

THE FOLLOWING WRITING IS BASED ON TRUE EVENTS.

My last piece reflected reality. This piece will bring us into a different reality. One similar, yet cinematic, and avant-garde in comparison to our own.

EXT. A FLOWER GARDEN - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

We open on a singular red rose. The rose is vibrant. Blossoming in the daylight.

Slowly, we track out. No longer a singular rose, yet a garden of gorgeous, unique, distinct hues of flowers, plants, grass.

A classical score overtakes the room tone of the garden. It's powerful. Intense.

The camera tracks out far enough for us to see a couple. A BOY and a GIRL, with hands on each other's cheeks.

We cut closer to see the boy and the girl, whose noses just barely touch. The boy exhales. He holds the girl's head down and kisses her forehead.

The music stops.

The girl's alone.

The boy's disappeared.

She looks around the garden, fearless. There's a sense of relief to her eyes. Why?

NOA (V.O.)

It was no longer love; it was me worshipping and praising your approval.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUSTIN'S HOUSE - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - DAY

The girl, NOA, enters Justin's "darty." Or "dager." Whatever you call it.

She wears a black bikini top and a blue jean skirt. Her hair is longer. She wears less make-up. Her smile is less genuine.

Noa and her best friend, MAE, run over to... the alcohol.

Noa and Mae stand in front of the booze. They ponder what their next steps should be.

Mae pours two shots of tequila. The camera holds on Noa's discomfort with taking the shot.

Sound becomes fuzzy.

Mae's voice sounds miles away.

MAE

Noa. Hello? Earth to Noa? Noa!

Noa comes back to us.

MAE (CONT'D)

Noa. What's up?

NOA

Nothing. I'm just, I'm drunk.

MAE

Okay. No more. I'm finding Justin.

Noa nods. Mae hurries off.

Noa pours herself two more shots. She swallows. She scans her surroundings. One more. Three.

She turns around to search the party. She's quite, wobbly.

NOA (V.O.)

I know now that I became someone I didn't even recognize with you. Constantly worried I would-

TEDDY

Where the fuck have you been?

The boy from the opening shot - TEDDY, enters. He is slim, skinny, and truly a creep.

He wears swim shorts and a black t-shirt. Black sunglasses to hide his eyes.

NOA

We just got here. Hi my love.

Noa kisses Teddy. He's **clearly** angry.

TEDDY

I've been here an hour waiting for you.

NOA

The pregame went a little late. I'm-

TEDDY

I dropped you off at Mae's an hour
and a half ago. You said you would
be 20 minutes.

NOA

Ted... I'm here now.

Teddy takes a deep breath. Noa puts her hand on his cheek.

TEDDY

(calmly)
Drink?

NOA

(sighs... happily)
Sure.

Teddy pours two shots from the same tequila bottle. They both
drink. He has this look of seriousness on his face. Does he
have something to prove to her?

Teddy puts his hand around Noa's waist. He motions her to
walk towards the pool, towards the others.

TEDDY

Hey.
(quietly)
Don't think about taking that skirt
off.

FLASH BACK.

INT. TEDDY'S ROOM - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Noa stands in front of a hanging mirror in a neon green
bathing suit.

Teddy lays in bed, on his phone, in the same clothes he wears
at the party.

This is earlier this morning. Hours before the party.

NOA

Do you like this one?

Noa faces Teddy.

TEDDY

(to himself)
Whore.

NOA

Ted. Come on. It's a party.
Everyone knows I'm with-

TEDDY

Everyone's going to think I'm
dating a whore.

NOA

I'll wear something over it.

TEDDY

At a fucking pool party?

NOA

Okay. Okay. I'll change.

TEDDY

Can you just wear the black one?
For me?

Teddy gets out of bed and walks towards Noa. He caresses her
body.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I should be the only one. Who can
see, and touch.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. JUSTIN'S BACKYARD - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - DAY

Teddy and Noa stand with Mae and Justin off to the right of
the pool.

Noa is in her own world. Mae watches her, ignoring the boys.

TEDDY

So you've seen their current stats.
And you're still.
(sighs, laughing)
They're not even gonna win, Justin.

JUSTIN

Ted, shut up. You don't know a
fucking thing you're talking about.

Mae notices how drunk Noa is.

She grabs ahold of Noa's hand and they run off towards a slip
and slide. The boys roll their eyes.

NOA
What's wrong?

MAE
Let's go down the slip and slide.

NOA
No I-

MAE
It's fun!

Mae takes off her jean shorts. She's in solely a bikini.

Noa becomes uncomfortable. She glances towards Teddy who watches her like a hawk.

NOA
You do it. I'll, uh, video you.

Noa takes out her phone and films Mae who runs and slides down the slip and slide.

Noa laughs and hollers.

Teddy watches from afar. He slowly walks towards, Noa.

Mae runs back to Noa. They laugh together. Drunk. Yet happily.

NOA (V.O.)
I had to become this *different way*
to be right for *you*. To cope with
the greek fucking tragedy that was
our relationship.

Creeping up out of nowhere, is Teddy, once again.

TEDDY
Hey. The pizza truck just got here.

Mae rolls her eyes.

NOA
(happily)
I'm coming.

Teddy grabs Noa's waist as they walk towards the pizza cart.

Noa devours a slice of pizza. Ted stands with her. He smiles. Maybe he's truly in love.

TEDDY
Ooooh. The sexy men just arrived.

Even if he *is* in love.

That line ruined it all for him.

"The sexy men" aka *men* who look like *boys*, walk towards the pizza cart. Teddy nods at each.

JUSTIN (O.S.)

Teddy!

TEDDY

(to Noa)

I'll be back.

Noa stands there with the three boys.

BOY #1

Is it time for the hot tub?

BOY #2

Uh yeah. Everyone down? Ethan? Noa?

NOA

Um.

Noa scans her surroundings. Teddy not in sight.

NOA (CONT'D)

Sure. Yeah.

NOA (V.O.)

Every action I made was
mathematical. High risk,
hopefully... high reward.

The camera moves towards the pool chairs, left of the hot-tub.

Teddy stands beside Justin and Mae, who sit on the pool chairs. Ted walks into a bathroom, away from their conversation.

MAE

You fed Charlotte before we left
right?

JUSTIN

Uh. Charlotte?

MAE

Justin. Are you serious?

JUSTIN

No. Yes... Whose Charlotte?

MAE

My fucking hamster. I told you to feed her.

JUSTIN

Well, who cares. It's a fucking hamster.

Justin starts to laugh a bit at their conversation.

MAE

(angrily)

Justin, did you feed her or not?

People start to stare at Mae. Noa peers over.

JUSTIN

Mae, chill out. We're having fun.

(beat)

It's a party. Charlotte will see us when we're back.

MAE

Not if she's dead!

Mae storms off. Justin laughs a bit and then stops when he realizes that he's sitting alone. At his own party.

Everyone else just stares at him.

He, then, goes after Mae.

EXT. HOT TUB - SUNSET, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Noa and the three boys sit in the hot tub. This is the first time we see Noa without her skirt on. Her hair is sopping wet. She dunks frequently in and out, while the boys converse.

BOY #1

I'm just glad I never have to see Professor Davis again.

BOY #2

True. I will not fucking miss that goddamn book. What was it called again?

BOY #1

Uh... Which one?

BOY #2

You know. The one with that girl.

BOY #1

Wow. Very specific. What girl?

BOY #2

Bro. Are you kidding. The one with that girl and she's shamed. With the letter. And the daughter, with the priest. Fuck. I can't remember.

NOA

Are you talking about The Scarlett Letter?

BOY #2

Yes! That's what it's called. God that book was stupid.

BOY #1

That's Professor O'Donnell's class.

BOY #2

Oh.

Silence. Everyone in the hot tub stares at Boy #2's stupidity.

BOY #2 (CONT'D)

I thought that was Davis's class. That's. Well.

NOA

Aren't you an English major?

BOY #2

(to himself)

This is all just embarrassing now.

Noa glances to the left of the frame and sees Teddy, walking out of the bathroom.

He locks eyes with Noa and stares at her in utter fury.

Then, storms over to the hot tub.

BOY #1

Teddy! Where the hell you been?

TEDDY

Ha. No where.

Teddy plops into the water. Across from Noa.

BOY #2

Um. Okay.

NOA
(to Teddy)
Hi.

TEDDY
(angrily, distant)
Hi.

NOA
Do you wanna leave soon?

Teddy stares at her with genuine evil in his eyes. He then aggressively gets out of the hot tub and storms towards the bathroom, again.

The boys stare in silence at Teddy's scene.

Noa hops out of the tub and grabs a towel beside her. She chases after him.

Trying to act calm.

NOA (CONT'D)
Ted?

Teddy opens the bathroom door. Noa follows in.

INT. BATHROOM IN JUSTIN'S HOUSE - ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, NIGHT

Teddy slams the door shut.

NOA
Ted, I just-

Teddy grabs Noa by the neck and shoves her against the wall.

Noa gasps out of shock.

Immediately, she silences herself. She seems somewhat calm, yet, still AND terrified.

Teddy holds her there for a few seconds, then loosens his grip.

He lets go.

Noa breaks.

She wails. Crying. Loudly.

Teddy turns away from her.

TEDDY

Why does it have to be like this?

NOA

(pulling herself together)

No. No. No. I'm. I'm sorry Ted.
It's my fault. I- I shouldn't have
gone *in*, with *them*. Uh. I mean. Not
without you there.

TEDDY

I asked you one thing, didn't I?

NOA

You did and I-

TEDDY

(to himself)

Don't think about taking that skirt
off.

Noa stands there in awe. Teddy turns back to her. He looks towards the door. Ignoring her presence.

We hold on Noa's shocked, sad, and lonely face.

NOA (V.O.)

It was never love. It was me.
Worshipping and praising your
approval.

...

Later that night, Noa goes to a friends house with her girl-friends.

They want to watch a TV show they've all seen.

"How about *Euphoria*? The carnival episode?"

Noa watches hand in hand with Mae, whose utterly terrified.

Noa cries herself to sleep that night. The lights dim. Screen fades black. But is this a movie anymore?

So, how does the media portray relationships and sexuality?

*I hope I answered it to some extent. But in some ways, it's impossible to answer. This is one story. Of thousands. That's why I want **you** to share what **you** feel comfortable, with me. I want the reader's story told. With that, we'll see next time.*