

TWENTY-TWO

Written by Julia Morizawa

Based on a true story
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TIME: The present.

SETTING: An apartment in West Los Angeles.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

LEILA - female, 22, Asian-American.

DANNY - male, mid/late-twenties, Caucasian.

ERIC - male, late-thirties, Caucasian.

ZOE - female, 22, Caucasian.

SOL - male, late-thirties/forties, African-American.

WRITER'S NOTES:

The above character descriptions are based purely on the real individuals that these characters are meant to portray. Therefore, these descriptions are flexible, though some minor references to ethnicity are made within dialog. If necessary, these references are not imperative to the story, and may be cut or altered. Also, throughout the script, several instances of drug use, drinking and smoking are specified. However, these actions should remain relatively constant for all characters throughout, regardless of whether or not it is indicated in scene description.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

This play is intended to be presented as realistically as possible. The original production included certain factors to assist in this, including seating the audience on stage, within the set on couches, chairs, etc., and blocking some of the action around or behind them. One performance took place in a large recreation room, rather than in a theater, to enhance the effect that the audience was actually a part of the world. All sound and music cues were played from a stereo within the set, with the actors starting and stopping them in character. There were no light cues other than the three black-outs noted in the script, and most of the performance space was lit with practical lights.

CHAPTER ONE: THE BEGINNING

We're in the living room of a relatively nice apartment in West Los Angeles. It's spacious and furnished, at least a couch and a coffee table, but it either hasn't been cleaned in months or a bunch of drug addicts have been making themselves at home. Probably both. Aside from the trash, clothes and random paraphernalia scattered about, we see the skeleton of a budding musician's studio - a couple guitars, an amp, a turntable, a mini keyboard, drum machine and maybe even a decent mixing board. It is pretty clear that this is where the tenant of the apartment spends his money.

The apartment is quiet. LEILA is planted on the couch, bored and impatient. She leans into a small mirror before her containing the late night remnants of cocaine. She uses a nearby credit card to cut what's left into a small line then rapidly snorts it. She checks her make-up in the mirror, sits back, and waits.

Suddenly, the front door slams open. Roughing their way inside are DANNY and ERIC - arms overflowing with large cases of cheap beer and convenience store snack food - both slightly out of breath.

DANNY

Fuck, man! That was so fuckin' close.

LEILA

Jesus Christ! Where the fuck have you guys been?

ERIC

My dad was still up. He was pissed cause I left one of his guns out in the living room. The one I showed you last night.

LEILA

The sniper rifle?

ERIC

Yeah.

DANNY

Dude, Leila. You gotta hear this. So, we're like six blocks away and this fuckin' cop starts tailing us. And I'm like sweatin' bullets cause I know Eric's got a couple 8-balls on him. Plus all the beer's just sittin' there on the seat cause I couldn't fuckin' figure out how to open your trunk.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

So I speed up and take the alley to get back here and right as we jump outta the car, the cop comes around the corner and turns on his lights. But we're already runnin' across the street, and I know that motherfucker can't stop us once we're outta the car. So we got through the gate and just waited and he sat on the street for like fifteen minutes. I didn't want him to know where I live so we had to make sure he was gone before coming up here. It was so fuckin' close.

LEILA

What the fuck, Danny? That's not cool. I'm never letting you drive my car again.

DANNY

What? Well, you're the one that wanted the blow but didn't wanna go get it.

LEILA

Dude, I paid for everything you've snorted tonight. Plus, I thought you were stoppin' by the bar to meet up with Sol, and you know I fuckin' hate him.

ERIC

Yeah, he's still over there singing karaoke. He said someone else had been by dealing some shit, but it was all stomped on with caffeine pills or vitamins or some other bullshit. That pisses me off. I never stomp on my stuff. Ask Danny. He saw it all before I cut it up.

DANNY

True that. He had a rock the size of my eyeball. It was huge.

LEILA

Well, where the fuck is it?

DANNY

Jesus, calm down, you fiend.

LEILA

I prefer the term, drug addict.

ERIC

Here.

Eric reaches into his inside coat pocket, pulls out a small sandwich bag wadded into a knot, and tosses it to Leila. She inspects it.

LEILA

This is an 8-ball?

ERIC

We did a couple lines at the bar, then some at my place. Plus, like I said, my dad was up, so I had to give him some.

LEILA

Fuckers.

ERIC

Relax. I got another one. It hasn't been touched.

LEILA

Give it to me.

ERIC

No way.

LEILA

I already fuckin' paid you for both of 'em. Give it to me.

ERIC

I said no. You'll do it all right away and give yourself a fuckin' heart attack. I'm lookin' out for you, making sure you pace yourself. Don't ask me again.

Leila and Eric stare off for a beat before she gives in, realizing he isn't joking. She switches her attention to the drugs - briefly struggling to open the bag, then pouring a decent amount of its contents onto the mirror.

LEILA

Fine. Then I'm holding onto this one myself.

She reknots the bag and over-dramatically places the remainder of the cocaine into her pocket. As she begins cutting lines, Eric cracks open a beer and digs into his munchies. Danny has long already made himself comfortable - swallowing the last of junk food, lighting up a cigarette, and setting himself up behind the mixing board.

LEILA (CONT'D)

So, my best friend's driving up from San Diego tonight. Is it cool if she comes over?

DANNY & ERIC

Is she hot?

LEILA

Yeah. But she don't give head the way I do.

DANNY

How would you know?

LEILA

Word of mouth. Pun intended.

ERIC

I can be the judge of that.

LEILA

What?

ERIC

Yeah. We can set up a little competition.

LEILA

Fuck you.
(beat)
What'll the prize be?

ERIC

How 'bout - more blow. Pun intended.

LEILA

I'll think about it. But you can't be the judge.

ERIC

Why not?

LEILA

Cause I said so. Danny can judge.

DANNY

I'm down.

LEILA

Pun intended?

DANNY

(beat)
I don't get it.

LEILA

Whatever. Anyway, she has a boyfriend. But he, like, beats her up and shit. So, she might be kinda fucked up right now. And if I see anyone try to take advantage of her, I'll cut off your balls - then boil them - and feed them to you.

DANNY

Jesus.

LEILA

So, is it cool?

DANNY

Yeah, yeah. How come you haven't brought her over here before?

LEILA

Because I don't like sharing.

DANNY

I feel you on that.
(refers to the cocaine)
You gonna pass that around?

LEILA

Hold on.

Leila divvies up six lines and snorts two before reluctantly rising and bringing the mirror to Danny. She watches impatiently as Danny snorts a couple lines, then she carries the mirror over to Eric. The process is seemingly habitual, somewhere between the obedient wife and the underpaid waitress.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(to Eric)

You sticking around tonight?

ERIC

Depends. Friday night - should be getting lots of calls. I don't like driving around during witching hour, but business is business. And last weekend my connect didn't come through, so I didn't make any money.

LEILA

Can I ride along?

ERIC

Nah, girl. Not tonight.

By now, Danny has turned on most of his sound equipment and is entertaining himself with some sort of beat.

Perhaps he scratches to a prerecorded mix or works the drum machine with one hand and the keyboard with the other. Once he's got something relatively cohesive going, Leila jumps up with a sudden burst of energy and begins dancing - drug-induced yet competent, and for the most part, sexy.

LEILA

So, Danny. When you gonna write that song for me? I just need a good rhythm, I can do the lyrics.

DANNY

How 'bout this?

LEILA

Nah, this is too rap-like. I need something more indie-emo with just a little bit of hip-hop, like in the beat, just to give it some curves. Dude, I saw this band the other night at the Echo and they were like totally punk-rock, and it was just two guys, one on drums and the other on guitar. But they had prerecorded all these like non-stop hip-hop beats and were playing them off a laptop and they played their whole set to it. It was so fuckin' rad. It was like, punk-hop.

DANNY

(laughs)
Punk-hop?

LEILA

Yeah, or hip-punk.

DANNY

That's awesome.

LEILA

That's what I wanna do. Like, hip-punk-emo. I'll start a new trend and record some ghetto shit and put it all over MySpace. And then I'll ask everyone to be my friend.

DANNY

Oh, shit. Speaking of MySpace, you gotta take down that page you started for me. My baby's mama found it somehow and she like totally freaked out. She said it like said something about me never wanting to have kids.

LEILA

What? All I did was put your name and picture up there. That's fucked up. I hate MySpace. Whatever, I'll take it down. We can do a new one when you've got some shit recorded.

DANNY

Cool.

While Danny plays around on one instrument, Leila joins in on another. It's quite obvious that she doesn't have the musical ear that Danny does, but she's trying none-the-less and thoroughly enjoying herself. Plus, just about anything sounds euphoric when the buzz is still good.

Eric has been keeping to himself on the sidelines, sipping his beer and sending text messages. We probably don't hear it ring, but he suddenly answers his phone.

ERIC

(into phone)

Yeah...I'm at Danny's...Just me, Danny and Leila...What the fuck, man? Already?...What'd you quote 'em?...Fine. I'll be there in ten minutes. Meet me in the parking lot.

DANNY

Who was that?

ERIC

Sol. He's working for me down at the bar tonight. I made him pay up-front though this time. No more IOU's with that fucker. Anyway, he's out. Said some rockers from New York are over there and wanna get high. I gotta go.

LEILA

Already? You just fuckin' got here.

ERIC

Money is money.

LEILA

You comin' back?

ERIC

Maybe. See ya, Danny.

DANNY

Later.

Eric lets himself out. Danny hasn't missed a beat, but Leila's mood has suddenly dropped a notch. But not for long. She retrieves the bag of cocaine from her pocket and preps another serving for Danny and herself.

LEILA

I wanna learn how to freestyle.

DANNY

(laughs)

Okay.

LEILA

Seriously. I've suddenly decided I wanna be more *gangsta*. How do I do it?

DANNY

I dunno. You just feel the beat and sorta just let it out. You know, just whatever comes to your mind.

LEILA

Let's hear it.

DANNY

What?

LEILA

I need an example. So I can get into the groove.

DANNY

A'ight. Check this out.

Danny presses a couple quick buttons on his mixing board and a simple yet catchy beat fills the room. He slips into a single-minded, drug-induced brief freestyle, but it's smooth and relatively impressive. Leila is blown away.

LEILA

Oh my God! That was so fucking cool!
Okay, okay. Let me try.

Several beats pass as Leila awkwardly attempts to "feel" the beat. It's overly apparent in her body, but she struggles to get any words out. She opens and closes her mouth several times, spitting out a line here and there, then starting over and trying again. She eventually constructs a little bit of something, but you couldn't call it freestyling - more like coming up with four lines that rhyme as quickly as possible. It's pretty bad, but she's definitely trying and her genuine frustration becomes more and more apparent. Danny finds the whole ordeal quite amusing.

DANNY

(laughing)

Dude, you can't just try to make the end of each line rhyme. You just gotta start and don't stop, and if a rhyme comes along, you use it. But if that's all you're thinking about it won't work.

Leila ignores Danny, struggles to spit out another line or two, before finally giving up.

LEILA

Fuck!

DANNY

Man, you suck.

LEILA

Whatever.
(beat)
Shit!

DANNY

What?

LEILA

Eric didn't give me my other 8-ball.

DANNY

You finished that other one already?

LEILA

No, but what if he doesn't come back? Or what if we run out before he's here? Or what if he fuckin' sells it to someone else?

DANNY

Chill. He'll be back. How much of that first bag you got left?

LEILA

I don't know, like, half.

DANNY

Well, hook a brother up!

Leila retrieves the bag from her pocket offers it to Danny.

LEILA

Here, you do it.

Danny obliges, stopping the music before moving over to the couch to cut it up.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I went to an NA meeting after work.

DANNY

Seriously? Where?

LEILA

Culver City.

DANNY

How was it?

LEILA

Pretty fucking cool, actually. I was a little drunk by the time I got there cause I bought some cheap Merlot and opened it in the parking lot. So I started crying when I was talking. It was kind of embarrassing.

DANNY

And now you're over here getting high.

LEILA

Yeah, I know, I'm such a hypocrite. But sometimes I really hate it, you know? I hate getting wasted and making a scene. I hate being up for three nights in a row. I hate obsessing about coke all the time. I mean, every once in a while it'd be fine. But I can't just do it every once in a while. I mean, they keep saying, 'One is too many and a thousand never enough' and I like totally get that. I don't know, I think I really need to quit.

DANNY

Man, don't say that. I'll miss you too much.

A beat.

LEILA

So is your job still making you go to AA meetings?

DANNY

Nah, I quit.

LEILA

What?!

DANNY

I quit this morning.