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ARVIND

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ARVIND

by

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Report

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Dedication

To mother and father, the only people I want to make proud

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ARVIND

by

Evan David Roberts, M.F.A.
The University of Texas at Austin, 2014
Supervisor: PJ Raval

This report will summarize the process of developing, producing and finishing the short documentary film ARVIND. Shot on HD video in Austin, TX from May 2012 to March 2014, the film was produced as my Graduate Thesis Film in the Department of Radio-TV-Film at the University of Texas at Austin in partial fulfillment of my Master of Fine Arts in Film Production degree.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea for ARVIND was inspired by my first few graduate experiences of writing, directing and acting in the program at UT-Austin. Observing eleven other people engage in the same filmmaking process was thought provoking and made me think about the autobiographical nature of our art, the purpose of storytelling and what fictionalizing our lives gives us in the end.

Watching other students create work in the program, I saw similar themes and characters came up consistently in their stories. Only Annie Silverstein would have made "Spark," a story about two young people who have a fleeting connection while their parents have a tryst in a run-down ranch house. She would not make "Ace in the Hole," Deepak Chetty's film about a futuristic cowboy that rescues his girlfriend who is enslaved in a sci-fi brothel. Jordan Kerfeld's "Knuckleball" and "Housebreaking" both dealt with the relationships between fathers and sons, and the conflicts around how men provide for other men or the women in their family. Britta Lundin's "Boost" and "Darling Memories" explored queer characters that come in conflict with rule makers, authority figures, or the rules of sexuality. Andy Irvine's "Sex, Crime & Punishment" and "Hearts of Napalm" focus on seemingly doomed negotiations, romantic and otherwise, between members of the opposite sex. It feels like a small point I'm making, of course, these filmmakers make the kind of work that interests them. I'm interested in what their stories reveal about them

and their internal longings. Why are they drawn to these kinds of stories? I saw consistent characters and themes emerge in their films, and it helped to shape a more nuanced understanding of them as people with specific life experiences.

Each film was like a puzzle or a mystery to uncover about its maker. Recurring character traits, themes, and modes of character representation can make up a set of data about an artist. I started to look at my own choices and my own films. Coming of age stories about gay teenagers, centered around issues of self-acceptance, the masculine body, latent sexuality as well as sexuality that was so overt, it was not emphasized. What did this tell me about myself?

33 Teeth (2011) and *Yeah, Kowalski!* (2012) were loosely based on stories, characters, and experiences from my youth. During a summer game of basketball with my group of friends, I remember we discussed measuring our manhood. I was titillated; yes I was actively trying to repress any desires for the same sex. When it came time for my best friend, Luke, to tell us if he had measured his manhood or not, he muttered underneath his breath (as he went for a lay up) "I measured with a comb once." The comment stuck with me for years. What could that mean? What would a comb tell you about the size of your manhood? Why do teenage boys do weird things like that? I never forgot it and in fact I had a repressed fantasy where I would hang out with Luke at his house and excuse myself to use the bathroom where I would ransack drawers and medicine cabinets looking for any kind of comb. What kind of comb would I find? And what would I do after I found it? It was an erotic totem, something I could fixate on without having to fixate on the true object

of desire. Thinking about that comb was safe. After that summer, Luke dropped me as a friend (seemingly because my efforts at repressing my desire for him weren't working) and so I never got to go back to his house and look for the comb.

In *33 Teeth*, I created the character of Eddie who, unlike me, had the chutzpah to break into Chad/Luke's house and find the comb. I was able to enact a long held wish through the writing and creation of the film. At the end of *33 Teeth*, Eddie has a tooth from the comb that he's broken off. He holds onto as a keepsake. It represents that he has one-upped the hot villain Chad, but he has also conquered himself in not repressing this desire. I've long since laid to rest these events from high school. I didn't need to make this film to move on, but seeing how my own longings and desires interwove with the film was really fascinating to me. Watching my fellow cohorts films made me realize that, maybe, we are all telling stories about our unfulfilled wishes and people we wish we could be.

Yeah, Kowalski! was a similar experience in wish fulfillment. The opening scene is based on a sex education class I remember from 7th grade where I was the only one to put in a question in the question bowl. I was never a late bloomer, but the character of Kowalski had a lesson to learn about accepting who he was before he could find the acceptance he was looking for. He didn't realize that it was his cunning and imagination that was interesting to his object of desire, Shane, and not whether he had armpit hair yet. It is true that these are some of my own personal challenges, accepting myself as I am, and hoping that if I were to fully accept my shames and my faults that others would follow suit.

The relationship between Gabe and his father was also lifted directly from my own experience with my father growing up. I did not write the truth. My father was not accepting of my queerness without his own inner turmoil. Gabe's father was unique in his acceptance of his son. I allowed Gabe to have a moment of vulnerability towards the end of the film where the father is finally given some appreciation ("thanks for the haircut"), but it is quickly diminished by his son's disappearance down the hallway. It's another bonding moment that ends far too soon for the father's liking, and a face that I would often see on my own father when I resisted making a connection with him.

I wrote Gabe's father's character thinking my dad might see himself in that character, and hoping he would see how I wished he had been during my teenage years, but also how I see him now, a kind easy-going man's man who loves his child deeply and irrevocably.

What did it say about me that I was putting a frame around these two stories from my youth, stories that were about self-acceptance, body acceptance or competition, masculinity, the appearance of masculinity vs. the behaviors of a "real" man? What makes a real man?

Another inspiration for this film came as a student of Professor Andrew Shea in his Dogme95 class and the studying of Stanford Meisner's approach to acting. Meisner's method focused on working with actors to be exceptionally present and in the moment with their scene partners. Some in-class exercises put students in front of each other, acting for the first time. I began to see how therapeutic it was to be

"someone else" and communicate myself in a way I would not normally do in real life but in a way that was more truthful to my true personality. Having the distance and remove of make believe was a spiritual benefit and that in a fantasy, I was expressing myself more truthfully than the real world, I felt, would allow me.

My personal insights after this class and making these two films made me wonder what it would be like to follow someone through a similar adventure of making a short film from start to finish, and see what connections, if any, the audience could draw from their real life to the world of make believe the storyteller created for us. I imagined the result would be similar to what I had experienced along with my classmates my first year of graduate school, that autobiographical elements would peak in and we would be able to learn from how this person expressed themselves in their art, perhaps revealing more than they would in life. This technique is used to great effect in the film *The Act of Killing* (which premiered at Telluride Film Festival a few months after we interviewed Arvind.) Director Joshua Oppenheimer writes: "The filmmaking method we used in *The Act of Killing* was developed ... as an investigative technique, ... to help us understand not only what we see, but also how we see, and how we imagine. " By having a subject write and produce a story based on their own life, we are afforded a unique view into their imagination and how they see themselves and the world.

DEVELOPMENT

The project idea hinges on a sliver of a moment: the moment when a director yells 'action!' and an actor transforms into a character. Additionally, I am focused on the moment we transition back to ourselves. What was the purpose of that brief sojourn into make believe? What are we attempting to do in that moment? This transition from fact to fiction was what my film would be made up, moments where we transitioned from the real world into the imagination of the storyteller.

In my two graduate films I had already worked with teen actors. As a result, I worried that I would typecast myself as a director of coming of age youth films. I even considered approaching an old folks home and working with seniors to bring to life the stories of their past or issues that they are dealing with currently. I had imagined that perhaps a woman in her 60s might write a story about her life from when she was 30, perhaps about her own relationship with her mother. This older woman would play herself as a younger woman. This idea interested me. Could the audience see both the past and the present in one person? Would they read the lines on the actresses face and realize the were looking at wrinkles that perhaps came from the life experience she was depicting? A woman in her 60s would be more introspective and able to connect emotionally to the material, and perhaps even understand the benefit of it all. Would she be reenacting moments from her youth that she wished she had done differently? It would be another kind of coming of age story,, coming of age at 60.

I might have made that senior citizen project were it not for another concern. I really wanted to continue making films about queer people. The films didn't necessarily have to be about their sexuality or pivot on a story connected to it, but like Kowalski, I wanted to tell more queer stories where the characters sexuality was a part of the fabric or texture of the story and not a focal point or a plot point. My connections in Austin to elders were slim. I knew more queer teenagers from the 33 Teeth and Kowalski shoots, so this is where I started. I connected with my friend Hilary Burdge who works in the California offices of the Gay Straight Alliance Network and was able to connect me to a few organizations here in Texas.

One final reason was that I decided to work with teenagers again was because it felt like a more cohesive idea when viewed with my other films from my time in the program. And I felt like it was a unique spin on the coming of age film.

While doing research on my next project, I went to OutYouth and spoke with a young man, George, who was there with his caseworker who was accompanying him as he was a ward of the state. George, caught my attention because he was queer, of mixed race and had a complicated family life. I knew that I wanted to work on a story that raised issues of race, class and gender. At that time I also didn't realize that whoever I was going to chose was probably not going to have any film experience and their creative process might be a lot of heavy lifting and teaching about the filmmaking process on my part.

I decided that I didn't want to call this an "audition" or a "casting process" because as I was working with youth and choosing them based on their life story, I

didn't want them to feel like their life wasn't interesting enough or that they didn't make the cut not even based on their acting ability but their ability to be themselves. So I named the project *If My Life Were A Movie* and I billed it as a video project where teenagers were going to talk about their lives and how they would put them into a narrative in a short film. I sent out emails and made phone calls and we had a room reserved on May 12, 2012. Only two people showed up. Conor, the romantic lead in *Yeah, Kowalski!* and Arvind, an extra from *Yeah, Kowalski!*

Conor was interesting. His parents had divorced and his father had gotten together with another man. His mother was still involved in their family and Conor seemed very well adjusted and extremely supported by both sets of parents. He was a performer, and he felt exasperated by his busy schedule. I wasn't drawn in by his stories, but I was interested in how a gay teenager could grow up with two fathers. LGBT teenagers are so shaped by their parents views about their queerness that I was curious how Conor experience his families total acceptance. I liked that a gay teenager having gay parents makes gayness seemingly a non-issue and not part of the story, just like a straight teenager having straight parents makes their sexualities "invisible."

Arvind was a different story. My first question was "Say your name, age, where you go to high school, and something about yourself that we don't know." Arvind went on for a two minutes stream of consciousness about sushi, where he was born, the air in the evening in California and being different. It was endearing and charming and I was immediately hooked, as was Annie who was operating the

camera. He was vulnerable, contradictory and it appeared, emotionally available. Annie and I could not help but laugh after he finished it with "... do you have any questions?"

I asked Arvind if his life were a movie, what would it be about? Before the interview, he had said there were some things about the family his father did not want him talking about. I told him that it was up to him and that I would not press him to talk about uncomfortable topics. Ten minutes into his interview, Arvind decided to tell us the story anyways, smiling glibly: "When I was two years old, my mother tried to kill me. She's mentally insane, or something. My dad hasn't told me the whole story. It makes me wonder, did something worse happen? I don't know, it's a mystery. I kind of like it."

It's hard not to become interested someone's story when it's delivered in such an emotionally incongruent way. My mother tried to kill me. But I'm telling you like I'm talking about my favorite subjects in high school. This was where my interest lay, in the contradictory way that he presented his story. How much of this experience did he truly understand? How did he feel about his mother, whom he had never even met? What had happened that night? What was the whole story that Arvind wasn't privy to?

As this point in the interview, I diverted attention away from this story. It felt like the tip of the iceberg that could get more detailed later, but I was curious to learn more. I also did not want to get too far into it if later his father got angry that Arvind had mentioned this.

There were other stories: his boyfriend who had a mother who Arvind said was "also crazy." His father who used to be a millionaire and was now a pedy cabber. His brother, Jay, had a full scholarship to UT to study physics. Arvind said he was never was cast as a lead and mostly played supporting roles in plays at his performing arts school, McCallum and that his goal was to make his father proud by getting a lead part. Most importantly, he felt confident in front of the camera, enough to be vulnerable and ask us questions, crack jokes. There was an unaffected ease he had with himself around us, the filmmakers, more than fifteen years older than him.

I was concerned about the story about the mother. I was fascinated but I knew I was interested in Arvind not just for this specific story. I felt that it might figure into the script he produced, perhaps indirectly since it was in the past, and perhaps it would not be such a huge part of the story.

As Arvind left, I felt like I found my subject but I also knew that interviewing two people was not a deep enough inquiry into the community. But there were so many interesting questions about his story after this first interview that I was certain I found someone I could work with. I wasn't clear about Arvind and what was going on in his life, if he was reliable or had the stamina for the kind of project I had in mind. I decided to write a grant for the Texas Filmmakers Production Fund and use Arvind's story as a template and see if the idea caught on. In the interim, I thought I would continue to look for other subjects.

For the grant proposal, I used only his interview footage and a loosely fleshed out idea of Arvind's life and his challenges. I had imagined that Arvind would write a script for a short film and that there would be opportunities to film this process at each stage, his decisions in how he directed the actors being the most interesting. I had no idea what he might write about. The story about his mother was in the past and I wasn't drawn to exploring it. I was more interested in how he had incorporated the narrative of his past into his current identity and who he felt he was becoming. I was concerned then that people might thing I had chosen him based on his sensational past, and that this bordered on exploitation of a youth who might not yet fully grasp the impact that abuse had on him growing up.

When the Austin Film Society granted me $8,000 to pursue this idea, the decision was made for me. I thought I might be able to find someone else if Arvind didn't work out, but it was validating that other people thought that, based on his interview footage, there was an idea worth pursuing. I decided to meet with Arvind and see if he was open to the idea. We met at a cafe near his house and I told him the process I was thinking about, that I would follow him around in his life but also require of him to write a story that was based on something that happened to him, and that we would make this film, he would direct it and I would produce it and make it all happen. I was open to Arvind making choices, as his choices were the most interesting part of the project. Who would he chose to play himself, and why? Who would he cast for the people in his life?

I met with Arvind's father, Michael, to discuss the project. It was really important to me that his dad knew my intentions and that I wasn't trying to do anything that would harm his son. Moreover I wanted to give his son an opportunity to express himself on a large canvas. That first meeting went well and Michael was extremely open to the project granted me such access to his son that I felt like it was too good to be true.

I learned a lot about their trial, the families past. Michael was on board for the project and wanted to support Arvind in whatever way he could. It also seemed that he wanted the truth of the past events to come out as his livelihood and financial life were ruined by the very public divorce and attempted murder case. He had lost his job, all his money and had to declare bankruptcy. I was concerned at this point that even though he was granting me so much access, he might not understand that the film I was wanting to make wasn't concerned with the righting the wrongs of the past or bringing anything new to light about the case. It was about Arvind, how he saw himself, how he said his past, how he reflected on who he was through this story, and what it said about him, if anything.

I told Michael I wanted to start filming as soon as possible. He said we should film the court case on Friday. "Court case?" I asked. I had no idea that Arvind's mother had come back into the picture after our May interview. One summer night in July, Jay was about to go see a movie with his girlfriend when a friend told him to jump on Skype to make plans. There he found an invitation to connect from his mother who he had not heard from in 12 years. He had to go lie down and

subsequently fainted. A week later, Arvind thought to get on Skype and saw the same invitation. Michael was furious and they decided that since Jay was a legal adult, that he would head the case against her. The were seeking a life-long protective order which was possible in Texas after an anti-stalking law went into place a few years ago. The alternative is that they every two years they would have to renew their restraining order and face their mother once again.

PRODUCTION

OCTOBER 2012

I made an appointment with Arvind to start interviewing him a few days before the court case. I wanted to experiment with meeting with Arvind with just a microphone and no camera. Would that make interviews more authentic? Would he feel more real and reflective if he weren't staring into a camera? In retrospect, I would never do this again. You are forced to only use this footage as VO and as I learned in the post-production process, voice over can be over used and often you're just giving too much information for the viewer to absorb. People need a second for their brain to rest and take it all in.

I wanted to utilize some of my experience as a radio producer in the process of making this film. I've realized that subjects have a more natural way of speaking and are less self-conscious when there isn't a camera, but with a microphone, people seem to speak more freely. This is largely because they can see the interviewers eyes and aren't distracted by a lens.

On October 24, I sat with Arvind on his living room couch and asked him questions about his life and his past. I wanted to get him thinking about what he might write for his script. What stories from his past could he draw on? How did he put the events in his life together in thought and in words, and what meanings about himself did he glean from these stories?

He talked about being bullied. I did not want to focus on the topic of bullying, as the last few years have felt like gay youth are only seen through that prism. Instead, my focus was on Arvind's ups and down, his competitive relationship with his brother, his life at home with his father and his friends at school.

Arvind spoke about his mother, not remembering what his mother looked like, not understanding why she reached out to him and his brother. This is the first time I really learned about how he feels about her. Arvind said he would not want to accept her back into his life even if she "sincerely wants to be there" for him. "She had her chance and she blew it. It's not my fault, it's her fault. So, I don't think it matters how she feels."

Because I do not know Arvind's mother and I was not effected by her horrific actions, it is easier for me to begin to have empathy for his mother. I was not married to her, I have not suffered under her abuse or grew up with the understanding that she tried to kill me and was mentally unstable. Arvind is too close to the idea of her being untrustworthy, manipulative and "insane" to fully embrace an empathic perspective, I believe, and no one, myself included, would ask him to push himself in that regard. Her actions are unthinkable and unacceptable. They are also in the past. Arvind and his brother survived, having suffered abuse that had emotional, mental and even physical consequences long into their teenage and young adult lives. I was interested in the complexities of this situation. What are the limits of our empathy for a person who caused us harm but whom we don't remember harming us? At what point do we question the narrative we are given? If

nothing is black and white, where are the grey areas for Arvind in the way he understands his past as it was told to him and who his mother is today?

Annie Silverstein, a fellow filmmaker and my cinematographer, and I went over to Arvind's house to film Arvind and his father Michael getting ready for the next day in court. The first footage we filmed was in the kitchen and it was run and gun from the get-go. Michael was self-conscious of the camera and looked straight into the lens so much that I gave up trying to cut around it in post-production. He was consistently aware of the camera through out the two years of filming and perhaps did not feel at ease in front of the camera. In the beginning, Arvind was very open and vulnerable and had a very authentic way of being on camera, which feels more authentic to the viewer. However, this first night of filming in the kitchen, there were moments where it felt like they were performing the father-son relationship for the camera. They put out placemats to eat. I later learned from Arvind that most nights his father cooks spaghetti and Arvind eats dinner alone in his room on his bed. This is the way it goes in documentary, the act of observing something changes it.

Michael cooked "irreverent curry," a curry with pork. They followed dinner with a conversation about tomorrow's proceedings that made me think perhaps they haven't gone over events surrounding the mother in a while. It felt like we were capturing conversations they had never had before. Arvind said he did not even remember what his mother looked like, but that he remembered her lips as he pushed her down on the checkered floor in her kitchen. "You just remember lips?"

Michael asked? "I've created an image in my head, but it's probably the wrong image, " Arvind replied. I thought this was interesting that Arvind's imagination was filling in the gaps. For me, this harkened back to his audition interview when he said "My dad hasn't told me the whole story. He said he'll tell me when I get older, but it's a mystery."

The following morning, Annie and I showed up at 730am while Arvind and his dad were getting ready for court. Annie stayed with them in the car while I drove behind them. We parked near them and walked with them to court. Arvind was visibly overwhelmed and I could not read how he was feeling. His posture was small and tucked in, and he walked holding his arms across his chest. His brother, Jay, felt different, a bit more relaxed in his gate and not carrying, or appearing to carry, the weight of the situation.

As with most run-and-gun shoots, a lot of it was running around trying not to get in Annie's shot, helping to set up a tripod or figuring out what shots to get ahead of time. We followed the family to the office of Heather Busby, their lawyer. I had not realized this was part of our day, and so I did not have permission to film her. We filmed her anyways and she said she would connect with her boss and ask him what was legal. She would eventually come back and say that her face could not be used and we thought the scene in her office would have to be cut. As this case was her last case as a lawyer, and we did not start editing until over a year later. Eventually we got permission to use her footage and she sent over a release form.

We got all of our equipment through the metal detectors, caught up with Arvind and his family and hung out in a back wing of the courtroom. The boys fought about schoolwork and who was more busy. Actually, this was one of the only times that their dynamic was easy and not strained. Jay was the perfect older brother and you could tell that Arvind's tales of him being awful to him were one-sided.

We were not allowed to bring cameras into the courtroom. I had communicated with the judge the week before and that possibility was available. Arvind's mother agreed to be filmed in the end, but because Michael was concerned that it would harm their case somehow, we did not film.

Arvind's mother was present in the courthouse. Arvind sat along in a jury box with a view of the whole courtroom and most notably, his mother. Jay sat on the outside of Heather's desk. Annie and I were sitting in the front row, our tripod resting against the wood railing separating us from Arvind's mother.

She looked to me like a fifth grade math teacher. She had a very matronly tweed suit on. She looked harried. She walked back and forth from some friends in the courtroom to the table with her lawyer. She whispered in his ear. She felt neurotic. She looked back a lot at the crowd a few times. We did not make eye contact, but I had a strange feeling about her. On the stand she was remorseful, shy, repetitive. But I couldn't get a read on her. It was a devastating testimony. I had a view of Arvind and often looked at him. His posture was rigid and his lips tight. He did not look relaxed. I was behind his mother in a way that for him to look at me

might mean he was looking at her, so I never saw his eyes directly. I had enormous empathy for him in these moments. Annie leaned in to whisper during Arvind's mother's testimony: "This is heartbreaking."

We followed the family for the whole day and ended up filming them having a meal at a diner. There had been a minor mix up in court that delayed the proceedings until Tuesday, a technicality that strategically felt like it didn't do much more than prolong the decision. I still had not come to understand why Arvind's mother had decided to go this route. There was some confusion about if there was in fact a protective order put in place after the incident. Was she really in violation of a protective order? I was not sure. But even if there wasn't an order in place, her reasons for reaching out to both Jay and Arvind, a calculated action I learned in court were confusing. Why would she not wait for her children to contact her if they wanted to? My only idea was that she had to reach out to show them that she wanted to know them, and that if she settled and did not fight the life-long restraining order they were seeking, she would not get the chance to plead her case. It felt like a plan destined to backfire. Arvind himself was confused as to why she was reaching out. I don't think that to this day he even understands why she did try and communicate with them.

The following day, Annie and I visited with Arvind and interviewed him about his experience in court. This interview, filmed as he sat underneath his bunk bed, gave us some very thoughtful footage from Arvind. He spoke about all the things that he thought she was thinking in the courtroom when he looked at her and

it felt like everything he listed that she had missed were actually a list of things that he missed as well. He missed a mother who would witness him riding a bike for the first time, or a mother who would comfort him in the middle of the night when he could not sleep.

Arvind's friend, Lili, came over and we took a walk with them down to the park where they sat on the swings and talked about school and the court case. Lili was really friendly and talked a lot and she brought out another side of Arvind that we hadn't seen yet. We had yet to film him with his friends and his daily life, and these scenes were the kind of world that I wanted to bring in to the film. It was also important to establish this relationship with Lili as she was in many photographs on his wall with Lili's mother, Sara. The rest of the interviews and footage from 2012 consisted of a few nights of Arvind trying out for his high school's fashion show and talking with his dad about schoolwork.

SCRIPT WRITING PROCESS

I asked Arvind to continue writing his play and set deadlines with him. I went over to interview him just with audio a few more times in November. In December, Annie filmed me interviewing him on the couch, at this point we weren't sure if I would be a character in the film because of the nature of the project. I had asked Arvind to write a play. He was not doing this on his own. How much would this fact have to be highlighted and understood by the viewer? I was beginning to feel like

there were ethical problems with assigning Arvind this task. At the same time, it felt like Arvind was choosing to participate.

I have long struggled to understand why Arvind and his father signed on for this project, and have had to come to terms with the fact that I chose to follow someone who was only doing as I asked. It was not as if I stumbled upon Arvind in progress with writing this play. I helped create this story. The project felt like it put Arvind inside a petri dish. What happens when you ask a teenager to write a story about their life? What will they write about? How will it change them? Will it change them? There were aspects of the film that felt like social work more than filmmaking. I was beginning to feel out of my depth.

I think Arvind mostly chose to be a part of the project because it pleased his ego. He told me that when everything else in his life was failing, he would feel successful because of the documentary. I would later learn that Arvind felt the need to prove himself to his brother and his father, as they both went to college, did well and were book smart and he felt he needed to show them that he could succeed in another area where he was talented and they weren't.

But this has always been a sticking point for me. Arvind had very little to lose and had very little invested in this project. It was just like homework, something that he didn't want to spend time doing. He would have rather hung out with friends or watched a movie. There was no great passion within him that was compelling him to do this project. I think this is the biggest fault of the film, and the reason why Arvind is somewhat unknowable in the resulting edit, because the type of person

who takes that kind of initiative on their own to write and produce a play is going to be fueled by a passion that will translate onto the film. Arvind never felt like he cared very much about the play. Even though we had just captured some amazing footage, it was very early on that I began to worry that, while the concept was interesting, I would ultimately have a really dispassionate documentary film subject.

But this would take a turn when Arvind talked with me about the original idea to make it a film. He had no interest in making a film. He wanted to write a play. At first I was resistant. I had wanted to film the film inside the film. I wanted it to be using the iconic imagery of a film set, relating more to my own personal experience that inspired the idea to begin with. I had no idea how to produce a play or where we would launch it. But I slowly warmed to the idea because, as I would learn over and over, it was Arvind's choices that make the story interesting, not mine. This was one of the early moments when I realized the way I had seen the project shaping up was not how it would be at all. As I heard many times in the last two years: in narrative film, the director is God. In documentary film, God is the director.

By December and January, Arvind was writing his first script. It began with a mother poisoning her children. It jumped ahead to his seventh year to when he was bullied for being gay. He gets his by a car on his bike and the ambulance triggers a memory of his mother. I tried to talk vaguely about narrative structure, giving his main character a want and an unexpressed need. We talked about what the character, Arvind, in his script wants and what he ultimately needs. Then I asked him what he wanted and needed in his life, which was harder for him to pinpoint.

Ultimately we realized together that it was easier for him to talk about what the Arvind in his story wanted and needed than the Arvind in real life. This felt like I was giving him a secret away, or giving him the realizations that I might need him to come to on his own. This was a good lesson to learn, to hold back and let your subject come to their own conclusions. My conclusions are not interesting, or can be leading him down a path he wouldn't necessarily think to go down. At this time I started to worry a bit, however, that Arvind might not be ready yet to have the kind of insight into his writing. He might not even be creatively tapped into himself yet to really pull from a personal experience without just mimicking it.

His subsequent drafts showed this. While he called his play a fiction, there were so many scenes that were on the nose copies of his experiences and family dynamics that I felt like he didn't get the point of what I was asking him to do. Before he sat down to write in October, I had talked about my experience making my short films and how even though the idea for the film came out of a personal experience or memory, that I used those memories as a springboard into another fictional world. Arvind, on the other hand, took the idea of 'based on a true story' quite literally and just recreated events in his life pretty much as they happened. Any differences where so minor that they didn't affect the story. Arvind would disagree, but it pretty clear that the characters in his play have a direct correlation to the people they represent in his life. I had hoped there would be some fun connections between the documentary world and the fictional world that Arvind would create, but I did not imagine, nor did I want, those connections to be so on the

nose. As someone asked me during the production of the play, "what's the difference between his play and a reenactment of events?" I do not fault Arvind, of course. I know this is a function of him being a teenager and still experiencing the complex emotional world around him. He has very little experience in life to have insight on, so it makes sense to me that he would chose to write a play about the most confusing and dramatic chapter of his life.

The project took a turn when Arvind told me he wanted to write the play from his mother's perspective. This was profoundly more interesting to me than a play about a teenager named Arvind. First, it was what he was interested in. Getting inside the head of his mother and trying to figure out what steps had to happen for her to act the way she did was his idea. It also linked in to an interesting dynamic in the family's narrative of the events. Because he had no memory of the event, Arvind relies on the interpretations of his family. Of course, these people are trusted eyewitnesses for Arvind. They were there, they experienced it and they have the memories. These memories were passed down to Arvind second hand and now their memories are his. Their story is his story. This tragedy happened to them all, but being so young and not remembering any of it had kept Arvind in a kind of limbo, separated from his father and brother by his lack of memory, but also clearly saved by lack of remembering the horrific details.

I was excited by this idea of writing from the mother's perspective as this meant ultimately that we would have to cast an actress for the role of his mother. I had been worried about the mother not having a voice in the play, and it was here

that I began to pray for an actress who would step into this role and perhaps be a mother herself, or have some experience to draw from, or perhaps be transformed by the experience herself.

FEBRUARY 2013

Arvind tried out for the fashion show, even though at this point his grades were so low and he had so many absences, there was concern from everyone involved that he would not be allowed to participate. We filmed on the schools campus without permission and I'm thankful that we did not end up using this footage because it might have been difficult to get permission slips from parents. These were hilarious high school scenes, however, and I wish we had a place for them.

Annie and I were finally able to film Arvind meeting with his surrogate "mother", Sara Hickman. Sara was an interesting character in Arvind's life. Sara Hickman is a local musician who has some notoriety and a huge fan base, the year we started filming she was the Texas State Musician, much like being the Poet Laureate. Sara adopted Arvind as her "son" and she is his "mother." She has a really great way with teenagers. She's herself, she's quirky, she can about anything, she's inquisitive, and she gets personal. I think I would love her, too, if I were a 15 year old. I was interested in making her a character in the film because it was clear she was filling a surrogate mother role. During one of our interviews, Arvind spoke about a time when he broke up with a boyfriend and update his status from 'in a

relationship' to 'single.' Sara noticed this on Facebook and promptly scheduled a movie date with Arvind. After the movie, they had dinner and Sara gave him some love advice, instructing Arvind to 'lock up his heart' and not give it to anyone so easily.

This day was a good day of shooting, Sara talked with Arvind about song writing and later they drove to a cafe and Arvind caught her up to speed on the trial and what had gone down. I was surprised to know that Sara didn't know half as much as I thought she did, given how close Arvind said they were and how much of a maternal persona she fostered with him.

This month, some school drama went down, as Arvind's father un-enrolled him from school as a strategy to keep him involved in the fashion show. There was also an issue with choir and Arvind being a double major transfer student, lots of particular details that did not end up in the film but at one point were the lead up to a story line about his expulsion.

February brought another shooter, UT Professor and award-winning cinematographer Amy Bench. Amy helped shoot the fashion show and I was so impressed by her confidence as a shooter. The fashion show was a logistical nightmare, but we were able to shot up early and shoot some scenes of Arvind on the catwalk before the audience arrived. We set up for the catwalk once we knew the order and then ran up front for reactions from the crowd

Arvind had been planning on getting a tattoo for months and we finally were able to schedule a time to meet with him after school at his friend Devon's house. I

was excited about this scene because it's so embedded in the teenager perspective and up until this point, we had not captured moments from his life that felt real and authentic. At Devon's house, we learned that his tattoo is a Celtic shield, oft seen as a protection symbol from evil. This could not have linked in more perfectly to the themes of the film. This scene in the film is where a lot of people start to empathize with Arvind because it's such a relatable moment.

MARCH 2013

Arvind's birthday is March 14, but his father organized a barbeque birthday party with family and friends a week later. Here we filmed Arvind singing his guitar, hanging out with his friends, and the family casually discussing their mentally ill mother over sausages and onion.

APRIL 2013

Arvind casually says that things "are gay" and his father corrects him saying "you say that like it's a bad thing." Arvind doesn't care about words or their meanings, so he thinks that people put too much weight on that word as a derogatory to gay people. At the same time, Arvind has friends who use this word in a negative light. What is interesting is that being gay is so tied up into Arvind's identity of who he is. It's the first thing he says he knows about himself. Perhaps this is why he feels he can upend it and reverse meanings and chose what means what, because he is so comfortable with it. His sexual identity is emerging as much

stronger than his culturally mixed identity. He does not identify as Indian, does not link with Indian culture at all, besides burning incense and eating curry.

MAY 2013

We are beginning the process of refining his script so Arvind met with UT professor Cindy McCreery to go over his script and find ways to make it more "interesting." Arvind doesn't seem invested in these meetings, has not prepared questions, has not thought about his story in a way that shows deep consideration and leaves without taking notes or really absorbing some of the really smart feedback Cindy gave him.

JULY 2013

We lost footage from the day before when Arvind cleaned out his own room and threw away things that weren't meaningful. Today we filmed Arvind as he set up his new room. Every younger sibling wants to get the bigger room eventually. I was never able to move into my older sister's room. We filmed Arvind as he threw away things that did not matter to him, and put the things that did matter to him on his walls. This was always going to be a filler scene and was used at one point in the edit because it linked so clearly with one of the play scenes where the brother's fight about Nick moving into Emmett's room.

AUGUST 2013

Arvind participated in the Queer Youth Media Workshop put on by the Polari Film Festival. During that workshop he met John and they went on a date. They were both open to me filming the date, strangely. Before John came by, Arvind sat and talked about his "trust issues" with other people and how his brother was the same. Perhaps the funniest footage I have of him is as he Google's "in gay relationships who pays for dinner" and then goes on to read the results on an advice website. I filmed them at Zilker Park as they were enjoying Blues on the Green. As I was walking around them, getting coverage of where they were sitting, I was listening to their banal conversation. Then John began to talk about the stories that he likes to write, and they began to pick people out of the crowd and tell stories about them. I quickly pounced into action and asked them both to go back and forth so that I could film them as they told stories. At one point, John stopped the conversation to notice "All our stories are about death, or our parents." We unfortunately didn't use this footage in the end.

The next day Arvind was acting in a friends film and I filmed them re-enacting a few scenes as well as his post-mortem on his date. Around this time it had started to just be myself and Arvind shooting, so our relationship as director/subject was getting closer but also a bit more fraught. It felt like Arvind wanted to have more control over what I filmed and when I filmed it, whereas before he was amenable to being filmed any time. He was just happy to be a part of

it. But now, over a year into filming he started to push back. I attribute this to becoming too familiar with him, or letting my professional guard down.

Arvind had said he wanted to visit a psychiatrist to ask questions about Borderline Personality Disorder, so I found Penny Kruger who is a specialist in BPD. Penny wanted Arvind to sign a piece of paper that agreed any consequences of this consult were not her legal responsibility. She also wanted to talk with Michael about what will happen and how to go about it, so I went over and hung out with Michael alone as he fixed his lunch and spoke with Penny on the phone.

It was here that I learned that Michael and his ex-wife met in a cult, and that she was sexually abused by her father as a young child. In regards to Arvind's play, Michael said he did not know how much Arvind remembered when he was three, and Michael did not want to get too involved in Arvind's process. He wanted Arvind to work on this play by himself without any outside influences.

Arvind prepared a few questions for Penny and paid very close attention to what she said, though her jargon was not always succinct enough to understand. Arvind didn't take notes, again, but remembered enough so that when we went back to his house and spoke with his father in the kitchen, they had a very interesting conversation about his mother getting treatment. For a long time, I felt like this scene might be towards the climax of the film because it's clear that it's such a shift from where we see him begin the film. In the beginning he doesn't care what she feels or if he sees her again, but by this scene, he's considering that his mother is treatable and that if she was treated, she might be a better person. His father,

understandably, cannot accept that. This is the first inkling in the film of Arvind's own personal narrative starting to detach from his father's, and more conceptually, when Arvind begins to acquire his own autonomy in telling the story of his mother, who she is according to him.

OCTOBER 2013

The few times Arvind and I met in October, it was to drive around the city. These were turning point moments for his story, I felt, because a lot of Arvind's expectations about what it would feel like to be an adult and not go back to school were falling apart. Everyone he knew was back in school and unavailable, but he had to go to work in the mornings and hang out with older people waiting tables for a living. He felt that his father was not working hard enough to help him get his GED or certification for this or that. He was growing stronger in his beliefs that being in school was not for him and that he needed to be out in the world. He said he felt like he was growing up "too fast" and that he was more lonely than he had ever been. This was also the time that I learned his father was thinking of moving his business to New Mexico and getting Arvind his own apartment in Austin. Arvind might be trying to emancipate himself from his father by the end of year, it seemed. And my story about a young man trying to gain autonomy over his life looked like some very clear events to define that story were about to take place.

It was clear to me that I could not begin to edit this film without the help of an editor and if I was going to do that, I needed to raise money. I tried to ask friends

and family but it was suggested that investors might give to the project if they saw that a community was behind it. I began to make plans for a Kickstarter Campaign and felt that I needed to show parts of the play process for the project to really take hold in people's imaginations.

The first element of this was a trailer or video, so I devised that I needed to show actors working with Arvind and inhabiting the roles. I brought together actors that I thought could spare a day and read parts for Arvind. We filmed them in a studio at UT and it was Arvind's first taste at how his play was going to land with people. The extremely talented Heather Kafka blew us all away in her reading of Susan, the mother with Borderline Personality Disorder who wants to reconnect with her kids. I think this is when things started to gel for Arvind and he began to realize how this could progress.

At this time I also decided not to give Arvind any instruction on how to direct actors. I saw that he had few skills in this area, which makes sense given that he's never done it before. In conversations with my mentor, documentary director and UT Professor PJ Raval, I realized that in order for Arvind's choices to land as authentic, I had to step back and let him fail or succeed on his own merits. Again, another lesson to unclench and let the story unfold as it wants to.

NOVEMBER 2013

I picked up Arvind's brother Jay and we went to his family's house for an unexpected dinner. This night was full of ripe footage, and later my editor would say

this scene was central to the story. It contained so many of the complicated dynamics between the three, especially Jay and Arvind. At this point, I was thinking the main conflict would be between Arvind and Jay, this was the true story, and I stopped thinking that the mother storyline was going to be more than just a skeleton to house this family drama between brothers.

We began to meet with Kirk Lynn, a playwright at UT -Austin who took over for McCreery when her schedule wouldn't permit meeting. Kirk really helped clarify Arvind's story. One of the most important things he said to him was 'Your life happens to you, but your play happens to the audience." I thought this was an extremely relevant point for Arvind, because he had been so stuck on writing the story the way things had actually happened, that he couldn't see what was not working for the narrative on the page. For example, he wanted the mother to be the main character, but he gave the real mission in the play to Emmett, the brother character. Emmett also has the climax where he tells the story of what happened that night, and if the mother had been the main character, this story would have been told from her perspective. We barely see the mother character outside of how she relates to the court case, but the brothers enjoy an opening scene, and a few exchanges during a scene playing Xbox. The mother is thus the antagonist, there only to cause conflict and change and transformation in Emmett and his brother Nick's life.

After meeting with Kirk, we made an unannounced visit to Jay's apartment. From the beginning they began to fight until it culminated in Arvind storming out of

his house after yelling "Jay, obviously you know nothing about my high school! You're such a dick!"

At the time, I was pursuing the narrative thread that the brothers were the real story, and that their dynamic explored in the play was how Arvind wished their relationship would be. Arvind wanted badly to have a better relationship to his brother, but expressed this in contradictory ways to his more logical and scientific-brained brother. Arvind wanted a better relationship with him, he told me, but it did not appear that he wanted to be consistently loving and caring to his brother. At the same time, Arvind continued to feel attacked or put down by Jay, who perhaps was only reacting to Arvind's protective measures of starting fights. These dynamics were fascinating to watch, but when they were placed on the timeline, they amounted to sibling bickering that was not interesting. Neither brother seemed to understand how the other one worked. Eventually this fight sequence did not make it into the final piece as their fights and squabbles became too overwhelming and monotonous.

The next day, I sat down with Jay to uncover the other perspectives about Arvind and the family dynamic. I knew Jay was actually concerned with Arvind's future, and wanted him to succeed, but did not see leaving high school as a path to future happiness for Arvind. Jay was ultimately very critical of their father and how he raised the two of them. Jay was fast becoming the most likable character in the film and the character that audiences would want to see more of.

During Thanksgiving, I had wanted to show the family together again during a holiday, but Arvind decided to schedule his time so that he was not home for the holidays. It was Jay and Michael together cooking a turkey, and a scene that we ultimately did not even cut together. Jay did talk with his father about what he expected from the play, and it appeared here that he was genuinely interested in going.

We decided to set up another visit with his "surrogate mother", Sara Hickman, as we hadn't seen her in a long time. Arvind's final visit with Sara worked narratively for a few reasons, it showed his development with his music in a way that was markedly different from where he began a year ago, and we also captured a conversation where Sara learns that the play is from the mother's perspective. At this point, we still had not met the actress who was to play Arvind's mother, so I was still perusing the idea that Sara had a role to fill in the story. I did like that she was his mentor and seemed to be the only adult in his life that was encouraging him directly to work on his passions.

DECEMBER 2013

This was a huge day for the production. Our first casting session was lackluster and had only three people show up. Today we had two of Arvind's friends as assistants and we were set up with enough cameras to catch coverage of the entire scenario. We had one camera set up to catch a wide of the entire scene to the left of the actor auditioning. The draw back from my plan was that when I was on

camera I was on the right side so effectively crossing the line. In the edit I realized how unfortunate this was and how I could not use this camera at all. I figured this out by the second casting session a few weeks later, but unfortunately, this is the one that mattered as this was when we were introduced to Addie Alexander. We did not have many people come in to read for the role of Susan, only three in fact. I appreciated Addie's professional acting experience and she proved to be an asset to the documentary.

Arvind would ask every actor who auditioned "What is the worst thing that has ever happened to you?" and some of them were startled, some of them opted not to get personal, and some of them, like Addie, told him honestly and up front their worst experience in life. For Addie, the answer to this question was being abused by her mother every day for 18 years. Arvind responded "Really?" "Really" Addie said. "Is it hard to talk about?" Arvind asked. Addie launched into her explanation and I saw Arvind was smiling at this unexpected connection. I think his choice in casting Addie was decided on this conversation, where Addie showed that she could talk about her tragedy in a way that to Arvind was unemotional and unthreatening. I think it was comforting to see that other people had dark pasts but were able to move on from them.

Interviewing Addie brought in some controversial concepts. Some highlights from her interview:

"I've worked with all kinds of women who are mothers and after all these years I probably come away with a very different view of the role of mother than a lot of people might have. I don't share a sanctity for that role. I don't share a

religious obligation for that role. Um I've had my own personal experience. And so someone who opts not to have a relationship with their mother is perfectly acceptable to me. On the other hand, if Arvind was a kid who did want a relationship with her, I could accept that also."

I thought these words were incredibly poignant and provocative for the film and placed the film in a broader context. Her words corresponded with my own thinking about the boundaries between empathy and forgiveness. It raises questions about the grey areas, the doubts, and the specificity of choices to be empathetic for Arvind's mother.

On Christmas Day, it was another holiday featuring another sibling fight. The two brothers were locked in a disagreement from the night before and Arvind was sequestering himself over at a small table at a pub his family would go to every Christmas. More performance occurred here, as I told Michael that I only wanted to film what was happening, and then he made a point to make Arvind join the group and talk it out with his brother.

UT LAB THEATER & KICKSTARTER

Around this time, two major things happened for the project. The UT Laboratory Theater decided to program Arvind's play "Mommy" in their Spring Season. This allowed us to set dates and start to plan for post-production. We were given two different dates, one in late January, another in late March and even though March seemed more feasible. If the play could get done by January then I could spend the rest of the semester editing. It was late November though, so committing

to an early January date was a stressful endeavor. I also felt that actors would not stay committed to the play and their roles over a period of months, but if the rehearsal period was short and quick and the plays' run was not too long, then I figured we would be able to keep people's interest.

We also continued to work on our Kickstarter, using footage taken from the first reading in October and a trailer that I had edited in late November. The entire Kickstarter process was an education in itself and we were successfully funded to the tune of $16,000. This would pay for an editing, assistant editor, composer, color mix and an educational curriculum.

The drawback to making this money was that Arvind's story reached a level of exposure that wound up limiting my access with him. Having people he didn't know respond to and fund a film about his story I think was flattering, but it also exposed him in a way that he's never been before. He was clued in to how he would be perceived and to a small degree, I think this exposure did effect him negatively and it pushed the vulnerable, authentic, and way more interesting version of Arvind deep down and out of view from our cameras.

JANUARY 2014

This was the game-changing month for the production. Arvind had scheduled rehearsals almost every day. We had rehearsal rooms in the studios up until the 15th when we would move into the space. We still had actors to cast, we had no costumes or sets and the Kickstarter was launched just after rehearsals began. I had

some days when shooters were not available, I was still searching for crew to help organize the opening night: sound recorders, ushers, coordinators. It was a mind-boggling thing to attempt all month, and it was perhaps the most thrilling month of my graduate career.

New things popped up once real people inhabited the roles. Arvind had cast a Jewish woman from Brooklyn as his mother, two Jewish young men for himself and his brother, respectively, and a gay man in the role of his father, Michael. The first version of his script had characters with names that were not Americanized and felt like his attempt to keep the Indian cultural heritage as part of the story. Hetal was the name for the mother character, and the two sons were named Amit and Nikil. But once Addie was cast, the character of the mother's last name changed from Harloway to Hoffmann (deemed more Jewish) and her first name went from Hetal to Susan. Once Arvind understood he had a mostly Jewish main cast, he turned to his assistant director, Lara, and said "Oh my god, my family is *Jewish!*"

The second significant thing that happened was when Addie asked Arvind who called the ambulance the night Susan poisoned her children. In the play, a character named John Pierce alerts the father that there were ambulances outside the house. But Addie was confused with the logistics of the events, because it was not clear how the ambulances knew to arrive and safe the lives of the two young boys that Susan had poisoned. Arvind had not thought of this detail, and suggested that neighbors heard the children screaming. "Thank goodness" said Addie, unclear if she was thankful that the fictional children or the real children they were based on

were saved by an observant neighbor. Addie, doing research for her character, reminded him that it was very important to know this detail as it effected her understanding of her characters motivations. Had her character called 911, what is the implication? She was clearly responsible for attempting to kill them, but was she also responsible for saving their lives? How would this change how Addie portrayed her? Arvind then suggested that there was a possibility that Susan (or his mother) had called 911 herself which puts these motivations into question. It was curious to me that Arvind did not remember this point, because the mother was very explicit about this in court. From her testimony in court (which I had transcribed):

"In the middle of the night I saw both the children sleeping on the bed in the bedroom. I passed out near the door. I was scared so I called Michael. But Michael did not respond. So I called 911."

A few days later, Arvind remembers this question and finds his father to ask him and Michael tells him that his mother had called 911. Michael suggests that she called 911 because she was due to bring the children to school in the morning and she figured she wasn't dead yet and she'd be in trouble anyways, so she might as well call 911.

The next day, Arvind tells Addie and Ezra, the actor playing his character, Nick, what his dad said. Addie had already done research and found this out online, much to the surprise of Arvind. "But this means that the mother had second thoughts" Ezra surmised. Addie negated that idea, and said that it wasn't brought up in court as a way to suggest she was remorseful. And the issue is dropped.

This sequence was interesting to me because it shows Arvind making decisions about what information is relevant to the play and to his story of his mother's attempt to kill him.

It's unimportant to me that the mother called 911. What might seem like a remorseful act should also be seen in the context of her history of abusing the children. But narratively, the sequence works as raising doubts about the mother's intentions and motives and more importantly, shows that Arvind unthinkingly adopts the narrative of his father. This is an important detail in the film, made clear by this sequence. As I see Arvind's journey in the film, he begins knowing next to nothing about his mother. At first she is crazy, she is on parole, she tried to kill him. by the end she is a "human being." He develops into a storyteller who decides what information is important to his own narrative.

As the rehearsals progressed, it was clear that Addie was finding the experience transformative as well. Drawing upon years of social work in custody cases, she came with deep personal experience with child abuse. But Arvind mostly received her maternal impulses with indifference. Their connection during casting was the high point of their relationship. In the middle of the play, he did say that she was like "the grandmother I never had," but as soon as Addie wanted more emotional interaction from him, Arvind withdrew and did not attempt to connect with her further.

A hilarious but unfortunate sequence of events happened the day before we were to start hosting rehearsals at the UT Laboratory Theater. One of our principal

cast, Rich (cast as Michael) left the production in a disrespectful manner that upset most everyone, especially Addie. Another Michael was quickly cast: Rafael. Thankfully he was a much better actor and more suited to the production, but Arvind's stress level was rising.

Another small story strand that did not make it into the final cut focused on Ezra, the actor playing the part of Nick, and high school friend of Arvind. During auditions, and after he was effectively cast, Ezra's mother passed away from cancer. He chose to continue on with the play and never once felt weighed down by it. Then, we found out that some classmates in an Audio/Video class were assigned to do a documentary on a student and they chose to do it on Ezra. Now, Ezra had a documentary crew following him during rehearsal and our documentary crew was following around them. When Arvind found this out, he said "Ezra, when I said to do character work, I didn't mean go out and get a documentary crew to follow you around."

The most stressful days of the shoot were the dress rehearsals. I had anticipated having two whole rehearsals to shoot actors on stage during pivotal scenes that I wanted to film. But I had not let Arvind know this and of course, they were behind schedule, costumes had not yet arrived and people's schedules prevented them from staying after. We shot what we could during rehearsals and after performances, but I would definitely have benefited from organizing those days better.

Opening night I had cameras following Michael, Jay and Arvind. Two cameras backstage, two out in the crowd, and one in the back of the theater. Opening night I wanted Arvind backstage, which he resisted, but I needed to see his face and have him watch the show from behind the curtain. The most important shots of the whole film were watching Arvind watch his characters and getting inside his head. It would be pointless to see him in the control room, giving queues.

After the performance, Arvind was surprised to see that his brother had come to the show. All along he had said that he didn't think his brother was coming, so I neglected to tell him that he indeed was. At this point, I felt that the story was about the brother's relationship and the relationship that Arvind presented in his play (the relationship he wished he had with his brother.) There was a conflict after the play with the two of them about Jay being "allowed" to come, which confused Jay because, as he said, "it's not like I did anything to him. I can see not letting my mom come, but I was a part of that social experience, it makes sense that I should come."

I interviewed both the brothers in the month after the opening night and learned more about their relationship and how the play had affected the family. Arvind was shocked that his father was emotionally hit by the play, thinking that it's a story they already know so "what's the big deal."

Arvind's transformation was, to my eyes, minimal. He said he might want to ask his mother a question through someone else at some point, but at this point, he had exhausted his curiosity. He also said that he might want to write another play, now that he had the other one finished. The most interesting thing he said was that

writing the play solidified for him that his perspective, along with his father and brother's are all from the same side, a united front, and that writing the play made him realize that they weren't the only side of the story and that his mother was a real human being and 'I might as well think of her as a human."

POST PRODUCTION

I had raised money on Kickstarter so that I could hand footage over to an editor. I found an editor in New York after an extensive search. We had very intellectual conversations about the dynamics and relationships and she seemed to understand Arvind in a deep way, as a bi-racial queer person herself. Editing remotely posed a problem as we had to send drives to Brooklyn and inclement weather held up deliveries. I realized I was going to have to come in at a much bigger level, and even recruit help from my assistant editors.

During a trip to NYC in April to work with Nadia, I started to think we weren't going to be able to finish in time for my graduation. We had a cut that was over an hour and we were running further and further behind. After valuable feedback from my advisor PJ Raval, I clarified the story and cut the rest of the film before the deadline.

A few days before my sound mix I received valuable feedback from Paul Stekler, Annie Silverstein, Monique Walton, Sarah Enid Hagey and Kyle Henry. This feedback contributed immensely to tightening up the film and making it something I'm immensely proud of sharing with diverse audiences.

Appendix A: Mommy Script

Cast of Characters

Susan Harloway:	A woman, a mother, late 40's, with a dark past.
Charlie Bard:	Susan's lawyer, 60+, unintelligent.
Judge Henderson:	A judge, 60+, good intentioned alcoholic
Janet Anderson:	Michael and Emmett's lawyer, mid 30s, helps them through the trial.
Emmett Harloway:	Nick's older brother, applied for protection order, student.
Michael Harloway:	Father of Emmett and Nick, has a hatred towards Susan.
Nick Harloway:	Doesn't want to see Susan, teenager, angsty.
Officer, Carlos:	Law enforcer, any age, supervisor.
Annette Haryana:	Susan's mother, very old, hates Michael.
Jenny Petal:	Susan's friend, late 30s, avid church goer, three children.
Bartender:	A female bartender, early 20s, works at a bar Judge Henderson goes to often.

This play is written with flashbacks, and two sets of the boys. Nick and Emmett when they are children and when they are teenagers. The flashback can be portrayed in anyway different from the normal scene change.

INTRO:

[The scene opens with a woman wearing pajamas, looking at a computer screen, the printer makes a printing noise,
She grabs the picture that was on the printer and pins it on her board. A phone rings.]

Susan: Hello?

[You hear murmur on the other side of the line]

Susan: Are you sure? Maybe you heard wrong. They couldn't have said that, I'm their mother!

[Murmur continues on the other line]

[The woman gets angry and hangs up. At this point she's bawling, she throws everything off of her desk]

Susan: THIS ISN'T FAIR!!! I shouldn't have agreed to go to court in the first place.

[The woman walks to her bed, and curls up in a ball under the covers. The scene fades out]

SCENE 1:

The same woman is dressed in a tweed skirt and tweed blouse, this is the past, the set moves into a court room and the woman sits. One boy is in the jury seats with two men, one presumably his father, the other a witness.

[The judge walks in]

Judge: Please rise.

[The two sides rise, and then sit]

I understand this is the protective order case?

[There is a young man and a woman, Janet Anderson, on the opposite side of the woman]

Anderson: Yes sir.

Judge: Are all the witnesses here?

[Every witness stand up]

Judge: Please hold up your right hand. Repeat after me; Do you solemnly swear -or affirm- that the testimony you are about to give in the case pending before this court will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[The witnesses repeat it except for the respondents witnesses, as they don't speak much English.]

Judge: Now all the witnesses need to leave the courtroom until called.

[Only the applicant's witnesses get up to leave.]

Judge: Mr. Bard, please tell your witnesses to leave the courtroom.

[Mr. Bard, the woman's lawyer, gets up with his client to tell them to leave the room]

Judge: Okay. From what I understand, Susan Harloway wants the ability to contact her two sons, Emmett and Nick Harloway. The appellant can start with your case and first witness.

Anderson: Nick and Emmett Harloway grew up without a mother, after being traumatized by their own blood.

Mr. Bard: Your honor this is irrelevant

Judge: Mr. Bard, I think this is incredibly relevant as to her mother getting in contact with her sons.

[Mr. Bard hushes down, an angry look from Susan, the woman, to her ignorant lawyer]

Anderson: As I was saying, these two deeply traumatized boys grew up with out a mother, because of her actions, and they decide to keep it that way. With out a mother. Your honor, I would like to call Keith Mapes to the stand.

Judge: Please go get him.

[Anderson leaves to side stage, entering again with one of the men previously in the jury box. He sits at the stand.]

Anderson: Mr. Mapes, can you please tell us what you know about the Harloway case?

Mr. Mapes: Well I was Mr. Harloway's lawyer in 2000, when the custody case was ongoing. During that time they had supervised visits with their mother because of her "depressed/suicidal" diagnosis by Dr. Renard. The supervisor, Carlos Rodriguez, told the court that supervision was unneeded, because Susan was completely sane. A few days later, she committed the crime.

Anderson: What did you think of all this?

Mr. Bard: Your honor, this is irrelevant

Judge: Ms. Anderson, please stay on the matter.

Anderson: Very well, your honor. Mr. Mapes, did you ever witness anything Susan did to make you think she was depressed or suicidal?

Mr. Mapes: I never witnessed anything of the sort, but I have seen her treat her sons badly, back in 2000.

SCENE 2:

[The set changes to a house, and two kids sitting at a table with the woman when someone knocks on the door]

Mr. Mapes: Hello Ma'am, are you Susan Harloway?

Susan: Yes, I am. Can I help you?

Mapes: [hands her a manilla folder] I'm your husband's divorce attorney i'm sure he's informed you, has he not?

Susan: He.. has..

Mapes: Please sign these papers, there is a court date inside in which you need to bring the papers signed, and your case.

[The older son comes to the door]

Boy: Mommy, can I have a popsicle?

Susan: Not right now. Please go inside now.

Boy: But <u>mommy</u>!! *[pouts]*

Susan: INSIDE. NOW, Or I will take away your toys!

[She pushes him inside]

Mapes: Alright, well I'm done here.

Susan: Wait. Tell him husband that he will never see my children if he does this.

Mapes: Yes ma'am.

[Mapes walks off stage, Susan stands in the doorway, watching him leave. As he gets off stage, she slams the door.]

SCENE 3:

[The house set changes back to a courtroom]

Mr. Mapes: And I've also heard from my colleagues about her behavior toward the children.

Mr. Bard: Hearsay! Your honor, that's hearsay!

Judge: Please answer the question and the question only, Mr. Mapes. Anything else?

Anderson: No your honor.

Judge: Its about lunch time, lets have a 45 minute break and then we'll be back. Resuming at 12:50.

[The people in the courtroom clear out except Susan and Michael Harloway, the parents of the two boys]

Michael: Why don't you understand, Susan? They don't want to be in contact with you, they want to be left alone. You made them want that, not me.

Susan: You brainwashed my children! They used to love me-

Michael: They were scared of you!!

Susan: You will never understand the eternal relationship between a mother and child. At least let me talk to Emmett! Let me tell him that I miss him so..

Michael: If he wants to talk to you, he can. But it seems like he doesn't. I'm done with this conversation. You can talk to my lawyer.

[Michael leaves stage left, Susan sits and puts her head in her hands]

Susan: *[in a hushed tone]* Not loving your mother is more evil than anything I've ever done.

[Mr. Bard enters]

Bard: Susan, its lunch time. Go out with your family, be here at-

Susan: I heard the judge! I don't need you to repeat him.

[pause]

Susan: I'm so sorry.. just this stress is killing me. I just want to talk to my sons..

Mr. Bard: *[clears his throat]* I know, and you will talk to them. In time, I promise.

Susan: He's brainwashing them, Charlie. They don't love me anymore..

[The two stand in silence, Mr. Bard knowing that its true, but not having the heart to admit it]

[black out]

SCENE 4:

[Everyone comes back into the courtroom, the applicant before the respondent, they all stare at each other until the Judge walks in]

Officer: Please rise. *[The people of the courtroom rise, and then sit]*

Judge: Does the respondent have a witness to call? Mr. Bard: Yes, your honor, we do. I would like to call Annette Haryana, the mother of the respondent.

[a frail old Indian lady walks to the witness stand, on her way she looks at the boy in the jury]

Annette: *[whispering]* Nick..

Judge: What?

[there is no response from the old lady, she sits down in the witness and puts her cane beside her]

Mr. Bard: Ms. Haryana, being the mother of Susan, how would you describe her?

Annette: *[In a hushed, frail voice]* Oh, my daughter is the sweetest, most loving girl I've ever known

Anderson: This is irrelevant, your honor! Judge: Mr. Bard please stick to the case.

Mr. Bard: Yes, your honor. Ms. Haryana, you lived with your daughter and her family in 2000, correct?

Annette: Yes sir, I was needed to care for the children because Michael was never there.

Judge: Ms. Haryana, please answer the question and the question only

[the old woman looked puzzled, not understanding the statement]

Mr. Bard: During that time, were there ever any moments when you doubted the devotion of Mr. Harloway as a father and husband?

Anderson: Your honor! This is completely irrelevant! This is a case to determine whether or not the victims should have the right or not to contact their mom and vice versa.

Judge: Sustained, Ms. Anderson, lets see what the woman has to say.

[Anderson sits in defeat]

Annette: Michael was never around when they lived in Boston, he would be out on those business trips or out with friends. He left raising the boys to my daughter and me.

Mr. Bard: Thank you Ms. Haryana, that is all.

[the old lady walks back to the courtroom seating]

Anderson: I would like to call Michael Harloway to the stand. Nick will you go get him?

[The boy in the jury box gets up and leaves, and returns with a middle aged man, who does the oath]

Anderson: Mr. Harloway, do you recall the night in April, 2000?

Michael: Yes, I do.

Anderson: Please tell us what you remember.

Michael: I was getting ready for bed, the boys were at their ex-mother's house *[he emphasizes ex]*, and I get a call from John Pearce, my neighbor, saying that they saw ambulances outside of Susan's house on their way home from the airport. I run over and see them. I start yelling for my children, and I get tackled by police.

Anderson: And did you see your ex wife that night?

Michael: Yes, she threw up on me. The medic there told me she drank something nasty, along with the boys.

Anderson: And what did the police find in Susan's house?

Bard: Objection! Irrelevant!

Judge: Mr. Bard, I'm sure that this is relevant to whether her children want to see her. Carry on, Ms. Anderson.

Anderson: What did they find, Mr. Harloway?

Michael: They found mosquito poisoning, which is illegal in the state of Texas, and used needles with traces of heroine.

Anderson: Tell me, Mr. Harloway, how is a mother supposed to raise her children when she's trying to kill them and shooting up in the same night?

Michael: I don't think its possible for a parent to raise a child while using. At all.

Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Harloway.

Mr. Bard: If Anderson is done, I have a few questions I'd like to ask. *[The judge nods]* My client tells me that you are a smoker, is that true?

Michael: I quit smoking in 2005.

Mr. Bard: But you smoked while raising the children, with Ms. Harloway?

Michael: Yes, but this has nothing to do with the case!

Mr. Bard: Please, just answer the question, Mr. Harloway.

Michael: Yes, I used to smoke.

Mr. Bard: Ladies and Gentlemen of this courtroom, I would like to state in this era of pureness, tobacco is considered a drug. Just as bad as any other drug. Raising a child while smoking tobacco is just as bad.

Anderson: Bard, you've got to be kidding me..

Mr. Bard: There are cases in family violence where a father puts cigarettes out on their children's arms!

Michael: But I would never do such a thing! I quit smoking! This is completely irrelevant to the custody that they want, or the lack thereof, with their mother! I am their FATHER.

Judge: Mr. Bard, is that your case?

Bard: I'm not finished. You were also a heavy drinker in 2002, you got into 3 car crashes that year, more than you have any other year after your divorce.

Michael: Okay, and?

Bard: Alcohol is a drug too!

Judge: Okay, I'm done with this. Anderson, do you have anything?

Anderson: No, your honor. I'm done.

[The scene changes to a simple TV room, with the two teenage boys playing what looks like an Xbox]

Nick: Want to play Xbox?

Emmett: Why? So you can be a sore loser again?

Nick: That was ONE time! And you cheated.

Emmett: *[Laughs]* Alright, just don't cry.

Nick: Yes! *[Nick sets the console up]*

Emmett: You're going down, you know that?

Nick: Just because you're older than me doesn't mean you're better at Call of Duty.

Emmett: But I'm smarter too. And more in tune with my senses.

[Nick chuckles, sarcastically]

Nick: Right.

[There's a short pause]

Nick: Hey, how's Natalie?

Emmett: She's good.

Nick: Does she know how the case is going?

Emmett: No, I was supposed to call her earlier but she was busy.

Nick: You know you're lucky.

Emmett: Huh?

Nick: You met the girl of your dreams at 17, look at me. Forever lonely.

Emmett: You're right. With that attitude you ARE forever lonely.

Nick: Thanks, just what I wanted to here.

[Another pause]

Nick: Do you think we'll win the case?

Emmett: I'm sure Judge Henderson isn't an idiot.

Nick: She doesn't even know I'm gay.

Emmett: I'm sure its obvious, you wore a cardigan.

Nick: Not what I meant. *[Pause]* FUCK! *[Nick throws his controller down, obviously getting beat by his older brother]* You could've at least gone easy on me!

Emmett: It was your choice to choose the shitty automatic.

[there's a moment of silence]

Emmett: She doesn't deserve to know you're gay. *[pause]* Nick, I have something I want to tell you.

Nick: You don't want to talk to her, do you?

Emmett: No, not at all. But when it happened, those years ago.. I know you don't remember much but I remember everything. I try not to, but it's imprinted in my head. When she tried to hurt you, I wanted to stop her.

Nick: So why didn't you?

Emmett: She hit me. Really hard. To distract myself I did something terrible. I pulled out my gameboy and payed no attention to you. I… Im sorry.

Nick: You were what, 5? *[pause]* Round two? *[Nick picks up his controller]*

Emmett: Yeah.

[The scene fades out with sounds of animated guns firing]

SCENE 5:

Mr. Bard: I would like to call Susan Harloway to the stand.

[The middle ages woman walks from the respondent seat to the stand, eyeing the boy in the jury box, she then does the oath with the judge]

Mr. Bard: Ms. Harloway, Susan, if I may, did your ex husband every take you to a psychiatrist?

Susan: Yes sir, he did in 1999.

Mr. Bard: And what did the psychiatrist diagnose you with?

Susan: Depression and suicidal thoughts.

[Anderson ruffles through her notes, looking for something]

Mr. Bard: Why do you think he diagnosed you with depression?

Susan: Michael was leaving me. He told me he was taking the kids with him. I couldn't handle even just the thought of it.

Anderson: *[Lifting up a sheet of paper]* Objection! I have written proof from Dr. Giesburg saying that she was diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, NOT depression.

Judge: Please bring it to my desk.

[The judge looks over the paper, and turns red]

Judge: I'll have my secretary put this on the record. Anyways, go on Mr. Bard.

Mr. Bard: I have written proof from the company doctor Mr. Harloway made Susan see, and on it, it says she was heavily depressed, with suicidal thoughts.

[He brings it to the judge and the judge also puts it on the record]

Mr. Bard: That is all.

Anderson: I have a few questions for Ms. Harloway.

Judge: Proceed.

Anderson: Ms. Harloway, were there ever any instances where you felt unloved by your children?

Susan: Barely ever until my ex husband gained custody.

Emmett: Not true!

Judge: *[hits his gabel]*

Anderson: And when Mr. Harloway told you that he's taking you to a doctor, what was your reaction?

Susan: I just… I wanted my family.

Anderson: Ms. Harloway, please answer the question
Susan: *[loud, abrupt and angrily]* I was angry, okay!! I didn't want to lose my whole family, I wasn't sick. I was just hurt, please believe me..

Anderson: What did you do to get rid of your anger?

Susan: *[Sobbing]* By lashing out..

Anderson: I am finished, your honor.

Susan: *[loudly, instead of leaving]* Emmett, Nick, I love you, please please forgive me for what I did, I'm not sick anymore! I promise!

[Two year old Nick enters, in all white]

Judge: Miss please step down.

Susan: *[Angrily, out of control]* No! I will not leave here until my children forgive me!

[EMS comes on, picks up Nick and takes him off stage in a stretcher]

[the security guard grabs Susan and takes her into another room]

Judge: 45 minute break?

[Slow fade out]

SCENE 6:

[The scene starts out in the courtroom]

Bard: I would like to call up Jenny Petal to the stand.

[A lady in the courtroom gets up and goes outside, quickly returns with Jenny, who once reaches the stand recites the oath]

Bard: Ms. Petal, what is your relation to Susan Harloway?

Jenny: Susan is one of my close friends, she goes to church with me every single Sunday, sometimes she babysits my three children.

[There's a shock in the crowd]

Bard: And how old are your children?

Jenny: 2, 3 and 7.

Bard: Did Susan ever show any violence to your children?

Jenny: Oh no, Susan is the sweetest lady i've had the pleasure to be friends with. I trust her with my kids.

Bard: How often does Susan go to church?

Jenny: Oh she's there every sunday! Sometimes she even goes on fridays as well.

Bard: Would you say Susan is an avid christian?

Anderson: Objection!

Judge: Sustained.

Jenny: Susan is maybe the most religious woman I know besides Minister Rita.

Bard: Thank you, Jenny. You can go now.

[The scene goes back to the house, the boys are two and five, Susan]

Susan: I love you boys so much, and your father too. You know that right?

Emmett: Yes, mommy, we know.

Susan: Your father doesn't know that.

Nick: Mommy, whats going on?

Susan: I don't know, sweetie. I'm just angry with your father.

[A knock on the door, Susan goes to answer it]

Carlos: Hi, Susan. I'm here to pick up the boys.

Susan: Did Michael send you? Tell him he can have them if he comes himself.

[She slams the door and goes back to her children]

Emmett: Who was that?

Susan: Nobody, darling. Don't worry about it.

[The boys play with their toys until a second knock is heard on the door]

Susan: *[Before opening the door]* I Told you! I'm not-*[opens door]* Michael: I want my children back, Susan. I'd rather do this the nice way.

Susan: Michael… I miss you. Please.. take me back, I wont be so crazy anymore, I promise.

Michael: I'm here for my children, and that's it.

Susan: They're MY children too!!

[Michael sighs]

Susan: You cant have them unless you take me back.

Michael: Or I can call the police, and they'll find your stash.

[Susan frets, and goes inside, Michael follows]

Susan: Boys, your father is here.

Emmett and Nick: *[look up]* DADDY!!

[The boys run outside and Michael follows]

Susan: Michael, wait.. Please think about taking me back. We could have a family again..

Michael: I do have a family. Me and my sons. Sorry, Susan. *[he walks out the door]*

[Susan sits at the table, with her head in her hands]

Susan: *[Gets up and goes to the open front door]* THEYRE MY CHILDREN TOO!!! *[slams door]*

SCENE 7:

[The set changes back to the courtroom]

Judge: Let's resume. Ms. Anderson, please start.

Anderson: I would like to call Emmett Harloway to the stand.

[The younger boy leaves the courtroom and returns with Emmett, the judge and Emmett do the oath]

Anderson: Mr. Harloway, do you recall the incident that happened in 2000?

Emmett: Yes ma'am, I do.

Anderson: Can you tell us what you remember from that day? Emmett: My younger brother and I.. we were at our ex mother's house that day, when we had first gotten there, there were presents waiting for us to open, but it wasn't Christmas. Being kids, my brother and I didn't realize that. I remember she kept on giving Nick candy, and then a few hours later he would grab for another and she would slap it out of his hand. I wasn't able to comprehend how weird everything was, how unusual she was acting. Then she forced my brother to drink something, he tried it and didn't like it. When he rejected it, she held him on the floor and forced it down his throat. The cries I heard that night are some I'll never forget, I tried to scream for help but she slapped me. I pulled out my new gameboy trying to distract myself. Then she came to me. *[Emmett starts tearing up]* Sorry, this is when it gets a little blurry… She came to me and made me drink it, but I was able to spit most of it out. After she drank some herself. She started acting really weird, like she was drunk. The next thing I remember was being in an ambulance, and seeing my dad get tackled to the street by some police men.

Anderson: And how long were you and your brother in the hospital?

Emmett: My brother was in for 2 weeks, I was in for 5 days.

[At this point, the whole courtroom is quiet, shaken by the painful memory]

Anderson: And do you remember the next time you saw Susan?

Emmett: No ma'am, I don't recall.

Anderson: Thank you Mr. Harloway.

Bard: Your honor, I would like to ask this young man a question.

Judge: Proceed.

Bard: Would YOU like to speak with your mother?

Emmett: You know what? I get asked that a lot and it makes me think. Do I want to speak with a woman who corrupted my childhood? Sure, I would give her a chance, maybe. But do I want to speak with a woman who corrupted my childhood, is clinically insane, has no judgement on what's right and wrong, ruined my relationship with my brother, and will most likely try to hurt me and him again? No, sir, I wouldn't.

[There's a long pause, and then a single person in the courtroom starts clapping]

Judge: After all these witnesses, if that's what Mr. Bard calls them, I decided I am going to have the final hearing in the near future where I will decide if the order gets passed or not. Case dismissed.

[Black out]

SCENE 8:

[The scene starts with Judge Henderson at a simple set Bar, only one other person at the bar besides the young female bartender, who the Judge knows well. The judge is obviously working on this case, he looks like he's having a lot of trouble with it]

Judge: This case I'm working on is brutal! *[He is seen ruffling papers]*

Bartender: Care to share?

[The two exchange a look, the bartender already knows the answer is no]

Bartender: Please?

Judge: Not legally allowed. Against the law. Its not important anyways.

Bartender: I'm not legally allowed to reuse peanuts but I do it anyways.

Judge: *[Drops a handful of peanuts]* Thanks. Just this mother went insane forever ago and wants to see her children, but they don't want to see her.

Bartender: Well what'd she do?

Judge: I really can't tell you.

Bartender: Another? Its on the house.

Judge: I'll pass, I should really be heading home, my wife is going to kill me.

Bartender: Traffic is terrible... it's on the house! Your wife is going to kill you anyways. *[She says persuasively]*

Judge: She tried to poison them. *[Lifts his glass to get more]*

Bartender: What?

Judge: The mother, she tried to poison them.

Bartender: Well that's why they don't want to see her! What's the problem then?

Judge: I'm good friends with the mother's lawyer. He'll hate me for choosing the opposing side. The mother seems to have changed as well. Its one huge mess and mostly just a fight between the mother and the father, it seems like they just want the kids to get back at each other, but the father obviously has better intentions.

Bartender: You have to do what's right. Would you rather fuck a family up for your friendship?

Judge: You're right… *[There's a long pause, Judge writes down stuff into the papers]* I still don't know what to do.

Bartender: I guess imagine if you were one of the kids, and it was up to some judge whether or not your mother could contact you, what would you want him to say?

Judge: It's not based on what the kids want. Its based on whats the most logical and lawful.

Bartender: So the kids could potentially have no say whether or not they want to see their psycho mom?

Judge: I mean, the older one does because he's 18, but basically not.

Bartender: Ooooh he's legal. Is he cute?

Judge: *[Stares at her for a moment]* As I was saying, if the father seems to be a bad parent, she could gain half custody.

Bartender: If the FATHER is a bad parent? I'm pretty sure it was the mother who tried to poison them, maybe I should cut you off.

Judge: Agh, you're right. Wait a minute… *[The judge starts writing things down on his papers, after a few moments he stands up]* I've got it!

[Judge quickly picks up the papers and exits the bar] See ya tomorrow!

Bartender: Aaaaand he doesn't care to share. *[cleans the bar]*

[the set empties and there's just a spotlight on Nick]

Nick: I don't get it. After hating us and herself back then, my own mother wants to see me? There's so much she doesn't know. So much I don't know. Do I even want to know? Should I bother even going to the courtroom? This stress is killing me. [Nick lights a cigarette] How do they expect me to do my schoolwork? I can't even remember to eat 3 times a day. Why does this even effect me? I didn't even know the woman. I don't know the woman. All I do know is that she tried to kill me. She was manipulative. My brother has felt guilty all this time because of her. No, I don't want to see her. I have a family, and she chose not to be a part of it.

[The set changes to a table and a few chairs, teenage Nick and Emmett sit with Michael and Anderson]

Michael: I seriously cant believe he thought bringing up me smoking would help them at all, that dirty scumbag.

Anderson: And trying to compare tobacco with heroine? Ha, right.

Nick: Dad, do you think Judge Henderson will pass the protective order?

Michael: He'd be stupid not to.
Emmett: Why is Mr. Bard even a lawyer? Its like he wants us to get murdered.

Anderson: What's scarier is that he used to be a judge.

Emmett: You're right, that is scarier.

Anderson: He had the highest rate of letting criminals go free.

Michael: Scum. Bag.

Anderson: The final hearing is going to be on November 22nd, Emmett do you think you can take off school that day? Nick?

Emmett: Probably, I already have a bunch of make up work, adding to the pile wont hurt.

Nick: That's one of my hard days, so I don't think so.

Anderson: Alright, it will be at 9am. Michael, you will absolutely need to be there.

Michael: Oh I will, my last chance to see defeat on that bitch's face.

Nick: Can we go get food? I'm hungry and tired of this courthouse.

Michael: *[To Emmett]* Shall we?

[Anderson and the family go their separate ways]

SCENE 9:

[The set is a courtroom again]

Judge: Today, the 22nd of November, 2012, I had to come to a hard decision. Although the mother seems sane enough to be in contact with her children, I decided to pass the protective order. If that's what the boys want, its what they'll get.

Mr. Bard: Your honor, I don't think Nick should be on the protective order, he didn't even testify!

Michael: Mr. Bard, he is still a victim! Are you sure you're not an idiot?

Judge: Settle down or I will kick you all out! The protective order has been passed, and that's that. On this day, came to be heard Applicant and Respondents agreed motion of a Temporary Ex Parte Protective Order. The motion is granted on this day. The requirements of a bond are hereby waives pursuant to Section, title 4, Texas Family code. It is hereby ordered that the Order granted on August 27th, 2012, is extended until the 21st day of November. On the 22nd, the lifetime protective order will be in effect until otherwise granted by the victims. Case dismissed.

[Everyone leaves the courtroom except Mr. Bard, Anderson and Michael]

Mr. Bard: Ms. Anderson, my client has some books, bibles, to give to the boys.

[He drops a stack of things on Andersons desk]

Michael: They don't want them.

Bard: Mr. Harloway, I wasn't talking to you.

Michael: Well, she is going to ask me if MY children would want them, and I would say no, so you are talking to me.

Anderson: It's true, mr. Bard. They wont want them, just as they don't want anything to do with her. Now please, move on.

[Bard picks up the books, and walks out]

Michael: Thank you so much, Janet. I owe you.

Anderson: I'm just glad that crazy bitch cant contact your boys!

Michael: *[Laughs]* Me too. Me too.

[Fade out]

SCENE 10:

[The scene is back to the intro house, Susan sitting at the table, in her pajamas, when she hears a knock on the door]

Susan: Who is it?

Mr. Bard: It's me, Charlie.

[Susan answers the door]

Mr. Bard: The protective order was passed, I tried my best, Ms. Harloway.

Susan: Whatever. It's your fault I cant see them anyways.

Mr. Bard: Please don't be like this. I really did try my best, this is pro-bono as well!

Susan: Yeah, well you'd probably do just as bad if I payed you.

Mr. Bard: I could've turned you down when you asked me to do this!

Susan: As I said. Whatever. All I ever wanted was to talk to them, to tell them I'm sorry, and because of you, I can't. You just had to compare my addiction to smoking.

Mr. Bard: Maybe if you had layed off the heroine, your kids would want to see you. They didn't want these books either.

[Mr. Bard hands her the books she tried to give them, he pauses, and then proceeds to leave]

Susan: Wait, Charlie. Thank you.

Mr. Bard: Its okay.

Susan: *[Looks at the books, and sobs quietly. She drops the books and then black out]*

END