

Mel Carter

MFA Prospectus

DESCRIPTION

The project is an original puppet sketch show exploring the question of how we can ethically pursue our desires within the context of the patriarchy. The production will be composed of a collection of short stories. I will be acting as the writer, director, lead puppet fabricator, set builder, lighting designer, performer, and producer.

BACKGROUND & GOALS

Personal Motivations

(cw: sexual assault)

Artists and activists frequently talk about how achieving equal representation within the existing power structure isn't enough, how we must dismantle the structure entirely. I've seen this argument presented on a macro level many times. What I haven't seen much of, is what this means on a micro level – what this means for people making small, personal decisions. I think that this is worth exploring, both because it's a hard question to answer and because these small decisions can have an enormous impact.

When I was in undergrad I was sexually assaulted by multiple men. Upon reflection, I have realized that a lack of self-care may have contributed to the circumstances that led to these violations. While the men who assaulted me saw their desire as their top priority, I tended to regard my own desires as unimportant. This is an aspect of rape culture that isn't widely discussed. People witness women allowing themselves to be used and blame women's lack of self-respect. What they don't talk about is how we've taught women that the best thing they can be *is* useful.

Once I noticed this pattern, I wanted to break it, but I found it difficult. I didn't want to swing so far in the other direction that I became one of the men who assaulted me. I started discussing it with other women and discovered that this story isn't just mine. I realized that this pattern repeats itself across generations and circumstance. I decided that this was something worth sharing, but I wasn't sure how. I've been toying with this concept for the past 5 years. Now that I've found the right format, I am passionate about telling this story the best that I can. Hopefully, this dialogue will contribute to a chorus of feminist voices that will one day be strong enough to drown out the patriarchy.

Context

For decades, women weren't permitted to enter the workforce, making them financially dependent upon men. This meant that women's desires for stability, safety, and success became tied up in men's desires. As women have entered the workforce, a narrative has developed in support of cutthroat women, pursuing their goals no matter what. This movement has been branded girlboss feminism. However, critics have pointed out that this isn't truly a change in the status quo, it is simply women reenacting the existing patriarchal structure. Some have reacted to this swing of the pendulum by moving backwards. A subset of women, called tradwives, use social media to promote the return to a subservient existence. I believe that an ethical society must exist somewhere between or beyond these two extremes. This society, however, can be difficult to picture because, as Gerda Lerner says in *The Creation of Patriarchy*,

"to step outside of patriarchal thought means being skeptical toward every known system of thought; being critical of all assumptions, ordering values, and definitions... in stepping out of patriarchal thought [we face] existential nothingness."

I'm undertaking this project to explore girlbosses, tradwives, and the existential abyss.

I started thinking about how to approach making this project five years ago. I was thinking about feminist narratives and quickly realized that most of the books I'd read were written by men, so I started reading classic fiction written by women. I also read nonfiction books and articles about the history of the patriarchy and sexual scripts. The original concept used the female orgasm as a core metaphor, so I read books and articles about this subject as well. Since arriving on this medium for the project, I've conducted additional research on the particular subjects I'm addressing and mediums I'm using. For example, I read/watched tradwife content to flesh out the character of Felicity Groundwater and read/watched traditional Punch and Judy performances to ground my adaptation in knowledge. There's no single source that I'm deriving the full piece from, but some of the individual short stories are adaptations of classic cultural texts. For example, the Punch and Judy show is an adaptation of *Moby Dick* and the Middlemarch story is a scene pulled straight out of George Eliot's masterpiece.

My full list of resources can be found in the appendix.

Relevant Training and Experience

I have had, or am getting, training/experience in every role I'm taking on for this production. I've worked as a professional puppeteer and trained in puppet fabrication. I've been a lighting designer and a dramaturg. I've directed shows and marketed shows. I've built

puppet booths and toured puppet productions. I haven't yet received training in writing for the puppet theatre (besides the few times I was able to stop by Matthew Cohen's class), but this summer I am attending the O'Neill Puppetry Conference and taking Writing for Puppets: A Workshop in Three Acts with Liz Hara.

My full CV can be found in the appendix.

While this project utilizes multiple types of puppetry, some of which I haven't been able to fit into my class schedule, I still believe that this MFA will ultimately be a reflection of the education I've gained here. In my experience, the pedagogy of the courses I've taken at UConn has been an all-encompassing drive towards creation. Every fabrication class I've taken has included a performance element. Every performance class I've taken has included a fabrication element. In our directing course we're also talking about playwrighting, dramaturgy, and production. The courses I've taken at UConn have reflected the reality of the average puppeteer; that you must be prepared to do everything. This drive towards creation has served me well. When I arrived at UConn, I had been wanting to create my own performances for years but, since leaving undergrad, I'd been stuck. UConn has given me the tools to move forward. I've been inspired by the lessons about innovative puppeteers, from Julie Taymor to Paul Zaloom. Every time I learned how to use a new tool, I felt a barrier dissolve between what I could imagine and what I could create. When I was in DC's small theatre world, I felt that my first production had to be perfect to earn a place of respectability amongst my peers. Since arriving at UConn, I've created eight original puppet pieces and learned not to allow perfectionism to hinder progress. I've also learned that sometimes I need to teach myself. During my first semester I found it frustrating when there was no one correct way to fabricate, that I could just be told. Now, I realize that no one can tell me how to build an angler fish because there's no right way to build an angler fish – I've been given all the tools I need, now it's my job to figure it out.

I've already begun applying these lessons to this project. I've put two of these short stories on their feet and presented them at puppet slams, to learn from performing them in front of an audience. So far the feedback has been very positive. After the IUD piece, I had audience members approach me after the performance, telling me that I'd expanded their conception of what puppetry is capable of and imploring me to continue performing this piece because it's an important story that they haven't seen told before. Folks enjoyed my satirical tradwife, Felicity Groundwater, so much that I was asked to perform that character in another puppeteer's show. These experiences allowed me to experiment with audio, develop my puppet fabrication, and flesh out my scripts.

How is the Work Innovative/Experimental

In its form it breaks the convention of a singular, linear narrative. In my research section, I couldn't provide one source that the full piece is based off of because I've never seen a political puppet sketch show done like this before.

In its content, it is staging feminist stories that haven't been told and attempting to break beyond the confines of the patriarchal thought structure.

In its puppetry, I'm trying things I haven't seen before – such as using a gyno apron as a shadow screen and having audience members drink from my burlap breasts.

THE PROJECT

An original puppet sketch show, composed of a series of short stories. The type of puppetry will vary, based on the short story, to be dramaturgically consistent with the genre.

Overview

The short stories included will be from a wide range of genres and therefore presented in a variety of styles. They will include stories such as a satirical piece about the pain of having an IUD inserted, where increasingly absurd things are done to a woman's uterus in shadow. Another story will feature a satirical tradwife who feeds the audience raw milk through her pendulous burlap breasts. In between these absurd scenes, a host will address the audience directly. This host didn't realize he'd be MCing this event and really doesn't think he's the right fit, considering the feminist themes, but he is also highly informed and will provide important context while trying to take up as little space as possible. Through these and other specific and satirical stories, this piece will question the very nature of the "hero's journey" through a gendered lens.

See Appendix for Script

DESIGN

Puppets

See appendix

Set

The stage will contain two puppet booths. One booth will be hand-puppet-style, the other will be kamishibai-style. There are two booths both because I am using a variety of puppets, some which will be easier to operate from above and some which will be easier to operate from below, and also because this may help with reducing dead space - something can be set up in one booth while the other booth is finishing a story. There will also be table that I will use for the IUD piece.

Neither booth will offer full coverage of the puppeteers. This is the convention for the kamishibai-style booth and will break convention for the hand-puppet-style booth. I'm choosing to break convention for hand puppet booth because it'd be the only time the puppeteer is hidden and I prefer consistency in the visibility of the puppeteers in productions, unless there's a dramaturgical reason for the inconsistency.

I'm planning on the kamishibai-style booth being 3' wide and the hand puppet booth being 5' wide. There will be 3' of space between them where the host puppet will perform. The table will be set behind the booths and then pulled out in-between them for the IUD piece. The musician will be set up off to one side. This configuration of the booths can be adjusted, if necessary for the venue. I'm currently booked to perform at BIMP (which has a stage that can either be 14'x8' or 18'x8'), Witch Bitch thrift, and Café Nine (who haven't sent me their dimensions yet).

The aesthetic of the stage design is somewhat deconstructed booths with plenty of texture. Booths that feel like they've been used for generations.

Costumes

Adriana Gonzalez Hernandez has offered to be my costume designer. I've spoken to her about pulling inspiration from drag culture, bouffon clowning, and the body morphing of Michaela Stark. I've also spoken to her about adding practical elements to the costumes like lights, hooks, and pockets.

Lighting

I want to be able to control the lighting myself. I do not want a full stage wash because I want to be able to control the stage picture/focus. I do not want to depend upon a lighting designer because I want the piece to be able to adapt to

different venues. I've spoken the Mike Demmers about this plan and he approved of the idea and gave me some specific advice on what instruments to purchase. Birdies will be focused on each performance station (the two puppet booths and the space in between the booths), an LED strip will be placed inside the miniature proscenium of the kamishibai-style booth, and a light on a tripod will be placed behind for shadow work. Each lighting set up will be plugged into the same power strip, which the performers can turn on and off from the stage.

Sketch of lighting on booths can be found in the appendix.

Music/Sound

I will be hiring a musician/foley artist who will provide live sound. The details of the sound design will be somewhat up to their creative impulse, but the general vibe will be something that isn't highly produced. It will serve to emphasize the genre of each short story and contribute to the emotion/humor of the piece.

Space/Location

I have booked the show at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, Witch Bitch thrift, and Café Nine in New Haven.

Personnel

I will need a puppeteer, musician, assistance with fabrication, and outside eyes.

I will perform with one other puppeteer. We will run all set and light changes internally. I will also hire an outside musician who will compose music, create sound effects, and run all sound.

I expect to have some assistance with fabrication from the puppet arts graduate assistants and students who are seeking to earn class hours. I will attempt to match the tasks I assign with the skillset and capacity of the students who are available. If any students assist me over breaks, I will note their hours so that they can receive credit during the following semester.

My plan for outside eyes is to try to match each advisor with one short story, so that they can focus in on one element of the piece. The exception to this rule is Lindsay Cummings, my primary advisor, who will have an eye towards the dramaturgy of the piece as a whole.

The following people have signed onto the project so far:

Committee:

Lindsay Cummings, Matt Sorenson, Megan Monaghan Rivas

Outside eyes in CT:

Bart Roccoberton Jr, John Bell, Lillian Ransijn, Susan Tolis, Sadie Aiken

Remote advisors (artists I have known and worked with for years, who are not local to CT. I will be sending them videos of the work as it progresses and meeting with them remotely):

Natsu Onoda Power, Mac Brown, Dylan Arredondo, Katie Ciszek, Rebecca Whitney Klein, Chris Sanderson

Costume Designer:

Adriana Gonzalez Hernandez

BUDGET

See Appendix

PRODUCTION TIMELINE

TIME	ACTIVITY
April 28	Auditions
April 29-May 9	One-on-one callback interviews with potential puppeteers
May 15	Cast show -- costume designer can start construction
Now-June 30	Complete rough draft of script

July 1-July 24	Build prototypes of puppets/workshop individual pieces on my own/edit script. Workshop different versions of what my costumes/set/world can be
July 25-31	Workshop individual pieces with outside eye
Aug 1-7	Make final build list/schedule & update script with info gathered from workshops
Aug 8-Jan 15	Build puppets, costumes, & set
Jan 16-Feb 28	Rehearse individual pieces, workshop with outside eye, make building adjustments as necessary
Mar 1-30	Rehearse full piece, in order, with outside eye. Rehearse with musician once a week, or more if possible
Mar 31-Apr 2	Tech at BIMP, with musician
Apr 3 & 4	Perform at BIMP
Apr 5-9	Incorporate anything important we learn from our audience
Apr 10 & 11	Perform at BIMP
Apr 12-Apr 30	Write book & prepare to tour
Early May	Submit book & tour show to Witch Bitch and Café 9 in New Haven

APPENDIX

RESOURCES/INSPIRATIONS

Form

- Various works by Natsu Onoda Power
- Road of Useless Splendor by Deborah Hunt
- Bill's 44th by Dorothy James and Andy Manjuck
- Feral by Shoshana Bass
- Dimanche by Chaliwate Company and Focus Company
- Punch and Judy
- Brother's Grimm
- Blair Thomas
- Moby Dick by Herman Melville
- Faust by Goethe
- Hannah Hoch
- Troy Brown
- Understanding Comics by Scott McCloud

Content

- The Writer by Ella Hickson
- Middlemarch by George Eliot
- Feral by Shoshana Bass
- The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath
- The Creation of Patriarchy by Gerda Lerner
- I May Destroy You by Michaela Coel
- Fleabag by Phoebe Waller-Bridge
- She Comes First by Ian Kerner
- Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
- Kindred by Octavia Butler
- Moregasm: Babeland's Guide to Mindblowing Sex
- Consent Friendly Flirting by Ahnna Marie
- Mrs Dalloway by Virginia Woolf
- Lumen: Introduction to Psychology, Social Norms and Scripts

- “We Can Write the Scripts Ourselves”: Queer Challenges to Heteronormative Courtship Practices by Ellen Lamont
- The Intersection of Dating Scripts and Queer Theory: An Analysis of Dating Experiences of Gay Men in West Texas by Robert B. Layne II, B.A.
- The Mystery of Female Orgasm with Sarah Barmak
- Married Love or Love in Marriage by Marie Carmichael Stopes
- Persepolis by Marjane Satrap
- “Who’s Afraid of the Big, Bad Tradwife?” by Amy Wang
- Tradwife videos of Estee Williams

Mel Carter CV

CONTACT INFORMATION

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www.makemelissacarter.com

EDUCATION

University of Connecticut, MFA in Puppet Arts

Expected Graduation 2026

Materials and Techniques: Matthew Sorenson

Marionette Construction and Performance: Bart Roccoberton

Directing: Matthew Sorenson

Rod Puppetry: Bart Roccoberton

Puppet Production: Bart Roccoberton

James Madison University, BA in Theatre Performance and Studies

2013-2017

Acting: Drew Hampton, Ingrid DeSanctis, Wolf Sherrill, Ben Lambert

Devising: Dennis Beck

Movement: Robert Smith

Dance: Ryan Corrison

City Academy of London

2016

Advanced Acting and Shakespeare

Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble Training Intensive

2015

Viewpoints/Suzuki: Jacob Coleman, Rebecca Lingafelter, Cristi Miles, Amber Whitehall

Young Actor's Institute

2011

Acting: Sarah Harlett; Singing: Marke Rabe; Dancing: Katheryn Reed; Scene study/Audition class: Alban Dennis; Improv: Andrew McMasters; Fight choreography: Geoffrey Alm; Voice: Alyssa Keene

Private Lessons: Guitar lessons Ian Drummond; Voice Rebeqa Rivers; Auditioning Carol Roscoe

PUPPETRY BUILDING

The Old Man and the Old Moon, 2024

Designed and built giant fish puppet and found object, direct manipulation chicken and dog puppets

Middletown Playhouse, 2023

Designed and built large judge and monster puppet for children's circus

War of the Worlds, 2023

Designed flat surface puppets for this production at Connecticut Repertory Theatre

Dear Mapel, 2022

Helped build puppets and a collapsible miniature proscenium for this production at Mosaic Theatre

Pilobolus Dance Company, 2021

Assisted the props master of Pilobolus with the fabrication of a large goat skull.

Lady from the Village of the Falling Flowers, 2019

Built finger puppets for this premiere production at the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival

ORIGINAL PUPPET PIECES

How to Kiss, 2023

Short piece satirizing the practice of giving universal romantic advice by asking the advisee to practice kissing with an octopus.

A Brief Lecture, 2023

A simple, tabletop puppet gets up to give a lecture to the audience and finds a pair of underwear. They accuse members of the audience and the puppeteer of leaving their underwear on the stage before finally realizing the underwear is their own.

Boots are Made for Walking, 2024

Remade a Hannah Hoch collage of a shell with legs and boots as a large, flat surface puppet and had it dance to 'These Boots are Made for Walking.'

Some Slight Pressure, 2024

Satirical piece about inserting an IUD. A woman goes to get an IUD inserted and absurd things are done to her uterus in shadow.

R3AL eyes PAST ur pasteurLIES, 2024

Satirical piece about the #tradwife movement, using unpasteurized milk as a physical representation of the harmful practices tradwives promote. Tradwife, played by an actor in a grotesque burlap bodysuit, offers the audience a taste of unpasteurized milk through her breasts. She then dies from drinking the unpasteurized milk herself.

ASSITANT DIRECTING PUPPETRY

City that Slept, 2025

Show that choreographed puppetry to recordings of people on the street in New York City, talking about their dreams.

The Old Man and the Old Moon, 2024

Directed 3D puppet movement for this full length production of a script by PigPen Theatre, produced by Connecticut Repertory Theatre.

I Am the Village, 2023

Puppet pageant about the life of Marc Chagall

PUPPET PERFORMANCE

Thumbelina, Imagination Stage, DC

The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival

Forest Treas, Pointless Theatre Co, DC

Alice in Wonderland, National Players, National Tour

War of the Worlds, Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Connecticut

Midnight Louie's, Lilypad Puppet Theatre, New York

The Infinite Tales, 4615 Theatre Co, DC

Watergate with Puppets, AnyStage Theatre, DC

(An Audio Guide for) Unsung Snails and Heroes, Manhattan Theatre Club Reading, NYC

Bronx Express, Theatre J Reading, DC

THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Emilia, *Othello*, Jason King Jones, National Players, National Tour

Titania, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Prince George Shakespeare, Maryland

Sky God, *Zomo the Rabbit*, Imagination Stage, Maryland

Myrtle Wilson, *The Great Gatsby*, National Players, National Tour

Janie/Old Man/Mom, *Do You Feel Anger?*, Theater Alliance, DC

The Guest, *Separate Rooms*, 4615 Theatre Co, Maryland

Young Hannah, *Hannah Arendt*, Goethe Institut, DC

LIGHTING

National Players tour, 2017-18, Assistant Master Electrician

Best Medicine Theatre Co, 2018, Lighting Designer

SOUND

Bent, 2015, Sound Designer

The Pillowman, 2015, Sound Designer

COSTUMES

JMU Costume Shop, Sewing Technician, 2014-15

GRANTS

Color the Curb, 2021

The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, in partnership with the District Department of Transportation, funds District-based artists experienced in large-scale exterior murals and community-based projects to design and install ground murals at low visibility intersections in Washington, DC. Selected artists are awarded grant funds to be used for design, materials, fabrication, installation, personnel, and project management.

Art and Humanities Fellowship, 2020

The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities Fellowship Program supports qualified individual artists and humanities practitioners who significantly contribute to the District of Columbia as a world-class cultural capital

RESIDENCY

Resident artist with the 4615 Theatre Company, 2018-2023

4615 Theatre Company produces a provocative blend of classical and contemporary work, inspiring audiences to explore the echoes and resonances of storytelling passed down through the ages. 4615's Resident Artists are a group of theatre-makers who have made 4615 their artistic home, and whose work 4615 is committed to supporting.

PUBLICATIONS

Cuntry Living, 2020 Autumn Issue

This international feminist collective published two of my pieces in their seasonal zine; a line drawing of tourists taking pictures of the Venus de Milo with the caption 'take your own nudes' and a collage from my 2020 series on cryptic cleanliness titled 'what you will'

Necessary Meditations, self-published 2017

A collection of sketches and poems created in an attempt to gain perspective after being sexually assaulted. Subsequently bound into a zine.

EXHIBITIONS

WXJM Gallery Show, 2017

Displayed a variety of prints and zines

Center on Contemporary Art, 2014

Displayed 'Bleh' a sculptural head sticking its tongue out, created by adhering projection slides to a wire frame

SCRIPT DRAFT 2/26

TITLE: BITCH EAT DOG

NOTE ON SCRIPT

This production will be composed of a series of short stories. These short stories are being developed one at a time, so there are some that have not been fully written yet. I have not finalized the order of the short stories yet. There will also be transitions between the short stories. These transitions will be created to serve the short stories (to help transition between them, to clarify dramatic themes, and to cut tension) so they are only roughly sketched in, in their most explanatory version, at the moment.

Since I don't have the full script written yet, I have included other information to try to clarify these stories to the reader, such as the role the story is playing in the production and the visual design.

TOP OF SHOW

A miniature proscenium, kamishibai-style booth and a hand puppet booth are onstage. Behind them is a table. Booths are lit with birdies.

Players enter - two puppeteers and a musician

Design of booths

wooden, textured, feel like they've been around for a long time

Design of costumes

timeless, lumpy like a bouffon clown, slightly feminine

Build list

mini proscenium, hand puppet booth, two full costumes, headpiece for musician

TYPICAL STORY

Purpose

Start the show with a very clear, pared down introduction to the theme

Design

Fanciful flat surface puppets and backdrop, rod puppets operated from above

Build list

knight, princess, ogre, ogre baby, background

Outline

- Knight kills ogres to rescue princess
- Knight and princess kiss
- Baby ogre comes in crying over their dead parent
- That's no good - reset
- This time princess kills ogre to rescue knight
- Princesses and knight kiss
- Baby ogre comes in crying over their dead parent
- That's no good - reset
- This time princess puts down sword
- Ogre and princess make peace
- Baby enters, stabs princess
- Baby kisses prince
- I don't know about that

HOST

Purpose

Fill time, transitioning between scenes, while next short story is being set up. This character is also a demonstration of a man who has every right to take up space but feels very uncomfortable doing so. He also serves a comical tool to clarify themes present in short stories.

Design

Bill's 44th style puppet

Build list

Host puppet

Description

Man who didn't think he'd be hosting this show tonight. Really doesn't think it's the right fit considering the feminist themes. Is very apologetic about the space he's taking up but also very knowledgeable about feminism and the themes represented in the show.

Sample of Dialogue

(popping out from behind booth, hesitantly. Holds copy of program that he's occasionally referencing)

Ohhh hi! Heyy everybody sorry I just I didn't know I mean I wasn't supposed to be your host tonight and I don't know if I would've agreed to it if I had known but they asked I guess because I have like a degree in gender studies or whatever and I said yes so here we are hello! Welcome! To the show! It's um it's got I would say heavily feminist themes but I mean you don't need to me to tell you that obviously you know that cuz you're here and the poster has like 15 bre- or no that's more like (counting) 17 17 breasts on the poster so yeah but ummmm that last piece was a demonstration of a core theme of the show how effectively combating the patriarchy can't be accomplished by simply swapping gender rolesblahblahblahblahaha oooo old white man explains feminist showw (crumples up program anxiously while looking at puppeteer setting up next scene) oh! They're ready! Ladies and gentlemen and everyone who exists outside of the gender binary because gender is just a cultural construct well you know that anyways – Punch and Judy!

PUNCH AND JUDY

Purpose

Punch represents men pursuing their desires no matter the cost, battering the women in their way. People frequently counter the argument that Punch shows are sexist by pointing out that Judy punches back. While I, personally, enjoy Punch and Judy shows, I don't believe that they're anti-patriarchal because Judy hits Punch too. I believe that this is just a woman reenacting all the actions of the patriarchy with all the same results and trying to tell us it's something different. Here, I combine Punch and Judy with Moby Dick, a classic cultural text about a man pursuing goals to his own demise, to demonstrate the flawed logic of believing that blindly pursuing your goals is feminist if a girl does it.

Design

somewhat traditional hand puppets (based on traditional designs, with a Mel Carter twist)

Build list

Punch, Judy, baby, boat, waves, naval officer, sailor, crocodile, buoy

Plot Summary

Punch takes to the sea to kill the albino crocodile that ate his leg. Judy and the baby are his crew and he's bossing them about, smacking Judy around. Judy decides she's fed up with being treated this way, and summons Mephistopheles. She makes a deal with the devil to get rid of Punch once and for all. Crocodile eats Punch and in the scuffle, also eats Judy's leg. Judy decides to take her revenge on the crocodile, takes over the ship and is bossing the baby about, smacking it around. They find the crocodile and in the ensuing fight, Judy also gets eaten. Punch and Judy keep fighting within Crocodile's belly as baby sails off into the sunset.

First Draft of Script

SHOWMAN (puppeteer) (Popping up above the booth) Mr Punch! Mr Punch they've done our introduction! It's time to start the show

PUNCH Hold on one minute I'm putting my beard on

SHOWMAN Alright alright I'll do the prologue while you get ready (clears throat) Ladies and Gentlemen and all between and beyond, today's tale takes us to the high seas (setting up the waves and the backdrop as she talks – maybe a seagull flies past) For these are difficult times and "whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and

methodically knocking people's hats off – then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for the pistol and ball.” (to Punch) Are you ready yet?

PUNCH Just a minute – I need my peg leg

SHOWMAN Well hurry up! (to audience) This voyage takes us aboard the Pequod (sets up boat) The name Pequod comes from a tribe of Native Americans who lived in the area we currently call Massachusetts (checks whether Punch is ready) “you never saw such a rare old craft as this same rare old Pequod. She was a ship of the old school, rather small if anything; with an old-fashioned claw-footed look about her. Long seasoned and weather-stained in the typhoons and calms of all four oceans, her old hull's complexion was darkened like a French grenadier's, who has alike fought in Egypt and Siberia. Her venerable bow looked bearded. Her masts – cut somewhere on the coast of Japan, where her original ones were lost overboard in a gale – her masts stood stiffly up like the spines of the three old kings of Cologne. Her ancient decks were worn and wrinkled, like the pilgrim-worshipped flag-stone in Canterbury Cathedral where Becket bled.” (beat. Then to Punch) ok surely you must be ready now

(Sailor puppet pops up on other side of Showman)

SAILOR I see yeer considerin the Pequod

SHOWMAN oh! Well yes “I was thinking of shipping”

SAILOR “Thou wast, wast thou? I see thou art no Nantucketer” – ever been aboard a whaling ship?

SHOWMAN “No, Sir, I never have”

SAILOR “Dost know nothing at all about whaling, I dare say – eh?”

SHOWMAN “Nothing, Sir; but” I took a sailing course at girl scout camp!

SAILOR Scouts “be damned. Talk not that lingo to me... Flukes! Man, what makes thee want to go whaling, eh?”

SHOWMAN “Well, sir, I want to see what whaling is.”

SAILOR “Want to see what whaling is, eh? Have ye clapped eyes on Captain Ahab?”

SHOWMAN (glancing towards Punch) Not yet

SAILOR “If thou wantest to know what whaling is, as thou tellest ye do, I can put ye in a way of finding it out before ye bind yourself to it, past backing out. Clap eye on Captain Ahab, young man, and thou wilt find that he has only one leg.”

SHOWMAN “Was the other one lost by a whale?”

SAILOR “Lost by a whale! Young man, come nearer to me: it was devoured, chewed up, crunched by the monstrousest [creature] that ever chipped a boat! -ah, ah!”

SHOWMAN Do you mean the great white leviathan Moby Dick?

SAILOR No you fool! Moby Dick is a myth, a fable, a fairytale. More than whales wait underneath these waves... (lost in revery)

SHOWMAN ... so can we ship off?

SAILOR Oh! Yeah, sure, what do I care?

SHOWMAN And so all the crew boarded the ship and we made ready to set sail (Sailor, Judy, Baby board ship. Showman pops below booth)

NAVAL OFFICER (Entering) Not so fast!

SAILOR Aye, it's the damn blue coats

NAVAL OFFICER Greetings gentlemen, (seeing Judy) lady, (seeing baby) and... infant. May I see your whale fishing license?

JUDY The captain will have that officer. (goes over to where Punch has been waiting, knocks) Captain? (no response) Captain? (no response) Captain! (pulls up showman) Will you get him?

SHOWMAN Come on, Punch, it's your cue!

PUNCH It's not my fault – I fell asleep (enters) Aye who calls for Captain Ahab?

NAVAL OFFICER Good morrow, sir, by the order of the royal court it is required by law that you produce your whale fishing license before you set sail

PUNCH My whale fishing license?

NAVAL OFFICER Your whale fishing license.

PUNCH Aye, that's no trouble, no trouble at all, officer. On this ship we take nothing so seriously as the proper whaling license. In fact, we had our license plated in copper and installed into the wall of our ship.

NAVAL OFFICER Excellent, and where is it installed?

PUNCH Just over the side here

NAVAL OFFICER (peering over side) I don't see anything

PUNCH Oh it's just down there, can't you see it glimmer in the sunshine?

NAVAL OFFICER (leaning further) No, I don't see a thing

PUNCH It's just there – lean a little further

NAVAL OFFICER (leaning further) I still don't see anything

PUNCH Further...

NAVAL OFFICER (leaning further)

PUNCH Further...

NAVAL OFFICER (leaning further) Are you sure it's down here?

PUNCH Yes, just a little further (pushes Naval Officer overboard)

(Naval Officer falls, we hear a scream and a splash)

NAVAL OFFICER Help me! Help me! I can't swim!

JUDY Captain, you didn't have to do that – we could've just gotten a whaling license

PUNCH Out of the question, there's no time to spare. Lads... Ladies... Baby... I've received word that the monster that took mine own leg from my person has been spotted in the northern sea. Today we set sail. Tomorrow I take revenge!

JUDY But captain, there's no way we can make it to the northern sea in a day's time

PUNCH (smacking Judy) We can if you get to work! All hands on deck! Hoist the main sail!

SHOWMAN (popping up) There was no talking him out of it. "The [creature] swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung." (pops down)

PUNCH (to baby) you! Baby! What are you doing, lollygagging? Get to work! (smacks baby)

(Baby starts to cry)

PUNCH Stop crying! (smacks baby)

(Baby cries harder)

PUNCH Be quiet! (smacks baby)

JUDY Don't hit him!

PUNCH Don't talk back to your Captain (smacks Judy) Make him swab the deck or something (exits)

JUDY (to baby) Don't worry – some day he'll get his

SHOWMAN (popping up) At top speed they sailed without breaking so much as a sandwich. "That night, in the mid-watch... the old man... suddenly thrust out his face fiercely, snuffing up the sea air as a sagacious ship's dog will, in drawing nigh to some barbarous isle. He declared that the [creature] must be near. Soon that peculiar odor, sometimes to a great distance given forth by [such monsters], was palpable to all the watch" (pops down)

PUNCH "T'gallant sails! -stunsails! Alow and aloft, and on both sides!"

JUDY What does that mean?

PUNCH Don't question your captain! (smacks Judy)

SAILOR "There she blows! -there she blows! A hump like a snow-hill!"

SHOWMAN (Popping up) Is that Moby Dick?

PUNCH (smacking showman down) No you fool! (seriously, to audience) It's Massive Richard.

SHOWMAN (pops up again) “The ship tore on; leaving such a furrow in the sea as when a cannonball, missent, becomes a plough-share and turns up the level field”
But the great white creature stayed just out of range of the crew’s hungry harpoons

PUNCH (to himself) faster, faster? Aye ye monster your speed is unmatched and I’ve a baby as a quartermaster. How shall we catch ye? “There’s a riddle...-like a hawk’s beak it pecks my brain. I’ll, I’ll solve it though!” (grabs baby, ties it to a buoy, throws it overboard)

JUDY (entering) Man over board! (starts to pull buoy back in)

PUNCH Lay ye hands off that rope! (smacks Judy) Let our bait alone –hungry Richard won’t be able to resist his cries – it won’t be long now

JUDY That’s it!

PUNCH There she blows! Pull the bait in! Come to papa!

(Baby pulled in, a giant albino crocodile snout enters in pursuit, Judy pushes Punch into crocodile mouth and saves baby. In the ensuing fight, all of Punch & Judy’s leg is eaten by the croc.)

PUNCH (as he’s eaten & continued from inside stomach) “Oh, lonely death on lonely life!... thou all-destroying but unconquering [croc]; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell’s heart I stab at thee; for hate’s sake I spit my last breath at thee... let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned [crocodile]!”

(crocodile burps, swims away)

JUDY MY LEG! MY LEG! THAT DAMNED DICK TOOK MY LEG!

SAILOR Aye he surely nipped you there. Let’s get this bleeding stopped and I’ll fashion ye up with the finest peg leg a lady could like

JUDY A peg leg? No! If we hurry, we can get my real leg back! We can reattach it! After that Crocodile! Go go go!

SAILOR My, I’ve never heard a sharper tongue from a sweeter mouth. As you wish ma’am

JUDY Hoist the main! “T’gallant sails! -stunsails! Alow and aloft, and on both sides!”

SAILOR Now what do ye mean by ‘stunsails’, ma’am?

JUDY Just GO! (smacks Sailor)

(they set sail)

JUDY It’s getting away! Can’t you go any faster?

SAILOR I can’t do it on me own, ma’am! You can’t sail without a leg and the infant’s not got the grip strength – it may be time to give up the ghost

JUDY No – no – I can’t (looks to the baby) can’t you do anything to help?

(baby shrugs)

JUDY Come on - just *try* hoisting that sail

(baby shakes head and blows raspberry)

JUDY PLEASE! I SACRIFICED MY LEG FOR YOUR LIFE YOU COULD AT LEAST TRY

(Judy gestures at leg, baby points at leg and laughs)

JUDY YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY?? (smacks baby) HOIST THE MAIN SAIL

(baby does its best to hoist sail)

SHOWMAN (popping up) They sailed fast and hard, without stopping for so much as a drink of water. Until in the distance they heard the mighty cry of the giant crocodile

SAILOR Thur she blows!!

JUDY Really? Where? I don’t see it

SAILOR Right there ma’am (pointing)

JUDY Where?

SAILOR Aye it’s true what they say about the short eyesight of the gentler sex - it’s just there on the horizon, ma’am (pointing deeper, leaning over the edge of the boat)

JUDY Sorry my cornea are so weak - where?

SAILOR Right there (pointing deeper)

JUDY Where?

SAILOR There! (pointing deeper still)

JUDY Oh! There! (pushes Sailor overboard)

(we hear a yell and a splash)

JUDY Soup's on! (rings bell) Come and get it, Dickie!

(Albino croc enters with Judy's leg in its teeth, she tries to reach it but in the ensuing fight,
Judy is eaten)

(the next few lines are said by puppets inside the croc's stomach)

JUDY God damnit

PUNCH Oh good! You're here – I've got a bone to pick with you –

JUDY Oh YOU've got a bone to pick with ME?? It's your fault we're in this mess!

PUNCH My fault? (smacks Judy)

JUDY Yeah! Your fault! (smacks Punch)

(sound of fight fades as croc swims away. Baby sails boat off into the sunset)

TRANSITION OUT OF PUNCH & JUDY/INTRODUCTION OF OYSTERS

FIRST DRAFT

HOST ooo wow so okay I'm sure you all picked up on the references to Moby Dick in that Punch and Judy show and rreally don't need me MANsplaining it to you but real quick I just wanted to share my favorite quote from Moby Dick (pulls out book) "Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water, and thinking that thick water the thinnest of air." So, ya just wanted to share that I guess I find it quite poignant even though some of Melville's writing is really awfully racist so maybe we shouldn't read him anymore at all but you see I think this quote is interesting because while Melville is clearly talking about religion, I feel like this quote can be applied to any number of phenomenon-

OYSTERS Oh my gaawd! Shut. Up.

HOST Right yes of course (exits)

OYSTERS

Description/Purpose

I'm referencing Moby Dick in my Punch and Judy adaptation. My favorite quote from Moby Dick is

"Methinks that in looking at things spiritual, we are too much like oysters observing the sun through the water, and thinking that thick water the thinnest of air."

While Melville is clearly talking about religion, I feel like this quote can be applied to any number of phenomenon that quietly cloud the air we breath, including the patriarchy. I would like to establish this idea and then create a chorus of obtuse oysters who comment on the pieces. These oysters would provide another option for transitioning between pieces, which could potentially be operated by the musician, rather than either of the puppeteers. They would also let me slyly and comedically invite the critics into the room.

Design

Foot operated puppets

Build list

2 or 3 oysters

Sample of Dialogue

OYSTER 1 (sarcastically) omg yay we looove punch and judyyy

OYSTER 2 (sarcastically) yaas sooo modern so contemporary so of the moment we loove it

OYSTER 1 (sarcastically) yaaaaaas I hate how movies have so much going on – it's so stressful

OYSTER 2 (sarcastically) yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaas this was so nice I could just take a little nap get a little beauty rest

OYSTER 1 you don't need beauty rest girl you're beautiful

OYSTER 2 oh thanks girl

(beat)

OYSTER 1 I did like the part where that lady pushed the pirate overboard tho

OYSTER 2 OMG GIRL YES ME TOO

OYSTER 1 & 2 GIRL POWER YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAS

SHRILL O METER

Purpose

Address the way women are sometimes punished for directly pursuing goals in the workplace.

Design

flat surface, carnival style puppets

Build list

backdrop, woman, stranger, shrill o meter, cops

Summary

Woman at a business meeting laying out what she believes would be the best course of action for the next quarter. Strange person enters while she's talking and sets up a Shrill o Meter. Woman says "Excuse me, hi, can I help you?" The strange person replies "oh don't mind me" So the woman keeps going with her presentation but every time she tries to speak the Shrill o Meter goes up, the strange person's eyes get wide, and they start moaning. Eventually the woman gets so frustrated with this person interrupting her presentation that she tells them off which breaks the Shrill o Meter and makes the strange person's head explode. The woman is fired and arrested for manslaughter.

FIRST DRAFT TRANSITION

HOST

FIINNALLY my turn to talk again! (beat) Sorry bad joke okay so anyways I don't think more needs to be said about that (mumbling) women in the workplace are more frequently punished for voicing their needs boodidoodedoo (normal voice) but I just have to say this next story is an excerpt from one of my very favorite books, Middlemarch by George Eliot which of course I'm sure you know was the pen name for Mary Ann Evans ooo a woman writing under a man's name scandalous! now I know I'm talking too much and everyone wants to get on with the show but I just have to say that Middlemarch is a classic, many consider it one of the greatest English novels, and personally I have never read a book that more genuinely wrestles with a woman's struggle to achieve true altruism (puppeteer in booth coughs) you're right so sorry I'll go

MIDDLEMARCH

Purpose

Middlemarch is the best example of a story I've read where the protagonist is a woman who is committed, above all, to serving the needs of others

Design

Each puppet character is a fabricator head, held in one hand and the puppeteer's other hand as the puppet's hand

Build List

Two heads

Excerpt from Middlemarch

Early in the day Dorothea had returned from the infant school which she had set going in the village, and was taking her usual place in the pretty sitting-room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters, bent on finishing a plan for some buildings (a kind of work which she delighted in), when Celia, who had been watching her with a hesitating desire to propose something, said –

‘Dorothea dear, if you don't mind - if you are not very busy suppose we looked at mamma's jewels to-day, and divided them? It is exactly six months to-day since uncle gave them to you, and you have not looked at them yet.’

Celia's face had the shadow of a pouting expression in it, the full presence of the pout being kept back by an habitual awe of Dorothea and principle; two associated facts which might show a mysterious electricity if you touched them incautiously. To her relief, Dorothea's eyes were full of laughter as she looked up.

‘What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia! Is it six calendar or six lunar months?’

‘It is the last day of September now, and it was the first of April when uncle gave them to you. You know, he said that he had forgotten them till then. I believe you have never thought of them since you locked them up in the cabinet here.’

‘Well, dear, we should never wear them, you know.’ Dorothea spoke in a full cordial tone, half caressing, half explanatory. She had her pencil in her hand, and was making tiny side-plans on a margin.

Celia coloured, and looked very grave. ‘I think, dear, we are wanting in respect to mamma's memory, to put them by and take no notice of them. And,’ she added, after hesitating a little, with a rising sob of mortification, ‘necklaces are quite usual now; and Madame Poincon, who was stricter in some things even than you are, used to wear ornaments. And Christians generally - surely there are women in heaven now who wore jewels.’ Celia was conscious of some mental strength when she really applied herself to argument.

‘You would like to wear them?’ exclaimed Dorothea, an air of astonished discovery animating her whole person with a dramatic action which she had caught from that very Madame Poincon who wore the ornaments. ‘Of course, then, let us have them out. Why did you not tell me before? But the keys, the keys!’ She pressed her hands against the sides of her head and seemed to despair of her memory.

‘They are here,’ and Celia, with whom this explanation had been long meditated and prearranged.

‘Pray open the large drawer of the cabinet and get out the jewel-box.’

The casket was soon open before them, and the various jewels spread out, making a bright parterre on the table. It was no great collection, but a few of the ornaments were really of remarkable beauty, the finest that was obvious at first being a necklace of purple amethysts set in exquisite gold-work, and a pearl cross with five brilliants in it. Dorothea immediately took up the necklace and fastened it round her sister’s neck, where it fitted almost as closely as a bracelet; but the circle suited the Henrietta-Maria style of Celia’s head and neck, and she could see that it did, in the pier-glass opposite:

‘There, Celia! You can wear that with your Indian muslin. But this cross you must wear with your dark dresses.’

Celia was trying not to smile with pleasure. ‘O dodo, you must keep the cross yourself.’

‘No, no, dear, no,’ said Dorothea, putting up her hand with careless deprecation.

‘Yes, indeed you must; it would suit you - in your black dress, now,’ said Celia, insistingly.

‘You *might* wear that.’

‘Not for the world, not for the world. A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket.’

Dorothea shuddered slightly.

‘Then you will think it wicked in me to wear it,’ said Celia uneasily.

‘No, dear, no,’ said Dorothea, stroking her sister’s cheek. ‘Souls have complexions too: what will suit one will not suit another.’

‘But you might like to keep it for mamma’s sake.’

‘No, I have other things of mamma’s - her sandal-wood box, which I am so fond of - plenty of things. In fact, they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer. There - take away your property.’

Celia felt a little hurt. There was a strong assumption of superiority in this Puritanic toleration, hardly less trying to the blond flesh of an unenthusiastic sister than a Puritanic persecution.

‘But how can I wear ornaments if you, who are the elder sister, will never wear them?’

‘Nay, Celia, that is too much to ask, that I should wear trinkets to keep you in countenance. If I were to put on such a necklace as that, I should feel as if I had been pirouetting. The world would go round with me, and I should not know how to walk.’

Celia had unclasped the necklace and drawn it off. ‘It would be a little tight for your neck; something to lie down and hang would suit you better,’ she said, with some satisfaction.

The complete unfitness of the necklace from all points of view for Dorothea, made Celia happier in taking it. She was opening some ring-boxes, which disclosed a fine emerald with diamonds, and just then the sun passing beyond a cloud sent a bright gleam over the table.

‘How very beautiful these gems are!’ said Dorothea, under a new current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam. ‘It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St John. They look like fragments of heaven. I think that emerald is more beautiful than any of them.’

‘And there is a bracelet to match it,’ and Celia. ‘We did not notice this at first.’

'They are lovely, said Dorothea, slipping the ring and bracelet on her finely-turned finger and wrist, and holding them toward the window on a level with her eyes. All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy.

'You would like those, Dorothea,' said Celia, rather falteringly, beginning to think with wonder that her sister showed some weakness, and also that emeralds would suit her own complexion even better than purple amethysts. 'You must keep that ring and bracelet - if nothing else. But see, these agates are very pretty - and quiet.'

'Yes! I will keep these - this ring and bracelet,' said Dorothea. Then, letting her hand fall on the table, she said in another tone - 'Yet what miserable men find such things, and work at them, and sell them!' She paused again, and Celia thought that her sister was going to renounce the ornaments, as in consistency she ought to do.

'Yes, dear, I will keep these,' said Dorothea, decidedly. 'But take all the rest away, and the casket.'

She took up her pencil without removing the jewels, and still looking at them. She thought of often having them by her, to feed her eye at these little fountains of pure colour.

'Shall you wear them in company?' said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do.

Dorothea glanced quickly at her sister. Across all her imaginative adornment of those whom she loved, there darted now and then a keen discernment, which was not without a scorching quality. If Miss Brooke ever attained perfect meekness it would not be for lack of inward fire.

'Perhaps,' she said, rather haughtily. 'I cannot tell to what level I may sink.'

Celia blushed, and was unhappy; she saw that she had offended her sister, and dared not say even anything pretty about the gift of the ornaments which she put back into the box and carried away. Dorothea too was unhappy, as she went on with her plan-drawing, questioning the purity of her own feeling and speech in the scene which had ended with that little explosion.

Celia's consciousness told her that she had not been at all in the wrong: it was quite natural and justifiable that she should have asked that question, and she repeated to herself that Dorothea was inconsistent: either she should have taken her full share of the jewels, or, after she had said, she should have renounced them altogether.

'I am sure - at least, I trust,' thought Celia, 'that the wearing of a necklace will not interfere with my prayers. And I do not see that I should be bound by Dorothea's opinions now we are going into society, though of course she herself ought to be bound by them. But Dorothea is not always consistent.'

Thus Celia, mutely bending over her tapestry, until she heard her sister calling her.

'Here, Kitty, come and look at my plan; I shall think I am a great architect, if I have not got incompatible stairs and fireplaces.'

As Celia bent over the paper, Dorothea put her cheek against her sister's arm caressingly. Celia understood the action. Dorothea saw that she had been wrong, and Celia pardoned her. Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her elder sister. The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?

**TRANSITION
FIRST DRAFT**

OYSTER 1 Oh my gawd did you see that necklace?

OYSTER 2 Literally so gorgeous

OYSTER 1 Sooo glam oh my gawwwdd

OYSTER 2 Ya why did that chick not want to wear it?

OYSTER 1 Yah it's like hello like it's jewelry! It's meant to be worn!

OYSTER 2 Yaas hellooo we are not making these pearls just so they can stay here in the mud with us!

OYSTER 1 Yaaas omg rip me open yank em out & set them into a brooch that is so gorgeous the debate about who will get it after ur grandmother dies creates an insurmountable rift in your familyyy!

OYSTER 2 omg yas gurl I want that to be my legacy too

JELLYFISH AND SHARK

Purpose

Metaphor for how it's potentially dangerous to be either a jellyfish with no personal sense of propulsion or a shark voraciously pursuing its prey

Design

Flat surface puppets

Build List

Jellyfish, legs, shark, backdrop

Summary

We're underwater. Legs kick into view – someone gently treading water. Then a jellyfish floats into view. We watch the jellyfish float closer, almost hit the legs and miss, almost hit the legs and miss, almost hit the legs and then a shark swims through and tears the legs off, leaving nothing but blood in their wake.

NO TRANSITION

One puppeteer will do Jellyfish/shark, the next will do Tradwife, no transition needed

TRADWIFE

Purpose

Demonstrates the absurdity and violence of subservience. The trad wife phenomenon is a movement of contemporary women promoting the idea of giving up their own power and agency to serve the desires of two other men: God and their husbands.

Design

Grotesque burlap body suit

Build List

I'd like to add more breasts to the existing body suit

Note

I made an original draft of this piece and performed it at a puppet slam where another puppeteer saw it and asked me to perform this character in their post-apocalyptic Christmas special. In between these two performances I added 7 breasts to the body suit and wrote some new jokes. The below draft of the script was written in between these two performances, so this script will certainly change.

Videos

<https://youtu.be/UZMsNswNXR4>

<https://youtu.be/6Yp42Z2UrlI>

Script

Tradwife in burlap body suit and apron enters and speaks directly to the audience

Howdy folks! Welcome to faithful farm wives! I'm Felicity Groundwater. I've come to talk to you today because there's been a lot of discourse recently about the #tradwife movement and I just have to say that it's true, I do consider myself a traditional wife and mother. But that just means that I prioritize caring for my kids and obeying my husband no matter what he commands. I'm just living my life – just because I promote it for financial gain doesn't give anyone the right to criticize me! Especially not Jessica Gross of the New York Times. I think that if we sat down and talked to one another, we'd realize that we have a lot in common. So tonight I'm going to give you a little taste of my life in the form of raw, unpasteurized milk. (Drinks milk. Tries not to gag) Now the government will try to tell you that milk needs to be processed but that just gets rid of the best vitamin! Vitamin M (Drinks milk. Tries not to gag) mmm that is so good I can't even describe it! And luckily, I don't have to! (Removes apron, revealing big burlap breasts with baby bottle for nipples) Tonight anyone who'd like can take a sip of raw milk straight from the tit! Any volunteers? Don't worry, it's all natural! (Tradwife drinks from nipple. Volunteer comes up) May I cradle the back of your head in a motherly fashion? (Instructs volunteer on how to drink milk, feeds) Nice, right? And you know what goes great with milk? Fresh chocolate chip cookies! (Gives

one to the volunteer and sends them back to their seat) The other morning my little son, Tumnus, came into my bedroom and said “Mama, can I have some chocolate chip cookies?” and I said “of course, sweetheart!” And I went out to the field and harvested some cocoa beans and dug a ditch and dropped them inside and left them to ferment for 81 days. Then I harvested some wheat and milled it into flour. And I took some sugar cane and smashed it with a bible and declared “You will be grains by god you will be grains!” Then mixed it all together, had it blessed by a priest, and bon appetite! After only 657 hours of labor, fresh chocolate chip cookies! (Bites cookie) mmm so good! You’ll have to excuse my manners. I want to get every last crumb (licks fingers) Just going to wash that down with a bit more milk. (Sips milk. Then chugs, seemingly against will. Gags on milk but still insists she loves it. Continues to chug. Turns around. We see a shadow man controlling her on her back. She turns around, continuing to chug and gag, until the milk jar is empty, and she begins to die) Oh lord! Take me! Take me now! (Dies)

TRANSITION FIRST DRAFT

HOST

Ooooo ooooookay so that was intense but I guess that's what we should expect from a show called '(bleep) Eat Dog' ummm so maybe - you all probably know this & I should just shut up but just in case somebody doesn't - so um there are these women online who identify as "hashtag" tradwives and basically they have chosen to revert back to a more "traditional" lifestyle, which in their case means that they're very religious, subservient to their husbands, and try to go back to living off the land. And these women promote this lifestyle on social media for financial gain. And you probably picked up this from that sketch so I probably really don't need to say but um one idea that tradwives will frequently promote is drinking raw milk. And it gets a little tricky because one could say that these tradwives are kind of turning on their fellow women for profit but also they're kinda victims as well, choosing to sacrifice their own agency. I find that choice really fascinating - it reminds me of a quote from Jane Eyre which sorry it's short I just want to share really quickly - it's written by Charlotte Bronte which I mean she's a- you know- a woman (clears throat) "I was tempted to cease struggling with him - to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own." so um ya that seemed relevant - anyways thanks for listening, I'll let you get back to the rest of Bitch Eat D- (gasps, realized he's said 'bitch') Oh my god oh my god I'm so sorry I didn't mean to say that word I would never I mean I did but - I'm just going to go I think I have a lot of reflecting to do

CAN I BE FRANK?

Purpose

Address the way that, historically, women have been told to prioritize male pleasure over their own and how this contributes to rape culture.

Design

heaven is hand puppets, reenactments are real buns and sausages

Build list

3 simple hot dog bun hand puppets, heaven's gates

Outline

- enter heaven
- Angelic hot dog bun welcomes everyone to the support group for abused buns, asks if anyone would like to share today
- One bun steps forward and tells their story [reenacted by real hot dog bun/hand]
 - They were all laid out with a lovely sausage on a beautiful summer day - they were on a whole stack of hot dogs, having the time of their life
 - Then they were brought to a big platform with lots of screaming people - they thought wow, people are really excited to see us!
 - But then a whistle blew and it started... the carnage
 - Humans were shoving whole hot dogs down their throats then balling up buns, dunking them in water and swallowing them whole
 - It was awful
- Support group leader says, "I'm sorry you had to go through that. Joey Chestnut will rot in hell for what he's put our kind through"
- Music changes to metal, lights shift to red, voodoo doll of Joey Chestnut appears
- Music and lights shift back, Support group leader asks if anyone else would like to share
- Another bun steps forward to talk about experience
 - Sausage invited her to a barbeque
 - She said no but he pushed her & eventually she caved
 - Sausage offered her mustard
 - She said no but he pushed her & eventually she caved [hand puts a little mustard on]
 - Sausage offered her relish
 - She said no but he pushed her & eventually she caved [hand puts a little relish on]
 - Sausage offered her ketchup
 - She said no but he pushed her & eventually she caved [hand puts a ton of ketchup on]
 - Then the sausage got in her
 - She said no

- But he said 'she obviously wanted it - she went to the barbeque and put on the condiments'
- 'She should've expected to be consumed'
- (actual human mouth comes up and eats hot dog – it's messy and visceral)

TRANSITION

No transition here - I want the hot dog eating to be very visceral and to let the audience sit with that image for a second

GRANDE AND THE MONSTER

Purpose

There's a cultural pattern of women dating men who aren't really on their level. It's common in TV shows and movies to cast normal looking men with super-model-hot wives. Many female celebrities date seemingly mediocre men. And every girl has had the experience of her incredible female friend dating some guy who truly does not deserve her. While that's all well and good on an individual level, as a pattern, I believe it's a reflection of the higher standards that are set for women, men being encouraged to always expect/pursue the best, and women primarily being encouraged to be wanted.

Design

Hand puppets

Build List

Hot lady, 2-3 friends, monster

Summary

Ariana Grande-like hot, talented, lovely girl goes over to her friend's house expecting a fun hang. When she arrives, what she finds is an intervention. Not for drugs or alcohol, but for her to break up with her horrible boyfriend. Her friends try to tell her that she deserves more than this guy but she denies that there's a problem and texts her boyfriend to pick her up. Her friends say, "He's not good for you! He's draining you!" She doesn't think that's true. Her friends say, "He's so weird – he never hangs out with us – he doesn't even go out in the daytime – he just stays in his dark room." She says, "He's an introvert!" Her friends, exasperated, say, "Look, Ari, you're gorgeous, you're kind, you're talented, you're funny – you're a freakin catch! You could be with anyone. Do you really *want* to be with this guy?" Ari's about to reply when her boyfriend arrives and it's revealed that he is literally Nosferatu. They leave together. One friend says to the other, "Well, we tried your plan." Pulls out wooden stake "Now it's my turn"

TRANSITION

HOST (solemnly enters with sheet of paper, clears throat) Good evening. Tonight, I've made some mistakes, and I've been writing this apology backstage because it's time I took accountability for my behavior. It has never been my intention to hurt anyone, or make anyone feel lesser than- but in life sometimes we need to take responsibility for the impact of our actions, no matter our intention. This is one of those times. Earlier this evening, I used the 'b' word and I should never have done that. It is a horrible slur which has been used to demean women for decades and I have now contributed to this pattern. I deeply apologize for my mistake and any pain it may have caused. Thank you for your time. (exits)

(beat)

OYSTER 1 What a little bitch

SOME SLIGHT PRESSURE

Purpose

Demonstration of when women are not only expected to temper their pursuit of pleasure but are also expected to endure pain without complaint. I chose to base this piece around IUD insertion because this is a real and common phenomenon - IUDs are the most effective form of birth control but many women choose not to get them because it can be incredibly painful. This is an unnecessary obstacle - pain reduction measures are available, they're just very rarely offered.

Design

Shadow puppets

Build list

All puppets built, I'd like to configure stirrups that are easier to get in and out of

Video

<https://youtu.be/B7lxU8AN43s>

Script

Patient laying on table.

Gynecologist enters.

GYNO Good afternoon!

PATIENT Hi

GYNO I see you've come into the gynecologist today to get the new IUD, the Big Cheddar

PATIENT Yeah... but I'm kinda nervous – I've heard insertion is very painful

GYNO Oh people exaggerate – you'll be completely fine. And the Big Cheddar is a excellent choice – it's proven to be 100% effective at preventing pregnancy

PATIENT Oh! That's great!

GYNO Alright so let's get started

Improv as they get patient's legs up in the air and the flashlight on. 'Paper' blanket now acting as a shadow screen.

Throughout following, shadow puppets are accompanied by foley sound effects

GYNO Okay sweetie, you're gonna feel some slight pressure here

Inserts speculum and cranks open.

GYNO And as long as we're here, I'm going to take a sample

Takes swab

PATIENT Okay

GYNO See this isn't so bad, right? Now I'm just having a bit of trouble finding your cervix so you're going to feel a small pinch

Sharpens knife and cuts into vagina. Patient reacts in pain

PATIENT Ohhh my god that was a big pinch

GYNO Don't worry about it – totally normal – but I'm still having some trouble finding your cervix so I'm going to have to make a bit of room

Starts chainsaw and cuts into vagina

Patient reacts in pain

GYNO Alright, there we go. Let's get this out of the way

Removes organ

PATIENT Wow I feel lighter

GYNO Yes, weight loss is a positive side effect. Ready for swim suit season, am I right?? Now then, we're ready to insert the Big Cheddar

Inserts cheese

PATIENT Oh that's not so bad

GYNO Nope! just a few more steps

Inserts rat. Patient reacts in pain

Gyno inserts cat. Patient reacts in pain

GYNO Don't worry, this is totally normal

Inserts dog Patient reacts in pain

GYNO Just hold in there sweetie

Lights match and drops it in. Explosion. Patient screams

GYNO Alright you're all set

Removes speculum. Patient pants in shocked silence

GYNO Now here's two aspirin in case there's any residual pain and (plops organ in a plastic bag on patient's chest) your uterus.

TRANSITION

OYSTER 1 Oh my gawwwd is it over yet??

OYSTER 2 I knooow it's like we get it already

OYSTER 1 Ya like just let girls do whatever they wanna do

OYSTER 2 Yass and like don't use birth control or whatever

OYSTER 1 Ya it's not a big deal I had like a million kids this year and like I don't even see them they're just out sitting on a rock somewhere or whatever

OYSTER 2 Yah just like nut up and reproduce ladies

FAIRYTALE

Purpose

Demonstration of potential way to navigate this question - pursuing desires in small quantities while taking into account other people's needs

Design

Somewhat grotesque shadow puppets

Build list

Queen, baby head, princess, advisor, witch, cowboy, farmer, castle/kingdom exterior, castle interior, worried brow, eyes, mouth, hair pull, starving citizens, happy citizens

Script

NARRATOR Once upon a time in a land far away
 Lived a queen who worried until she turned grey
 She worked and worked, all day and night
 With no space to herself or time to eat right

 This queen, she had a terrible habit
 Her bountiful hair, with her hand she would grab it
 Pull it out from the root by the strand
 And eat it up like some ham that was canned

 Her daughter, the princess, would beg her to stop
 But habits are habits and stop she could not
 She yanked and she chewed through functions and meetings
 And people ignored it, proceeding with proceedings

COWBOY The price of grain is too damn high!

FARMER Your majesty, he doesn't understand - because of the drought my harvest
 only yielded half of what I expected. I can't afford to lower my prices!

COWBOY Well I can't afford to feed my cattle!

FARMER Then just slaughter them! That's what you're raising them for anyways!

COWBOY How abouts I slaughter you?

ADVISOR Gentlemen! Gentlemen! This is no way to behave. I'm sure we can find a
 consensus. Your majesty, you seem exhausted, perhaps you should retire to
 your chambers and I'll wrap up this little disagreement.

QUEEN No, thank you, that won't be necessary. The farmers will lower their prices and the crown will temporarily supplement their income.

FARMER Very fair, your majesty

COWBOY Thank you, ma'am

(they leave)

ADVISOR Are you sure about this, your majesty? If the crown pays these farm people it leaves less money to defend our kingdom from a potential attack by our southern neighbors

QUEEN Thank you for your guidance but if war does come I don't believe our strongest defense is an army of the emaciated

NARRATOR That night, the queen thought on troubles galore
Like water for crops and funds for the war
As she worried on worries her hairs she pulled out
And ate up each one with her sweet little snout

Till she pulled on one hair and it just wouldn't come
She yanked it again but it wouldn't succumb
So she grabbed with both hands, and held on tight
And pulled that darn hair with all of her might

Slowly but surely, it started to yield
Then out it popped, and all was revealed
Swinging from under her finger and thumb
Was an infant head, without tum or bum

(Head screams)

QUEEN Oh my! What is it sweet head?

HEAD HUNGRY!

NARRATOR The queen rang the kitchen and made her request
Fill a bottle with milk, bring only the best
Fill it they did, in his mouth it was popped
He swallowed it whole but his screams did not stop

HEAD HUNGRY!

QUEEN Oh dear! More milk?

HEAD BREAD!

NARRATOR The queen rang the kitchen and made her request
 A loaf of fresh bread, bring only the best
 Bake it they did, in his mouth it was popped
 He swallowed it whole but his screams did not stop

HEAD HUNGRY!

NARRATOR So
 The queen rang the kitchen and made her request
 All bread in the castle, the best and the rest
 Bring it they did and fed him each piece
 He swallowed them all but his screams did not cease

HEAD HUNGRY!

NARRATOR The breadless queen felt compelled to obey
 She drafted an order on that very day
 “every loaf, every bun, every naan in the country”
 “Must be brought to the court of the queen, for he’s hungry”

PRINCESS Mom, what is this?

QUEEN He’s hungry

PRINCESS What is that thing?

QUEEN He came from my head. He must be fed.

PRINCESS Mom, people are going to starve

QUEEN He’s hungry. He must be fed.

PRINCESS You’re acting crazy

QUEEN (pushing princess out door) HE MUST FEED

(outside door, advisor is waiting)

ADVISOR I'm worried for your mother. It seems that the queen is unwell. Perhaps, while she recovers, I should take a stronger leadership role...

PRINCESS She'll be fine

NARRATOR The order was carried out
Farmers were left without
The bread was delivered
and the citizens withered

The baby alone had much to eat
And as it ate it did not excrete
It only grew in width and height
Till floorboards creaked and skin pulled tight

When the last loaf of bread was nothing but crumbs
His lips he licked and gazed down on his mum
The queen was relieved and started to smile
But then he did scream in a voice most vile

(head screams)

QUEEN Sweet head that was all the bread in the kingdom! What can I give you now?

HEAD SPACE!

QUEEN Oh of course! You poor thing, cramped in here!

NARRATOR The head was brought by the queen's royal guard
Down four flights of stairs and across the courtyard
To the castle's main room, the greatest great hall
Where they held all their luncheons, functions, and balls

QUEEN Is that better, sweet head?

HEAD (looks around for a moment, then screams) MORE SPACE!

NARRATOR The queen, dead eyed, felt compelled to comply
No option but one, though she couldn't say why
"I declare war!" she shouted on high
If any opposed she swore they would die

PRINCESS What is this? Why are we going to war?

QUEEN He needs more space. The kingdom to the south has the biggest castle in the world. He'll be much more comfortable there

PRINCESS Mom, I'm worried about you. You're not acting like yourself

QUEEN There's nothing to worry about. I know what I want. I know what to do.

PRINCESS We can't go to war for this THING! People are going to die!

QUEEN He's not a thing! He's my sweet sweet head!

PRINCESS He's a monster! (Goes to attack)

QUEEN (blocks her way) Get out! Get out! He needs space!

(Princess exits. Advisor intercepts in hallway)

ADVISOR Come now, princess, you must admit the queen is unwell. It's time for someone else to take the reins. I already have the support of the court. It would be so much easier if you just accepted the obvious and convinced the queen to resign.

DAUGHTER I'm handling it.

NARRATOR The princess was desperate, she needed some help
She jumped on a horse and took off with a yelp
To a slum of a slum filled with liquor and vice
Under a sign reading "spells 4 a price"

WITCH What do you want?

PRINCESS I'm looking for the witch

WITCH Which witch?

PRINCESS Whichever one can help me

WITCH With what?

PRINCESS My mom

WITCH Honey, we've all got mommy issues - my father traded my mother for a preserved corpse at an underground mummys for mommys market swap.

Didn't see me complaining - my new mummy was arguably more maternal, though the PTA wasn't a huge fa-

PRINCESS I need to stop a war

WITCH Alright alright - come on in - drama queen

NARRATOR So she told her the story of the head that appeared
And the witch listened keenly while stroking her beard

WITCH Okay big baby pops out of a head - let's see what I've got here (rifling through spell book) Ah! Here we go!

When a creature that's one is split into two
Combine over time is what you must do
Consume the addition till he is no more
But be sure to eat slowly or all ends in gore

NARRATOR She rushed back to the castle and then at nightfall
She slipped out of bed and snuck to the hall
Creeping silently up to the head where he laid
She reached into her shawl and pulled out a blade

The knife was so sharp, a shoe it could cut
For a moment she paused, checked in with her gut
Then she stabbed in his flesh and sliced off a cheek
And the head woke up with a thunderous shriek

But she was unshaken - the cut, it was clean
She snuck out back where she wouldn't be seen
The next day down to the kitchen she went
To fry up the baby, ignoring its scent

She served it to her mother with a side of hash brown
The queen took a bite and swallowed it down
She gasped, her mind clear, she was finally freed
From the intoxicating lure of the head's great greed

Her thoughts were hers and her actions were too
She got to her feet, she knew what to do
The head called out but she ignored its roar
As she ran to the court to call off the war

ADVISOR I'd like to thank you all for your support of my leadership-

QUEEN That won't be necessary.

NARRATOR The head was sent out of sight out of mind
 And so peace returned to the castle in time
 But still each day, till the queen's very last
 She ate a slice of strange meat with her breakfast

 The queen found a balance she hadn't before
 'tween her needs and others, that old tug of war
 Doing a little for herself was really just fine
 As long as she kept the needs of others in mind

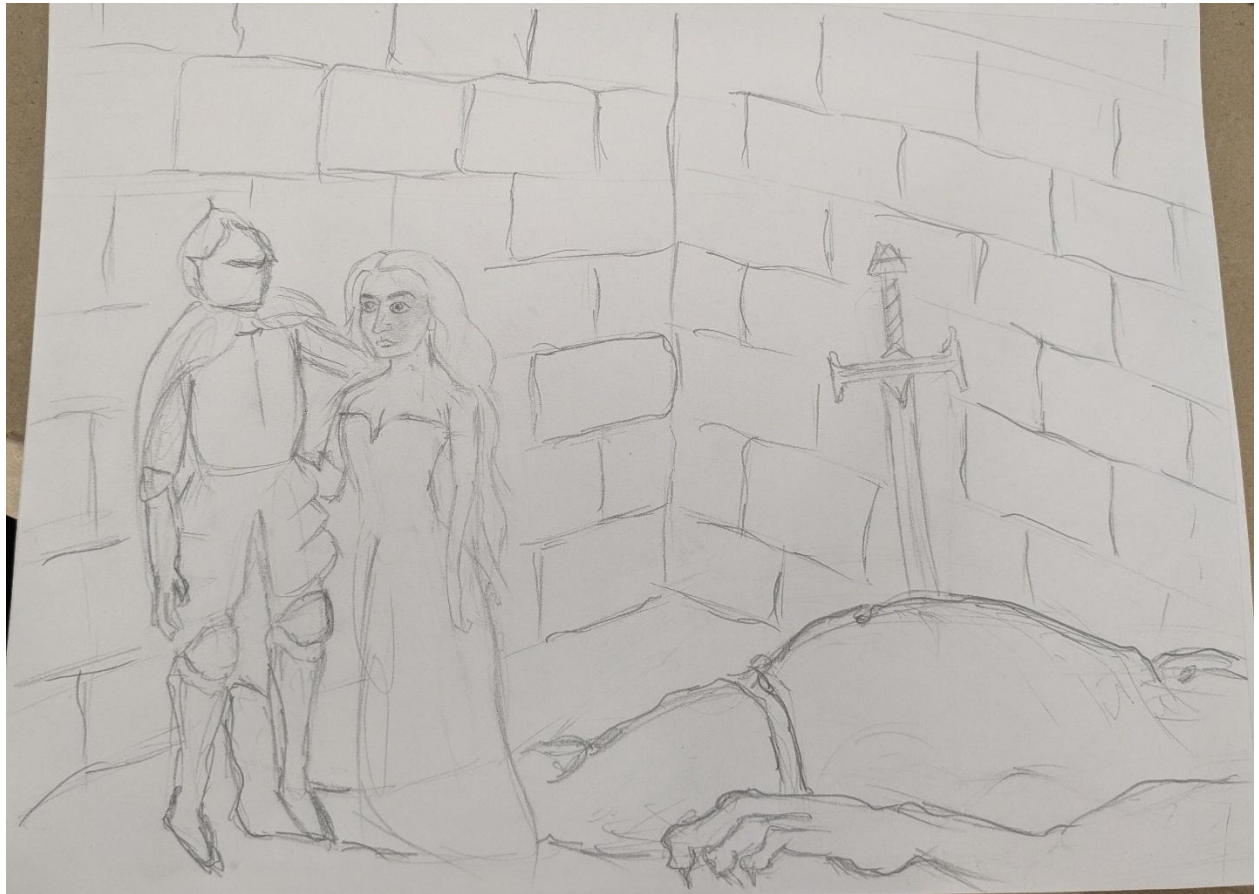
 But discord was brewing throughout the land
 The people rose up and she was shit-canned
 They took over the court, they filled it with laughter
 And they all lived happily ever after

ENDING

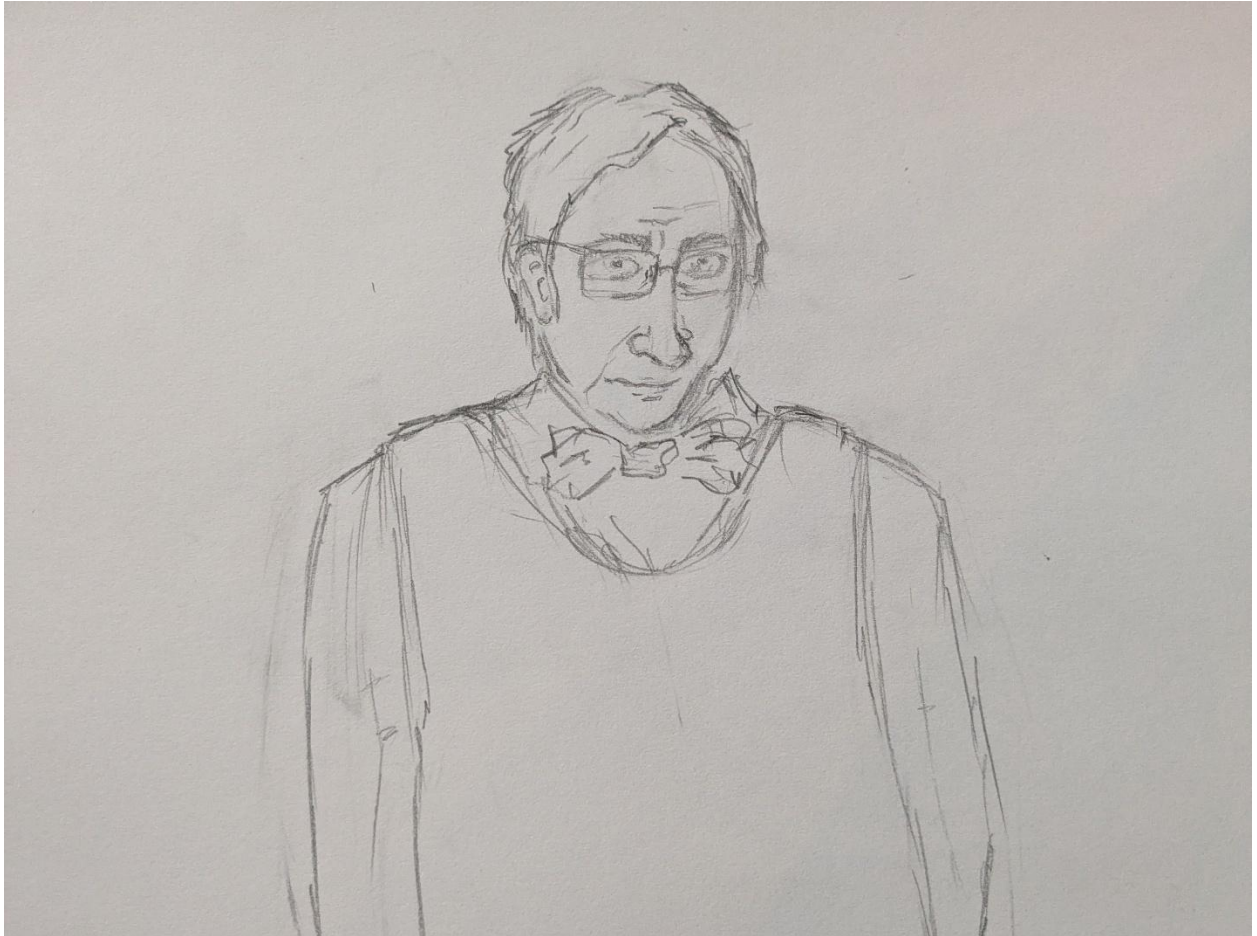
Not sure how I'm going to put a button on this baby yet! Probably won't know till I get it all on its feet & see how it feels in the end. Kinda feel like maybe it's now the expectation that in funny shows about something there's a moment where we break form and find a moment of earnestness but if I'm going to do that I want to make sure it's earned and natural and not super derivative

DESIGN IMAGES

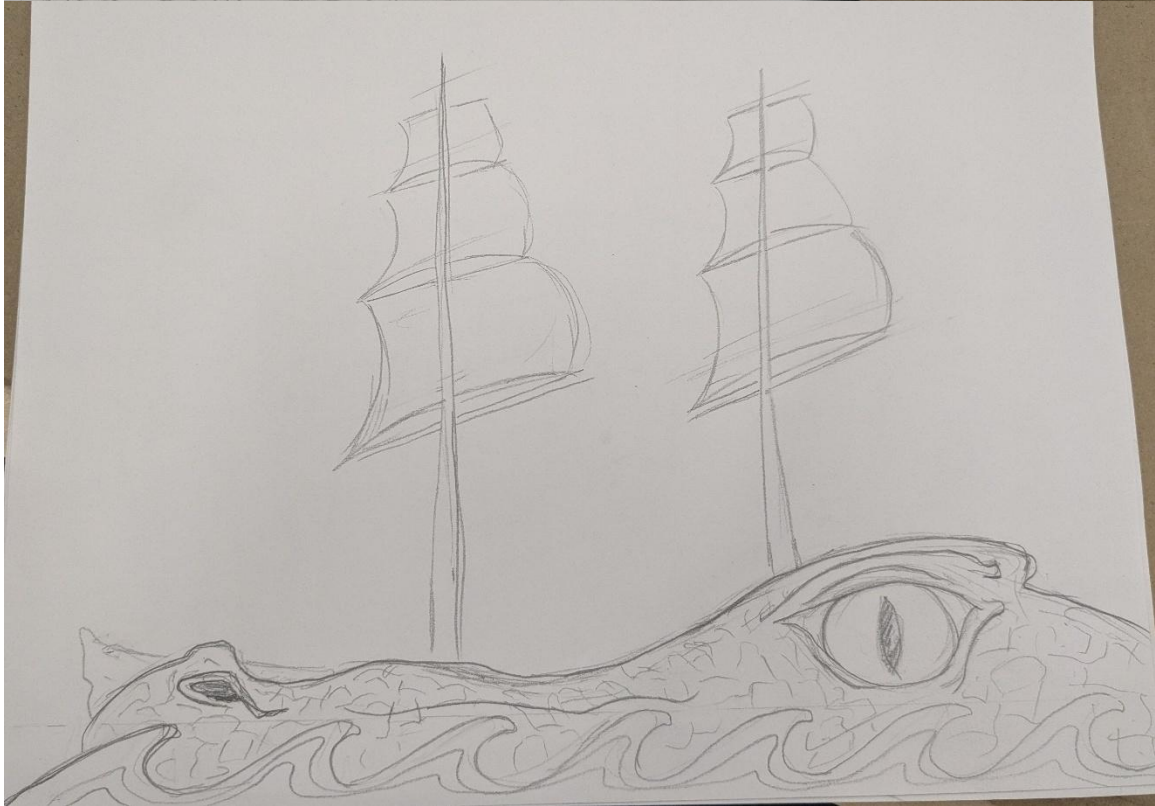
Typical Story



Host

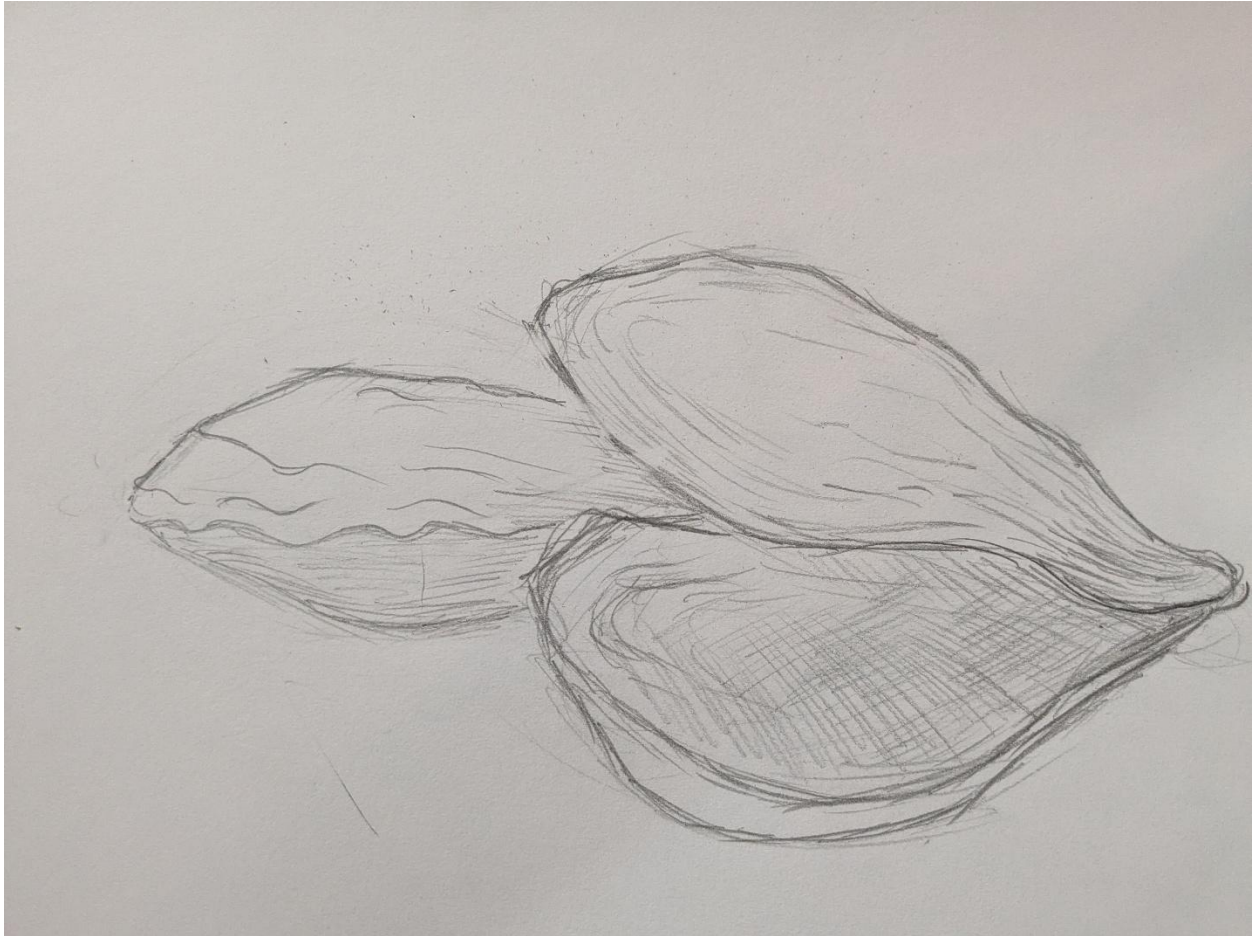


Punch and Judy





Oysters



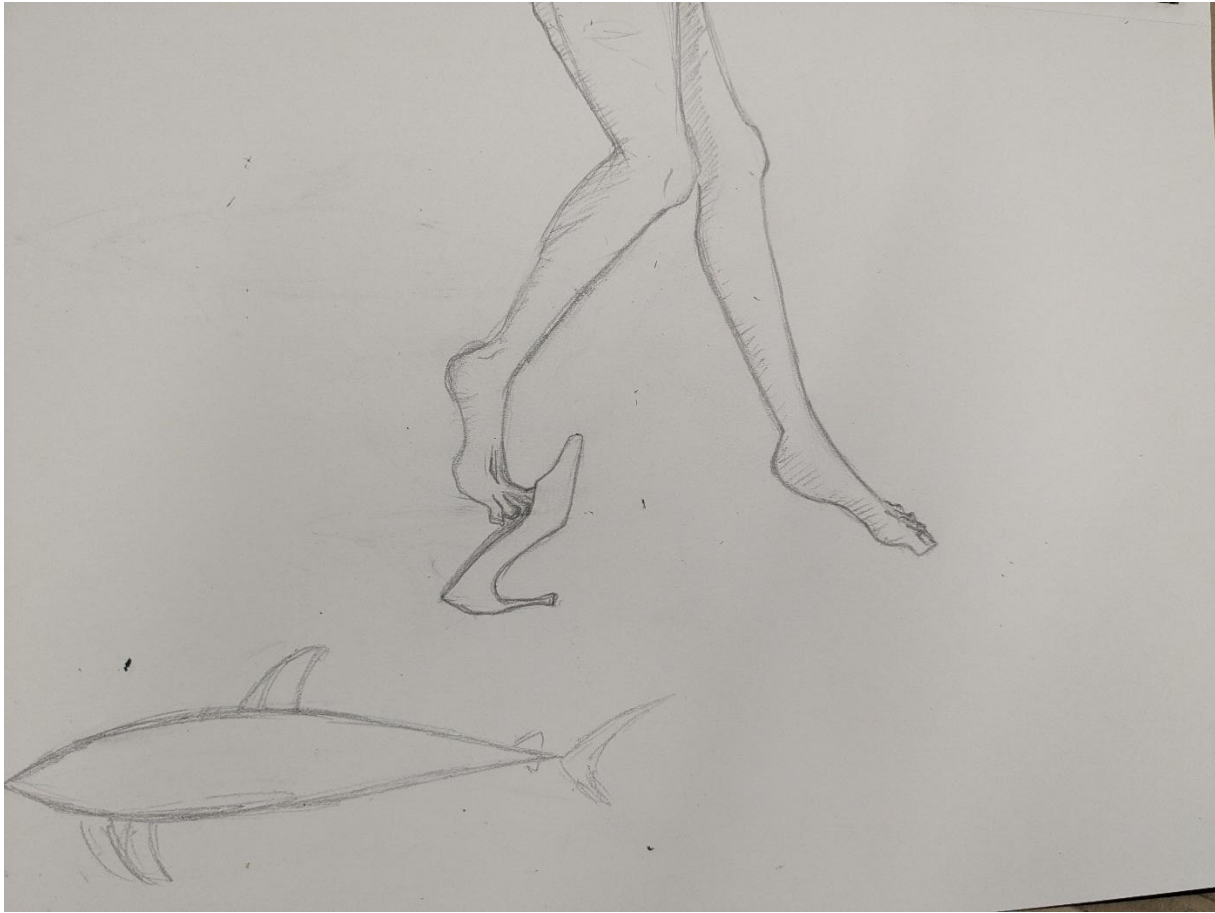
Shrill O Meter



Middlemarch



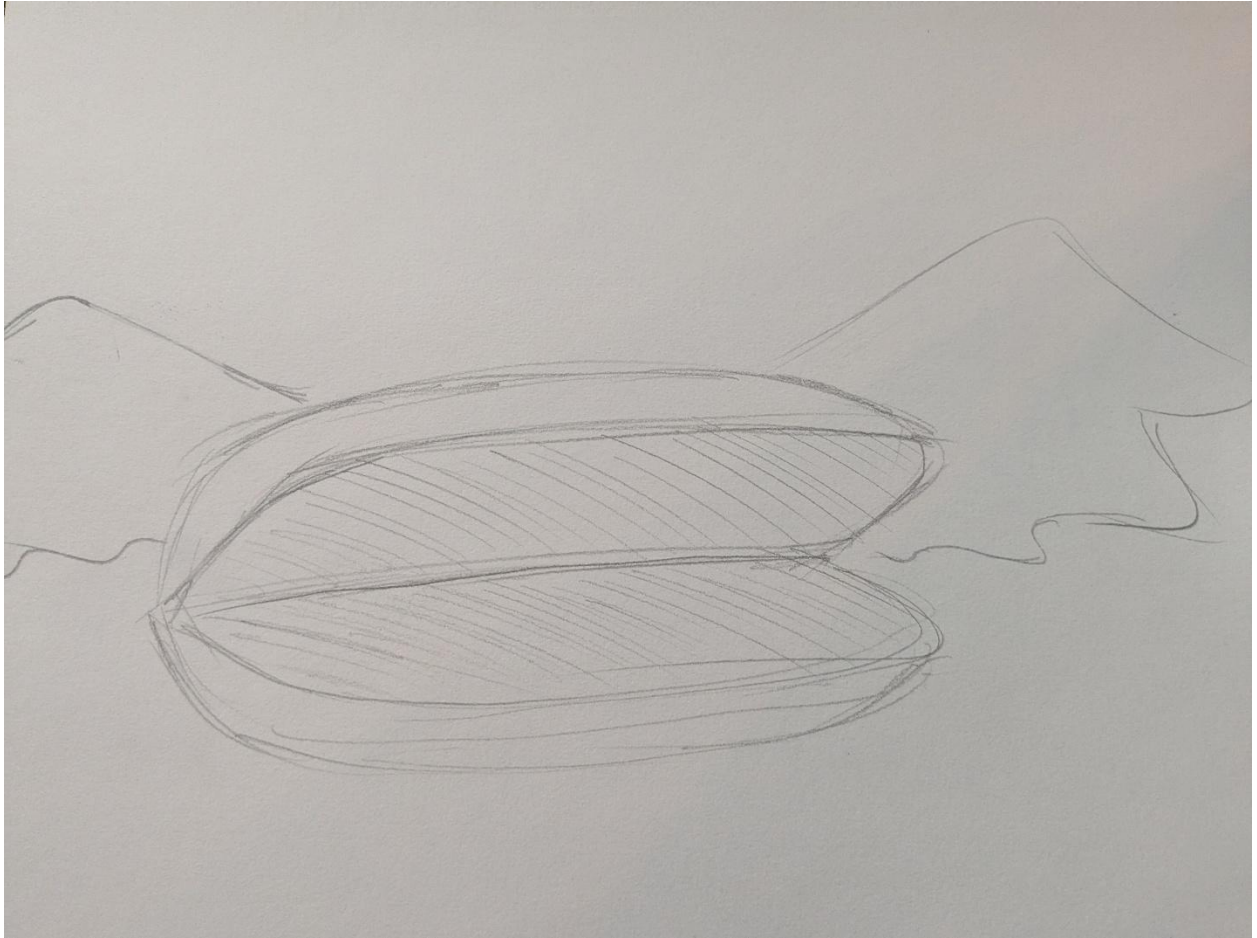
Jellyfish & Shark



Tradwife



Can I Be Frank?



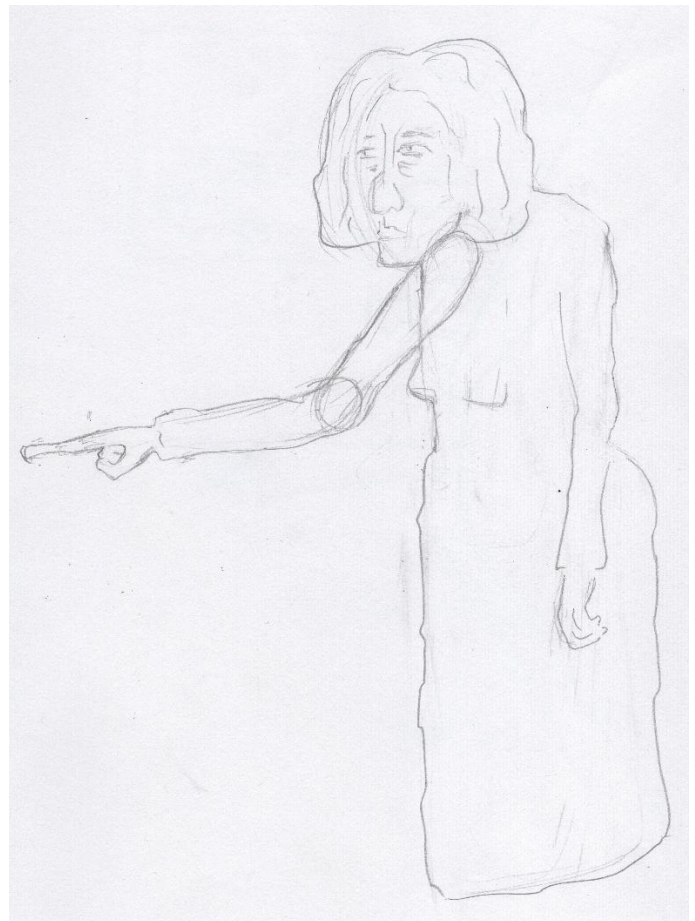
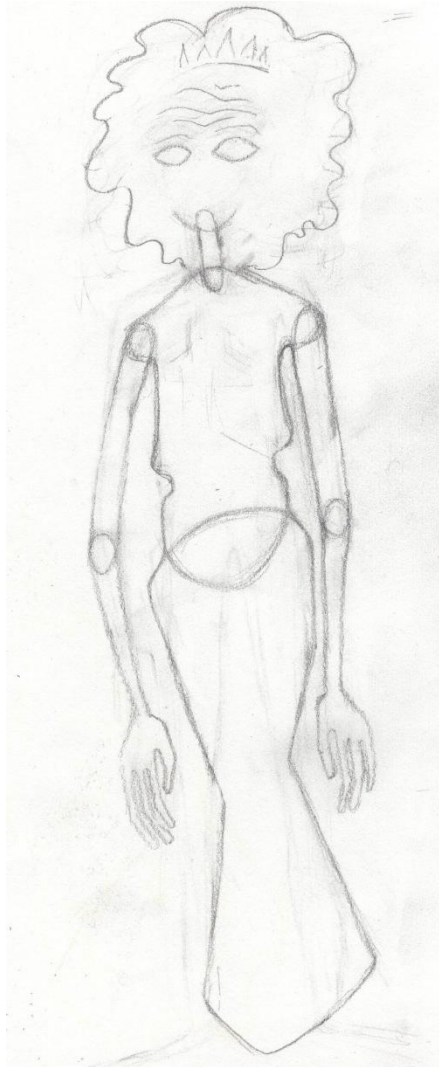
Grande and the Monster

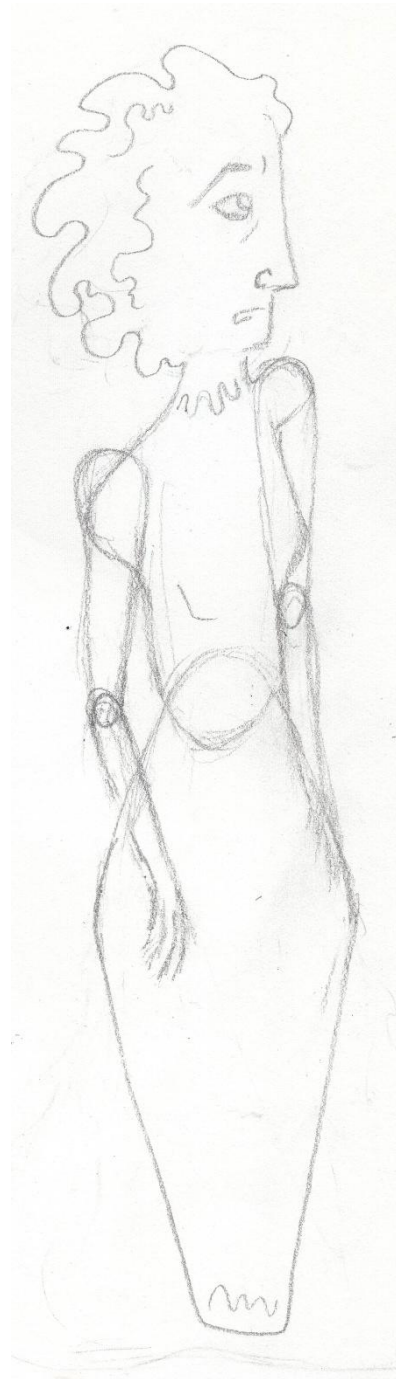
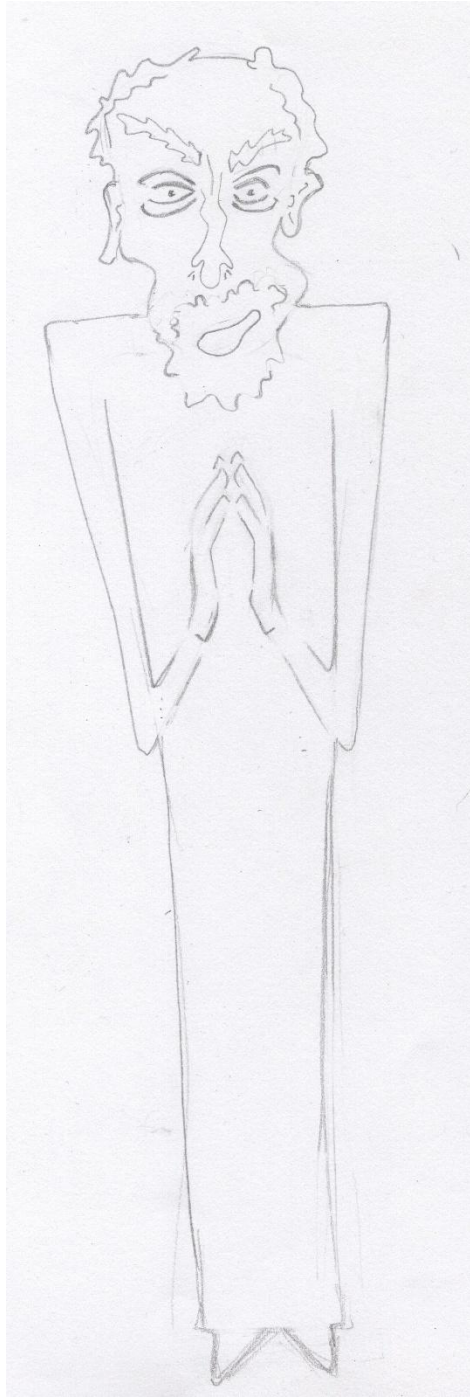


Some Slight Pressure

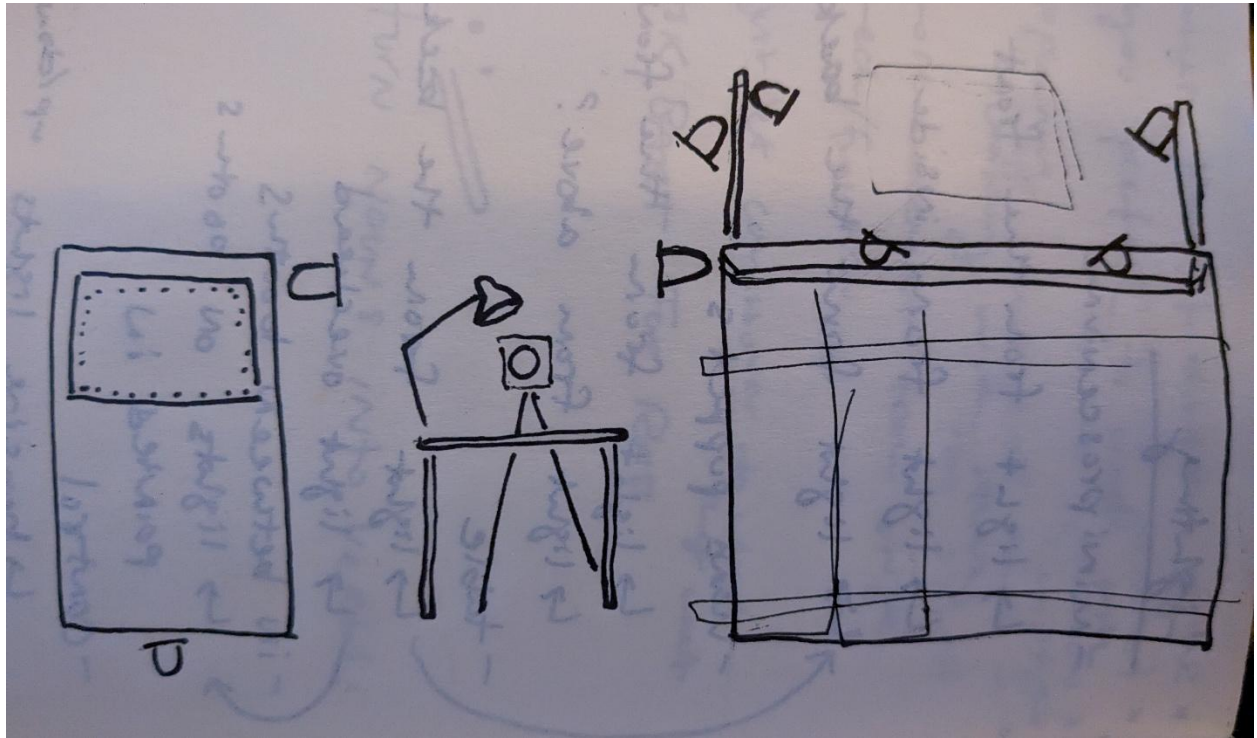


Fairytale

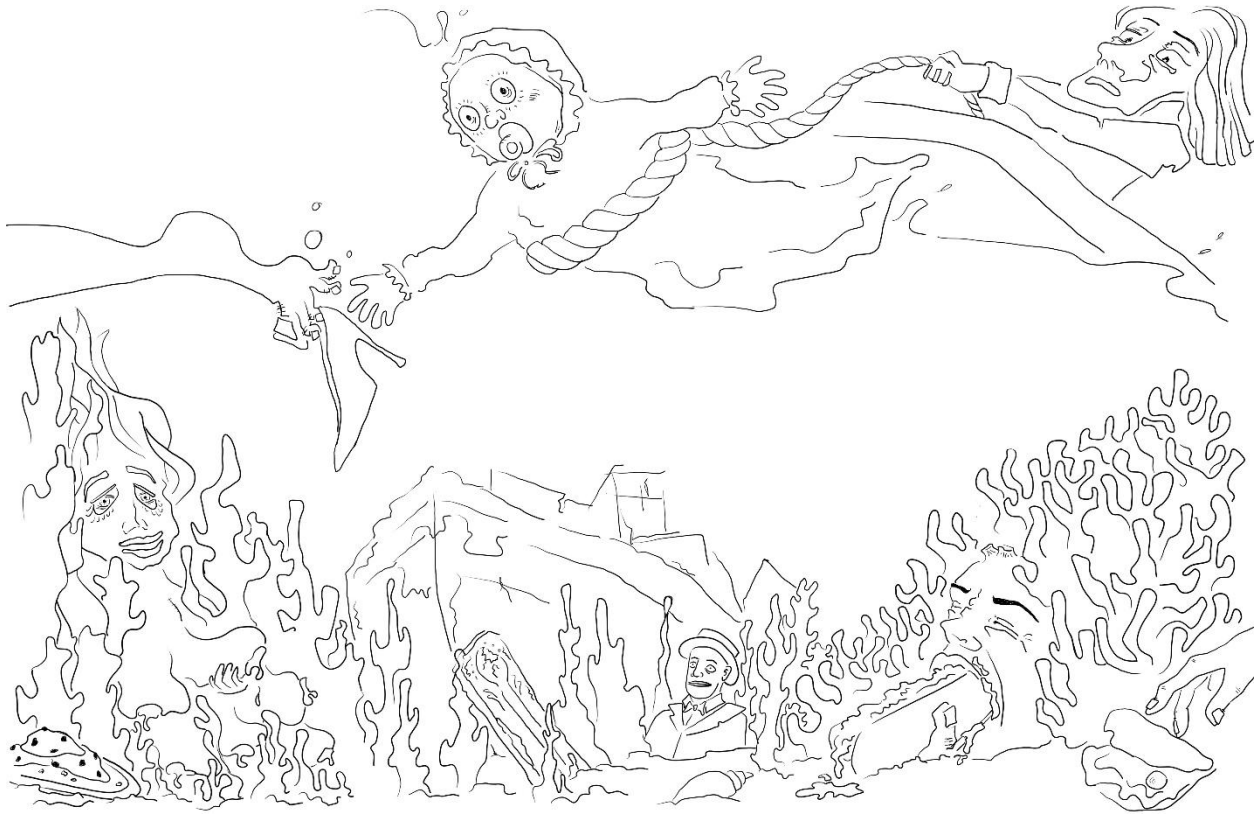




Stage Layout with Lighting



Draft Poster



BUDGET

Build List

Set

Kamishibai Booth

1" x 3" x 8' pine wood

¾" x 24" x 3' plywood

Hinges

bolts

nuts

1" x 2" x 6' wood

Hand Puppet Booth

1" x 12" x 8' pine wood

¼" x ¼" bolts

¼" nuts

Metal wall bracket

Folding table

Costumes

2 costumes for puppeteers

Thrift shop clothes to adjust

Extra cloth

Headpiece for musician

L200 foam

Extra cloth

Lighting

Dimmers

6 pack of birdie bulbs

Birdies

Mike stand

Flashlight

Power strip

Extension cord

Typical Story

Backdrop

¼" Plywood

Paint

Knight

¼" Plywood

Paint

Welding rods

Princess

¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Ogre

¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Ogre baby

¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Transitions

Host

L200 foam
Black magic sculpting foam
Jacket
Shirt

Oysters

Foot pedals
Black magic sculpting foam
L200 foam

Punch and Judy

Punch

3" x 3" x 4" maple wood
Doll clothes, adjusted
Paint

Judy

3" x 3" x 4" maple wood
Doll clothes, adjusted
Paint

Baby

3" x 3" x 4" maple wood
Doll clothes, adjusted
Paint

Boat

3" x 3" x 2' maple wood

Waves

1/4" plywood

Naval Officer

3" x 3" x 4" maple wood
Doll clothes, adjusted

Paint
Sailor
3" x 3" x 4" maple wood
Doll clothes, adjusted
Paint
Crocodile
3" x 3" x 8" Maplewood
Paint
Cotton
Buoy
3" x 3" x 1" maple wood
rope

Shrill o Meter

Backdrop
¼" plywood
Paint
Businesswoman
¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Stranger
¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Shrill o Meter
¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Cop
¼" Plywood
Paint
Welding rods

Middlemarch

Dorothea head
L200 Foam
Black magic sculpting foam
Celia head
L200 foam
Black magic sculpting foam
Props
Costume jewelry

Jellyfish and Shark

Jellyfish

- Spider catcher

- Worbla

- Paint

Legs

- Worbla

- Welding rods

Shark

- 3" x 3" x 6" maple wood

- Welding rod

Backdrop

- ¼" plywood

Tradwife

Tradwife

- Philips avent natural response

Can I be Frank?

- 3 Hot dog hand puppets

- 4" x 24" x 72" upholstery foam

- paint

Heaven's gates

- ¼" plywood

Joey Chestnut voodoo doll

- Cotton fabric

- Cotton stuffing

Props

- Veggie dogs

- Hot dog buns

- Ketchup

- Mustard

- Relish

- Serving tray

Grande and the Monster

Hot lady

- 3" x 3" x 3" maple wood

- Fabric

- Doll clothes

2 friends

- 3" x 3" x 3" maple wood

- Fabric

- Doll clothes

Monster

3" x 3" x 3" maple wood

Fabric

Doll clothes

Some Slight Pressure

Stirrups

Uterus

Jello

Fairytale

Shadow puppets

100lb cardstock

Budget

supplies	number	price	total
8oz acrylic paint	5	10	50
hinges	8	1.49	11.92
1" x 12" x 8' pine wood	5	21.46	107.3
1/4" x 1/4" bolt	40	0.93	37.2
1/4" nuts	40	0.1	4
metal wall bracket	4	2.32	9.28
1" x 3" x 8' pine wood	3	11.53	34.59
3/4" x 24" x 3' plywood	13	22.22	288.86
bolts	4	0.93	3.72
nuts	4	0.1	0.4
1" x 2" x 6' wood	4	8.04	32.16
folding table	1	60	60
thrift shop clothes to adjust	1	100	100
yards of cloth	5	40	200
dimmers	3	42.95	128.85
6 pack of birdie bulbs	1	19.94	19.94
birdies	6	29.95	179.7
mike stand	1	29.99	29.99
flashlight	1	20	20
power strip	3	6.79	20.37
extension cord	3	15.98	47.94
3/4" x 4' x 8' plywood	1	37.71	37.71
box of metal welding rods	1	37.99	37.99
black magic sculpting foam	1	17.99	17.99
jacket	1	30	30
shirt	1	20	20
foot pedal	2	44.99	89.98
3"x3"x3' maple wood	1	28.95	28.95
doll clothes to adjust	1	30	30
1/4" x 2' x 4' plywood	3	14.94	44.82
costume jewlrey	3	10	30
worbla	1	37	37
Philips Avent Natural Response	3	30	90
4" x 24" x 72" upholstry foam	1	34.39	34.39
veggie dog 4 pack	4	6.99	27.96
8 pack hot dog buns	2	2.97	5.94
ketchup	1	2.19	2.19
mustard	1	1.67	1.67
relish	1	3.14	3.14
serving tray	1	2.49	2.49
cotton by the yard	3	3.36	10.08
lb cotton stuffing	1	17.73	17.73

toddler clothes	3	32	96
3"x3"x3' wood	1	28.95	28.95
stirrups	1	199	199
musician hours	60	25	1500
gallons of gas	10.5	3	31.5
posters	100	1.5	150
			3811.58