

**Hail Tonya**  
Cat Bitteker  
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### **LOGLINE**

A stagecraft professor from CSU is recruited by the Cleveland Theater and must find inspiration as a part-time playwright to keep her new job, but with severe writer's block, she turns to increasingly illegal means to get the inspiration she needs.

### **CHARACTERS**

**Tonya Kiev** - Cynical theater professor who feeds into her morbid curiosities.

**Waylon** - A humble yet stubborn reporter for WKYC (a Cleveland TV news station), as well as Kiev's lover.

**Eloise West** - Young, spirited writing intern for the Cleveland Theater.

**Teddy Goodluck** - Strict but fair producer for the Cleveland Theater, and Kiev's supervisor.

**Sal Sagarin** - Tonya's friend and mentor of 15 years. A published crime/mystery author.

**Mike Waltz** - Head writer for the Cleveland Theater.

### **SYNOPSIS**

CLEVELAND, 1994. 39 year old tenured stagecraft professor, Tonya Kiev, teaches a playwriting class at the CSU campus. Her class is lackluster and she shows no passion for her craft. That same day, she takes the train home and is assaulted and mugged by a drunk stockbroker. After being attacked, she becomes increasingly paranoid of those around her. She continues to teach her playwriting class and slowly develops inspiration to write her own play based on her experiences. The students from Kiev's acting class perform her play for the end-of-the-semester performance. A producer for the Cleveland Theater, Teddy Goodluck, is at the play and Tonya quickly acquires a part-time writing job under Goodluck. Tonya soon discovers, however, that the theater industry is an untamed zoo, and she must learn to navigate her new, temporary life. Suffering from writer's block, however, Tonya falls behind. From this, she takes increasingly suspicious actions in order to gain inspiration for her play. Her life spirals after she is sexually assaulted and, as a result, ends up accidentally murdering a writing intern. All productions at the theater are quickly halted and those closest to Tonya become increasingly suspicious of actions. With an arsenal of crimes committed and a fear of getting caught, she quits the Cleveland Theater. Luck on her side, Tonya returns to her peaceful teaching position, though she does not live with the same security and comfort she once had.

## ACT I

1. TONYA KIEV is lecturing a playwriting class. She reminds students of the end-of-semester play. She dismisses the class. Tonya takes the train home. A DRUNK STOCKBROKER sits next to her and harasses her. He wraps his arm around her and tries to look in her bag. Tonya attempts to leave, but he pins her to the seat.

Tonya shoves the man, slaps him in the face with her book and exits the train. The man chases after her, grabbing her shoulder. She turns, shoves the man. The man stumbles back and falls onto the tracks. A train is heard approaching. Tonya blinks. Tonya is still sitting on the train, she looks at the man. She slithers away from him, exiting the train as the doors open.

2. She enters her home, disheveled. Tonya realizes the man took her wallet. Tonya fires up her computer and looks through the Cleveland Police Reporter. Tonya makes herself a drink. She makes sure her doors and windows are locked. Then, she sits on the couch, trying to relax.

3. Tonya is at the lecture hall. She stares at the class outline, but does not follow it. She tells the class to think about a script they want to write based on a real life situation. She dismisses class early.

4. Tonya goes to the DMV. They tell her to cancel her cards, to which she replies she only carries cash. She is missing paperwork, so they cannot process her request for a new ID. She leaves.

5. Tonya is home. She stares at her student's scripts she assigned them to write a while ago. Tonya taps her pen on the stack of scripts and glances at her computer. The Cleveland Police Reporter is pulled up. She exits the reporter tab and opens a Word doc. She types out the beginnings of a play: a woman's reaction to an unfortunate series of events of getting attacked, mugged, denied, and unheard. A comedy.

6. Tonya meets with SAL SAGARIN. He talks about his life: a job offer to be a celebrity's ghost writer, his unhappy marriage to his wife but she doesn't know he's unhappy, his latest crime novel he has to write. Tonya asks him to read her script. They discuss her writer's block. Sal asks how she came up with the idea. She tells him the truth.

7. Tonya is at the school theater, her students are rehearsing a scene. A PROFESSOR sits in the audience. Tonya wraps up the rehearsal, giving the students notes. The students tear down the stage and exit slowly. The professor approaches Tonya. He tells her Teddy Goodluck, a producer for the Cleveland Theater, is coming to the end-of-semester show, as requested by the Dean. The prof says Teddy wants to feature it at the Public Auditorium for the entirety of Cleveland.

8. Tonya is typing her play at home. She paces the house, glancing out the window occasionally. She notices a car parked in front of her house. She becomes paranoid. Her phone rings, it is Sal. They converse. Tonya hangs up, still watching the car. The car door opens, Tonya jumps. Two

MEN exit the car, holding copies of THE BOOK OF MORMON. The two men start down the street. Tonya looks back at her computer, powers it off and heads upstairs for bed.

**9.** Tonya watches her students rehearse the play. The prof appears and watches with Tonya. They talk, the prof questions the female lead, which sets Tonya off. The students finish performing. Tonya mentions that next week is the dress rehearsal. The students leave. Tonya collects her things and starts to leave. The prof stops her and advances towards her. Tonya gets nervous. He compliments her.

**10.** The theater has a full audience. Students are on stage performing. Tonya is backstage, watching the play. She notices the prof with Teddy in the audience. The play ends and the students bow. The curtain drops.

Tonya stands with a drink in her hand at an after party. People acknowledge her. TEDDY GOODLUCK approaches her. Teddy proposes adapting her script into a major production for the Cleveland Theater. He invites her to the Public Auditorium to see a show.

**11.** Tonya is on the train. There are a few people around her minding their business. A woman on the other side of the train sits with a man who is being handsy. She is physically not interested and repeatedly asks him to stop. Tonya glances at them before looking around the train. Nobody cares, they only stare. Tonya smirks.

**12.** Tonya is at the Public Auditorium. She buys two tickets. She walks to the WKYC station a few blocks away. She waits by a car, leaning on the trunk. WAYLON exits the station and notices Tonya. They have a quiet, but intimate conversation. It is revealed that Waylon is her lover. Tonya pulls out one of two tickets for the play. Waylon agrees to go with her. They kiss. Waylon goes back inside with the ticket. Tonya heads to the train station.

**13.** Tonya is in front of her last playwriting class of the semester. She requests their final scripts. Students stack them in a pile on the front table.

**14.** Tonya gets home and turns on her computer. She gets an email from Teddy requesting a copy of her play. He notes an address. Tonya prints her play. She boxes the play and packages it. She writes the address with Sharpie.

**15.** Tonya is at the post office. She pays and the mailman takes her package. She goes to the DMV and tries the door. Locked. A sign pasted to the door says ‘gone for lunch.’

**16.** Tonya is getting ready. She finishes her drink, grabs her bag, and leaves. Waylon waits in his car outside. Tonya and Waylon are at the theater.

Tonya meets Teddy. Teddy brings her to his office. Tonya mentions class is out of session for winter break and wonders if she can work at the theater over the winter. Teddy mentions a part-time writing position. Tonya is hesitant, she asks about production roles. Teddy reminds her he's interested in her writing. Teddy offers the position. Tonya accepts.

## ACT II

1. Tonya enters Teddy's office. He tells her she will be working with an intern, Eloise, to revise the play. Tonya looks through her play, reading the revision notes. Tonya and Teddy discuss revisions. ELOISE WEST enters. Eloise recognizes Tonya, she mentions that Tonya set her up with the internship when she was an undergrad. Tonya does not remember her, but tries to be polite.

Tonya and Eloise are in an empty office. Tonya reads through the revisions, making her own notes on a pad. Eloise observes, she spits notes and observations. Tonya stands, saying she has writer's block. Eloise says she will write her own draft to help out.

2. Tonya is at home trying to find inspiration. She calls Sal and explains her struggle. She details the scene she is stuck on. He offers some feedback. She hangs up and attempts to carry out the scene herself. She ends up hurting herself.

3. Tonya sits at Teddy's desk. Teddy asks how Tonya got injured. Tonya lies. Teddy urges Tonya to work with Eloise. Eloise offers to work together at her apartment. Teddy watching, Tonya sadly accepts. Eloise leaves the office. Tonya follows but is stopped by Teddy. He reminds her that she wanted the job, so she will have to keep up.

Eloise types on her computer and Tonya sits reading. Eloise asks for input. Tonya remains mostly silent, except for telling her that it is not authentic to what actually happened. Eloise inquires. Tonya tells her it is based on a true story. Eloise tells her to just write the truth then. Tonya says she doesn't know the truth.

4. Tonya sits with Sal. Sal congratulates her on her new job. Sal goes on to discuss his newest crime novel. He details the plot.

5. Tonya walks home. She walks past an alley and notices a WOMAN getting assaulted by a MAN. Tonya stops and hides behind the wall, watching. The man throws the woman to the ground and runs away. Tonya approaches the woman once the man disappears. The woman begs Tonya to call the police. Tonya hesitates. Tonya notices the woman's purse on the ground and picks it up. Tonya bolts down the alley with the purse. The woman screams as Tonya disappears.

Tonya stops in front of her house, but does not go in. She continues to Waylon's house. She stops out front and sees Waylon dancing with his WIFE in the window. Tonya frowns. She digs through the purse's contents, pulls out a wallet and chucks the bag into a garbage can on the road.

6. Tonya scrolls through the Police Reporter. The TV is on in the background, commercials play. She looks through the stolen wallet on her desk. She studies the ID. The picture looks surprisingly similar to Tonya. Based on the name on the ID, Tonya looks through the reporter. Nothing yet. Tonya goes to the window, peering out cautiously. She checks the door to make

sure it's locked. A commercial for a gun store plays. Tonya looks at the screen, intrigued. Tonya turns off the TV.

**7.** Eloise hands Teddy a revised draft. Teddy instructs them to continue revising and they will have a writers meeting about it in the afternoon.

Eloise stops Tonya. She offers for them to have a drink together and talk about the script. Tonya declines.

**8.** Waylon is at the TV station. He's watching the live news broadcast. The anchor on the green screen discusses the "Dog of the Week." The anchor goes on to a crime that took place where a woman was assaulted and mugged, no leads, the criminal's were a man and a woman. The anchor says the victim has been compensated, but the criminals have not been identified, case closed. The show goes into an ad break.

Waylon goes to his manager, inquiring about the case. Manager asks what Waylon does again, Waylon replies "Dog of the Week," manager is not impressed and tells him that he should stick to his job. Waylon expresses that he wants to go into crime reporting. Manager tells him maybe at his next job.

**9.** Tonya is sitting at a long table with a bunch of writers. They go over her play. Everyone spits notes, ideas, critiques. One writer mentions that the lead should be a man. Tonya gets angry. Teddy calms Tonya down, saying they will keep the lead a woman. The head writer, MIKE WALTZ, goes on to manipulate the main character into a hopeless romantic, dumb-blondesc character. A few writers, including Mike, make inappropriate, sexual jokes about the main lead.

Tonya goes to the bathroom, frustrated. She splashes water on her face, and studies herself in the mirror. Tonya leaves the bathroom and packs up her notebooks to leave.

Eloise spots Tonya after the meeting ends. Eloise gives Tonya a marked up draft of the play.

**10.** Tonya arrives at Sal's apartment. He's hosting a wife-swap party. They go to the bedroom to talk. Tonya asks for advice. Sal gives it. Sal goes on to tell her that he is divorcing his wife since he is gay. Tonya helps him. Sal offers Tonya weed.

**11.** Waylon is speaking with the assault victim. The woman tells him what happened and describes the criminals, but doesn't remember their features. Waylon says he will investigate the case.

Waylon is home. He goes to throw a bag of trash away. He notices a purse in his garbage can. He takes it out and asks his wife about it. He empties the contents: lipstick, receipts, wrappers, a small bottle of Advil. He looks at a receipt. It says the victim's name.

**12.** Tonya is high, watching people around her. Topless women and naked men. A couple makes out on the couch next to her. Sal is on her other side, scribbling in a notebook. Sal's wife comes

up to Sal and tries to be intimate. Sal pushes her away, saying he is with Tonya. Sal asks if Tonya is ok. Tonya says she wants to buy a gun. Sal tells her to go home and sleep off the drugs.

**13.** Tonya is on her way home when she notices Mike walking in the opposite direction. The writer notices her and approaches her. Tonya attempts to act sober. Mike chats and invites himself to her house.

**14.** The two go to her house. Tonya makes him a cup of tea and they talk about the script. She enforces that it is her script and does not want her story to be diminished for money. Mike makes a deal with her that she will get more creative freedom if she gives him sexual services. Tonya tells him to leave. Tonya gets up and goes to the door. Mike stops her, grabbing her wrist.

Tonya grabs her landline and bashes the side of his head with it. The man gets mad and throws Tonya onto the floor. She grabs a poker from the fireplace and hits the man in the shin. She gets up and slams the poker over his head. The man crumples to the floor.

Tonya blinks and looks the writer in the eye, he is still holding onto her wrist. The man threatens that he can get her fired and the theater can take the rights to her play.

**15.** Tonya is brushing her tongue in her bathroom. She looks terrible. She puts more toothpaste on her brush and continues to brush. She checks to make sure her doors and windows are locked. She goes to bed, curls up, and cries. She falls asleep.

**16.** Tonya wakes up and gets ready. She sticks the stolen ID in her pocket. She is dressed to look like the victim. Tonya enters a gun show. She looks around, finds a pistol, shows the fake ID, purchases it, and leaves. Tonya shoves the gun in her purse.

**17.** Waylon goes through a police report of a male suspect. Waylon goes to the police station and figures out the suspect is in the drunk tank. Waylon asks if he could ask a few questions to the suspect. The officer reluctantly agrees. Waylon speaks to the suspect. The suspect agrees it was him and explains what happened.

**18.** Tonya calls in sick. Tonya types her play quietly. Waylon calls. He invites her to a nice dinner.

**19.** Tonya and Waylon sit at a restaurant. Waylon discusses his side job. Tonya realizes he is talking about her crime. Waylon asks about Tonya's job. Tonya tells part of the truth. Waylon is sympathetic, but positive.

Waylon throws Tonya on her bed. They make out. Tonya gets flashbacks to Mike. She makes Waylon stop and apologizes. Waylon respects her. They go to bed.

**20.** Waylon makes himself coffee quietly while Tonya is still in bed. He notices the stolen ID on the counter and studies it, confused. Tonya appears in the kitchen. Waylon puts the ID down.

Tonya goes on to explain why she has it without being prompted. She lies. Waylon is suspicious, but chooses to believe her. Tonya changes the subject.

Waylon leaves. Tonya goes to the kitchen and cuts the stolen ID in half before throwing it in the trash.

**21.** Tonya decides to go to the theater. She sees advertisement posters for her play pasted to the doors. Eloise says they are doing a writers meeting. Tonya goes to the meeting. She voices her revisions and her opinions. Some writers dispute her changes, but Mike says he likes them. The meeting concludes with Tonya being heard, but only partly.

Tonya sits in the main theater. Production crew builds the set and messes with the lighting. Eloise approaches her. Eloise compliments her revisions and tells her rehearsals will begin in the next two weeks so the play needs to be finished. Tonya acknowledges her. Eloise says they will be having a team dinner the next night and Tonya is invited.

**22.** Tonya is with the other writers at dinner. She stares at Mike. He notices and winks at her. She goes to the roof for some air. The head writer follows her. Eloise notices Tonya leaving and follows as well.

Tonya smokes a cigarette. She props the door open with a rock. Mike appears. Tonya is afraid. Mike tries to reason with her. Tonya tries to leave, but Mike pushes her against the wall and covers her mouth. Tonya takes her pistol from her purse and pistol whips him.

**23.** Eloise enters the roof, making sure the door is still propped. She does not see anyone. She sits down and smokes a cigarette.

**24.** Tonya runs to the door and heads down the stairs. The writer chases her. He trips on the rock as he goes through, it moves out of place. The door seals shut. Tonya runs down the stairs. The writer grabs her and stops her. Tonya freaks out and fires the gun. The writer crumples to the ground, bleeding.

**25.** Eloise hears a bang. She gets up and goes to the door. She freaks out when she notices the door is locked.

**26.** Panicked, Tonya exits the building and runs. She throws the gun in a trash can without stopping. She stops in front of a grocery store. She stares at her reflection in the window, blood splatters her leggings and face. She grabs a fresh pair of pantyhose and a pack of makeup wipes. She purchases them, then goes to the bathroom. She changes, freshens up, wipes the blood off, and leaves.

**27.** Tonya sits down at the table of writers. She keeps up appearances, smiling and laughing. Someone inquires where Eloise went. Someone tells her Eloise went with Tonya, Tonya does not understand. Someone else jokes that Mike probably got a hold of Eloise. Everyone laughs. Tonya laughs with them. Everyone decides to pay and leave. Tonya follows suit.

**28.** The next morning, Tonya turns on the television. A news broadcast plays of a dead woman found on the roof of a restaurant: Eloise West. The anchor also mentions Mike was found shot, and is now in a coma.

The phone rings. Teddy tells Tonya to come to the theater. She looks up at the Police Reporter. Every case on the page is a crime Tonya committed. Tonya freaks out.

**29.** Police surround the theater. Cops question various employees throughout the theater. Tonya goes straight to Teddy's office. Teddy is speaking with an officer. The two turn when Tonya enters. The officer takes Tonya into another room for questioning. The cop gets the info he needs and moves on to another employee. Shocked, Tonya sits at a desk and flips through her script.

Teddy enters and tells her they are halting all productions until further notice. He tells Tonya to go home.

### ACT III

**1.** Waylon speaks with the victim again. He mentions Tonya and gives her purse back. She tells her truth. Waylon comes to a realization.

**2.** Tonya is with Sal. Sal is filling out divorce paperwork. Tonya tells him what happened at the restaurant. Sal promises to keep it a secret. Tonya tells him she wants revenge. Sal tells her to go home and enjoy her Christmas.

Tonya sits quietly in her home. The play sits on the table next to her. She throws away the marked up play.

**3.** Waylon heads to Tonya's house. Waylon confronts her about the mugging. Tonya denies it. Waylon begs her to tell the truth. Tonya still lies. She tries to tell him what she has been through. Waylon does not listen. He bombards her with questions. Tonya goes upstairs, trying to escape his assault. She yells at him, forcing him to understand her POV. Waylon feels sympathy for her, but he does not let up. Waylon grabs her and pulls her close. He kisses her. He begs one more time. Tonya says nothing.

Defeated, Waylon lets her go. He says he is releasing the story to the news. He apologizes and leaves. Tonya is alone.

**4.** Waylon is at the news station, sitting in his car. He stares at the paperwork in the passenger seat. His evidence. He is torn.

Waylon enters the station. He goes to his manager and urges to broadcast the story. The manager gets mad at him and says Waylon is supposed to find the "dog of the week" not "psycho of the week." Waylon sits at a computer, defeated. He pulls up a package about a Foxhound and starts to edit it.



5. Tonya is on the train. The train stops and Tonya gets off. She bumps into someone on her way out the door. They tell her to watch it. She immediately turns around, grabs the woman by the coat collar, and punches her in the face. She shoves the woman into the train. Tonya exits.
6. Tonya goes to the hospital. She sits on a chair in Mike's room. Tonya stands and slowly walks over to the writer. She grabs a pillow from the side of the bed. She smothers him. The heart monitor flatlines. She leaves the room.
7. Tonya stops at Lake Erie. She goes to the news station. She leans on Waylon's car and smokes a cigarette. She pulls a note from her pocket and puts it on Waylon's windshield under the wiper. It reads: 'DINNER TONIGHT? -T'
8. Tonya is at home. She types out a two-weeks notice for the theater. She prints it and puts it in an envelope.
9. She walks to the post office. She stops at the DMV. She gets a license replacement request in. She notices the mugging victim also requesting a replacement. The victim doesn't recognize Tonya. Tonya smiles and leaves. Tonya drops the letter at the post office.
10. Tonya enters the lecture hall. She smiles at the room full of students. She asks how their break went. She begins to teach.

**THE END**