

Reimagine

by

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Cast:

DAPHNE – Female, 17

MONIQUE – Female 17 - Monique was written to be a woman of color, but that is not a firm limitation

JULIE – Female 45

KURT – Male 45

Time: Present

Setting: Two rooms. Stage left is a teenager's bedroom, with a desk and computer, where Daphne and Monique are present. Stage right is a kitchen, where Julie and Kurt are present. Daphne and Monique will never directly converse with Julie and Kurt. Julie and Kurt will be continually moving and interacting while Daphne and Monique speak, setting the table for lunch.

This play is original and has yet to be published.

Biography

Scott Lummer is an award-winning playwright and mediocre actor, with over 50 professional productions worldwide including Sydney, London, Los Angeles, and yes, Akron. He's the first playwright to win the British Theatre Challenge in consecutive years and has created the first play used as a TED talk. Genres range from futuristic to drama to comedy, and he tries to find the flaws in protagonists and the good in antagonists.

*Play opens with Daphne in front of a computer and Monique behind her.  
Julie is holding a tablet. Kurt enters*

KURT

I parked the truck out back. Let me know where you want everything.

JULIE

Looking at tablet, barely noticing Kurt

Uh huh.

KURT

Might rain in a bit. Should get everything put away soon. (looks at Julie – no response). Julie!

JULIE

Continues to look at tablet

That's nice.

KURT

The truck's on fire, but I'll wait for the rain to put it out.

JULIE

Good id ... What?

KURT

What has you so enraptured?

JULIE

It's a new TED talk. On climate change.

KURT

Can you put it down?

JULIE

Watch it with me. We always used to love watching TED talks together.

KURT

A TED talk? That's porn for intellectuals. You can watch it later -- I need to talk to you.

JULIE

You know where all the supplies go.

KURT

Actually, I don't. But it's not about that. Where's our daughter?

JULIE

In her room ... with

Sound of text alert; Monique looks at phone

JULIE and DAPHNE

Simultaneously

Monique

DAPHNE

Who's that? Monique ... (Rises, crosses behind Monique to look at her phone) Mon! Let me see.  
Grabs at phone playfully

MONIQUE

Pulls phone away

Stop! It's Tim – he wants to do the simulation with us.

DAPHNE

He just wants to hang with you.

MONIQUE

No way. You're the one he likes. Every time he talks to me it's always "what are you and Daphne doing," or "is Daphne O.K.?"

DAPHNE

Crosses back to chair, sits.

So stupid -- if he likes me, then why not just say it. He's really hot ... but ... still –

MONIQUE

Daphne! You shouldn't judge him based on his (text tone, Monique looks at phone) ... a selfie ... OMG ... he IS hot. Anyway, let's pick up where we left off.

DAPHNE

Already on it.

MONIQUE

Laughs loudly

This universe is really dumb – I don't think it's going to work.

JULIE

What are they doing in there?

KURT

Probably playing that new video game she wanted.

MONIQUE

Nice touch.

JULIE

Kurt, the last thing that girl needs is video games. All that silly fantasy and violence.

KURT

I checked it out. No assassins. No car thieves.

JULIE

What does it do?

KURT

It's a simulation game. They create a universe where they can explore family life.

JULIE

You know my fantasy simulation? One where she empties the dishwasher.

DAPHNE

What the –

MONIQUE

You got burned!

KURT

It'll be good for her. Educational.

MONIQUE

Try changing the settings here.

(Points to the screen – laughs loudly)

JULIE

Doesn't seem too educational. I don't like how much time they're spending with each other. She's a bad influence.

MONIQUE

Hey!

DAPHNE

Laughs

You're the one who changed the settings.

JULIE

She needs to spend more time on homework.

KURT

What's the point? She's not getting anything out of school.

JULIE

She loves school!

KURT

Doesn't matter. Her education is useless.

JULIE

The teachers are great. And they work hard.

KURT

They should be for what we pay in taxes.

JULIE

Let's talk about this later. We need to start lunch. The girls must be getting hungry.

KURT

There you go, changing the subject. Every time I make a dent in your liberal armor.

JULIE

We just need to get the food started. We can continue later.

KURT

You better believe we will.

JULIE

Why must every discussion be political? Can't we just have a normal conversation?

KURT

The U.S. spends more than any other country on education, and our scores rank in the bottom 20% worldwide?

JULIE

You're making up facts. Education spending's been cut by over 80% in the past 20 years. We need to spend more money, not –

KURT

Now who's lying about facts.

MONIQUE

Gotta tell you – some parts of this simulation really freak me out.

DAPHNE

How's that?

MONIQUE

The enormity of it. At first, it seemed really simple, but we can control every aspect of life in this world. And even the smallest change can have unintended cascading effects.

DAPHNE

But it's just a simulation. It's not like we change something in here and you and I grow gills.

MONIQUE

It's not just that. I've been reading. With computer programs like this, there are over 100 billion artificially created universes. And AI can create trillions more every year.

DAPHNE

What's your point?

MONIQUE

How do we know we're in the real universe? The odds are 100 billion to one we're part of an artificial one.

DAPHNE

As long as Descartes lived in the same universe as me, I know I'm real.

MONIQUE

Descartes?

DAPHNE

French philosopher. (beat) You know – "I think – therefore I am."

MONIQUE

French philosophy might be part of the programming. (Daphne pinches Monique) Ouch! What was that for?

DAPHNE

"You hurt – therefore you am" Now, let's get back to this simulation. I want to make some progress before lunch.

MONIQUE

Sound of text. Checks phone

Another selfie from Tim. He still wants to come over.

DAPHNE

Grabs phone from Monique and looks at it

Damn! But no, maybe after lunch.

MONIQUE

Takes phone back – begins texting

KURT

The bleak future isn't only because of crappy education. The job market's being flooded by immigrants.

JULIE

There you go with immigration. It's the cause of all that's wrong – crime ... the economy ... even hurricanes.

KURT

Do you even want any border control?

JULIE

I just don't –

KURT

If you read that article I sent you, you'd under –

JULIE

I did start to read it – until I saw it was from that right-wing fear-mongering bull –

KURT

To you, any site that doesn't preach socialism is a right-wing fear—

JULIE

That's not fair – you KNOW I'm always trying to broaden my –

KURT

I don't KNOW anything!

JULIE

That's the first correct fact you've said.

KURT

Always with the cheap shot. That's why --

DAPHNE

I've never heard your parents have a political argument. Don't they care?

MONIQUE

Oh yeah! But you know them – both very analytical. They're all evidence-based discussions.

DAPHNE

Quite the contrast to (nods towards Kurt and Julie). I want to create a world with less hostility.

MONIQUE

What are you doing?

DAPHNE

Changing some of the rules of the universe. Like you said, this version is hard to deal with.

MONIQUE

You're not supposed to have access to this area – programmers only.

DAPHNE

All revolutions start with finding a back door – so to speak. Gandhi was the ultimate hacker.

MONIQUE

What the ... Limiting free speech? You ain't no Gandhi.

DAPHNE

When he was assigning the simulation, Mr. C said that free speech isn't absolute. You can't purposely incite violence. So why can't we make it illegal for a publication to purposely lie?

MONIQUE

But restricting the press ... there'll be unintended consequences.

DAPHNE

Maybe ... but they'll be outweighed by banning trolls from blatantly lying about facts. All I know is this current universe is dysfunctional.

MONIQUE

Who determines what's a lie and what's true?

DAPHNE

The courts do that every day – sometimes with life and death at stake. Let's look at the output.

MONIQUE

Points at screen

Hey! Trust in the press is rising from its all-time low.

DAPHNE

Having more consistent facts will make people less aggressive.

MONIQUE

Look at you – the radical!

DAPHNE

It's like Shaw said. You see things; and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?"

MONIQUE

Quoting George Bernard Shaw. I'm impressed!

DAPHNE

Raises arms in the air – drops the mike.

Drama club – bitch!

JULIE

I see your point. I read the article you sent me.

KURT

So, why are we having this debate?

JULIE

My parents ... and your grandparents ... were immigrants. What would you say to them?

KURT

I know, Julie. But those were different times. Think about how many of our friends have been laid off lately. What we need to do is --

JULIE

I get that. I think there's some type of compromise we can reach. But what about the social issues on your platform? no gender or civil rights ... no gun control ... harsh sentencing for minor crimes ... I just can't get behind that.

KURT

I agree. But the economy must be first. Those other facets will change as the country changes.

JULIE

How long will that take?

KURT

I don't know ... a long time. We need a leader with some balance.

JULIE

It sucks that every election we have only two unsatisfactory choices.

KURT

That's reality.

JULIE

If that's reality, I want to live in a simulation.

MONIQUE

Fun! ... I got an idea. Go back to the restricted area.

DAPHNE

You're going to mandate free tickets to Sabrina Carpenter concerts?

MONIQUE

I'm serious – get me in there. (*Daphne yields control of keyboard – Monique types*)

Don't you think it's odd that the U.S. is one of the few democracies with this type of political system.

DAPHNE

A democracy's a democracy.

MONIQUE

No – in lots of places locally elected representatives select party leaders – and in most countries there are more than just two parties.

DAPHNE

I don't see the differ –

MONIQUE

A wider variety of views are expressed. And politics will be less controlled by outside interests. Plus, the candidates are under 90 years old and have more substance than ... a reality TV star.

DAPHNE

I guess it couldn't hurt. (points at screen). Over two-thirds of the populace believe gun laws should be stricter, and yet nothing seems to be happening.

MONIQUE

So if I change things here ... and ... here --

DAPHNE

Wow. There's more consensus between beliefs and legislation. Messin' with the government --you're just like (*singing*) Alexander Hamilton.

MONIQUE

(*Raises hands over head*)

Politics club, bitch!

KURT

Looks wonderful.

JULIE

Couldn't have done it without you. (*crosses toward center*) Girls! It's almost time for lunch!

KURT

I have a surprise for you.

JULIE

You're going to my campaign meeting with me?

KURT

Now THAT would be a fantasy ... I got these.

JULIE

Two tickets to the TED conference? It starts in an hour. We better get going.

KURT

That's why I secretly made sandwiches to go!

JULIE

So clever ... While we're in the car, I do want to talk to you about something else. Has (*nods towards Daphne*) she talked to you about ... you know?

MONIQUE

Hmmm -- this is really getting interesting.

DAPHNE

Gotta shut her up ... I think it's ready to turn in. Mr. C will love it. He'll probably give us an A+.

MONIQUE

It's good -- this revised world might even be sustainable. But ... I'd like to do even better. Let's try again after lunch.

DAPHNE

OK -- I'll save it.

MONIQUE

Nah – delete it. We already know some of the impacts. I want to start fresh.

DAPHNE

You sure?

*Monique nods, then presses keyboard. Lights on stage right flicker, then go to black. Kurt and Julie freeze.*

MONIQUE

Maybe we can try less drastic measures to get the same effects.

DAPHNE

And maybe change some parts of the educational value system.

MONIQUE

That world really sucked. It had to be reimagined, or those people couldn't survive.

DAPHNE

Did you see how they picked their top judges?

MONIQUE

Insane!

DAPHNE

How 'bout next time we make Julie and Kurt to be YOUR parents? I was starting to take it personally.

MONIQUE

MY parents would serve better food. What was that trash they were making?

DAPHNE

Speaking of which, let's get something to eat. *(They start to exit)* Hey ... later ... will you help me empty the dishwasher?

END OF PLAY