

# BLANK GENERATION

A ReDrafting of the Play Formerly Known as  
FORWARD, TO BETTER DAYS

Draft 5  
Revision 1

Written by Austin Sky Parker

TIME                               Somewhere between 1969 & 2009.

PLACE                              New York City & surrounding.

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| THE POET         | Male, 19. 1969-1971     |
| THE RUNAWAY      | Female, 17. 1989-1991   |
| THE OVERACHIEVER | Female, mid 20's. 2009- |

|         |                          |
|---------|--------------------------|
| JEANINE | F, 18. 1969-1971         |
| RYLAND  | M, early 20's. 1989-1991 |
| DIEGO   | M, 17 2009-              |
| JAYNE   | They/Them- 1971          |
| BILLY   | M- 1971                  |
| PARTIER | F/M- 1971                |
| NURSE   | F/M- 1971                |

BLANK GENERATION handles themes of drug abuse, self-harm, sexual misconduct, suicidal idealization, & general adult themes.

\*SASPS is what Ensemble Members/Players who perform as multiple characters are referred to as. It originated in one of my first works and has since been used as a term of endearment. -ASP

BLANK GENERATION  
is dedicated to the memory of Taylor Syska.

SCENE 1

*THE INSIDE OF NEW YORK CITY.*  
*The feeling of an empty bar at*  
*five-AM, piping hot on the*  
*inside, contrasting the*  
*freezing cold in the street.*  
*Remnants of the city litter*  
*the space: exposed brick,*  
*empty tables bolted to the*  
*ground, cracked pavement. All*  
*along the walls are posters*  
*for CBGB's: the Birth of Punk.*  
*There are classified ads from*  
*the 2000's, the sign of a*  
*recession. There are missing*  
*posters of a RUNAWAY lining*  
*the walls, surrounding the*  
*audience, framing the world.*  
*This is not somewhere you*  
*would like to spend a lot of*  
*time. There are two*  
*individuals on stage.*

*A BAND stands upstage. Tuning*  
*up, blending in with the*  
*landscape. They seem less than*  
*concerned with the dingy world*  
*they inhabit. In fact, it*  
*could be their home. THE BAND*  
*tunes up and a mix blares*  
*overhead the individuals*  
*silhouetted onstage. MTV,*  
*ANTI-ROCK AND ROLL*  
*PROPOGANDA, VIETNAM PROTESTS,*  
*PUNK ROCK RIOTS. Be creative*  
*with this, pull the audience*  
*into the world we've created.*  
*Span 40 years in one moment.*

*(THE POET is speaking to THE*  
*OVERACHIEVER.)*

THE POET

I'm just saying... Patti Smith  
 loved Arthur Rimbaud. This is  
 after, remind you, Arthur Rimbaud  
 shot his gay lover.

THE OVERACHIEVER

Did they end up together?

## THE POET

Unfortunately not. Rimbaud died in 1891. Patti wasn't born until 1946.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

So sad to see something so menial  
get in the way of true love.

## THE POET

I came to New York in 1969. Summer of Love. Hippies humping in the street and this new *Rock & Roll* fueling everyone up and getting them angry. All anyone wanted to think about were the good ol' days, days when it was just the likes of me and Lee Harvey Oswald. Poets came to New York City. I was a poet. So I came to New York. I wished to live in the way of those people of the past.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Oh, gee, I don't know. People like to say I'm neurotic but I like to think of them more as quirky strengths! "Slow down, honey. Ease up, honey. You're working too fast, honey!" Well, young people, there's lots of life to live and the world doesn't slow down for no one! I came to New York City in 2009, I was an advice columnist for the *New York Beat*! So exciting! I remember stepping off this stinky, smelly bus and looking down and seeing half of my heel dunked in someone else's piss and thinking, *Oh Good, Honey. This is where you break through to those better days!*

*(They face each other.)*

## THE POET

I should've been with Patti Smith.  
She would've made me feel  
something, all those dead poets  
made each other feel something.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

I wanted to be with a boy once. He

(MORE)

THE OVERACHIEVER (CONT'D)

was a composer, a pianist from--

THE POET

*(Interrupting:)*

Closest I had was Jeanie. But we were kids and I was on my way to bigger and better things.

*(JEANIE ENTERS. She and THE POET are high school kids.)*

Jeanie, my love. I'm moving to New York City and I think it's best you stay here. I'm going to do things and feel things and fall in love with people who died before you and I were born. I'm going to create masterpieces and burn them for fun because I can. I hope you can understand.

JEANIE

But... You gave me your class ring.

THE POET

I know.

*(BEAT.)*

You can just mail it back if you don't have it with you.

*(JEANIE EXITS.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER

Poor kid.

THE POET

I know. I was so naive then.

*(THE RUNAWAY ENTERS frantic.)*

THE RUNAWAY

LET ME OUT OF HERE!

*(THE RUNAWAY starts prying at the doors, banging at the windows, desperate to escape.)*

PLEASE!

*(THE POET goes to her.)*

THE POET

Easy, kid.

*(THE POET attempts to grab THE RUNAWAY'S shoulders.)*

THE RUNAWAY  
GET THE FUCK OFF ME!

*(THE RUNAWAY knocks THE POET off of her and, in an instant, has a SWITCHBLADE pointed at his throat.)*

And don't call me kid, asshole.

*(THE POET stands, hands in the air.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER  
Now, no one needs to get hurt. I understand you may be a little upset...

THE RUNAWAY  
*A little? I'm a little freaked-the-fuck out.*

THE POET  
Let's have this conversation without the knife? Okay?

THE RUNAWAY  
Knife doesn't go anywhere until you tell me where I am.

THE POET  
We're right where folks end up when they let city streets chew them out.

THE RUNAWAY  
I didn't ask for riddles.

THE POET  
We're right where we're supposed to be, just before we were meant to be here.

THE RUNAWAY  
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!

*(THE RUNAWAY takes a swipe at THE POET with their knife. THE POET ducks and wraps their arms around THE RUNAWAY, holding them tight.)*

THE POET

Easy.

THE RUNAWAY

WHICH ONE OF YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?  
WHO BROUGHT ME HERE?

THE POET

No one took you here.

THE OVERACHIEVER

You got here on your own, honey.

*(THE POET drops THE RUNAWAY).*

THE RUNAWAY

No, no. I remember sitting in the corner on the side of the stoop of some pre-war building and feeling the cold wet asphalt under my fingertips and letting fish hooks drag my eyelids down. I open them back up and here I am. How did I get here?

THE OVERACHIEVER

You'll have to figure that out the same way we did. Retrace your steps.

*(BEAT. THE RUNAWAY looks to the others, then out. Then:)*

THE RUNAWAY

I'd lived in North Plains for my entire life, so when I was seventeen years-old I told my parents, "Fuck ya very much!" and took a train into the city. I was dating some reject then, back in '89. He had this greasy long blonde hair (it was so hot, he looked like a fat Kurt Cobain). Anyways, I met him in the city and--

*(RYLAND bumps into her.)*

RYLAND

Keep your head up.

THE RUNAWAY

Why don't you watch where you're

(MORE)



THE RUNAWAY (CONT'D)

going?

*(BEAT. RYLAND turns, stares.)*

What're you looking at?

RYLAND

You're not from around here, huh?

THE RUNAWAY

Yeah I am. I grew up uptown.

RYLAND

Must have been way uptown.  
You headed home?

THE RUNAWAY

I haven't got a home anymore.

RYLAND

What are you, a Punk or somethin'?

THE RUNAWAY

Or somethin'.

RYLAND

Punk's dead. Stick with me. I'll  
take care of you, kid.

*(RYLAND smiles THE RUNAWAY'S  
way, then continues walking.)*

THE RUNAWAY

*(Out:)*

We started living in his apartment.  
All life ever wanted to do was  
shove me around and let me catch my  
balance before taking out the backs  
of my knees, this was the last  
chance to let it do something  
great.

THE POET

All I wanted to do was *feel* things,  
you know? And I realized, the  
easiest way to feel something is  
when you're feeling it with  
someone. That's why meatheads sign  
up to go in some  
jungle, makes them feel *alive*. I'm  
not much cut out for war... So I  
started shacking up. I'd fuck  
everything that moved. I wasn't

(MORE)

THE POET (CONT'D)

doing much poetry anymore, but I  
sure as hell was making art. People  
would ask me...

THE OVERACHIEVER

"I don't get it, do you like boys  
or do you like girls?"

THE POET

And I'd tell them that I liked  
being loved. And they were welcome  
to love me with whatever parts they  
had.

THE OVERACHIEVER

I worked for three days straight in  
2010. I didn't leave my desk, I  
just sat there and kept writing and  
writing and writing. Every time my  
eyes got tired I would think about  
the past, I would think there is no  
where to move but forward Remember,  
honey, Sergei Rachmoninoff finished  
his most famous Prelude when he was  
19 years-old! I'm only twenty-three  
and on my way out of my prime. I'd  
crush up another Amphetamine and  
twirl it in my water glass with a  
Splenda. At four AM the water  
spilled off of the desk and puddled  
around my swivel chair. They found  
me on the floor the next morning  
hysterical. They put me in a  
Psychiatric Ward where I worked  
from a padded room with soft white  
furnishings. I just kept telling  
the nurses--

*(The RINGING of a phone  
interrupts THE OVERACHIEVER.)*

NURSE

CALL.

*(THE OVERACHEVER goes to the  
phone.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER

Hello?

VOICE

Hey, you. How're you enjoying the

(MORE)

VOICE (CONT'D)

city?

THE OVERACHIEVER  
It's... It's nice. I'm loving it.

VOICE  
Where are you now?

THE OVERACHIEVER  
My apartment. I was just about to go to the park--

VOICE  
Funny. I heard they put you up in Westchester, locked in a rubber room.

(BEAT.)

THE OVERACHIEVER  
Funny.

VOICE  
You know you can always come home--

(THE NURSE'S VOICE interrupts the tension.)

NURSE  
PILLS.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
I'm sorry, I have to go.

(THE OVERACHIEVER slams the phone down. They then walk over to the Pill Window and get a small dixie cup.)

I just kept telling the nurses, "I can't go back, I can't go back." They thought I meant to work! I meant that, literally, in this time line, whatever way it stretches, I can't go back. They assigned me a social worker. I asked her when I could go home and she told me to get comfortable. They'd reevaluate my case after a week of treatment.

(The Ramones, "GIMME GIMME SHOCK TREATMENT" blares. THE RUNAWAY AND RYLAND thrash.)

THE RUNAWAY & RYLAND  
 GIMME GIMME SHOCK TREATMENT! GIMME  
 GIMME SHOCK TREATMENT!

*(They continue  
 singing/screaming as they jump  
 on a naked mattress, shoving  
 each other and laughing. Then  
 they begin to break shit,  
 bashing things, losing  
 control. They crash into each  
 other and stop for a moment,  
 looking at one another. Then  
 they kiss, not romantically.  
 They sink to the mattress.)*

#### THE POET

Park Place Hotel. November 6th,  
 1972. I got invited up to the 42nd  
 floor by someone I had been seeing  
 regularly. They were this really  
 lean, androgynous kid who used to  
 wear big lipstick and gogo boots  
 and walk the streets and wait for  
 men to leer at them so they could  
 beat the shit out of them. Anyway,  
 they drag me up to this party.

#### THE OVERACHIEVER

People just shambled the halls of  
 the North Wing. It's all there was  
 to do. Shamble. Pace. Try and get  
 out. They woke you up at 7:00 every  
 morning and locked you out of your  
 room for the rest of the day. Like  
 clockwork. No- like music.

*(A soft symphony begins.)*

Each one of us, a note in this  
 grand orchestration being told what  
 to do, what to feel. Another cut on  
 the arm, another prescription gone  
 too far. They keep us all so  
 drugged up any discernible  
 personality is lost and we can just  
 flow with the melody. There are  
 these people, the really sick  
 people. They make this place more  
 like a prison. Missing-teeth crack

(MORE)

addict comedians (punch lines suffering from the lisps), new fathers who put bungee chords around their necks for attention, mental breakdowns in college dormitories, the flamboyant meth head groping male patients. The religious zealots, Neo-Nazi skin heads with white power symbols carved on their bodies beat the shit out of each other in the cafeteria, sex starved nymphos hiding handjobs under blankets, nicotine mafias running the halls through loose cigarettes. Someone here keeps stealing the plastic spoons and slipping them in the elastic of their sock, whatever category that falls into. We turn from the Lilies pasted on the walls and find one strapped to the table. Her screech stops the music. *Grand Caesura*. The air is thick and awkward and no one wants to be the first to shamble back to day-to-day Bonkersville. I turn and someone is standing next to me just staring ahead.

DIEGO

You could cut the tension in here with a plastic spoon.

THE OVERACHIEVER

It's enough to make me laugh for the first time in a month.

DIEGO

Here.

*(He hands THE OVERACHIEVER a plastic spoon.)*

DIEGO (CONT'D)

I'm Diego. I saw you come in on Saturday. I wanted to give you some time to get acclimated. But I also wanted to give you a welcome gift. So here.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
Thanks?

DIEGO  
Yeah. I wanted to do the full  
silverware set but they keep the  
knives on a high shelf.

*(He puts his arms out as if to  
say, **what can you do?**)*

*(THE RUNAWAY & RYLAND sit up.)*

RYLAND  
I think I love you, kid.

THE RUNAWAY  
You would.

RYLAND  
Honestly. I want to do something,  
okay? To show how much I love you.

THE RUNAWAY  
I've always wanted to ride the  
train to Coney Island.

*(RYLAND pulls out a  
switchblade.)*  
Jesus, what're you trying to do?

RYLAND  
Look, if I cut my hand open and you  
cut your's open, we can hold our  
hands together and the blood will  
seep through the cuts. We'll be in  
each other's veins.

THE RUNAWAY  
That's so messed up.

RYLAND  
Do it with me.

THE RUNAWAY  
No thanks, you're not cutting me  
open.

RYLAND  
Don't think of it like that! It's  
an illustration of love. Don't you  
love me, kid?

*(THE RUNAWAY stands.)*

Don't you?

THE RUNAWAY

I can't talk to you when you're like this. You're doped up, you're talking crazy.

RYLAND

Tell me you love me.

*(BEAT.)*

Please, kid?

THE RUNAWAY

Don't call me kid.

RYLAND

You have to love me.  
I'm *sad*.

THE RUNAWAY

Oh, fuck off.

*(THE RUNAWAY begins to walk out.)*

RYLAND

Don't leave me!

*(He pulls the blade across his palm, cutting it open.)*

LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO!

*(THE RUNAWAY turns to see the blood. Panic sets in.)*

THE RUNAWAY

Get away from me, I don't want you anywhere near me.

RYLAND

I just want us to be together.  
Don't you want to be with me?

*(He takes a staggering step but can't walk. He falls to a knee.)*

RYLAND (CONT'D)

I can't live without you. I can't walk without you.

*(THE RUNAWAY cautiously steps towards RYLAND.)*

THE RUNAWAY  
You can't walk because you're  
bleeding and you're strung out.

RYLAND  
That's not it.

*(He looks up to THE RUNAWAY.)*

THE RUNAWAY  
What?  
What is it?

*(RYLAND lays face down and begins to cry.)*  
He just laid there, face down on  
the floor for what felt like hours.  
Just bawling his eyes out. His  
guitar is next to him. He's  
screaming into the carpet,  
scratching his face red on it / I  
fucked someone else and now he's  
dead and I'm next!

RYLAND  
/ I fucked someone else and now  
he's dead and I'm next!

THE RUNAWAY  
It was '92 by now. There was a  
plague in the anal cavity of New  
York City. I went to the bathroom,  
pulled his pill stash out of the  
cracked mirror cupboard. Then I  
pocketed his knife and his fucking  
MetroCard, too, and walked out of  
the apartment. I never saw Ryland  
again. As I passed the street  
corner I turned and saw a missing  
poster for myself. I took a marker  
out of my bag and wrote FOUND: DEAD  
and ripped it off the wall. Maybe I  
could give it to life down the road  
and it would stop messing with me.

*(THE OVERACHIEVER holds the  
box for a MONOPOLY BOARD GAME.  
They begin setting it up.)*



DIEGO

All of the money is gone. You're going to have a hard time playing without any of the money.

*(He approaches THE OVERACHIEVER)*

What game of Monopoly doesn't have any money, right?

THE OVERACHIEVER

It's okay. I like trying to keep track of the totals in my head.

DIEGO

Math? For fun? So you're in here for masochism.

THE OVERACHIEVER

*(Half a joke:)*

"Unrealistic expectations for myself."

We could make the money, for arts and craft therapy tomorrow.

DIEGO

I asked, you know how damn badly I've been begging to play anything other than *Uno*? They won't give us scissors, place would be a blood bath before 11:00 snack. We could use spoons for money if you want to!

*(He begins unpocketing spoons.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER

What're you in here for?

DIEGO

I launched a textbook through the window of Goddard Hall.

THE OVERACHIEVER

I assumed kleptomania.

DIEGO

The spoons? They're good to have around. They help keep my anxiety in check. The plastic gets jagged

(MORE)

DIEGO (CONT'D)

and you can rub it on the inside of your arms until they get raw. And if you hide it in the sleeves of your sweatshirt no one knows.

THE OVERACHIEVER

Oh. I was hoping it was a quirk. You made it dark.

DIEGO

I mean, in a way, it is a quirk. It's just also messy.

THE OVERACHIEVER

Well. I hope that some day you get to the point where you don't feel the need to do that.

DIEGO

Thanks. I hope you get out of here soon.

THE OVERACHIEVER

Thank you, I'm ready to get back to my job.

DIEGO

I think I'm going to go back to school after this. I just have to handle my feelings better. Keep my anxiety in check, be less... Manic.

THE OVERACHIEVER

That's good. That's good. You have to stop hurting yourself if you want out of here, you know. If they see your arms like that, they'll put you on watch.

DIEGO

Yeah... Yeah, you're probably right.

THE OVERACHIEVER

I can help. If you wanted.

DIEGO

Really?

THE OVERACHIEVER

Yes, of course. Give me your spoons.

DIEGO

My spoons?

THE OVERACHIEVER

Yes. Your spoons.

*(BEAT. DIEGO concedes and hands over the spoons.)*

All of them.

*(He hands one last spoon, tucked away somewhere.)*

There. Next time you feel like doing that, you have to find me and we can... Play Monolpoly.

DIEGO

With no money? Impossible.

THE OVERACHIEVER

*(Showing off the spoons.)*

What do you mean no money? I'm currently a millionaire.

*(He laughs. His smile fades.)*

DIEGO

The last person who was nice to me tried to sneak me in their shower.

THE OVERACHIEVER

*(Attempting a joke:)*

Maybe they thought you just needed a shower.

*(BEAT.)*

I don't want anything from you. I want to help you get better. You're a kid. You don't need to be in a place like this. Leave that to us grown people in our twenties.

THE POET

Anyways, I'm standing in this nice-ass hotel room and waiting for someone to realize that I don't have any money or drugs or guitar playing ability and kick me out, when my date comes up behind me and whispers in my ear:

JAYNE

Are you having a good time?

THE POET

I think so. I don't think I'm drunk enough.

JAYNE

Skip the kid stuff. Try this?

THE POET

Before I have a chance to question it, I have a face full of this powder. It looks like Cocaine but I didn't feel like the world sped up. Everything was double. One version was fast forward, the rest was rewind. It felt like the first time I heard Legend of a Mind by the Moody Blues. Maybe I was Timothy Leary. Either way, I'm sitting on the couch trying to focus on keeping the world from spinning when I look over and see Jayne is sitting on top of this kid. Sort of smacking his face around.

JAYNE

Looks like someone is having too much fun! Wake up, Billy! It's time to wake up!

THE POET

But Billy isn't waking up. In fact, with every slap you can sort of see his eyes open, but his pupils are rolled back and the whites of his eyes are now yellow egg yolks blotted with red, Tobasco arteries. And people are starting to crowd around the kid, but Jayne is still smacking him.

JAYNE

WAKE UP, SLEEPING BEAUTY. DON'T MAKE ME KISS YOU!

*(Panic begins to set in as JAYNE realizes BILLY won't wake up.)*

Billy, Billy wake up.

THE POET

Jayne? I don't think he's waking up. He looks fucked. We should put him on his side or somethin'.

JAYNE

No! No, he's just passed out. He'll snap out of it! We've got to splash some water on him. Let's get him to the bathroom.

PARTIER

Let's put him in the tub.

JAYNE

Yeah! Yeah, put him in the tub and let the faucet pour on him!

*(She turns to THE POET.)*

Grab his arms.

*(JAYNE runs to the bathtub and turns on the water, we can hear it filling up, splashing onto the tile.)*

BRING HIM OVER!

*(THE POET lifts BILLY by the shoulders while THE PARTIER grabs his legs. They shimmy him over to the bathtub and place him down slowly.)*

THE POET

I don't know about this. We should get him to a hospital.

PARTIER

Are you fucking CRAZY?!

JAYNE

Nobody's going to a hospital! He'll wake up, he'll snap out of it, okay? Just give him a minute.

*(She begins pushing THE POET out of the bathroom.)*

THE POET

Jayne, look at him! We need to take him somewhere.

*(JAYNE pulls THE POET close.)*

JAYNE

Look, kid. I know you grew up watching Steve McQueen so you've got a real keen sense of right and wrong, but you just inhaled half a bag of Ketamine into your fucking head. No one is leaving.

*(THE POET thinks.)*

THE POET

You're sure he'll be okay?

JAYNE

Of course. Kid's a drummer, he pulls this shit all the time.

*(THE POET nods and turns, leaving with JAYNE. BILLY is alone onstage, just the sound of the bathtub is heard, the faucet dripping. BILLY'S head leans back, lowering slowly beneath the water. First his mouth, then his nose, too until he disappears completely with a final "blip.")*

*(In a moment the world spins and the inside of a train car is created. Everyone is riding, but they do not exist in each other's worlds.)*

SUBWAY P.A.

GRAND CENTRAL STATION. TRANSFER IS AVAILABLE TO THE 4, 5, AND--

THE OVERACHIEVER

I boarded the Metro North from Westchester with a little get-well packet in my hands. It had these nifty phone numbers you could call when you were feeling, "manic." I memorized the phone numbers on the way home, it's all I could do after the trees stopped rushing by and dark tunnels began lining the way to Grand Central. Just reading the numbers off, closing my eyes and reciting them back and hoping I wouldn't really have to use them.

(MORE)

## THE OVERACHIEVER (CONT'D)

I transfer at Grand Central and  
start taking it...

## THE RUNAWAY

Back uptown, away from Ryland's in  
Greenwich Village.

## THE POET

And the car looks like Seneca  
Village, filled with these Puerto  
Rican families on the wrong side of  
Robert Moses's "Urban Renewal"  
plan. I sink to the back with  
the...

## THE RUNAWAY

Thugged out druggie types...

## THE OVERACHIEVER

And chronic subway masturbators.

## THE POET

My pant legs are soaked. My sleeves  
are still sopping wet. Everyone had  
fallen asleep on the floor but I  
can't bring myself to close my  
eyes. He's still in there, behind  
that door.

## THE RUNAWAY

Laying there, letting himself bleed  
into the sheets, hoping someone  
will walk in and pity him.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Or lobotomized, raw arms refusing  
to heal. I become painfully aware  
of the dirt under my fingers and  
begin picking at it. Then biting at  
it. Still six stops until I'm home.

## THE RUNAWAY

I chastise myself for even  
considering going home.

## THE POET

I imagine myself crucified and the  
feeling of being nailed to  
splinters makes itself at home.  
*Bath Water Ghost. Holy, holy  
seraphim. Hold your breath!*

## THE RUNAWAY

I play with the pill bottle in my pocket.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

I feel the phone numbers in my pocket.

## THE POET

*Sink into rhythm not of hearts  
beating or gasps clasping, but sink  
to waves crashing and souls  
passing.*

## THE RUNAWAY

The knife's blade lightly pricks my fingertips.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Razor blades sear into my smile,  
pressure cracks open my teeth.

## THE POET

*What holy love erases a mother's  
son, pried from scum in the base of  
a tub in the base of a tomb of piss  
and stray hairs, pubic, numbering  
six.*

## THE RUNAWAY

With each screech of the track my  
heart beats a little faster.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

I can feel the air in this train  
car running out, getting thinner  
every second. We'll suffocate  
before Harlem.

## THE POET

*Six slick sick steps softly  
splaying the son of man on bath  
curtains ran beneath your head,  
below your neck and into your  
hands.*

## THE RUNAWAY

You took my breath away.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Let me asphyxiate...



THE RUNAWAY  
While I fixate on you

THE POET  
Release, young rebel! Worry not!  
For staying afloat in a life  
of ecstasy can be undoubtedly...  
Draining.

THE RUNAWAY  
I consider piercing a hole in my  
neck to let more air in.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
I consider scratching a hole  
through the glass to make an  
emergency exit.

THE RUNAWAY  
And right as things become too  
much.

THE POET  
*(HOLY begins overlapping.)*  
Holy...

THE OVERACHIEVER  
The pressure is cracking me open.

THE POET  
HOLY...

THE RUNAWAY  
The burners burst to flames.

THE POET  
HOLY!

THE OVERACHIEVER  
The matches singe your fingertips.

*(DING. The Subway doors  
opening.)*

THE POET, THE OVERACHIEVER, AND THE RUNAWAY  
This is my stop.

THE POET  
I race out of the subway stop and  
up the stairs of a cold hollow  
building and grab a small desk that  
sits on my knees.

(VOICES ALL AROUND HIM ECHO:  
 WRITE IT DOWN. WRITE IT DOWN.  
 WRITE IT DOWN.)

I'm staring into my Smith-Corona  
 typewriter with the faded-blue  
 metal finish, tapped and  
 chicken-scratched to the bone and I  
 realize...

(Turning out towards the  
 voices.)

I can't. I'm empty. Rung out like a  
 rag.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
 Go on, write your poem.

THE RUNAWAY  
 Yeah. It's not bad.

THE POET  
 It's not that I don't want to...  
 It's that I can't. I need to fix...  
 I need a fix...

(Realizing:)  
 I need a good fuck.

(Guitar Screech. Transition,  
 THE POET is shirtless,  
 panting. Following a conjugal  
 visit.)

It's not an easy realization to  
 come to, specifically in the  
 position I did: sort of pressed on  
 my face with my elbows against  
 these scratchy hotel covers around  
 the corner from Fifty-Third and  
 Third. My legs sort of being lifted  
 in the air like a human  
 wheel-barrow-- realizing, all at  
 once, that I would never feel  
 better than I felt right there.  
 That words would never describe the  
 Euphoria in my head. David Bowie  
 and Iggy Pop and all the Beatniks  
 had tried to do it-- it's why a  
 million people looked up from the  
 slaughter in Vietnam to watch Sammy  
 Davis Jr. Twist on gogo-girls on  
 Hullabaloo for half an hour.

(MORE)

Nothing is ever going to feel better than sex. Great as it is, I began to realize something: I could fuck like a rabbit and write like it was my last will and testament, but I'd never live the way the poets did. Free and happy. You can't write your past when you never let yourself live in the present.

THE RUNAWAY

I was excited for the future once! I was one of those, "April showers bring May flowers" bitches once, too. I held in there as long as I could, I gave you every chance to straighten yourself out but you thought it was too much fun to keep jerking me the fuck around. Life!

THE OVERACHIEVER

You're unhappy?

THE RUNAWAY

Very.

THE POET

You wanna change the time of the year? Sam Shepard says we can change the time of the year. What's your favorite?

THE RUNAWAY

Fall.

THE POET

Okay. It's Fall. Are you happy now?

THE RUNAWAY

Yeah.

I found the pills I stole, the one's that are supposed to make you feel happy? I took the whole bottle and stopped feeling anything.

THE POET

You killed yourself?

THE RUNAWAY

Yep.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Oh, you can't kill yourself. You're such a lovely young lady.

## THE RUNAWAY

Too late.

## THE POET

You **KILLED** yourself! That's so... So... stellar! So Sylvia Plath of you--

## THE RUNAWAY

*So Sylvia Plath of you!* Shut the fuck up! You read *The Bell Jar* once and think you know everything? Shut the fuck up. I gave life every chance I could. It didn't have to stop, it didn't have to go back to the good ol' days. It just had to get better. And it didn't. So I stopped the world and I got off.

## THE POET

So ungrateful... All the greats get to kill themselves.

(Realizing:)

I should kill myself! Make it my magnum opus, my gift to the world.

## THE RUNAWAY

You don't have the guts.

## THE POET

No?

## THE OVERACHIEVER

If we could please...

## THE RUNAWAY

No, you don't. All you artist types are the same. "I'll kill myself! I'll do it!" I dated one, dumbass. Dried his tears, let him touch me and write me songs when he was sad. You're all so hellbent on feeling something, you couldn't fathom the idea of finally feeling nothing.

## THE POET

What do you know?

*(Thinking of reasons.)*

No one cares about me.

THE RUNAWAY

Join the club!

*(Counting on fingers:)*

No one feels cared about,  
everyone's dad sucks, all of us  
have been the last kid in line for  
kickball. You won't do anything  
about it.

THE POET

Cynical bitch.

THE RUNAWAY

Chicken-shit word slut. Whoring  
yourself out for other people's  
pain.

THE OVERACHIEVER

I'm not going to sit here and  
listen to you all rip each other to  
shreds over this.

THE RUNAWAY

No one's talking to you, nutcase!  
Don't you have an Ativan  
appointment right about now?

THE POET

Do you even understand the irony of  
you saying that, Little Miss  
Prescribed Dosage?

THE RUNAWAY

Go fuck yourself.

THE POET

I don't have to. Plenty of people  
would be happy to.

THE RUNAWAY

You proud of that?

THE POET

I'm proud I didn't lose my  
boyfriend to getting butt-fucked in  
Central Park! Can you imagine being  
so desperate for a lay you're  
willing to risk your blood turning

(MORE)

THE POET (CONT'D)

against you?

THE RUNAWAY

I'm sure you can.

THE OVERACHIEVER

You two aren't the only people with problems, you know?

*(DIEGO ENTERS)*

DIEGO

I'm sorry.

*(His wrists are bleeding.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER

What did you do?

DIEGO

I'm sorry.

THE OVERACHIEVER

You were supposed to talk to me when you felt that way.

*(THE OVERACHIEVER takes his arms.)*

You didn't do this with a spoon.

DIEGO

There are screws under the bed you can twist out if you know how to do it.

THE OVERACHIEVER

We have to cover this up, to get you home.

DIEGO

It's too late, they know. I'm not going back to school. I'm going to the State Hospital, they're pulling me in for shock treatment.

*(GIMME GIMME SHOCK TREATMENT plays, softer.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER

Shock treatment? With the electrodes.

## THE POET

Chemical shock. Drugs, no  
electricity.

## THE RUNAWAY

It's what they used to fuck up  
Richard Lloyd so bad. It'll kill  
the kid.

## DIEGO

They'll inject me with a sedative  
every eight hours until my body  
naturally builds a tolerance. I'll  
sleep for about eight days straight  
before my body begins fighting it,  
keeping me awake. That's when  
they'll take me off of that stuff  
completely and basically rev me up  
with speed. Make it impossible to  
sleep. Chemical Shock. Repeat 'til  
happy. Let it wring me out like a  
sponge.

I can't hurt myself when I'm  
asleep.

## THE POET

The slowest lobotomy you ever saw.

## THE RUNAWAY

Cute kid. They're gonna gut his  
mind.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

That's not fair! I can help, I can  
help, let me help you.

## DIEGO

I mean, it's too late.

## NURSE

PILLS.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Let me talk to them.

*(To the NURSE.)*

Hey. HEY!

*(The NURSE hands her the  
pills.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER (CONT'D)  
 I'm not here for my pills, I need  
 to talk to you.

*(People come out of the  
 woodwork and grab THE  
 OVERACHIEVER, forcing the  
 pills to their mouth.)*

Let... Let go of me! GET OFF, I'M  
 NOT TAKING ANYTHING YOU GIVE ME.

*(THE OVERACHIEVER jerks and  
 swings around, trying to free  
 themselves. THE OVERACHIEVER  
 thrashes into the NURSE'S  
 STATION.)*

*(CRASH! A cup of water spills  
 near THE OVERACHIEVER. They  
 lean down to pick it up.)*

THE OVERACHIEVER  
 I am so sorry!

*(They begin cleaning it up).*

THE POET  
 You knocked it over.

THE RUNAWAY  
 You've got to clean it up.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
 I am!

*(THE POET and THE RUNAWAY'S  
 voices meld.)*

VOICE  
 You're such a klutz, such a mess.

THE OVERACHIEVER  
 I know.

VOICE  
 How can someone love me so much and  
 fuck up so badly?

THE OVERACHIEVER  
 I'm cleaning it.

VOICE  
 Clean it up.



THE OVERACHIEVER

I am.

VOICE

Clean it up.

THE OVERACHIEVER

I *told* you, I am!

VOICE

Clean it up.

THE OVERACHIEVER

**WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU WANT FROM ME?**

VOICE

Come home and clean up the mess you made.

(*BEAT.*)

Put your hands behind your back.

THE OVERACHIEVER

How am I supposed to clean it up without my hands?

VOICE

You have a mouth don't you?

(*BEAT.*)

THE OVERACHIEVER

I put my hands behind my back--

(*Quickly:*)

THE POET

And the perv zipties my elbows together really quick, so my chest is sticking out. And I said, "easy, old timer. You've got to pay extra for that." And I sort of laughed it off, but he didn't stop. He just pulled it tighter, so I could really feel the plastic starting to dig into my skin. And it hurt. And it felt like there was water dripping from the ceiling, pooling between my shoulder blades and sliding down my back towards my ass and I looked down and saw these red blots staining the hotel bed. ~~And I tried to squirm onto my shoulder~~

(MORE)

## THE POET (CONT'D)

~~but he had an arm on either side of~~  
~~my waist holding me tight. And I~~  
~~told him, "you have to stop." He~~  
~~loosened up his grip, slipped his~~  
~~hand through my hair. Then he took~~  
 his hand and covered my mouth and  
 with his thumb he clasped my nose  
 shut. ~~And I'm trying to get free so~~  
~~I'm jerking my head around but he~~  
~~isn't letting up and I can feel him~~  
~~getting closer to me, getting more~~  
~~and more turned on every second.~~  
 And I started screaming between his  
 fingertips, "I can't breathe! I  
 can't breathe! I'm drowning!"  
 And he just stops and looks at me  
 and says, "what?" And I say, "I'm  
 drowning. I'm drowning! *Bath Water*  
*Ghost, Holy Holy. Hold your*  
*breath!"*  
 And he goes, "If I wanted all this  
 crazy I'd just fuck my wife."  
 And he cuts me loose. And I walked  
 out of that hotel, down the street  
 feeling... Empty. Any beauty in me  
 was dried up and used and gone.  
 It'd run off to live in a better  
 time. I didn't know where I was  
 going, but I just kept walking  
 until you could see the sun start  
 to peek from between the buildings.  
 I look up and right off of Fifth  
 Avenue on the East Side of the Park  
 I see Jeanie. She looks radiant.  
 And whatever dead spark there was  
 inside of me lit up, like maybe  
 there was beauty somewhere. I  
 walked up to her, looking and  
 smelling like a broken dream, and  
 she looks me up and down and stands  
 there stock frozen. That's when I  
 noticed she had this kid inside of  
 her. Not only did she have a life  
 of her own but she was carrying  
 someone else's and I couldn't help  
 but just cry.

THE POET

(To JEANIE:)

I miss you.

JEANIE

I bet you do.

*(JEANIE walks away.)*

THE POET

I never saw Jeanie again. I don't think I ever *felt* anything again. I spent so much time trying to go back, I threw away the future.

THE RUNAWAY

I *know* I never felt anything again, I'm not sure I ever did.

THE OVERACHIEVER

Anything I ever could've felt was taken away when I was so young. I tried to run away from the past for so long, it destroyed my future. That's what my therapist on Carnegie Hill tells me, anyways.

THE POET

What was it worth?

THE RUNAWAY

Dying over?

THE OVERACHIEVER

Days wasted in sterile white walls.

THE POET

Become something great.

THE RUNAWAY

You can always kill yourself before someone kills you for a useless cause.

THE POET

Become too valuable to lose before the send you to die for LBJ's child massacre.

THE RUNAWAY

See the world before they kill you slowly after fifty years in a marriage you weren't sure you wanted.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Help others, help yourself. When  
they see you're broken, they'll  
accidentally kill you before they  
fix you.

## THE POET

Why are we so fucked up? Is  
everyone like this?

## THE RUNAWAY

It's probably my parents' fault.  
They sat me down in front of the TV  
too much when I was a child. Let it  
rot my brains out.

## THE POET

Read too many books, idolized  
people that life couldn't touch.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

I don't know if it's anyone's  
fault.  
Was it all worth it?

*(LIGHTS UP. There is no more  
play. One by one we go down  
the line and answer:)*

## ACTORS

My name is [ACTOR'S NAME]. I came  
to New York in [YEAR] from [WHERE  
YOU CAME FROM]. [WHAT DID YOU  
SACRIFICE, WAS IT WORTH IT?]

## THE POET

Take me back.

## THE RUNAWAY

Take me away.

## THE OVERACHIEVER

Take me forward, to better days.

*(Richard Hell's THE BLANK  
GENERATION plays.)*

END PLAY.