

“Glory in the Flower” by William Inge

Scene for Midterm Presentation --

Pg. 174

J “Bus! Bus Riley!” - J “Oh, Bus! You *knew* I did...”

CUT TO

Pg. 175

B “How ‘bout a...” - B “I had to write...”

CUT TO

Pg. 177

J “Don’t be silly.” - B “Here’s my arms...”

CUT TO

Pg. 178

J “Are you fighting...” - B “Let’s go back...”

END SCENE

Tone --

The tone, or feeling that I hope the audience gets from my scene is frustration. Because of where I am cutting it, the mood shift would change the entire play if it was put into context, this is why I’m so drawn to it. They end separated, with Jackie horrified that Bus can’t even bring himself to say “baby” (despite being half of the creator of said baby). I want the audience to feel Jackie’s hurt and feel just as unsatisfied and, again, frustrated.

A good image I have for the scene is:



Imagine this: you’re having a fantastic day at work, getting so much done, there is so much potential for what the day could bring. And then... the worst thing happens... all your work is ruined by your coffee spilling.

This is Bus and Jackie. Their “date” is going fantastic, they’re dancing, catching up, and then it’s ruined by Bus’ inability to admit that he was a jerk.

Given Circumstances

Environmental -- The specific location is a bar, in the stage directions the title is given as "PARADISE." There is not a specific location given in the dialogue, the only geographic information that is gathered from the text is that the town is far away from Los Angeles, not St. Louis, and south of Kansas City. A date is not given within the dialogue, but the language suggests the mid-20th century. Jackie mentions dancing with Bus the first time she heard "Stardust" by Hoagy Carmichael, which came out in 1927. There is also an 18 year old boy in the bar, who isn't dressed in a military uniform. Deductively, the time is most likely mid-1950s. As far as time of year, Jackie doesn't put on a jacket when she leaves, so it's not cold out, and there are a bunch of teenagers hanging out, I would assume it's summer. The economic environment is the topic of conversation between the Salesman and Howie. It is changing and it's "not what it used to be." Politically and religiously, it is a small town. Jackie mentions when she came back to town after being pregnant and giving up her baby, "the church women" would look down at her and talk bad about her. It is very obvious that the church and religious ideals still have a very strong hold on the town and its citizens. Socially, the times are changing and not everyone is changing with it, specifically the Salesman and Howie. They mention how the old mansions that people owned have become apartments or even turned into a business college. The Salesman's biggest claim is that the town is worse off because of it.

Previous Action -- Many past events are discussed within the dialogue, especially regarding Bus and Jackie. According to Jackie, Howie didn't care for Bus before he left for L.A. and according to Howie, most of the town felt the same way. It is also revealed that Bus and Jackie, for quite some time went "steady," which of course led to the pregnancy mentioned earlier. It also mentions in the dialogue that both Jackie and Bus left the town for awhile, Jackie because she was pregnant, Bus because he moved to Hollywood to fight professionally and act in movies. Jackie also reveals that multiple men have tried to marry her since Bus left, but she never did because she was always subconsciously holding out for him. The Salesman reveals the same "previous action" every time he speaks. According to him and Howie, the town that they the play takes place, used to be a hub of economic and social activity, and now it's dead and fiscally dry.

Polar Attitudes --

Jackie at the beginning: She is comfortable with her world, she doesn't have an overall desire to leave or to make any aggressive changes. She is rather bored in her relationships, and moves on quickly because none of them give her the rush that Bus did. Jackie is satisfied with herself, she fits the perfect description of an American girl and is happy with it. She also acts much younger than she truly is. She knows she can marry and be happy, but doesn't necessarily want to.

Jackie at the end: She is more confident than she was before. She feels free, and feels like she can commit herself more fully to someone. She is more independent and proud, no longer an American girl, but an American woman. She sees good things ahead, but age appropriate, more mature things.

Bus at the beginning: Bus feels on top of his world. Regarding relationships, he feels that he should always be the desired one in the relationship, that he is the grand prize that a person can win. He is, obviously, full of himself. Despite his age, he feels that he has a bright future filled with women, success, and fame.

Bus at the end: His entire world has been flipped upside down. He has gone from being the handsome desirable, to the lonesome “has been”. He falls out of his self-righteous state, and falls into a state of self-pity and denial. In the moment of the end of the play, he doesn’t know what waits for him, other than he wants another drink.

Howie at the beginning: Howie loves his town, and his world. He admits that it used to be better but he still loves it for what it is. Howie mentions how him and his wife have friends, and he feels comfortable as a member of the community. He is satisfied with himself and his situation. He doesn’t see much more happening and that doesn’t bother him.

Howie at the end: Howie doesn’t go through major character development in regards to his prospects or himself. However, regarding his relationship with the younger generation, we see how frustrated he gets and he even talks about how he doesn’t understand kids these days.

Salesman at the beginning: The salesman has a fairly awful relationship with his world. He is clearly not happy with his current relationship, despite mentioning his wife, he briefly suggests his sexual interest in Jackie. He definitely doesn’t think the problem is him, he is a token Willy Loman, he only mentions the problems with the world, never with himself or his own tactics. His prospects don’t look good, he has become so defeated he has resorted to drinking in a bar.

Salesman at the end: The salesman comes out slightly worse than what he started. In regards to the world and his relationships, he is in denial. However, with himself, he gained slightly more confidence in his life goals of selling, and never quitting the road. He still believes that he can make it rich someday, again, very Willy Loman.

Joker at the beginning: The youngest of the characters, he is full of spirit and sees that his life can only go up from where he is now. He comes in having a crush on Jackie, but obviously having solid friendships because he is there in a large group. He clearly has a lot of self-confidence, not self-centered, but confident. Like I stated, he feels his life can only get better.

Joker at the end: Joker has a heart to heart with Jackie at the end, where her reality crosses into his as advice. Joker ends the play, with a more clear vision on adulthood, whether he is happy of it or remorseful the script does not allude to. At the same time, he ends the play feeling younger than at the start, because Jackie distances herself from him using their age and experiences.

Dialogue

Choice of words -- William Inge wrote *Glory in the Flower* in a 1950's southern dialect. So he uses words like "doll," "swell dame," and "smitten" when describing women and relationships. Despite not giving a specific location, he writes in slang. For example, "wanta," "uset' be," and "things is pretty bad." Inge clearly wanted to make the characters as real as possible, so he wrote the language the way real people speak.

Choice of phrases -- It is written in prose, and there are no traces of any sort of rhyming or alliteration anywhere in the script. He will often use ellipses to show a character fading out, but doesn't use much interruption or hard cut-offs.

Choice of images -- There is quite a few instances of spoken imagery throughout the show, given by many characters at different times. For example, the Salesman explains the mansions and landscaping that used to be in the town, "fine big houses on both sides of the street. *Mansions!* Them high trees overhead... big green, leafy canopy, that let sunlight through" (177). Inge uses phrases like this, especially with the Salesman, to paint a picture of a brighter and happier time for him.

Choice of Peculiar Characteristics -- As I mentioned in the "Choice of words" section, Inge wrote the entire play in a dialect that is some breed of southern. He uses an awful lot of slang and conjunctions that don't actually exist outside of people's vernacular. I really like the way Inge wrote Bus, because it is very obvious that Bus is trying to incorporate his newer "Hollywood personality" lingo without ditching his original way of speech either. The writing itself shows a character that is lost and carries baggage from multiple stages of life.

The Sound of the Dialogue -- The way the dialogue is written, when it is spoken you can nearly hear a slightly southern twang, even without inflicting it in your voice.

Structure -- One thing I noticed while reading the play especially while reading some of it out loud is that most of the time when one character has several longer lines of dialogue, usually the other person has pretty short responses between them.

Characters

Jackie --

Desire -- Jackie wants, in a sense, the life of the normal “american woman” in the 1950s. She wants to marry a man, have a family, a white picket fence, and a dog. The catch is, she wants a man who is going to treat her the way she truly deserves to be treated.

Will -- Jackie has a very strong will. Jackie came back to town after giving up her baby, even though she knew the towns people would scorn her. She could have married several different men, but wanted to hold out for just the right one. She is a girl who knows what she wants and she gets it.

Moral Stance -- Because of her experiences, Jackie is pretty liberal, she really embraces the younger crowd, despite being in her 30s. She is a beacon of light everywhere she goes.

Decorum -- Jackie is white, average height, thin waist, with blonde hair. She wouldn't be caught dead in anything other than a skirt or a dress, and she always has just a little bit of beauty makeup on.

Adjectives -- Tastes sweet, feels soft, smells delicious, sounds small, looks beautiful

Mood-Intensity -- When Jackie first enters the scene she is anxious and excited. Her heart is racing, but she isn't sweating because it's a good nervous - she's seeing Bus for the first time since giving up her baby. Her stomach doesn't hurt, but she may be hungry. Her muscles are loose because she was planning on dancing tonight, and she's ready for it. Her breathing is calm.

Bus --

Desire -- Bus doesn't have long term goals in mind, his thinking is purely in the moment “dude bro” type. He wants to maybe have a wife someday, but he doesn't feel his youth is over yet.

Will -- Bus gives the impression of a strong will, however he doesn't take rejection well, and we see that his will is not nearly as strong as he is physically.

Moral Stance -- With Bus, all morals fly out the door. He loves to sleep with women and then leave them. Despite Jackie mentioning she has a boyfriend, he offers to take her to a house where they can be together. He is the only thing that matters.

Decorum -- Bus is in his late 30s, but is very attractive and in incredible shape. He may have a little bit of a belly, however he wears it well and it is flattering. He doesn't walk, he struts everywhere he goes, even being in LA where there are hundreds of

thousands of people more attractive than him, he still walks as though he has all eyes on him.

Adjectives -- Feels smooth, tastes bitter, smells musky, sounds arrogant, and looks cool.

Mood-Intensity -- When Bus first walks in, he is nervous, despite his persona. His heart is beating quickly, but he isn't sweating, his stomach is fine, and he is loose. He has mastered this "cool-guy" presence, he wouldn't dare drop it over meeting with some "doll."

Howie --

Desire -- Howie is getting up there in age, and his overall goal is to die, having lived his life the way he wanted to live it, as a bartender in his town.

Will -- Howie's will is strong, despite his brother criticizing him and trying to make him feel like a failure, he stayed strong and did what made him happiest.

Moral Stance -- Howie is traditional, but tolerant of the more liberal side of things. The scene where he kicks out a kid for smoking weed, and telling him that his life must be sad if that's the only fun he knows how to have. He feels the younger generation is lost and he doesn't know what to do about it.

Decorum -- Howie is in his 60s, but he is spry. He is slightly overweight, what some of us would call a "beer belly." His voice has vocal fry from existing in a loud environment his whole life, but it is relaxing, like there's wisdom behind everything he says.

Adjectives -- Tastes savory, smells smokey, looks aged, feels firm, and sounds soothing.

Mood-Intensity -- Howie, being a bartender, has mastered the staying calm in almost any situation. This is his place, where he is happiest, where he gets his satisfaction. He is showing no signs of being anxious or uncomfortable.

Salesman --

Desire -- The salesman goes through a drunken and emotional journey through his small pieces of dialogue. By the end of the play, it is obvious that his true desire is to be a success. That's all he wants his life to be -- successful.

Will -- The salesman's will was once strong, but has been depleted over time. He stands up to his wife against moving a starting a chicken farm, and he makes the decision to never give up selling, but we as the audience don't know if he is fully committed to those promises or not.

Moral Stance -- His morals are low. He doesn't care about what anyone else is saying throughout the entire play. His problems are the only problems.

Decorum -- The salesman is bigger, going bald, and absolutely white. He often dresses in unkept up suits, and pants that don't quite fit him. It is obvious that he could clean up nicely, however, he doesn't do it very often.

Adjectives -- Smells boozy, Tastes bitter, looks cheap, feels heavy, and sounds ramblingly.

Mood-Intensity -- The Salesman is frustrated and slightly intoxicated when the play starts. His heart is beating fast, he probably is sweating, as his internal body heat rises. His stomach is settling as he relaxes from the alcohol. However, he is physically tight.

Joker --

Desire -- Joker is young, and isn't quite sure of his end desire yet. Mostly, he just wants to be taken seriously while still enjoying his life and his youth.

Will -- Joker's will is strong, it comes from being so young and hip, he feels on top of the world.

Moral Stance -- Joker hasn't had the time or life experience to figure out his morals, shown through his affection for Jackie, who is in her 30s, possibly double his age. He also swears to Howie saying that no one else was smoking weed, meaning his willing to cover for his friends.

Decorum -- I picture Joker as either a mixed race or a black boy. Who hangs out with the white crowd because they think he's hip. He clearly holds himself well, and is fairly attractive.

Adjectives -- Smells clean, Tastes fresh, Looks handsome, Sounds hopeful, and Feels leathery.

Mood-Intensity -- Joker starts the play in a group of kids, dancing, meaning his heart is beating quick and he is sweaty. His stomach is going strong with just a little bit of booze in him, and he is relaxed because he is in a comfortable place.

Idea

“Glory in the Flower” is an interesting title that I struggled for a while to understand. At first, I thought it was in response to the town they were physically in. However, after I read the play, I don’t know how many times, one of the most common themes is aging or change over time. To me the title refers to the blooming of a flower, that resembles people (like Jackie and the Salesman) or places (like the town) changing, and the beauty or pride that can come with it.

Philosophical statements highlighted in the text:

“Nothing ever stays the same” (168)

“Lotsa times a young girl, smitten on a young boy, sees lotsa “very fine things” in him that aren’t there at all” (170)

“Kids get head-over-heels in love, and maybe even kill themselves for love, without even knowin’ what they’re in love with.” (171)

“Seems like folks b’lieve pretty much what they *wanta* b’lieve.” (172)

“Well you can’t expect *paradise* until you *die*.” (172)

“There oughta be a law to keep things the way they are. Goll darn it, there oughta be a law.” (178)

“There’s no one can ever arrange things in his own life, when he’s a kid anyway, to suit himself. You gotta make peace sometime with the life you were born with...” (183)

“It makes you feel strong... to hate” (183)

“A guy don’t stay smiling... and nice... and sweet. A guy’s gotta *fight*.” (183)

“But a man... always wants... somethin’ *better*.” (184)

“You’re only as old as you feel.” (189)

“But all that life you got, all that energy and pep, they’re no good just in themselves... you gotta grow up.” (189)

Their meaning, bunched together, leads me to think that William Inge was a rather cynical and/or traditional person. He was trying to convey his disdain, or his characters disdain through his use of their dialogue.

The main struggle between two characters is between Jackie and Bus. As I briefly mentioned, the main theme is dealing with age and how self-discovery comes from the passing of time. Jackie, at the end of the play, has found herself. She is similar to a ghost, no longer having unfinished business, so she is able to move on, only instead of into the afterlife, it's into her future without Bus Riley. We can also see this theme through the salesman's internal struggle. He goes through his entire interaction with the town, from when he first started coming and making "thousands!" and then seeing it change, and to where it is today. However, by the end of it, he has set his path and says he will never give up selling until he dies, because that is who he is.

The scene I have chosen essentially the meat and potatoes of the play. It touches a total and three units, and has two mini scenes within it that I cropped out. So to answer the question, could it be taken out? Despite it carrying the majority of the plot? Yes, I believe it can be taken out. Because, if the theme that William Inge was going for, was that of aging and accepting changes over time, it could be shown between Howie and the Salesman. In fact, you could cut everything out except Howie and the Salesman, and have a great 10 minute play that still delivers the same or at least a very similar message. The reason they're both in there is to juxtapose Jackie to the salesman. Jackie embraces her new found self, and the audience is left to imagine what she will do with it. However, the Salesman falls deeper into denial, and refuses to adjust to the times that are changing around him.