

WINDOWS

By Dennis Bush

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CHARACTERS

CARRIE	17, female, upper middle class, lives in Manhattan; a leader
JAY	17, male, working class, from Brooklyn; a bit of a bully
KRISTA	15, female, middle class, from Harrison, NY; slightly paranoid
ROCHELLE	16; female, middle class, from Brooklyn; sensitive, bright; a poet
MONICA	15, female, middle class, from Garden City, Long Island; perky, emotional
STEVE	17, male, middle class, from Queens; extremely bright, quirky, introverted
ELISE	17, female, middle class, Staten Island; athletic, funny
DAWN	16, female, middle class, Manhattan; loves words; observant
DONOVAN	16, male, very wealthy, Manhattan; shy, privileged but not pretentious
GREG	15, male, poor, Manhattan; impacted by his father's drug and alcohol problems; sensitive

PROPS

- 1) A large envelope with "Open This First" printed on it.
- 2) A small box with "Open This Next" printed on it and filled with 10 cards with discussion prompts, as per the script.
- 3) An information and instruction letter
- 4) 10 (or more) index cards
- 5) Camera phone for Elise
- 6) One or two other camera phones for possible use by other characters
- 7) Notebook for Rochelle

SETTING

WINDOWS takes place in an audition space in New York City on a Saturday afternoon.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

WINDOWS was first performed by North Canyon Theatre Ensemble in January, 2006. The original cast included Hanna Leister, Lauren Forschino, Emily Kneale, Jake Dennison, Rocky DeMasi, Nadine Lombardi, Kelsey Torstveit, Emily White, Scott McKown and Alex Knerr.

PRODUCTION NOTES

WINDOWS can be presented with a very simple set. There are no special costume requirements. The original production was performed in the round but most any style of staging will work.

RUNNING TIME

Running time is approximately 40 minutes.

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AT RISE: *There is basic seating scattered around the performance space. In the center, there is a small table or something similar on which there is a small box with the phrase, "Open this next" and a large manila envelope with "Open this first" written on them in bold letters. After a few seconds, the actors begin to enter the space slowly, looking around.*

CARRIE: There aren't any windows. *(SHE continues to move around the space, looking around.)*

JAY: Nope. No windows. *(HE does a quick, cursory look around and sits down, getting comfortable.)*

KRISTA: But they're watching us from every direction. *(Looks in one direction and, then, turns to look in another. There is a sense of concern but SHE should not be actively paranoid.)*

(ROCHELLE and MONICA enter, looking around, but not yet speaking.)

JAY: They're just sitting there and watching. It's like on the cop shows when the murderer is in a room getting questioned and the cops are watching through the special two-way mirror.

STEVE: Maybe they're not watching us live. . . Maybe they're videotaping us and are gonna watch the tape, later. They do that with murderers, too.

(ELISE enters, unnerved by the conversation SHE has walked in on.)

DAWN: We're not murderers! We're just trying out for a reality TV show.

(DONOVAN enters, looking around,)

GREG: *(rushing in, out of breath)* Oh, good. I thought I was too late. I was afraid it would all get started without me.

ELISE: Did you run here?

GREG: Part of the way.

ROCHELLE: How far away do you live?

GREG: Not too far. Just up on 48th, off of 8th.

STEVE: I took a bus and two subways to get here. I planned my route and did a practice run to make sure I'd have enough time to be on time.

MONICA: I had to come in from Long Island. (**quick, excitement-filled pause**) But I'd have gone across the country for this!

DAWN: My dad dropped me off.

KRISTA: My mom's waiting downstairs. We got here like five hours early. I told her to go shopping or something instead of sitting in the car the whole time but she was like, "Ooooh, no. I'm not going to get out and walk around this neighborhood."

DAWN: This neighborhood is nice, now. My mom grew up close to here and she said it used to be all dirty movie theaters and drug dealers and stuff.

KRISTA: My mom hates the city.

CARRIE: Where are you from?

KRISTA: We live in Harrison. It's nice. Quiet.

JAY: Sounds boring.

KRISTA: It isn't, really. (**senses general disbelief**) Really, it isn't.

ROCHELLE: We believe you.

JAY: (**indicating ROCHELLE, as HE addressed KRISTA**) She believes you. (**looks at DONOVAN**) What about you?

DONOVAN: What about me?

JAY: You live in the city? How'd you get here?

DONOVAN: (**clearly avoiding admitting anything**) Yeah. Uh-huh.

STEVE: Yeah, uh-huh, what?

DONOVAN: Yeah, I live in the city.

ELISE: Where?

DONOVAN: Upper East Side.

JAY: I'm guessing you didn't take the subway.

DONOVAN: No.

ROCHELLE: So, how did you get here?

DONOVAN: (**under his breath, hoping the questions will stop**) I got dropped off.

JAY: By your mommy? Did your mommy drop you off?

DONOVAN: No, our driver did, ok?

JAY: (**with a taunting edge**) Ohhhhhh. (**quick pause**) Must be nice.

MONICA: Do you live in a big skyscraper?

DONOVAN: No, we have a townhouse.

CARRIE: My parents and I live on the 29th floor of our apartment building. It's just the three of us, since my sister got married. I got her room. It has floor to ceiling windows. Sometimes, at night, I feel like there are people looking in my window.

ELISE: On the 29th floor?

JAY: (**sarcastic**) Must be a superhero peeping tom with suction cups for hands. He crawls up the outside of the building just to get a look in your window. (**gives CARRIE the once-over**) I don't know why he bothers.

CARRIE: I didn't mean that there's an actual person right outside my window looking in. I said it feels like people are looking in. . . from the building across the street or wherever. It's a feeling, ok? I haven't actually caught someone looking into my room with binoculars or a telescope.

ROCHELLE: I've done that.

KRISTA: Done what?

ROCHELLE: I've used binoculars to look into other people's apartments. It's interesting. Fascinating, actually, to see what people do when they think no one is watching. They'll scratch themselves and pick their noses and all kinds of stuff.

JAY: So, you're a peeping. . . (**quick pause**) What did you say your name was?

ROCHELLE: Rochelle.

JAY: A peeping Rochelle!

KRISTA: It's creepy.

ROCHELLE: I don't do it all the time. Just every once in a while.

JAY: You heard it, here: Confessions of a Part-time Peeper.

KRISTA: Shouldn't somebody be telling us what to do or how this is supposed to work?

STEVE: There's a big envelope here that says, "Open this first."

ELISE: And a box that says, "Open this next."

JAY: I say we open the box first.

KRISTA: But we're supposed to open the envelope first.

JAY: Who says?

KRISTA: The person who wrote it on the envelope.

JAY: You must be a rule follower.

KRISTA: A what?

JAY: A rule follower. There are two kinds of people in the world: Rule followers and rule breakers. You're a rule follower.

CARRIE: (**to JAY**) And you're a rule breaker.

JAY: You got that right.

STEVE: I'd rather not have the people holding the tryouts think that I can't follow simple directions.

JAY: Another rule follower heard from.

STEVE: Let's take a vote. Majority wins. Everyone who wants to open the envelope first. . .

KRISTA: (**interjecting a reminder**) Like it says to do on the envelope.

STEVE: . . . raise your hand.

(KRISTA, CARRIE, DONOVAN, ELISE, DAWN and STEVE raise their hands)

STEVE: **(continuing; counting)** Six. **(pause; there's no real need to continue the voting but STEVE wants to be thorough)** And everyone who wants to open the box first, raise your hand.

(JAY, GREG, ROCHELLE and MONICA raise their hands.)

STEVE: **(continuing)** Four. **(quick pause)** Six to four. We open the envelope first.

JAY: **(taking the envelope from STEVE's hand)** I'll open it.

DAWN: **(to JAY)** Why do you get to open it? **(to others)** Why does he get to open it? He didn't even want to open it first.

JAY: I get to open it so whoever it is that's watching us for this audition thing can see that I'm a leader. **(opens the envelope and pulls out a typed sheet of paper, reads aloud)** "Welcome to the final round of the screening process for Teen Music Network's new reality series, Boarding School. Congratulations, on making it this far.

(There is applause, cheers, giggles and other responses.)

CARRIE: **(takes sheet of paper from JAY and continues to read aloud)** "We received thousands of applications from teens across the country and, from those; we asked two hundred and fifty to prepare video diaries. After viewing and re-viewing those videotaped windows into your world, we selected fifty young people for this round."

(MONICA giggles and applauds.)

DAWN: **(takes sheet of paper from CARRIE and continues to read aloud)** "Sessions just like this one will be taking place in four other cities, during the next two weeks. The final step will be to send ten of you – two from each of the five final-round sessions – to take part in the first edition of our new thirteen-week series, Boarding School."

MONICA: Only two of us will make it?

DAWN: **(pointing to the reference in the printed sheet)** That's what it says.

MONICA: Wow. Only two of us.

DAWN: There's more. **(quick pause; resumes reading)** "This session is being videotaped, but our producers are also watching you, right now, live."

(Everyone looks around. MONICA smiles broadly and waves. Others greet the viewers in more casual but still eager ways.)

CARRIE: **(taking the sheet back from DAWN)** “And, now, please open the box and get started.”

JAY: **(mocking STEVE)** Are you sure we don’t need to take vote before we open it?

DAWN: Just open it.

JAY: **(opens the box)** There are a bunch of cards in it.

ELISE: Cards? Like for playing poker?

MONICA: Like Celebrity Poker Showdown?!

GREG: **(reaching in a pulling out a card)** No, like cards with directions on ‘em. And there’s a piece of paper in here, too. It says **(reading)** “Everyone should pick a card. One at a time. Be honest. Be yourselves and be real.”

ELISE: What else could we be?

CARRIE: **(pointing at JAY)** A jerk like him.

GREG: There’s a P.S. “After the last person has drawn the final card, you are free to go. One of our producers will meet you in the waiting room outside the studio. Be sure to take all of your belongings, when you leave. Thank you for participating in the Boarding School casting process. Even if you’re not selected, we hope you’ll watch the show.” **(shows the paper)** That’s it. No more instructions. . . I guess we get started, now.

DONOVAN: Who’s going to take the first card?

CARRIE: I was the first one here so I think I should take the first card. Anybody have a problem with that? **(quick pause; looks at JAY)** Anybody but you have a problem with that?

(All except JAY respond with “Go ahead,” “Fine by me,” etc.)

CARRIE: **(pulls a card from the box; reads it aloud)** “Describe your most embarrassing moment.”

ROCHELLE: I’ve got a million of those.

ELISE: Too bad it’s not your card.

STEVE: **(to CARRIE)** I think they want us to answer right away, when we pull a card. I don’t think we have an unlimited amount of time to consider a response.

JAY: Yeah, we don’t have all day.

CARRIE: Okay, Okay. So, it was last year. I was a junior and I was going to the prom with a senior. He wasn’t my boyfriend – not officially. We got a limo with two other couples and we were riding around, before we went to the prom, sticking our heads out the limo’s sunroof and waving at people. And we were way on the west side

and I had to pee really bad. The limo didn't have a bathroom – it had a jacuzzi but no bathroom and I wasn't going to pee in the jacuzzi – so I asked the driver to stop someplace where I could use the restroom and he suggested that I hold it 'til we got to the prom but I could never have waited that long. When I said that we were way on the west side, I meant that we were way on the west side. There were warehouses and storage places and stuff like that. No apartments or restaurants. And it was dark. So, I got on the intercom and I told the limo driver to pull over right there 'cause I was going to get out and go to the bathroom.

ELISE: Did you?

CARRIE: Heck, yeah, I did. I hiked my dress up and I squatted down and I peed in the street about twenty feet away from where the limo was parked. And just as I was finishing, Jason – that's the guy I was going to the prom with – got out of the limo and asked if I was okay and it scared me 'cause I wasn't expecting anybody to get out of the car. So I lost my balance – it's not easy squatting like that – and fell backwards. Jason helped me up and we got back into the limo and drove off. And I thought everything was fine. Until we walked into the prom and Maria Benedetti just about split open her dress laughing at me. And I was like, what's the matter, and she told me about the big pee stain on the back of my pale pink prom dress. **(quick pause)** And that is my most embarrassing moment.

(ELISE, MONICA and ROCHELLE applaud.)

JAY: Why are you clapping? She fell in her own pee. Since when does that rate applause?

MONICA: I was just being polite.

ELISE: She went first. And she shared a very personal story. That's not easy to do with people you don't know.

KRISTA: I'd rather tell strangers than friends that I fell in my own pee – not that I've ever fallen in my own pee or peed outside in a prom dress – I had a really pretty dress for prom, this year. But I'd never pee in it. Or in any dress. Or outside at all. . . I pee inside. Not outside.

DONOVAN: Well, now that we've gotten that cleared up, somebody else needs to take a turn and pull a card.

DAWN: I'll go and get it over with.

JAY: **(to GREG)** I'd have gone next but I'll be a gentleman and let her go.

DAWN: **(reading the card)** "What's the one word that would best describe you and why?" **(pause)** Okay. **(quick pause)** Word lover.

STEVE: I think that's two words or a hyphen. I don't think it counts.

CARRIE: I think it's fine. **(to DAWN)** Go ahead. Tell us why.

DAWN I love words. I always have. I used to go through the dictionary and find interesting, exotic words and, then, find a way to work them into conversations. One of my favorite words is abattoir. Isn't it fabulous? Abattoir. Say it with me. . . **(the others join her, with varying degrees of enthusiasm)** Abattoir! And do you know what it means? **(no response)** Slaughterhouse. **(no response)** It means slaughterhouse. It sounds so elegant – abattoir – like it should be some kind of fashionable, French salon. . . and it means **(quick pause)** slaughterhouse. I love that! And pestilence. I love pestilence. That's a plague or a scourge. Scourge is a good word, too, but not nearly as expressive as pestilence. Or eviscerate. That means disembowel.

(ROCHELLE opens a notebook and writes a few words down, without drawing attention to herself.)

KRISTA: They're not very happy words. I mean, slaughterhouse. . . plague. . . disembowel?! **(aside to ELISE)** I think we're going to see her on CNN sometime and it's not going to be good news.

JAY: Who's next?

ROCHELLE: Why don't you go?

JAY: Fine with me. **(looking in the direction from which HE thinks the producers are watching)** I'm not shy. I'm a leader. **(taking card)** "Describe your best date."

CARRIE: You better pull another one. **(sarcastically)** I think you have to have had at least one date for this card.

JAY: I've had dates. **(lying)** A lot of 'em.

ROCHELLE: So, tell us about your best one, like the card says.

JAY: Her name was Sharon. Sharon Ocarina. It was at the end of school, last year. She was gonna be moving over the summer so I figured I could have a little fun and, then, not have to see her again. You know how it is. Girls get clingy and all stalkerish. So, we went out. Got some pizza, went to a movie and made out through the whole thing. **(pause, bragging)** I'm a good kisser. She wanted me bad. Real bad. I don't even remember what the movie was. It was an awesome date. Then, a couple days later, I came down with a really bad cold. The doctor thought it was mono. I blame it on Sharon.

ELISE: **(who has been gradually making a connection in her mind)** Did you say Sharon Ocarina?

JAY: Yeah.

ELISE: Kind of short and a little. . . chubby. . . with short brown hair and big brown eyes?

JAY: Yeah, that's right.

ELISE: She moved in down the street from me. On Staten Island.

JAY: You know her? You know Sharon?

ELISE: Yep. We were at Destiny Milanazzo's birthday party, last weekend. I think I have a picture of us together on my phone. **(shows the camera phone photo)** Is that who you went on your date with?

JAY: **(the swagger is gone)** Yeah.

ELISE: She's gonna die when I tell her.

JAY: You can't do that.

ELISE: Do what?

JAY: Tell her. You can't tell her anything that goes on in here. This is a **(making up the term)** "confidentiality zone." Whatever happens in here, stays in here. We've gotta be like Vegas. **(looks around at the others)** Right? We're like Vegas. C'mon, everyone. Let me here it **(expecting them to join in)**, "We're like Vegas." **(no one joins in)** We all said "abattoir" for her but nobody will do a little "We're like Vegas" chant with me? I see how it is.

STEVE: Actually, I think he's right. I think we should respect the privacy of this situation. Like the letter said, we're giving the producers – and each other – windows into our worlds and we shouldn't turn that personal information into gossip. So, I say, "We're like Vegas."

GREG and DONOVAN: We're like Vegas

(The girls look at each other, waiting for one to take the lead. CARRIE nods in agreement.)

CARRIE, DAWN, KRISTA, ROCHELLE and MONICA: We're like Vegas.

ELISE: **(giving in)** All right, "We're like Vegas." **(pause)** I won't say anything to Sharon. **(aside to ROCHELLE)** At least not for a few days.

JAY: **(to GREG)** You've been awfully quiet. Why don't you go next?

GREG: Okay. **(feigning nonchalance)** I don't mind. **(gets up and goes over to the box of cards and selects one, then, reads it)** "Complete this sentence: What I wonder about most is _____."

MONICA: That's a tough one.

GREG: **(not making eye contact with anyone)** I wonder where my dad is. **(pause)** Last time I saw him – almost a year ago – he was living on the street. Down in the Village. I was having dinner with my uncle, Wayne – my mom's brother – at an Italian restaurant on Bleecker and we saw my dad sitting on the sidewalk leaning against a trashcan. He didn't recognize me but I knew it was him. I could tell right away, as soon as I saw him, even before my uncle took a quick breath and looked away, like he'd seen a ghost. My dad is kind of a junkie. Kind of an alcoholic, drug addict combination. He hasn't lived

with my mom and me for a couple years. It got too hard to have him around, stealing stuff, getting us in trouble with the neighbors and the landlord. Sometimes, when I came home from school, I'd find him drunk or high or both, lying in a heap, in the hallway in front of our apartment door. I'd take him inside and get him cleaned up and put him to bed before my mom got home. I actually miss doing that. I always felt like I was really close to him, then. Like he needed me. **(pause)** Anyway. . . that's what I wonder about.

ELISE: Okay. . . uh. . . whoa. . . uh, why don't I go next. **(quickly grabbing a card and reading it)** "What is your favorite sport and why?" **(quick pause)** That's easy. **(quick pause)** Spitting.

ROCHELLE: What?

STEVE: That's not a sport. Spitting is not a sport.

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