

DINOSAURS

A Play; or a Conjuring

SYNOPSIS:

Ellen and Daniel are stuck on the same night, over and over again. Literally. If only Ellen could get the conversation right this time, but things go haywire when the rules of the world that The Writer created begin to fail them, and all three of them are forced to face the limitations and vitriol of memories gone awry. Based on a true story, except for the Groundhog Day element, Dinosaurs explores the guilt and grief that suicide leaves us with, and how our memories morph and fill in the blanks when people leave us too soon, denying us the closure we so desperately craved.

characters

ellen	early 20s	she's tired and always seemingly in a rush
daniel	early 20s	charming, unhinged, a figment of a memory
the writer	late 20s	ellen, but older and (she thinks) wiser.

place

an october night in a backyard in probably la, but can be anywhere.
but it's october.
that feels important.
the leaves have just begun to fall.

time

around 8:30 pm

notes

play with the transitions. it doesn't have to be lights up, lights down. this is the thing about memory, it enmeshes itself outside the confines of time, it floods, it flows into the next, so play with that.

a / indicates an overlap. talking over each other is vital to the rhythm of this.
an , indicates a breath. however long or short is up to you. but it's a breath.
there is dialogue in italics on page 12. it's to indicate that they're trying to stick to "the script" of the memory, but it's not working.

your daniel can be played by 3 different actors throughout the play or just one, whatever you feel works best. i see it as three. he is not confined to any race, or gender. he is daniel, living as a memory, which will inevitably warp and twist, so the daniels do not have to look alike, we just need to know that it's still daniel. do with that what you will.

please cast bigger bodied actors for ellen and the writer. small does not mean thin, it means short.
let your ellen look normal.

that's all.

SCENE V

Same as before, here she comes.

More Dinosaurs on the railing.

However the TV light stays on. Dimmer now.

ELLEN

Daniel?

Daniel enters in a full Dinosaur suit.

ELLEN

Oh my god.

DANIEL

Hello, m'lady.

ELLEN

I actually
It's

DANIEL

You still live here.

ELLEN

I truly cannot proceed with this.

DANIEL

You don't like it?

ELLEN

,

DANIEL

What, I'm not allowed to come visit you?

ELLEN

It's not
This is not it.

This isn't
I physically cannot do this like this

(directed back towards the house)

Are you fucking serious?

DANIEL

I thought I'd shake it up.

ELLEN

No
This isn't you
This is her
Is this supposed to be a joke?

DANIEL

No?

ELLEN

Can you just
Give me a second

(again back towards the house)

What the fuck is this?

She goes back up the steps, and bangs on the porch door.

ELLEN

I'm not
I'm done if you think
Can you PLEASE get out here?

She bangs again. Silence.

The TV turns off.

Finally, the back door creaks open.

Out comes THE WRITER (28, an older sister).

THE WRITER

What?

ELLEN

You know what.

THE WRITER

I'm not supposed to be out here.

ELLEN

This is stupid.

I cannot believe you.

In what world would this have happened?

THE WRITER

It could have.

ELLEN

,

THE WRITER

What!

It could have.

ELLEN

I'm honestly embarrassed for you.

THE WRITER

Jesus, you're mean.

ELLEN

Well, you write bad.

THE WRITER

Oh sick burn, bro.

Fuck off.

ELLEN

No you fuck off.

DANIEL

Ladies, please.

ELLEN

Daniel, not now.

THE WRITER

Daniel, not now.

DANIEL

Okay.

Sorry.

ELLEN

Re-write it.

THE WRITER

No.

ELLEN

This isn't honoring him.
It's making fun of him.
I won't do that.

THE WRITER

It's not.
He would have done this.
You know that.
He would've.
He dressed up as fucking Spiderman and hung upside down from the roof of his High School to ask a girl to prom.
This isn't out of the realm of possibility.
This was him.

ELLEN

It's not the him that I know.

THE WRITER

Well, it's the him that *I* know.
And so it stays.
Because this is mine.
And I say so.
And he would have.
So whether you like it or not.
It stays.

ELLEN

,

THE WRITER

Do it.

ELLEN

No.
If you're making me re-live this, I get a say.
No.

THE WRITER

I hate you.

I get a say.

ELLEN

You're not letting him grow!

THE WRITER

I'm good.
I'm hot, actually.

DANIEL

I want them to
They should know you though.

THE WRITER

It's okay.

DANIEL

You can't add things because you feel like it.

ELLEN

Ellen.

DANIEL

She can't.
That's the rule.
And she's making fun / of you

ELLEN

No, I'm not!

THE WRITER

Bullshit.

ELLEN

I don't want them to think that this was all of him.
It's a warped bad version.
And they should know why we / loved him

THE WRITER

/ Don't say it.

ELLEN

That's not the point, though.

DANIEL

ELLEN

Sorry, you think a fucking dino suit is gonna make him three dimensional?

THE WRITER

,

ELLEN

Exactly.

You can't bend the rules because you don't like the game.

THE WRITER

,

Fine.

,

Again.

No more TV. We bleed into the new.

SCENE VI

Lights up, but instead Ellen is already out on the porch, in a lawn chair, holding a beer. There's a cooler next to her.

She's drunk.

Daniel enters. We see his progression to the tree this time. The inner machinations. The whole shebang.

Ellen watches him, drinking away.

He finally gets to the tree and settles.

ELLEN

Hi.

The lights flicker.

He snaps his head up.

DANIEL

,

Hi.

I didn't see you.

ELLEN

S'fine.

So that's what you do, huh?

DANIEL

What do I do?

ELLEN

The whole
Breaking into my backyard thing.
Do you want a beer?

DANIEL

Sure.

ELLEN

Well scoot your boot over here, partner. Grab a cold one.

He sits down in the chair next to her.

DANIEL

You still live here.

ELLEN

No, we're skipping this today.

DANIEL

Oh / okay.

ELLEN

I wanna ask you some things instead.

DANIEL

Can I do something first.

ELLEN

Is it the / dinosaurs?

DANIEL

I got you dinosaurs.

He holds them out.

ELLEN

Fuck.
Right. Okay.
Um.
Put them on the rail.
They'll be decoration.

He does.

ELLEN

Did you miss me?

DANIEL

What do you mean?

ELLEN

Last year, did you miss me? Did you think of me at all?

DANIEL

Yeah
Of course I did.

ELLEN

Why'd you never text me then?

DANIEL

'
Is this the Spanish Inquisition?

ELLEN

No.
You're a Christian, and I am the Jew, so it wouldn't work.
Unless you ask me the questions, but we already know all about me.
I'm a fucking open book.
Wait, no. Are you Catholic?
What are you?
Mormon? Born again? Bible bangin'?
What are you?

DANIEL

You're drunk.

ELLEN

Correct.

DANIEL

I should go.

ELLEN

No no no no
You should stay
Right here.
What are you?

DANIEL

Uh
Just plain old Christian.

ELLEN

Huh
Cuz they held your
It was in this huge mega church, and I thought it was just where those things are held
But then my mom said that it was because your family was super
Like that area is super religious
Which really threw me
But I guess we never really talked about that stuff

DANIEL

Ellen, what are you talking about?

ELLEN

Your um
Oop no
That's off limits
Doesn't matter
I won't ever know anyways.
Okay, next question.

DANIEL

,
Okay.

ELLEN

Why didn't you text me?
Why didn't you reach out
Like
At all?

DANIEL

You already asked this.

ELLEN

You didn't answer.
So.

DANIEL

I don't really
,
I don't want to get into this right now
If that's okay

ELLEN

Why

DANIEL

It's been a really long day
And I don't have / the energy

ELLEN

No, right
Sorry
I got carried away
I'm just
Curious, I guess.

DANIEL

I'm gonna head out
I feel like I've interrupted your
Whatever this is

ELLEN

My drinking in my backyard.

DANIEL

Yeah, that.
So I'm gonna go.
I shouldn't have come
It was stupid
Sorry.

ELLEN

I go a lot of places I probably shouldn't have.
Like I definitely should not have gone to Charlotte's party 6 beers in
But I did.

And I still thought jungle juice would be a good idea.
 And then I most definitely vomited all over her that night.
 But I also would have never met you if I hadn't gone.
 So.
 Checks and balances and what not.

DANIEL

You puked on Charlotte?

ELLEN

Oh yeah, full on projectile vommed.
 It would be funny but she stopped being my friend, so now it's just very sad.
 Oh my god.
 I became that girl.
 Puke girl of o'10.

DANIEL

I wouldn't go that far.

ELLEN

I would.
 Do you know that she and Lee wouldn't even talk to me about you that year?
 Wouldn't even mention your name.
 Outright refused.
 And I kept trying to make sense of it
 Like I needed to know I wasn't crazy
 That I wasn't the only one affected by it but
 But they both looked at me like they had no idea what I was talking about.
 Like my pain was so unwarranted.
 So out of the blue.
 ,
 How could they not care?
 How fucking dare them.
 Did you know that Lee once told me that he didn't end up going to this High School
 where they gave everyone their own horse because he already owned his own horse?
 I wanted to yeet myself off a cliff when he told me that.
 ,

DANIEL

Lee said that?

ELLEN

Yah, how fucking
 Like how unbelievably rich and out of touch do you have to be to think
 That's relatable?
 Or even a common topic of conversation?

DANIEL

Lee was
Extravagant
To say the least.

ELLEN

Lee was an asshole.

DANIEL

Sure.
But at least he knew who he was and owned it.

ELLEN

Do you wanna go suck his dick or something?
Jesus.

DANIEL

Ok I'm gonna go.

ELLEN

No sorry
I just
Apparently I still get jealous.

DANIEL

Of Lee?

ELLEN

And you.
Of Lee with you.

DANIEL

,
Seriously?

ELLEN

What.

DANIEL

You actually think I was in love with him?

ELLEN

I don't know.

We stopped talking and suddenly you were everywhere with him

And I wasn't invited anywhere anymore

so

Or maybe I pulled away and everyone just naturally drifted apart but

DANIEL

I came here to tell you that / I love *you* actually.

ELLEN

Yeah yeah yeah.

I don't want to talk about that tonight.

DANIEL

I kind of do.

I kind of need to.

ELLEN

Mmmmm

No.

S'mine turn tonight.

I DRIVE TONIGHT.

(Back towards the house)

YOU HEAR THAT?

Fucking thinking this is only hers.

Bullshit.

DANIEL

Ellen

ELLEN

Grrrrrow UP!

DANIEL

Don't be WEIRD.

ELLEN

DON'T BE WEIRD, MA'AM.

DANIEL

DON'T MAKE IT BIZARRE, MONSIEUR.

Daniel finally grabs a beer. A chance at brevity.

ELLEN

There are lots of things I wish I could ask you.

DANIEL

Ask 'em.

ELLEN

I don't think you'll know the answers.

DANIEL

Try me.

ELLEN

Okay.

DANIEL

Start easy on me.

ELLEN

What's your mom's name?

DANIEL

Really?

ELLEN

No, see you can't judge me about this
You never told me her name
I never even saw a picture.

DANIEL

You never asked.

ELLEN

I didn't know I needed to

DANIEL

Are all of these going to be personal questions?

ELLEN

Yes.

DANIEL

Um

ELLEN

There are so many parts to this that will remain a mystery to me because I don't have the right to ask.

How fucked is that?

,

Do you know that I met your mom and your sister

I didn't even know you had a sister by the way

But they knew who I was, what I looked like, what my name was, what I meant to you

Like I didn't even have to introduce myself

Which was

Jarring?

I don't know if that's the right word.

But I went up to them and I said, "Hi I just wanted to--"

And your sister immediately said "I know who are you",
and your sweet mom

She said my name like it was cursed.

I was so ashamed to be there that day

It felt like I was intruding

,

I want to apologize to your sister, but I don't know what for.

I don't know what I did.

But I know she hated me.

She stared at me like she could fucking kill me

And I still to this day don't know what I did.

Maybe it's that she knew I couldn't love you back

Or not in the way you needed me to

And that will haunt me for ever.

DANIEL

,

El, what are you doing?

ELLEN

I don't really know you, do I?

DANIEL

You know what I wanted you to know.

ELLEN

That's not fair

Like how I am supposed to know if I love you if

Like

If I didn't know you

DANIEL

I think you just know.

ELLEN

I tried, didn't I?
I tried to know your history but you never
You never gave me anything

DANIEL

Maybe you just didn't try hard enough.

ELLEN

,
Again.

Begin again.

TV plays: "Our condolences"

Abruptly off.

SCENE VII

Same as before. Out she comes. More dinosaurs.

ELLEN

Jesus Christ.

DANIEL

Hi.

ELLEN

What are you doing here?

DANIEL

How are you?

ELLEN

Dan, what are you doing?

DANIEL

I was in the neighborhood.

ELLEN

Bullshit.

DANIEL
No, I / was,

ELLEN
Uh huh, sure you were.

DANIEL
Okay.
Is this a bit, because I don't get it.

ELLEN
It's not a bit.

DANIEL
I've been in my car for the past hour.

ELLEN
So you weren't just in the neighborhood.

DANIEL
Ellen.

ELLEN
I'm just trying to keep your timeline straight.

DANIEL
We both are.

ELLEN
What do you want, Daniel?

DANIEL
I was in my car, and you just / popped up in my mind

ELLEN
I have to go.

DANIEL
What?

ELLEN
I have to go.

DANIEL

Can I just
Can you
Just wait a second please?

ELLEN

,
You have 5 minutes.

DANIEL

Well, time is actually irrelevant.

ELLEN

Time is actually of the matter.

DANIEL

But also not of the matter.
Time is here and now

DANIEL

But never.
I am the mad hatter.

ELLEN

But never.
I am the mad hatter.

A brief respite. This was clearly an inside joke.

ELLEN

What's in your hand?

Daniel shoves his hands into his pockets.

DANIEL

Nothing.

ELLEN

Daniel.

DANIEL

Nothing!

ELLEN

Show me

DANIEL

I feel stupid now

ELLEN

Come on.

He reluctantly reveals the dinosaurs.

ELLEN

Oh.

DANIEL

See, it's stupid.

ELLEN

No.

Sorry.

It's not.

I just

I wasn't expecting that.

DANIEL

I figured it was appropriate.

ELLEN

You saw the song?

DANIEL

Yeah. I heard the song, actually, with my ear parts.

It's really good, El.

He offers them again.

ELLEN

Thank you.

DANIEL

Who was it for?

ELLEN

Um,

DANIEL

I'm hoping you'll say me, so this doesn't seem like the biggest mistake of all time.

ELLEN

It / wasn't

DANIEL

No, see the thing is: I came here because I
Well I needed to.
I needed to see you.
And I know we stopped talking, but I really missed you, Ellen.
I really really missed you and so I came here to
,
I just wanted to say
Fuck.

Just like the times before, he loses his breath.

ELLEN

Hey.
Breathe.

She goes to pat him on the back. She lightly settles on his shoulder.

It still burns.

ELLEN

Take your time.