The Actor’s Process: A Character Exploration of April White from *Savage in Limbo* by John Patrick Shanley

By Lisa Anderson

Abstract

When an actor is in the process of creating a character, there is a significant amount of work that is done both inside and outside of the rehearsal room. An actor’s process requires hard work in rehearsals, but also demands a great deal of research and analysis before even stepping into the rehearsal room. This paper provides an in depth analysis of the actor’s process as it applies to the creation of the character April White in John Patrick Shanley’s *Savage in Limbo*. *Savage in Limbo* is set in the Bronx in the early 1980s and is a play about five people struggling to find their place and purpose in a seemingly dismal and hopeless world. In order to fulfill the demands of the character and play, it was my responsibility as the actor to apply the technical skills that I have developed over the course of my training in the BFA Acting program in the areas of voice, speech, and movement. In this paper I describe how I specifically applied my BFA acting training in the development of the character, and the ways in which this training helped me meet the demands of the role and rehearsal process. In addition to a detailed description of the application of my acting training, this paper contains an in depth play and character analysis that includes extensive research on the major social, economic, and political issues surrounding the Bronx in the 1980s, how it pertains to the context and themes of the play, and the ways in which it informed my character choices.
It is hard for me to find the words to describe how I felt after reading John Patrick Shanley’s *Savage in Limbo* for the first time. I found it very compelling, but questioned if it would be interesting onstage because of the “concert play” structure, which seemed to lack driving action. In his author’s note, Shanley describes a concert play as a series of related emotional and intellectual events more than a conventional story, and notes that the audience should be included in the world of the characters. The first thing I thought was that Shanley was asking a lot of the actors and director, and that it would be a very challenging play to do successfully. Nevertheless, I found the language and the characters to be incredibly moving, and I instantly fell in love with all of them, especially April White, whose story I will be forever thankful that I had the opportunity to tell.

After the very first read through of the play in the summer, a month or so before rehearsals even began, I remember thinking how we could really create something magical with this script. After the last line of the play was read, the cast and director sat in silence for quite some time, reflecting on what we all had just experienced and discovered. Rose Bonczek, the director, was the first to speak and asked us to share our impressions from this reading. What seemed to resonate with all of us were the complexities of the characters’ relationships and the very distinct battles that they each fight. One of the biggest things that struck me in this read, which I carried with me throughout the process of the show, were the very child-like qualities that were present in these thirty-two year old characters, and how the bar in which the story takes place is not unlike the grammar school playground that they all once shared. Each of them has been
through a lot without having done a lot, and this play takes place on the night where they decide to break their binding patterns.

My initial idea about the theme of the play and the basic conflict was stagnation versus change. Each character knows that their life has not turned out to be what they hoped it would, and each of them has a burning desire to change their circumstances but is not sure how. Initially I felt that within the story, April represents the uncertainty and injustice of life. Out of all the characters April has the purest and kindest heart, and she proves that even the kindest and most hardworking people can take a turn for the worst when life gets in the way. Through April, Shanley seems to say that it is not enough to be kind, have dreams, and set goals; you must also have the courage to endure what life throws at you and the strength to take care of yourself because, as the character Tony Aronica states, “nobody else can be brave for you and nobody else cares” (21). Through the process I did not veer from my initial thoughts of April’s role in the play, but discovered that she also exemplifies the aftermath of other people’s poor decisions. For example, Father Rogan’s impure actions started her down the wrong path, and in the course of the play the comments and actions of Denise and Linda drive her to very dark places and Murk points out that “People gotta take responsibility for what they do” (30) because it really ends up harming poor innocent bystanders like April.

April’s journey in the play is a sad one. At the beginning of my process, I was unsure whether or not April and Murk’s engagement was a positive or negative change. I went back and forth on this throughout the process. Did accepting Murk’s proposal allow for a better life and a positive change in the near future? Or did it mean that she was accepting her sad life as is and this would only lead her to further destruction? After one
very productive rehearsal I discovered that “my strength comes from Murk, and my enormous capacity to forgive. Denise’s loneliness helps me see that Murk is the greatest gift I have ever gotten and that he gives me the strength to go on. I do not need to seek something else like Denise and Linda because I already have what I need. I realized this when I had the impulse to clasp Murk’s hand when I asked Denise if she wanted me to do something. In that moment I needed to know that he was there because if she said yes, I would need him by my side” (journal entry from 9/2/09). I thought for a while that the engagement was a positive thing and meant that April finally realized that Murk is a wonderful gift and she should stop pushing him away and embrace her life with him with open arms. When she accepts Murk’s proposal and gives a speech about her parent’s deaths and decides to drink a Brandy Alexander (the drink that killed her mother) I realized “This is a goodbye speech! Goodbye to possibility, goodbye to my parents and all of my baggage. It’s just Murk and me now. He is my whole world now that I have accepted this proposal, and it gives me the strength to finally face the drink that killed my mother” (journal entry from 9/14/09). Despite my epiphany, the next time we revisited the scene and went through to the end of the play, this choice did not feel right. I could not explain it intellectually yet, but my instincts were telling me that it was the wrong direction. I had a discussion with the director and we discovered that it was indeed a goodbye speech, but not the positive one that I had been thinking. I realized that April accepts Murk’s proposal because her unstable state paired with Denise and Linda’s recent abandonment leaves her with no other choice. However, by accepting the proposal, she resigns herself to a life that has no hope for improvement, which to her equates to death.
Since she no longer has any hope, she finally drinks the drink that killed her mother. My opinion of April’s journey changed drastically throughout the rehearsal process.

In the summer, before rehearsals began, I made several trips to the library and started reading about the Bronx in the 1980s (where the play takes place), and the Bronx in the 1950s and 1960s (when April would have been growing up). I also listened to New York dialect samples obtained on the International Dialects English Archive website. I used an outline to organize my research and the given circumstances of the play into categories (economic, political, social, religious). Next I created a character analysis in which I used the given information about April to fill in the details about her family and life up to the point where the play begins. This allowed me to make informed choices in rehearsal. Since April was raised Catholic and was sexually abused by a priest, I researched Catholicism, Catholic schools, and sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Another part of my process was breaking the play down into cycles of action and determining my objective, actions, and tactics. Coming into the rehearsal process with the basic understanding of what my character was doing moment to moment helped me discover early on whether I was on the right or wrong track with my initial choices. The research, character analysis, and breakdown of the script made me feel confident and free to explore in rehearsals.

My research helped me significantly with the characterization of April. New York City (especially the Bronx) was a very scary place in the 1980s and there was a huge amount of financial and social turmoil. I decided that these social and financial factors contributed, in part, to April’s meekness and fear, and from this I developed a very timid and hesitant physical demeanor. Within the given circumstances, April is a former
Catholic schoolgirl who has abandoned many of her pious principles and is drunk throughout the play. This information strongly impacted my physical characterization. Since she is an ex-Catholic, I made physical choices that were in opposition of what a “good Catholic girl” would do. For example, my legs were always wide open despite the fact I wore a skirt, my posture was hunched over and sloppy, and I was very ungraceful and heavy on my feet.

My relationship with the director was immensely helpful in this process and allowed me to leave rehearsal each night with exciting discoveries, questions, and goals for future rehearsals. The director, Rose Bonczek, started the process with a helpful balance of freedom through improvisation and character exploration, and structure through table work and analysis of the text and characters. Part of Bonczek’s process is making up titles for each scene, which helped me understand what was at the heart of each beat and how I fit into it. For example, for the scene in which April’s boyfriend Murk dresses up as Santa and gives her a Christmas gift to calm her down, we came up with the titles “Things We do for Love,” “No One is Alone,” “Responsibility,” “Good Girl in a Good World,” “Forgiveness,” and “Cause and Effect.” All of these titles stayed with me and served as a reminder that this scene was about companionship, tenderness, and love, which helped me tell the story.

Throughout the rehearsal process, Bonczek guided us in explorations and improvisations that facilitated my understanding and connection to the character. These exercises included “Circle Cross” (freely speaking personal thoughts to one another in character), “The Hours” (going through an entire day in the character’s life), and exploring the character’s center of energy, response to music, and life as a child,
teenager, and young adult. The foundation I created with my research and character analysis allowed me to work impulsively in these explorations, and the exercises helped me discover layers to the character that my conscious mind had not yet uncovered. I was often surprised at what I discovered in these improvisations that I had never consciously thought of but seemed so obvious once they came out of me. For example, in the center of energy exploration I discovered that April leads with her eyes and forehead and the feelings that came with this were of paranoia, neurosis, and being on the verge of bursting at any moment—a very useful discovery for me. When I was asked what I want most in the world, I discovered that it was to change the past. This discovery helped me immensely in understanding why April constantly retells stories from her past and why she is stuck—her greatest hope is to change something she cannot. We also did an improvisation in the bar between Murk, April, and Denise, and I discovered that April’s tactics to get what she wants are typically indirect and timid. This discovery informed all of my choices in the show, and helped me understand those pivotal moments when she is very direct and fearless.

I really appreciated how the director conducted rehearsals and moved us forward in the process. In the beginning most rehearsals started with an improvisation and character exploration, followed by very productive table work in which we read the scene, gave it a title, and discussed our first impressions of what was going on for our characters within this moment. After hearing from us, Bonczek guided us with questions that helped me become more specific and make clearer choices. I really appreciated the way she facilitated table work because she asked me what I thought about the character and we had a dialogue about it rather than her pushing her personal views about it onto
me before seeing what I could bring to the table. It truly felt like a collaborative effort and this made me really trust her and produce specific and strong work. This trust was a big part of what allowed me to go to the dark and difficult emotional places that this play asks of its actors.

When we began blocking the show I felt free and comfortable enough to fully investigate different choices because the director emphasized that blocking too was part of our exploration and did not need to be set in stone yet. After we ran a scene Bonczek asked us what we discovered and highlighted the interesting things that she noticed. I wrote in my journal on August 27th, “Rose pointed out in one of the runs of the first scene between Denise and Linda that I (as April) responded very selectively to what the women were talking about. For me, this evoked the image of someone riding on a train. April is in a state of waiting, and then as other “passengers” of interest come on board, I am pulled out of this passive/inactive state. Rose’s directing process is very helpful because she points out what she sees and asks us guiding questions. This helps me understand my choices and identify my discoveries so they influence the scene the next time we do it.” I really appreciated this directing style because it allowed me to honor and build upon my impulses without being my own “watcher.”

As we got closer to opening, I was not getting many notes and the majority of the director’s attention went to some of the other actors who seemed to still be really struggling. There was a rehearsal in which we had talked about how April is in many ways “auditioning” to be friends with Denise and Linda and I really went in this direction. This ended up steering me away from some of April’s tragic and darker characteristics, and I lost a lot of her depth and honesty that I had found at the beginning
of the process. This seemed to go unnoticed by my self and the director until our voice
and speech coach, Francine Zerfas, watched a run thru and mentioned it. Suddenly I felt
very lost and disappointed with myself for not realizing this, and frustrated that it had not
been addressed earlier. However, the director and I discussed my feelings the next day
and she apologized for steering me in the wrong direction, and we worked on solving the
issues together. After reminding myself of April’s journey and her place in the story I
was able to reclaim the depth that I had steered away from. I really appreciated that the
director took the time to have this conversation with me privately and make me feel safe
again.

There are several important experiences that really shaped my portrayal of April
during the course of rehearsals. For example, in the second week of rehearsals I took a
Kundilini Yoga class for the first time, which facilitated a major break through for me. In
short, Kundilini yoga explores the connection between the physical and emotional, and
helps open up the body so emotions can surface and release. In the same week of my
first Kundilini class, which was a very emotional experience for me, I learned that a close
friend of mine was a victim of sexual abuse, and the empathy I had for April grew even
more. Experiencing the emotional effects of Kundilini and finding out about my close
friend’s tragedy really connected me to April’s emotional life in a very visceral way
throughout the process.

Another significant experience for me was in the second week of rehearsals when
Francine Zerfas (voice and speech coach) came to watch our first on book stumble-thru.
Francine told us that these characters reminded her of a pack of wolves that were
separated and kept howling to find each other. She also pointed out that the characters’
anguish and visceral speeches are not unlike those of a Greek tragedy, and that because
the playwright really gives us permission to “spill our guts” we should take full
advantage of it. I kept going back to these two things throughout the process to keep
myself from pulling back or underplaying anything. An acting issue of mine is to pull
back in very tense or emotional moments because I am afraid of pushing, but Francine’s
thoughts served as a reminder that the only way I could give this character the justice she
deserves is by not being afraid to lament and howl wholeheartedly. I experienced a great
release in doing this that was far from pushing.

Another important experience was a rehearsal where I suddenly got a clear
understanding of my relationship with all of the characters in the play through one
exchange with another actor. “A major discovery I had tonight was my connection to
Linda. When Linda has her monologue about why she has reasons to cry, I felt a strong
relationship with her as if she was speaking all of the words I have trouble saying out
loud. It reminded me that these people are different versions of each other, as John
Patrick Shanley says, and they are all fighting for the same thing in different ways. In
this connection with Linda I felt great empathy for her, and as I watched her struggle and
defend herself, I felt like she was fighting my fight too, and realized that all of the
characters are fighting a common thing” (journal entry from 8/31/09). This experience
helped me discover the strong kinship that exists between the characters, even if they do
not all realize it. April does not always listen to other conversations at the bar, but this
night is different because the other characters bring their desire for change in with them.
She is able to see reflections of herself in the others, and she watches them fight in a way
that she wishes she could. This understanding strengthened my connection to all of them (as April), and made it even more heartbreaking when they disappointed me.

The greatest challenges that I encountered in this process included figuring out what to do in my long moments of silence, letting go of the character after rehearsal, understanding my relationship with Murk, and finding vocal range within a very specific character voice.

April is a very passive character who goes for long periods of time without saying anything. I wrote in my journal that, “A challenge I keep having is with my physical action in those long moments where I do not speak. My instinct is to keep going along with the idea of a train passenger and allow myself to respond to those key things that April desires and that grab her attention. Things like friendship, love, mothers, and change. I have a tendency to premeditate a physical response, and I need to trust that my background work on the character and actively listening will give me the freedom to respond when it is really necessary. I need to trust that it is enough to sit and listen, and that I will respond when it is right to respond.” Once I trusted that I knew this woman well enough to simply be present and see what happens, I no longer worried about what I was doing in those long silences and I stopped forcing responses.

Throughout the rehearsal process I noticed how much the physicality of my character helped me find her emotional and mental state. April’s posture was slouched, closed off, and very still, and I found that when I embodied it for a long period of time it severely altered my mood and I felt very downtrodden, hopeless, fragile, and vulnerable. This was great for the character, but difficult for me as the actor. It would take me a good hour after rehearsal to get out of this emotionally taxing state and I would feel very
depressed. I spoke to my Kundalini instructor, Roger Manix, about this and he told me that I needed to do a physical “cool down” after rehearsal to give myself the opportunity to release the character from my body and leave it at the door. Something as simple as a few roll downs to stretch the spine while making a conscious decision to leave my work in the rehearsal space kept me from taking the character’s baggage home with me.

April’s most important relationship with any of the characters is her relationship with Murk. Already a complex relationship, it was difficult to connect to the actor playing him because many of his choices seemed very aggressive and pushed me away from him, and his love for April seemed to be missing. For example, the fact that Murk is willing to break his rules for April, and that he goes as far as dressing up as Santa to comfort her says that he really loves and cherishes her. However, there were times when the actor would angrily slam my drink down on the bar, take it away from me, or snap in my face, and this was very frustrating and confusing because it was not supported by the text and gave me no reason to care about him or spend as much time with him as I do. I waited a few weeks to see if he would start making different choices, and when he did not I had a polite discussion with him outside of rehearsal. I made sure to phrase it in a way where I was not intrusive on his process or stepping out of bounds and taking on a director role. I simply told him that when he snapped in my face or acted aggressively towards me that, as the character, I became very irritated and felt like lashing out or leaving him. I also said that I was concerned that because I was responding this way, that the audience might get the wrong idea about our relationship and be confused about why I stay with him at all, and asked for his advice on the matter. He told me that he would explore some different choices to see if that made me feel less aggressive toward him,
and this definitely improved the situation. However, even during performances, I felt that the actor playing Murk was not always present and connecting with me, but I learned that the only person I can be responsible for is myself and I need to do my best to tell the story of our relationship with the work I have done regardless of what the other actor is doing.

A note that I consistently received throughout the process was to keep my vocal pitch from getting too high. I was using a very high, nasal dominant character voice, but it was important that I found the range within that voice to avoid turning April into a caricature that the audience would write off as comic relief rather than a three dimensional human being to sympathize with. To overcome this challenge I spent extra time activating my mask resonators in my vocal warm up to help blend my mask and head voices so I did not sound too shrill or airy. I also gave myself a mental reminder before each rehearsal and run to allow flexibility and range in my character voice.

With this role, I felt that for the first time I discovered an acting process that successfully worked for me. After two years of trial and error I finally was able to incorporate the things I learned from the BFA program over the past two years that I have found to be very helpful, and discard the things that are not. I found that the play and character analysis that Professor Mary Beth Easley required of us in her acting class really works for me in terms of guiding my research and applying it directly to the play and my character. I came in feeling very prepared and confident and it gave me the freedom to play and explore. Another tool that I applied from my acting training was breaking down the play into cycles of action and determining objectives, actions, and
tactics to engage myself in the action of the play and prevent me from playing an emotion.

My voice training was imperative to this process and creating this character because the demands were rigorous! Since this show is so vocally demanding with the character voice and the outbursts of intense emotion, I would not have gotten through this production without destroying my voice if I had not kept up with my Chuck Jones and Fitzmaurice voice work in the summer and throughout the entire process. I did a forty-five minute vocal warm up every day to keep my voice in shape and make sure I did not strain it. The Fitzmaurice voice work was especially helpful for me in this emotionally and physically taxing role because the technique facilitates spontaneous breathing that releases physical tension, allowing for greater resonance and vocal freedom. April’s character description states that, “She can go from serenity to hysteria without showing a seam” and I was able to use the Fitzmaurice work to help me transition in and out of serenity and hysteria without pushing my voice and emotion. For example, there is a moment where April rambles on about Father Rogan without getting too emotionally involved, and then instantly transitions into a hysterical monologue that begins with the line “Help me. Help me.” I used something called a standing tremor from the Fitzmaurice technique to activate my breath in a manner that helped me release this hysteria and launch me into the monologue. In a recent interview for *American Theatre*, Catherine Fitzmaurice (founder of Fitzmaurice voice work) describes tremoring as:

A naturally occurring reflex in the body…[that] happens when you are cold, angry, excited, injured, fatigued, nervous…It is tremendously useful for voice, because it directly reaches those aspects of oneself that are almost impossible to
identify and shift. I’ve developed ways to encourage tremors to allow spontaneous breathing and to release chronic muscle tension.” (39)

A standing tremor involves slightly bending the knees and sending energy down to the floor through the feet; the combination of release in the knees and pressure in the feet causes the body to tremor, which releases physical tension and the breath. The breath is connected to the thought, and so by mentally investing myself in the given circumstances of the play, the physical release and spontaneous breathing from the standing tremor helped me reach the hysteria that is required in this moment. The Fitzmaurice voice work supported me in these quick transitions from serenity to hysteria by keeping my body and voice working freely and impulsively without having to push.

My speech training was also an integral part of this process because the play calls for a Bronx dialect. I was able to listen to dialect samples and use my knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet, mouth shape, and tongue placement to create the Bronx dialect. I practiced and became comfortable with the dialect prior to rehearsals to keep it from holding me back as I explored my character and the play. My process of familiarizing myself with the dialect included a speech warm up of words and phrases that covered every vowel and consonant sound of the alphabet. I made the appropriate consonant and vowel sound changes in these words and phrases while continuing to listen to the dialect samples to check my accuracy. As I continued to practice the dialect in my speech warm up, the mouth shapes and the vowel and consonant sounds became second nature. Whenever Francine Zerfas came to rehearsals she would point out any words or sounds that we executed incorrectly and remind us of the correct sound and mouth shape.
For April’s physicality I explored the Laban Efforts that we learned in movement class with Professor Belinda Mello. The Laban Efforts involve the examination of movement in terms of time, weight, and direction to create very different physical textures. I determined that when April is sober her movement is quick and pulsing, light, and direct and when she is drunk her movement is lethargic, heavy, and indirect. Alexander Technique helped me embody a slouched posture in which I could still be physically free and not cut off my breath. I also used Kundalini Yoga in my daily warm up to connect with my body, emotions, and breath and maintain the physical stamina this character required.

In performance I was surprised and thrilled to discover even more about my character. For example, in rehearsals we talked about and explored a typical day for Murk and April at the bar and determined that I came to the bar directly from work and Murk was always waiting there with my drink. Since Justin Davis (the actor playing Murk) and I had to be on stage before the house opened for the pre-show we started doing improvisations before the audience strolled in. On opening night in our daily improvisation he asked me how my day was and I impulsively told him I got fired from my job today. This fueled my entire performance for the rest of the run because it raised the stakes for me to improve my life and fight for something new on this very night.

Another thing I discovered in performance was how the pre-show music affected me. I found that as April, I had very visceral emotional responses to the song lyrics and found myself daydreaming of Father Rogan and commiserating about my life. This was yet another thing that fueled my performance at the top of the show.
I was very happy to learn that I was able to be consistent in performances and invest myself in the circumstances of the play, and feel like it was happening for the first time. As I walked up the stairs to the stage before every show I was filled with excitement to be able step into this woman’s shoes and tell her story. I have never been so thrilled to perform, and this ease and enjoyment that I felt came from the trust in my self and my work that I discovered in this process.

If I were to continue working on this role I would like to further explore my vocal range within the character voice and my relationship with Murk. I feel that if I continued to work on the role, my voice would inevitably become more expressive and it would be great to see where that took me as both the character and actor. In terms of my relationship with Murk, I would love to find the sincere connection we sometimes reached in the Santa Clause scene in the rest of the play because that relationship is so complex and crucial to the story and I felt that it was lacking. Another thing that I realized I did not answer for myself is what incident April witnessed that created her extreme fear of going crazy and being taken away. There was one performance where that line came out of my mouth and I realized that I did not know where the idea came from. I would like to see how, if at all, it would impact that monologue.

In retrospect, I feel that I achieved what I hoped for in this role. I wanted to avoid the trap of playing April as the comic relief as opposed to a three dimensional human being and I think I was successful in doing so. I feel like I found the balance between the comedic elements and the truthfulness of April and created a character that the audience really empathized with. I was proud of myself for trusting in my process and being patient and nonjudgmental toward my work, which I have struggled with since I started
the BFA program. My work was consistent in performance and I was able to make each show new and exciting for myself, I felt very grounded and active, and I took my physical and vocal stamina to the next level. In the future, I hope to take all of these things I learned about myself and my process and continue to work with ease, patience, and confidence and keep discovering why this is what I love to do.
Appendix A: Savage in Limbo Dramatic Analysis & Research

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environment

1) Bronx, New York City at the Scales Bar. Scales is a seedy dive bar in a lower income area that has seen better days. The bar has a wood floor and wood walls, two rectangular tables, and a fairly small “L-shaped” bar with three stools. Behind the bar is an ominous-looking spiral staircase that could lead either up or down. Near the bar, where the jukebox once was, the floor is distressed and faded. There are no visible bottles or glasses behind the bar, and the only “decoration” is two dead plants.

2) Date: July 1983 on a Monday night

3) Economic factors:

   In the early 1980s the US economy was recovering from a bad recession that started during the 1970s and peaked in 1982, and one of the worst fiscal crisis in New York history. Reagan’s economic policy (“reaganomics”) began to improve the US economy and by 1983 New York’s employment rate was rising. However, the jobs that were created were mainly white-collar positions, and so the lower class blue-collar workers continued to struggle.

   “The expansion of white-collar and professional jobs…in the 1980s also strengthened a different side of the city. The cultural and entertainment services that are a unique mark of New York flourished because middle- and upper-class residents, as well as tourists visiting the city for business or pleasure, bought tickets for plays, visited the city’s great museums, and shopped in its stores.” (The Empire City). The characters in Savage are not part of this white collar/professional class and are not reaping the benefits
of the recovering economy during the time of this play. There is a clear divide between the “haves” and the “have nots” thanks to “reaganomics” and the people in the lower classes watched others thrive while they struggled to stay afloat. For my work in the play, this tells me that financial struggles contribute to the characters’ turmoil, and that they belong to a group that is virtually ignored by the government.

In the late 1970s, at the same time of the great economic recession in New York, a series of fires were burning down thousands of buildings in the South Bronx. The fires began to decrease between 1977 and 1979 for a number of reasons: “It might seem reasonable to suppose that some of the measures taken by the City were at last having an effect: the City now had second crack at fire insurance monies paid on properties whose owners were delinquent in city taxes; welfare families were not being “rewarded” for burnouts any longer, and the fire and police departments had cracked down on arsonists.” (The South Bronx Rising, p. 362). The fires and crime rates caused the people who could afford it to flee the Bronx, businesses avoided it at all costs, landlords refused to put money into maintaining the buildings, and the borough was at an incredibly low point. Local Bronx leader Roger Hayes noted how the streets were laden with drug dealers and junkies (Jonnes, p. 361) and things were so bad that when members of the housing coalitions would say to the defeated people of the South Bronx, “You haven’t had heat for two days” that they would respond, “Hey, we didn’t have heat for two years where I used to live” (Jonnes, p. 361).

The Northwest Bronx community also suffered from similar urban struggles, and the community along with the Catholic Church started a coalition in the 1970s to address these issues. One Bronx bishop, Bishop Ahern, visited all the parishes and rallied the
people: “If the Bronx dies, then the hopes of a million and a half people for justice and a
decent life, here and now, will die with it. We’re trying to stop that from happening . . ..
And so far as we know, what we’re undertaking in 1975 in the northwest Bronx is unique
in the American church, both for its scope—and for its challenge . . .. The scope is to
renew the neighborhood of the northwest Bronx . . .. The adversity which our life in the
city subjects us to can make us bitter or it can make us better. It can destroy cities, or
inspire us to renew them” (Jonnes, p. 350). The Church gave hope to many people and
inspired a large portion of the Bronx community. Many of the Bronx people joined
together to make major changes, and with the City successfully cracking down on
arsonists, the next step in the 1980s was to fight abandonment of buildings and
rehabilitate them, which became possible thanks to the Koch administration.
Improvements were made in the Department of Housing Preservation and Development,
and the City finally made loan monies available (Jonnes, p. 364), allowing people in
these impoverished areas to slowly but surely rebuild their neighborhoods.

The Reagan administration was severely cutting back on governmental programs,
and this caused the Bronx community coalition to fight hard for private support that
would eventually help them back on their feet (Jonnes, p. 371). On April 19, 1983 the
coalition made major headway with getting Chase Bank to support their cause
financially. This was significant because it meant victory for a community that had been
ignored for so long. This allowed people to see the sun behind the clouds, and cling to
the hope for a better future—not everything was completely dismal.

Overall, the early 1980s in the Bronx were the years that the community
vigorously rallied together and finally, after years of struggle and being ignored in the
1970s, they convinced people to support their cause and make the borough a livable place. 1983 seemed to be the year when life in the Bronx really started to look up and the seeds of major change were planted (such as obtaining the backing of major corporations like Chase Bank and Exxon to support new businesses and reconstruction of the city). The 1980s in the Bronx Community was full of hope and action to make this borough a better place, and the stagnancy of the characters in *Savage in Limbo* is a clear juxtaposition of this. We have a large group of people in the community fighting and making a difference, and then we have the 32-year-old characters stuck in their meaningless and dormant lives. All of them except Murk have a desire to make a change for the better, but unlike the community coalition, they have no idea how to begin to get anything done. Specifically in 1983, times are still tough, but there is budding evidence, even in a downtrodden place like the Bronx, that things are looking up. By the end of the play each character explores new territory (Tony and Linda decide to move in together, April and Murk get engaged, and Denise realizes that she is completely alone), and whether or not they are actually taking a step in the right direction, they are undeniably making a change that holds the *possibility* of a positive outcome.

4) Political Factors:

- Ronald Reagan (Republican) has been president for two years

- Many poor and minority citizens viewed Reagan as indifferent to their struggles, and accused his policies of solely benefiting the wealthy (Wikipedia)

- Reagan cut budgets for Medicaid, food stamps, federal education programs, and the EPA (Wikipedia)
January 1983 Reagan’s approval rating dropped 35 percent. People were frustrated that only the elite were benefiting from Reagan’s domestic policies (Troy, p. 136).

US Marine troops occupied Beirut, Lebanon as part of a multinational force to make peace during the Lebanese Civil War. In April, The Hezbollah—a Lebanese militant Islamic group whose anti-U.S. sentiments were sparked in part by the revolution in Iran, were the attackers. This followed another attack on US Marines at the Beirut International Airport, leading the US to pull troops out of the country. This made the country realize its vulnerability (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/etc/cron.html).

People feared nuclear war with the Soviet Union and Reagan opposed any commitment to mutual assured destruction, and considered a nuclear freeze movement dangerous (Troy, p. 138-39). In 1983 Reagan laid out his foreign policy and proposed “defensive technologies” that “could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles” (Troy, 139). This strategy was known as the “Star Wars” defense because Reagan dubbed the Soviet Union an “evil empire” and people nicknamed his Mach 8, 1983 foreign policy speech the “Darth Vader Speech.” This sense of evil outside of the country is similar to the evil in the Bronx just outside of Scales Bar. Inside the bar, Murk works at controlling everything, and tries to keep April oblivious to the ugliness of the world. Each character is affected in various ways by the evil of their environment, and they are controlled and stunted by their own fears.

In April 1983, Reagan promoted his Central American policy, pointing out its strategic importance as the border of the Caribbean, and its proximity to the United States (Troy, 139).
5) Social/Religious factors:

- Donald Trump built the 68 story, $200 million Trump Tower on 5th Ave. that “symbolized the excess of the age” (Troy, 132).

- “. . . The 1980s marked a giant step toward an almost reckless, autonomous individualism and away from the politicized, communally oriented “consuming public” protecting consumers’ rights. Consumer Reports functioned as a guide for goodies, not a Naderite prod to corporate responsiveness” (Troy, 119). For those millions of Americans in the upper-middle and elite classes who had extra money to spend in this “economic boom” of 1983, materialism was taken to a whole new level—“these whipper-snappers were what they wore, ate, drank, and fancied” (Troy, 119). These types of people are in stark contrast to the characters in Savage. In a world where a certain group is thriving and has the luxury to obsess over material things, it becomes very frustrating and difficult for those who cannot have that lifestyle. The excess amplifies their circumstances and feelings because there is so much to be had, yet they get nothing of it.

- Popular songs: “Beat It,” “Thriller,” “Flashdance,” “Every Breath You Take,” “Can’t Slow Down” (Grun, 607)

- The Compact Disc is launched (Grun, 607) in addition to many other technological advances such as the home video camera. There is technological progress in the world, but in the world of the characters there is only stagnancy.

- Popular films: “The Big Chill,” “Flashdance,” and “Terms of Endearment.” Similarly to Savage in Limbo, the characters in these films reflect back on their pasts and life choices, and battle with unhappiness in their current circumstances. This reflection of the
past and dissatisfaction with current circumstances is also what the country was going
though politically, economically, and socially.

-“In July 1983, by comparison, eighteen of the top forty singles on the *Billboard* charts
were by British artists, more than at any time in US chart history, including the 1960s”
(Thomson, 163).

-Popular movie genres were science fiction and fantasy, which reflects 1980s culture and
its obsession with high-tech capitalism and Reagan’s celebration and promotion of new
technology. Some feel that Hollywood produced very shallow and conservative films in
the 1980s (such as *Brainstorm, Return of the Jedi*, and *Space Raiders*), which also
reflected the Reagan administration (Thomson, 88). Although entertaining, these films
did not raise any deep social or political questions, nor did they have much variation from
one another.

-Maryknoll Sisters: A group of Roman Catholic women founded in 1912 who devote
their life overseas to medicine, communications, education, agriculture, and social
services (Wikipedia). “The Maryknoll Sisters Contemplative Community is made up of
Maryknoll Sisters who have discerned a personal call from God to dedicate their lives to
mission in the contemplative community, and who live a life of prayer and communal
worship, silence, solitude and penance, by which they strengthen the contemplative
dimension of their witness and their expression of zeal for the coming of the Reign of
God” ([http://macc.catholic.org/maryknoll/maryknoll.html](http://macc.catholic.org/maryknoll/maryknoll.html)).

6) Life in the Bronx: In the 1950s the Bronx neighborhoods “were still densely settled,
and its image was one of tightly knit ethnic communities” (Gonzales, 117). The living
conditions in the 1960s and on were “tightly packed apartment houses that could not
compete with suburban homes, [causing] a continued outward movement of residents in search of a better living space…” (Gonzales, 118).

-“…by 1984, 55 percent of the families in that same area were below poverty level and 39 percent were receiving welfare” (Gonzales, 119).

-“An outbreak of drug addiction among ghetto youth during the 1960s caused much of the crime. But whatever the reason, demands for greater police protection became commonplace and “law and order” became the catchphrase of politicians…” (Gonzales, 120).

-Great conflict existed between the Puerto Ricans and blacks in the 1960s and 1970s and gang related crime was a major problem

-Crime and social disorder in the 1960s caused the borough to fall apart and neighborhoods that once provided good homes for families became unlivable

-In the 1960s “All who could move away [from the Bronx] did so. Those who couldn’t often vented their rage on the police, the firemen, the buildings, and the neighborhood. Thus shops closed, landlords abandoned buildings, the population declines, and the neighborhoods of the South Bronx collapsed. Devastation spread to other parts of the borough…” (Gonzales, 121)

-“Disorder, crime, and poverty came to a head during the July 1977 power blackout…up in the Bronx…there was “almost a state of anarchy.” Looters ransacked commercial strips from 138th Street to Fordham Road…Policeman were bombarded with bricks and bottles…the line of arrestees stretched into the street. The looting destroyed small businesses throughout the South Bronx, leaving residents without food stores, pharmacies, or small retail shops…Thirteen years later, in 1990, the twenty-block-long
retail center on East Tremont Avenue still had not recovered from the blackout’s damage” (Gonzales, 122).

-“By the sixties, the only distinction between the projects and the surrounding blocks was the newness of the buildings” (Gonzales, 124).

-Neighborhoods that remained: public housing projects, and blocks of row houses in Mott Haven, Longwood, and around Clay Avenue (a part of the Grand Concourse—predominantly Jewish in the sixties). Also the Italian neighborhood of Belmont, Fordham University, the Bronx Zoo, and Third Ave.

B. Dialog

1) Choice of words: slang, cursing, harsh, urban

2) Choice of sentence structure: Run-on sentences indicating a fast paced rhythm, quick quips, incorrect grammar, vivid imagery

3) Choice of images:

   -The animal: The pent up rage, lack of control, the truth, hysteria, chaos

   -Ghosts: Denise, Linda, and Tony all refer to feeling like ghosts symbolizing how they are present but not truly living or being able to be seen or heard like a live person

   -Limbo: a void, nothingness, represents the emptiness and stagnation of the characters’ lives

   -Murk’s wooden leg: sturdiness, convention, something missing

   -Dead plants: loss of life, no rebirth, no life cycle

   -Empty space where juke box was: void, nothingness, something missing, no sound

   -Pool table/balls: chain reaction

4) Characteristics: Bronx/New York dialect
5) Prose

II. Dramatic Action

A. Basic Conflict: Stagnation vs. change, drowning vs. swimming, submission vs. fighting

B. Basic Action: Denise decides she can no longer continue on with the same deadbeat life and she comes to Scales seeking fulfillment. To her dismay she only finds April and Murk. Linda arrives crying about Tony leaving her to pursue “ugly women” and she and Denise decide to become friends and get an apartment together, and then invite April to join them. Tony arrives to explain himself to Linda, and Denise abandons April and Linda and offers herself to Tony. Linda reveals that she and Tony have a child and she is pregnant with another one and proposes marriage. Murk proposes to April, which she unwillingly accepts. Tony decides to move in with Linda and raise the child, minus the marriage. Denise realizes that she is all alone.

C. Inciting incident: Denise decides to go to Scales on Monday night

D. Climax: Linda offers her friendship to Denise one last time and Denise responds with “I don’t know how…”
Appendix B: Savage in Limbo Character Analysis of April White

A. Physiology

1) Sex: Female
2) Age: 32
3) Height/Weight: 5'4''/120 lbs
4) Color of hair, eyes, skin: Brown, blue, fair
5) Posture: Slouched, sloppy
6) Appearance: Life has made her haggard and run down, but there are still traces of her once beautiful appearance. Underweight, unhealthy, untidy, sweet and pleasant face that has lost its innocence. Round face, normal sized head, proportionate limbs.
7) Defects: None
8) Heredity: Alcoholism-mother's side; She has kept her mother’s favorite skirt and blouse, which she wears frequently, as well as her mother’s watch and only pair of pearl earrings.

B. Sociology

1) Class: Lower. Lives in a poorer area in the Bronx with her uncle and his family. She used to be middle class when her father was alive but his death left she and her mother in debt.
2) Occupation: Grocery store clerk at C-Town in her neighborhood. Income is minimum wage, which is not enough to support herself. Indifferent toward her work organization, but thankful that they keep her employed. Working conditions are mediocre--she is not treated terribly or unfairly, but her employer does not go out of his way to make sure the
employees are happy; the customers are usually nice to her and she knows many of them from the neighborhood, but it is difficult for her to look into their eyes because she sees their pity and she is reminded of the tragedies of her life. Her intelligence and former ambition are not at all suitable for this work and she could be doing much better, but her alcoholism and emotional instability have made this type of work her only option. Her childhood ambition of being a Maryknoll nun has completely disintegrated (she no longer goes to Church) because of the way the tragedies in April's life have affected her.

3) Education: April has a high school diploma. She attended St. Anthony's Catholic School for kindergarten through eighth and St. Francis high school, which were all in her neighborhood. These were very strict schools where she was mainly taught by nuns and priests and was required to attend chapel every week and took religion classes every year. She made very good grades until the beginning of her junior year when her father unexpectedly died. Her favorite subject was religion because she felt like the more she could learn the closer she would become to God, and she was involved in activities that helped the people of her community (i.e. tutoring, soup kitchens, food drives). Her strengths were helping others, obedience, and leading by example.

4) Home life: Parents are both dead. Her father died when she was sixteen in his sleep—most likely from heart failure. He was the manager of a flooring company that he worked his way up in through his years of working there. Her father was a hardworking, gruff, straight-laced blue-collar guy. He spent a lot of time at work, but was a stable figure in April's life that provided them a comfortable living and was always home for dinner every night and went to church on Sundays. When he died he left them with very little money, as his death was so sudden. April's mother, who worked as a house cleaner,
went into a depression and started drinking heavily and could no longer work. They had to move out of their two-bedroom apartment and into a crappy one bedroom in a poorer neighborhood. April was always very close to her mother and devoted all of her attention to taking care of everything for her--bills, work, the funeral, etc. They lived off of the money April made from a minimum wage job and any other odd job she could pick up along the way. It was at this time that Father Rogan, a priest at April’s school, spent a great deal of time with April to “help out” and they developed a very inappropriate relationship that destroyed April’s life. It took April’s mother a while to realize what was happening but when she did she made sure that Father Rogan was driven out of town. April never blamed her mother for anything because she was such a sweet and empathetic person, but her academics suffered from all of her responsibilities and the scandal with Father Rogan and her goals and dreams disintegrated. When April was twenty-three her mother died of complications from alcoholism at a family Christmas party, which made April go over the edge. She stopped going to church and started drinking, taking various drugs, and was very promiscuous. Murk found her on a street corner passed out from drugs and recognizing her from school and around the neighborhood bars took her back to his place to help her and they have been close ever since. Murk’s reliable, consistent, and stable nature was in complete opposition of those she had been surrounding herself with, and this what made her feel safe and trust him. He was the only person from her past who did not look at her with pitying or judgmental eyes. He helped her get the job at the grocery store through a friend of his.

Time line from mother's death to present:
age 23: April's Uncle helped out with funeral expenses. April works at a temp. agency and tries to make money to keep the apartment she and her mother lived in.

age 24: April stops going to church and works full time. She begins to lose her faith in Catholicism after the tragedies that have taken place in her life. April starts drinking for the first time in her life and spends her down time barhopping. She can no longer afford her apartment and moves in with her uncle and his family and sleeps on the living room couch until she can get back on her feet.

age 25: April's drinking becomes a problem and she gets fired from her temp. agency job. She no longer takes care of her appearance. Her uncle threatens to kick her out if she does not get a job. April lies and says she has a job in the city as a nanny but goes drinking during her "work hours."

age 26: April starts going home with various men she meets at bars and starts getting into drugs. One night Murk finds her passed out on the street and recognizes her from school and around the neighborhood. He has always admired April from a far but was too scared to ever make a move. He takes her home with him and takes care of her. Murk makes April promise him that she will stop using drugs, and he promises her in turn that he will take good care of her. He also gets her a job at the grocery store. April and her uncle are on better terms now that she has started to change her act and get her life together again. April hangs out with Murk at Scales every night he works and he gives her free alcohol.

age 27: April and Murk's friendship develops into a romantic relationship. April loves Murk but knows that her love for Murk is different than his love for her, however, the evolution of their friendship into a relationship seems natural and only fair to Murk who
has helped her so much. Similarly to the situation with Father Rogan, April feels like it is her duty to sacrifice what she wants to make him happy because of all he has done for her.

age 28: April continues to be a heavy drinker whenever she is not working at the grocery store. Her typical routine is going to work in the mornings to late afternoons, and then heading over to the bar with Murk and drinking all night until she passes out at Murk’s apartment. Murk does not mind this but is just happy to always be in her company.

age 29-32: Murk and April continue their daily routine. April knows that she wants something more for her life, but is not quite sure what that something is, nor is she sure how to go about changing things. The frustration and angst caused by her situation are what lead her to drinking, and the more she tries to repress these feelings with alcohol, the more she cannot stand herself and begins to lose her sanity. Physically, she is at a point where she must drink in excess just to maintain normalcy.

5) Religion: April comes from a family of devout Irish Catholics. April and her parents went to Church every Sunday and she took religion classes daily at her school. She was baptized as a baby, had her first communion at age seven, and dreamed of being a Maryknoll nun and going to India to help the sick. When her father died she buried this dream because she realized she could never leave her mother. She thought that perhaps she could be a teacher at a Catholic school and spread the Catholic religion that way while still being able to devote her self to helping her mother. April was greatly influenced by one of the priests at their church, Father Rogan. Father Rogan was the one who inspired her to want go to India and help the sick. After April's mother died and Father Rogan left the church, she lost faith in God. She felt completely lost because all
of the significant things in her life were taken from her: father, mother, Father Rogan, and her faith. When April was a child and early teenager her faith and commitment to her religion kept her from getting into the slightest bit of trouble. It made her afraid and feel too guilty to put herself in any situations that could get her into trouble, and so she often kept to herself, preferring to spend time with her parents and Father Rogan in her free time. Her devotion to Catholicism made her a model daughter and student in the eyes of all adults.

6) Race/Nationality: Caucasian/Irish and English. Irish on her mother's side and English and Irish on her father's side.

7) Place in community: As a child and teen April was a quiet leader and role model. She was very meek but her work ethic and kindness made her a leader at school. She rarely gossiped and was nice to everyone, especially those who were teased. Attention always made her feel uncomfortable. Everyone looked up to April because she was beautiful and kind. Some girls were jealous of her and irritated that they could not find any negative qualities in her, which isolated her. Many students admired April, but her shy demeanor kept her from getting close to any one. Her place in the community as an adult is not as admirable. She is an alcoholic who works at a crappy job and shows no signs of doing anything noteworthy with her life. Murk is her only real and close friend and he takes care of her, but this care is also what inhibits her from changing her life for the better and finding her place in the world. Others that know her think she is pathetic and crazy, but they pity and humor her because her deterioration is so tragic. Those who do not know her try to stay away. As Denise says, "Nobody every gets on April's case."

8) Political affiliations: Republican. Conservative beliefs but has never voted nor been
politically aware because her concern was with her mother by the time she was old enough to vote. As an adult she does not really have any political affiliations and has lost touch with the world around her.

9) Amusements, hobbies: As a child she was always helping at church with community service, and any church event. She loved reading the bible and religious literature. She spent a great deal of time with her mother and grandmother, helping them cook and clean, and loved to draw. After her mother's death her amusements became less innocent and her only amusement is drinking and reminiscing about old times. April never reads.

C. Psychology

1) Sexlife, moral standards: Very sexually repressed for a huge part of her life. Her religion and aspiration to become a nun kept her from any type of sexual activity, and she would scold herself for her curiosity about it. However, after her father’s death Father Rogan, a local priest and April’s role model, took advantage of her vulnerability and sexually abused her. He was very manipulative and made April feel like she owed it to him to do what he wanted after all he did for her family in these rough times. He made her believe that if she denied him, she would offend God with her selfishness and unwillingness to make any sacrifice. Father Rogan told her that their relationship must always be a secret between the two of them and God, and that she must not go to confession about it, and so she never did. After April’s mother found out and the relationship ended, April went back to keeping to herself and refraining from any sexual activity. However when her mother died and she started drinking and going to bars more frequently, her sexual moral standards went out the window and she became very
promiscuous until she met Murk, and then she stopped having sex completely. By not sleeping with Murk, April was able to trust him and feel hopeful that this special relationship with him could save her because it was different and expected little from her. Murk knows about her past and never pressures her to do anything sexual, and April greatly appreciates him for this. In many ways he is like her first true “parent” because he is responsible, he is the ultimate caretaker, and she can be completely dependent on him.

2) Personal premise, ambition: As a child and teenager April's ambition was to be a Maryknoll nun in India and help the sick. After her father died she settled for becoming a teacher in a Catholic school so she could also take care of her mother. Following her mother's death April lost sight of any ultimate goal and her "ambition" has become getting drunk and numbing herself from the hurt she has experienced in her life.

3) Frustrations, chief disappointments: April is frustrated that she cannot change mistakes that she has made in the past, and is disappointed in her self and angry that she cannot shake off the emotional damage from these mistakes. She is still devastated by the loss of her parents, and angry with God for taking them away from her. She is angry for what Father Rogan did to her, but she blames herself even more than him. At different points in her life she has tried dealing with her devastation, frustration, and anger by self-medicating with drugs and alcohol, distracting herself with sex, and through her relationship with Murk. However, despite these various attempts at repressing her negative feelings, they never go away, and with each year that passes, she finds it harder and harder to contain them and control herself.

4) Temperaments: Easygoing, serene, hysterical, and desperate. She uses alcohol to
keep herself docile, and when the effects wear off she becomes hysterical. April desperately wants to be an optimist, yet she finds herself constantly battling her instinctive fear and pessimism.

5) Attitude toward life: Resigned. April accepts that her routine with Murk is the best her life is going to get. If she can stay in the routine then maybe it will keep her from losing her mind, and perhaps in the mean time something great will come her way and change her life.

6) Complexes: Obsessed with the past—specifically the tragic parts of her past such as her parents’ deaths and the incident with Father Rogan that changed her life forever. April’s greatest fear is of her “animal” taking over and driving her crazy. April’s animal is all of the anger, aggression, resentment, and disappointment that she has been hiding and battling with for half her life. April fears that when she is no longer strong enough to contain all of the ugliness inside of her, she will have to be taken away to an insane asylum or jail because she will never be able to regain control of herself. She fears this most because it is the ultimate isolation that is even worse to hear than death.

7) Ambivert: April is very eager to share information about her life and join conversations, but many of her true feelings are held back until the top blows and she cannot contain herself.

8) Abilities: Knows Latin, can recite countless bible verses. April now hides these abilities because they were connected to her former, wholesome self, which she now feels completely isolated from. Even Murk does not know this about her.

9) Qualities: As a child she had a vivid imagination and would pretend she discovered that she was really a Saint, and that her special gift would be to relieve the pain of the
sick. Her judgment was exceptionally good, her taste was modest and simple, and she
carried herself with poise. Now her imagination has been replaced with “the animal” that
embodies all of her internal hostility, and her thoughts and feelings are in constant
conflict. She uses all of her strength to fight “the animal” and keep it from gaining
control over her. Her once lovely appearance has grown haggard and sloppy.
10) IQ: April is bright and when she was in school she always studied hard.
Unfortunately she never uses this intelligence in her present state.

D. Grounding Questions

2) What time is it? Monday night, Early Fall, 1983.
3) What are the given circumstances? I lived with my mom and dad and dreamed of
becoming a Maryknoll nun. My parents are both dead- my mother died one Christmas
after drinking four Brandy Alexanders. I no longer aspire to be a nun because Father
Rogan quit being a priest. Murk and I have a relationship and I keep him company at the
bar and he keeps me drunk. Murk is in love with me. I am 32 and struggle with keeping
sane and dwell on the past. Denise, Linda, April, and Tony are my former schoolmates.
I am attracted to Tony and eager to make friends with Denise and Linda because they
represent a change that might help me defeat my internal animal.
4) What is my relationship...? Murk: Murk is my only friend and my boyfriend. I love
and appreciate him, but I am not in love with him the way he is with me. Murk found me
at a very low point and helped get me back on my feet. We are very close and he loves
me more than anything. Our relationship is very co-dependent and it is what keeps me
semi-stable, but is also one of the things contributing to my demise.

Denise: I went to Catholic school with Denise and always thought she was very smart. I was always too shy to make friends with her. I occasionally see her at Scales now but am always so drunk I do not really pay attention to her and she never talks to me until tonight. When she presents the idea of moving in together I am very eager because it might be the thing I need to get better.

Linda: I went to school with Linda as well. She made me uncomfortable for some reason. I remember that she disappeared in the 8th grade because she got pregnant. Although I was never close with her, I didn't like when the other girls gossiped about her. I felt sorry for her, and could relate to her in some way because I knew what it felt like to be isolated. Now I am excited of the possibility of making friends with her, but she doesn't seem to like me very much. I fear her rejection of me, but my desire for her help overrides that fear.

Tony: I went to school with Tony as well. I never spoke to him because he was known to be a "bad boy" and he was very popular, and I was very shy. I thought he was very handsome and had a crush on him, which I was very angry with myself for. I spent an entire semester sitting behind him and I waited for the days he forgot his pencil and asked me if I could loan him one. I ask Tony to marry me because if I could have a guy like Tony I think my life could get better.

5) What do I want: I want a change that helps me stay sane. I want to be forgiven for my sins so my suffering will end and I can go to heaven.

6) I want help because I don't want to be the crazy one they take away. I numb myself with alcohol so I am not tormented by my awful life. I want change because my animal
is getting stronger every day and I can hardly contain it anymore. If the animal gets out, it means that all of the good parts of me are dead and I will never be able to get them back again.

7) What's in my way? Murk because he can't let me go; my alcoholism which keeps me from dealing with my hurt and anger in a healthy way.

8) How do I get what I want? Drink, plead for help, pursue friendships with Denise and Linda, flirt with Tony, propose to Tony, attempt to suppress my animal, share my past with others in hopes that it will help they rescue me. Physical: reach, pull, crawl, beg.

Associations:

Animal: Kitten-sweet and cuddly but can change moods in an instant.

Element: Air-light and effervescent

Abstract: Broken tea cup
Works Cited


