

Playwriting Portfolio

Hannah Grimston

Gaunt: An Extract.

'Gaunt' was written in 2019 for my dissertation project which looked at adopting the writing style of Sarah Kane in order to improve my writing. It is 40-60 minute one act play made up of episodic scenes, which explores the topic of eating disorders.

Scene 9:

Riley: Do you love me?

Liam kisses her collarbones.

Liam: Parts of you.

Riley: What parts?

Liam kisses her cheek bones,

Liam: Here,

Liam kisses her collar bones.

Liam: Here,

Liam kisses her ribs.

Liam: Here,

Liam kisses her hip bones.

Liam: Here.

Riley: What about me?

Liam: They are you.

Riley: Me as a person?

Liam: You are your body.

Riley: That's not all I am.

Liam: Is it not?

Riley: No.

Liam: It is a reflection though.

Riley: But.

Liam: it shows how you look after yourself.

He kisses her collar bone.

Liam: And how you don't.

He bites her thigh.

She grabs him gently by the hair, closing her eyes she pulls him closer.

Riley: Take it away.

Eat me up eat it all.

Gnaw, bite, dribble.

Take me away, take me away from myself, take me away from the world.

Chew, tear, gorge on me, all of me, leave nothing remaining.

First the skin, make it crunch, peel it off, render the fat, let the oil pool to the top and reserve it for the potatoes on the side.

Take the muscle, pull it strip for strip, pull it away.

Pull until you see white.

Yank them out of me, pull until they snap like tree sticks.

Suck the meat from my ribs, drizzle them in barbecue sauce and lick them from end to end. Boil what's left of my bones and drink the broth.

Do I taste good?

Liam: fatty meat doesn't taste good.

Riley: lean meat has no flavour.

Liam: add salt

Riley: add pepper.

Liam: recipes of Riley. Tough, chewy, weak boned, not worth the money.

Riley: Put her in a soup and leave her for 8 days on high heat. A menu of a wasted university degree, 9-5 job and getting nowhere. Subtle hints of flavour from an oily t-zone, snaking veins and the inability to shift that last ten pounds. What do I taste like? Am I food for the soul, can I heal the common cold? Is there a use for me at all?

Scene 12:

A bowl of tomato soup sits in the centre of the stage. Riley and Liam sit either side of it.

Riley: A test?

He says nothing.

Riley: How many calories are in t?

Riley: What, no calculator today?

Riley: Say something.

Riley laughs.

Riley: Quiet today huh? ...

Riley: SAY SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING.

Liam: It's gone cold.

Riley: It's a test. I've resisted.

Liam: Only for 2 days...

Liam crawls over, pulls the spoon from the bowl and lets the soup drip down.

Riley: Don't make a mess.

Liam: Couldn't have that.

Liam beckons Riley over, she crawls slowly.

She dips a finger in the soup, pulls it to her mouth, she stares at it again.

Riley: I don't want it.

She goes to wipe her fingers, but Liam grabs her hand, he sucks her fingers clean.

Riley: This is what you wanted.

She dips again, but he refuses her finger, she rubs it over his face.

Riley: All this mess.

She pushes more in his face.

Riley: Is this what you want? I can be free. I can be wild, I can resist temptation.

She grabs a handful and throws it at the wall.

Liam pushes her down, places a hand around her throat and holds the bowl over her head... He begins to tilt.

Liam: Congealed and you still want it.

Riley: No I don't.

Liam: I know when you're lying.

Riley and Liam: I am you.

Liam: It smells so good.

Riley: It smells so good, so sweet.

Liam: So sweet. You've been strong.

Riley: Please don't.

LiamL But you still want it.

He pours it over her face.

They stare at each other. Riley doesn't move.

Liam licks her clean.

Riley: Crack me, throw me against the pavement and watch me shatter, my skin so dehydrated that a knock of the hammer should do the trick. Glue won't fix me, nor tape, nor plasters, nor rope.

I am broken and all you do is stand on the ceramic shards of my body and stomp like a petulant child.

I am crumbled pieces on the floor which are crunched and ground into dust, underneath the soles of your feet.

And still you will not let me go. You scrape and pull me up, stuff me into an urn and place me in your mantle piece. You stop and stare at me, admire me from the outside. When will it be enough.

My shell is rupturing, out pours the black pain, staining everything. My rotting organs drop out of me one by one, cancerous and festering. Fly blown and covered in maggots. I watch them drop and feel weightless. Nothing holds me down any more.

Blood's Thicker: An Extract.

Blood's Thicker was written in 2017 and performed in 2018. It explores themes of toxic masculinity and the family dynamic.

The scene below follows Caroline, daughter-in-law, and family friend Teddy as they discuss an incident which occurred when Teddy was a teenager.

Teddy sits on the veranda with a cigarette he fiddles, his sleeves have been rolled up and his shirt undone slightly, he seems scruffy. He tries to light his cigarette but his lighter fails him. Caroline approaches and offers him her lighter. He takes it gratefully.

Caroline: I'm sorry about earlier, I'm sure Amelia didn't mean to upset you.

Teddy: You don't know her very well then.

He sighs and takes a long drag, Caroline sits down beside him.

Caroline: What happened... With you and her?

Teddy: *[sighing]* We were always friends; me, Dylan and Ams, because of Richard and my father. When I was sixteen we got together. Richard was ecstatic but Cassandra wasn't pleased.

Caroline: *[lighting her own cigarette]* Why doesn't that surprise me.

Teddy: I think she's just protective.

Caroline stares at Teddy, they both know that it's a lie.

Teddy: One night we had a pretty big argument, I thought it was over and I slept with someone else... she never forgave me.

Caroline: You two were over?

Teddy: *[He nods]* She couldn't even look at me for months, I wasn't welcome around here for a while. Dylan didn't speak to me. It was Cassandra who sorted us out, she said that it was awkward for all of us and it was just a teenage fling we'd all laugh over eventually.

Cassandra: I didn't hear much laughter in there.

Teddy: As much as I knew it was over, seeing Amelia with other guys hurt. I kept asking her to take me back but she'd always remind me of what I'd done and how much I'd hurt her... After a while I'm sure she wasn't hurt anymore, she just knew how much it hurt me to hear what I'd done. What I'd lost. It took me three years to get over her.

My dad hadn't long passed away so I didn't go to Uni, I helped my mum manage the farm and this girl, Daisy, was new in town.

Daisy appears on the stage, as he speaks, Daisy walks over to him and drapes herself on him, her movements delicate, like a flame dancing in the wind.

She was sweet and beautiful and just what I needed. She helped my mother, cooking and cleaning around the house, doing her own thing when she wasn't helping. She worked hard, was up with me every morning looking after the animals. It was like she wasn't scared of anything, she got stuck in. That smile always on her face.

Despite the friction between us Amelia invited me to her 18th, and I took Daisy thinking it would be a good idea to show Amelia that I was over her. Looking back I guess it was childish, like I was showing Daisy off.

Amelia was different that night.

A soundscape of fire, screaming, drinking and bass music fills the stage. Amelia emerges covered in blood and dangerously drunk. Teddy and Daisy walk forward hand in hand.

I think she'd taken something but she was... she wasn't herself. It was like she was in her own world. She and a bunch of her mates slaughtered a pig and came back to the party covered in blood.

Caroline: Jesus Christ, she's like her father.

Amelia: TEDDY!

Squealing and ecstatic she falls and stumbles across the stage. One look at Daisy and the facade falls.

Amelia: Daisy-

She is sober for a second, Teddy's betrayal poignant. The facade immediately goes back up.

Amelia: You're so beautiful.

Amelia falls onto them trying to kiss Daisy. Teddy tries to push Amelia. Daisy begins to cry into his arms. Amelia gives up and walks off stage.

Teddy: She came over to us and got up in Daisy's face, trying to kiss her. Daisy freaked, despite her work on the farm, the blood freaked her out and she just started throwing up. I wanted to take her home but she said she'd been drinking and her Mum would freak so I took her into the barn to calm down. It got so late and we ended up just falling asleep in the hay. After everything that had happened that night, it felt perfect, like the madness with Amelia had never happened. *In his own world...* it was too perfect.... I should've just taken her home.

As Teddy reflects, Daisy walks to the back of the room and out of the door. A recording of Daisy plays.

Daisy: *(O.S)* *Teddy help me, Teddy... Teddy.*

They are being burnt alive.

Teddy: Then there was just fire... everywhere, crawling up the beams and engulfing us like the fires of hell.

It was like there was no way out. Daisy, where are you? Daisy?

The screams fade.

I managed to pull us out but Daisy.... The fire had engulfed her and spat her back out. She had scars all the way up her body, across her face. She didn't leave her house for months.

I wanted to be there for her but I guess I reminded her of what had happened. If i'd woken up earlier I could've saved her. She'd still be alive now. We could've had a life together.

Caroline stares blankly. There is a long silence and Caroline pieces the story together.

Teddy looks at her

Caroline shakes her head.

Caroline: She couldn't could she?

Teddy: I've been asking myself the same question for eight years.

Caroline: And then to be so cavalier about her death.

Teddy: Mmh.

Caroline: Teddy? Do you think she started the fire.

Teddy: I still have the letter Daisy left me.

Daisy walks through the audience.

Teddy and Daisy: Dear Teddy.

Daisy: I'm so sorry. I know this is going to hurt you. I know you must think I'm selfish for leaving you like this but it's the only way. I don't think you'll ever understand, and I don't either, I don't think I want you too. Just know that I loved you with my all my heart and that sometimes love isn't enough. I never told you but ever since that fire, it's like my mind can't escape it. I am... living in a constant nightmare. Every time I closed my eyes I

was in an inferno, the scars would burn and I would wake up screaming. I couldn't sleep for months. The smell of smoke puts me right back in that barn. I wanted to tell you, Teddy, I truly did but how could I? In this town, that barn stands tall, mocking and reminding. My life ended that night. But I couldn't tell you that. You gave me so much, and I'm forever thankful but you're another reminder, I don't want to hurt you but I think every time you see me you think what could've been, what could've been if we hadn't been in that fire. If I wasn't damaged goods. I know you never said this, you wouldn't, but I saw it on your face, I felt your eyes wash over my scars, your eyes hardening. You were haunted by that night too. You still are. Until you admit Amelia's place in all of this you'll still feel that guilt. You aren't to blame Teddy but confront who is. She's still in your life. I know you say it couldn't have been her but we were doomed from the start. She had you once and she'd never let you go. She's evil Teddy and the sooner you realise the better off you'll be. I loved you and I know you loved me but you loved her too and you still do, I'll never understand that. I'm not blaming you, I promise. But please in my memory, get out. Get away.

Finn enters from inside the house, he interrupts the two. Daisy dissolves.

Finn: Hey, Teddy, Richard wants you inside, he said something about his new Beretta.

Teddy raises his eyebrows, gets up to go inside. Caroline follows after him.

Caroline: Teddy?

Teddy: [he turns to her] I don't think. I know.

Love Your Selfie: An extract.

This monologue was created for the module 'The Self' and explores a women's sense of femininity despite the roar of patriarchal feminine ideals. The monologue belongs in multimedia 10-minute piece.

Slit the wrists of childhood and bathe in her blood.
Say goodbye to youth but bring along her looks,
Skin not yet oiled, the natural blush in her cheek, peach fuzz.
Dress her up in leather and Spanx and pull her in tight, tight, tighter.
Swaddle her into a skin tight body con.

Present her to the altar of broken hearts,
Douse her in gasoline and light her up, let her burn.
Christen her hot.
Present the holy vodka and drown her in it, cool her down
Make her cool.
Carve out her cheekbones, sharpen her jaw, sculpt her nose.
Kardashian barbie, perfectly poised, posed and pouted.

Make her skinny
Starvation prolonged by first loves and never feeling good enough, a competition, who

can go for the longest,
a never-ending arm wrestle, as he wrestles her to the floor and tells her that she wants it.

Reserve the fat for the cheeks, lips and just a touch in the chin to even out the face. Make her thick with two C's
Puppy fat turned into bitch skinny.

Pull out her heart, drench it in foundation, set it, beat it, push it till the blood pours out, till it's no longer bloated. Cover it in glitter make it look pretty, festival ready, choke it up, vomit it out, girly girls only chuck up glitter and rainbows and vodka downed straight.

Make me pretty, make me beautiful, follow the videos of the goddess in the boxes on the internet. Scroll through the pictures. Take the diet pills, the magic bear tablets, down the detox tea. Bathe in it, drown in it, let it fill your lungs and reduce your appetite and your ability to shit straight.

Rim her crying eyes with eyeliner, white to make your eyes look bigger. Two drops of Bella Donna to dilute the pupil, make them big round beautiful, fuckable, blowjob eyes. Don't forget the lashes.

Silence the thunderstorm and teenage rage, keep it quiet, simmering. Turn that thunderstorm to soft white fluffy clouds. Aesthetically pleasing, quiet, floating.

They Will Be Like Shadows: An extract.

This play was written and performed in 2019. This play follows five girls being held in an underground bunker. It explores the women they were, are and who they will be.

An extract from Scene Eight:

Aaron: I remember the first time I saw you...

He turns, he has her attention.

Aaron: You're not just random. I've watched all of you. I wanted to help.

April: I didn't need any help.

Aaron: (He laughs) You were working in an all-night cafe. The first time I saw you. You had a black eye. You served me coffee, it was my fourth of the night. I was out-late working. After that I kept coming, I kept an eye on you. Talled up the injuries. First the black eye. Purple and swollen the first time but eventually yellowed and then gone... and then a few nights later, a split lip, grazing on your cheek.... Like you'd been pushed into a wall...

April takes in a sharp breath.

Aaron: Things stick in my head, I'd seen similar injuries in the hospitals... I knew exactly what it was. The tiny bruises on your upper arm, five, all distinctly finger-shaped. They

were careless whoever did it to you. Not enough embarrassment to be a boyfriend, a boyfriend would hide that sort of thing... ask Ava... no this was someone who wanted people to know. A brother... or a dad.

April: I'd like to go back now, please.

Aaron: You need to wait for the swelling to go down so I can properly bandage it. So I watched... and waited... It wasn't your only job... I watched as you went from that cafe to an office job with your creepy boss, to the warehouse on weekends. I didn't understand how you did it.

Aaron sits next to her on the bed.

Aaron: You were so small... worked for so long... you look better now. (He holds her hand) He can't hurt you in here.

April: If you'd watched me for so long, didn't you see I had sisters, younger than me... who needed me. I worked for them, not for anyone else. (her eyes begin to fill with tears)

Aaron: But you were only a child.

April: (Choking back sobs) So are they, and with me gone who do you think is going to help them. What you did was selfish. You think you saved me, you pick girls you think you can paint and fix but you can't. None of this is for me, it's for you... to make yourself feel better.

Aaron: You were exhausted, you can rest here.

April: Fay, she was fifteen, still in school, she wanted to be a hairdresser, she told me that she wasn't smart enough to be a doctor, so she'd be a hairdresser so she could help people feel better about their appearance. Make them feel new and fresh.

Aaron: Stop.

Aaron is visibly distressed by her revelations, he grapples with his head.

April: Taylor - eleven, she wanted to be an artist, she already set up an online shop, I bought her art supplies with my cafe tips. And Maisie, she was only five... she needed me.

Aaron: Shut up.

April: (Diligent, her voice raising) they need me and you took me away and you think you're helping because I don't have to work three jobs... you didn't watch closely enough. If you did... you would've known... my dad didn't hit me, he never would... he broke his back working as a fireman. I looked after him. He's a big man, accidents happen, the split lip was me falling to help him up, the fingerprints are when he depended on me to shower in the morning. He needed me. I needed them.

Aaron: no... no.

April: Yes... you got it wrong. You believed what you wanted to see in order to justify this to yourself. He didn't hurt me, you did.

In a rash decision, he smacks her head against the headboard, knocking her out cold.

He is quiet for a second, still.

He gets up, paces. April remains still.

Aaron: I've never hurt them... never. It's meant to be better here. Safe. What am I doing... she's lying... she's too proud to admit a man raised a hand to her. I never saw a wheelchair, never heard of one. (laughing) what am I doing... (he sits next to April) I'm sorry.

Blackout.

An extract from Scene Fifteen:

Aaron: All I wanted was you. Just you... I wanted a good morning and a good night. I wanted to wake up to you every morning, pull you close into a hug as you'd push me away and dive back into your dreams. I wanted breakfast, I wanted to make your meals, give you flowers, come home from work with a bottle of wine and a picnic to celebrate a good day. I wanted a normal conversation. I wanted to curl up on rainy Sundays and watch long and boring films. I wanted fresh laundry swaying on the washing line, smelling of cut grass and new beginnings. I wanted long autumn walks crunching through the coloured leaves, I wanted mud stains and paw prints. I wanted hot chocolate in the snow, ice skating, Christmases with presents under the trees. I wanted double dates and dinner parties and too much red wine over steaming food. I wanted sunny dosing by the poolside, jumping to the cool water, sweating over a sunbed. I wanted to skinny dip in the sea. I wanted dancing at 3 o'clock in the morning to Amy Winehouse because we could. I wanted stolen kisses and to be wrapped up in the darkness of the night with you as my protector. I wanted bowling dates, me beating you at basketball in the arcade and you slamming me at air hockey. Cinema dates surrounded by popcorn and pick n mix. I wanted beach days with wooden forks plunging into styrofoam boxes filled with fish and chips. I wanted the roller coasters, the Ferris wheel. I wanted to get down on one knee. I wanted congratulation cards piling up on our window sill. I wanted two lines on the pregnancy test, a growing bump, and then a baby's cries as we wake up together to rock them back to sleep. I wanted first steps, grizzly tears, baby's clothes on the clothesline. I wanted you and me and a baby a family, a dog, a home, a job... it wasn't much to ask for, was it? Was I asking for too much?

You wanted more.. different ... twisted... and always more... nothing was ever good enough... I wasn't enough for you. I loved you and all I wanted was for you to love me back.

Were you capable of that? I thought I taught you what life could be... with love... but it was all for nothing... this was all for nothing.