

Crazy Hex Girlfriend: A Solo Performance of My Own Design

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Abstract

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Crazy Hex Girlfriend is a solo performance that questions the compulsory nature of the heterosexual experience in contemporary American society, and the cascading effects it has on an individual's relationship to internalized misogyny and sexuality. This inquiry is derived from my own suppressive experience of my sexuality and understanding of self, and the deconstruction of perceived identity it ignited.

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Graduate Thesis - *Crazy Hex Girlfriend*

Jeffrey Fracé

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When you go to graduate school, you anticipate change: change of ideas, change of perspective, even just change of location. What I didn't anticipate was a change - and quite frankly, an awakening - of the deeply suppressed sexual identity that had laid dormant for the first twenty-five years of my life. Though never rooted in shame, my identity was shaped by my upbringing and environment, and the questions I had within myself seemed unimportant, with answers far out of reach. The changes that came with my graduate school journey catapulted my sense of self-reflection into high gear, and I realized the extent to which my compulsory heterosexuality - and its accompanying internalized misogyny and insecurity of lesbian identity - had stunted my self-actualization. I embraced this new, previously suppressed identity with open arms in graduate school, and it colored the ways in which I could more authentically show up in my artistic work.

In addition to my self-actualization, my time in the Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Washington has yielded a wealth of new skills that I have incorporated into my creative process, as both an actor and a writer. With each passing quarter, my confidence in

the successful utilization of these new skills grew, and they became further cemented as a part of the way I approach story, character, and relationship to audience. These tools were the foundation upon which I took the concept of my solo performance, *Crazy Hex Girlfriend*, through the stages of creation to performance. *Crazy Hex Girlfriend* was built from the ideas I learned through my studios in clown, comedy, and acting, and was able to be thoughtfully shared with the skills I developed through study of the Alexander Technique. This groundwork set me up for a successful solo performance, and allowed me to learn and experience - in real time, with my own words - the importance of play, open vulnerability, and the pursuit of my own triumphant failures for my audience when intentionally breaking the fourth wall.

The skills I learned in my acting studios, though unique and distinct, proved to have great overlap when it came to devising a cohesive and dynamic solo performance. In these studios, I absorbed a more nuanced understanding of the importance of clear character arc and transformation, and learned to focus on crafting a character's journey with moments of discovery and vulnerability. This helped me ensure that I created moments in my solo performance - through writing, rehearsing, and blocking - that could propel my character forward, forcing her to change with the new information with which she was being presented. This also gave me the ability - when transitioning from playwright to performer - to discover opportunities to raise the stakes of the story, which allowed myself and my character to pursue active objectives, actions, and tactics in my script.

In *Crazy Hex Girlfriend*, comedy and clown were major components of the rehearsal process that helped me discover the relationship I wanted to have with my audience in performance. My studio studies specific to clown and comedy became a cornerstone of this exploration, because they allowed me to reconnect with my sense of play and challenged me to

find games with my audience. These studios taught me about the Clown and Bouffon, and sparked my interest in using elements of both archetypes to write and perform a single character in solo performance. This was a particularly fruitful exploration because it allowed me to engage with my audience playfully, painfully, and directly. I could make fun of them while making fun of my own character, simultaneously failing and succeeding right before their eyes. I alienated my character from them, illuminated them with honest social commentary, and then slowly regained their support in my character's triumph. Without an understanding of how the audience's support is necessary to this type of comedy or how to let them in on the game, *Crazy Hex Girlfriend* would have been unsuccessful. I owe much of the success of the writing and performance of the show to the things I learned from Jane Nichols and Bradley Wrenn in these studios.

The final component of my graduate training that helped take *Crazy Hex Girlfriend* from the page to the stage were the skills I learned about artistic purpose and audience invitation with the Integrative Alexander Technique, as pioneered by Catherine Madden. Before graduate school, I had never heard of the Alexander Technique, nor had any inkling of how to utilize it in the artistic process. The Alexander Technique helped me understand and apply the idea of incorporating my audience into every step of my process, including: writing, editing, rehearsing, and performing. It assisted me in creating a plan to invite my audience on the journey of self-discovery with my character, and supplemented my performance with care for the audience's experience in relation to the story. Applying this technique to a script of my own creation was a journey three years in the making, and infused my thesis with a newfound sense of artistic purpose.

The tools I gained in my acting, clown, and comedy studios, aided by the thoughtful, artistic planning I learned with the Alexander Technique, allowed me to bring elements of play and vulnerability to every facet of development, staging, and performance of *Crazy Hex Girlfriend*. Overall, the process had moments of difficulty and victory, but I felt well-equipped to see it to the end. Creating, sharing, and trusting your own work can be difficult: I experienced moments of self-doubt, confusion around contradictory notes from outside voices, and hesitation about moving from one stage of rehearsal to the next. But my time in graduate school has given me - in addition to my skillset as a performer - a newfound sense of trust in myself as a creator who can take a piece of theatre from beginning to end, while making impactful discoveries along the way. Through *Crazy Hex Girlfriend*, I realized that creating your own work always yields new discoveries beyond those made in the classroom; in this process, I discovered the continued importance of liveness of play, specifically in a show that shatters the imaginary fourth wall. I found that directly interacting with my audience kept me in relation to them at all times during performance - even if something went awry, I was forced to stay with them, openly and honestly, and carry them to the end. It was a new and different experience to be in dialogue with my audience at every turn, but I was thrilled to be continuously learning about new facets of liveness, presence, and play in real time performance (while still feeling supported by my tools acquired in graduate school). Furthermore, the discoveries made through this process - in regards to artistic creation, thematic storytelling, and play with the audience - mirrored the actual discovery of self that served as the ignition for this project. To be able to explore a part of my identity that still feels fresh in many ways, within the context of an artform that demands freshness at every turn, provided continued opportunity for discovery of self, both in art and in life. The subject matter of *Crazy Hex Girlfriend* - honest self-discovery and authenticity - mirrors

the process I have created in graduate school to prioritize authentic discovery in story, and has proven to be the most prevalent lesson to carry forward as I prepare to re-enter the professional world of storytelling as the most authentic version of myself.

Crazy Hex Girlfriend

A Solo Show

CHARACTERS

GRETA - Mid-twenties. Smart, adaptable, and blunt. Self-aware and yet somehow not? Strong opinions, possibly hiding something she isn't even aware of yet.

SETTING

Various locations around a major, southern, metropolitan city. More specifically:

A nightclub with flashing lights, loud music, and cheap vodka. It's annoying to talk to people here.

A local bar that's more upscale than a dive, but approachable enough that you could still wear jeans - it probably plays 90's French alternative music, has a menu of share plates, and the bartender can say more about the wine list than just the flavor profiles on each bottle. This place is a breath of fresh air compared to the nightclub.

Her car. It has an oddly specific radio. We are here briefly.

And then also, the spaces in-between. The walk Greta takes from the club to the bar. The walk Greta takes from the bar to...whatever her next step is. The space in-between is reflective, educational, conversational. It is needed space for Greta to keep trying to move forward, but doesn't need to be anything complicated.

TIME

Close to now. 2019 probably: right on the cusp of something new and unexpected.

(Darkness)

(We hear music you'd expect in a metropolitan nightclub: remixes of songs on the radio, heavy base.)

*(Flashing lights begin and reveal the outline of a young woman dancing: it's **GRETA**.)*

(She's holding a vodka soda. She is focused on dancing. She will make it through three drinks tonight if it's the last thing she does. She's nearing the end of her vodka soda and seeks out someone who is eager to please: like a puppy! A puppy with a Chase Sapphire Card. She finds one.)

GRETA:

(Over the sound of the music. GRETA is talking to a credit card puppy.)

SORRY, WHAT? OH MY GOD YEAH, I LOVE THIS CLUB.

*(Sound goes down abruptly. It's background noise. **GRETA** looks at the audience and steps out of the club moment.)*

This is the biggest shithole I have ever seen.

*(Back to the club, music full volume. **GRETA** finishes the first drink and throws it somewhere. She goes back to the credit card puppy who, lucky for her, has her second drink. She starts on this second one. **GRETA** is swaying and talking to him, unamused.)*

**YEAH TOTALLY. HEY, WOULD YOU GET ME ANOTHER VODKA SODA?
YEAH THANKS.**

*(**GRETA** laughs and then turns to audience again. Music goes down.)*

Ohmygod, please don't worry about me! This isn't me - it's all a part of the game. I'm acting!

*(**GRETA** gets an idea.)*

HEY. Do you want to play with me? It'll be so fun I swear. I do this like, every Saturday. All you have to do is, one: pick a club. (**GRETA** looks around) Looks like we're going with this one. Two: pick a drink - try to keep it as cheap as possible, I find it's easier to talk guys into buying them for you that way. And three: find a dude. This part is dealer's choice. I tend to go for a bit of a cookie cutter: he's probably a douche when he's sober, but here? Eager to please. Like a puppy! A puppy with a Chase Sapphire card. And then first one to get three drinks wins! Typical Saturday night. Hope you ate before you came!

(GRETA dances more and begins work on her second vodka soda. The music has gone back up. She has a weird sense of control, but there is a sense of emptiness coloring the way she navigates the situation. When she nears the end of the drink, the music goes back down.)

GRETA:

I need to figure out a name for this. Cool Girl...

(GRETA finishes her second vodka soda and throw the cup.)

Flip Cup???

Two down. One more and we can get OUT of here. FINALLY. Don't get me wrong - I love Saturday's, but they really take it out of you. I mean, three drinks is a very fine line: am I going to turn into a demon tonight, or just fall the fuck asleep? But we NEED Saturday's, right? They're like, the Cliff Notes version of failed relationships to share over bottomless mimosas at brunch. Minimum effort required for the friend group to keep inviting you.

Besides, Cool Girl Flip Cup makes getting to Sad Girl Sylvia Plath Sunday soooooo much faster. Sunday's are-

(GRETA is interrupted. The credit card puppy returns with the third vodka soda returns.)

Hold on.

(We see GRETA turn on the Cool Girl charm again. Music is up. She comes back to us.)

(Music back down.)

Mission accomplished.

Oh! I forgot to mention...there is one catch to this game, and that is that you are probably, definitely going home with the credit card puppy. You have to make that VERY obvious by the first vodka soda - make it VERY clear there's no need to roofie you. Be a bit of a waste!

(GRETA hears something coming from the direction of the credit card puppy (probably him). She turns back to the audience for a moment.)

Be right back.

(Back to the club and the guy, music full volume. GRETA is nursing the third and final drink. She's talking to the guy over the music.)

THANKS. NO YEAH, GLAD I CAME OUT TOO. I ALMOST WENT TO THIS PODCAST RECORDING WITH MY ROOMMATE INSTEAD. WOULD HAVE BEEN TERRIBLE. HAHA WHAT? YEAH, SURE, LET'S GO.

(Music goes down. GRETA grabs the credit card puppy and faces the audience. She finishes her drink.)

Seriously! Don't worry - I've got this under control. It's just for one night! Just remember: always pack a toothbrush, use protection, and call your Uber at 6am.

(GRETA faces the credit card puppy. She begins to turn on the Cool Girl Charm and laugh uncontrollably. She and the credit card puppy are getting physical as they move to the back of the stage. This should be chaotic and hilarious. Sound and laughter go up, and then out with a Blackout. We hear GRETA make a woo girl sound.)

(Lights up. GRETA tosses the credit card puppy offstage.)

Ok, thank god THAT'S over. Now it is time for the best day of the week: Sad Girl Sylvia Plath Sunday.

(GRETA catches the Sylvia Plath transformation backpack, thrown from offstage.)

That last part I said to him was actually true though. Podcasts are like, my biggest pet peeve. Ok, that's not totally true. In the world of wildly streamed podcasts, I hate the "HEY GIRLIES!". You know, like if Joe Rogan was a hot girl who ran on iced coffee and worshipped Emily Mariko and talked about sex because it's liberating - but really they only talk about straight sex - and the rest of the podcast is basically nothing like Joe Rogan because who the fuck listens to Joe Rogan. HEY GIRLIES!

(GRETA is transforming from Saturday's Cool Girl to Sunday's Sad Girl Sylvia Plath to go to the bar by herself. This will include tearing down the nightclub and building the bar, along with her personal transformation onstage. GRETA'S backpack includes everything needed for the transformation. She puts on new clothes, she takes the glitter and lipstick off her face, she changes shoes, drinks some water, brings out a bottle of chardonnay and a wine glass, puts her hair up, takes off her jewelry, "The Bell Jar" comes out, etc. The transformation should take a decent amount of time through the following:)

Like, there's this one podcast, it's called something like, I don't know, insert vaguely misogynistic girl boss slogan here. You know the ones. It's like, "white feminism but I'm talking about sucking dick so like literally why don't you support all women?"

ANYWAY. Not the point. I hate that these podcasts exist. Just, STOP. WHY have you wasted your time naming a blowjob technique the "Dick Fuck 9 Million" like it's some kind of Phil of the Future, self-help, orgasm robot bestowed upon you by the Continental Principalities straight out of Angels in America?!

(GRETA laughs. The audience probably won't.)

Come on! Tony Kushner? Kushner - I barely know her!

OK, fair enough.

And UGH! GOD. There's this one line I hear over and over again in these things -

"If he wanted to, he would."

News flash! Nobody EVER wants to, so nobody ever will! Why are you acting like we aren't all pretending to like these dudes, all of the time?

It's a cycle: you get bored, so you get on an app. You pick a dude, end up more bored than you were to begin with, dump him, report back to your friends "there are no good men", joke that you'd totally be a lesbian if you lived in a bigger city, masturbate to gay porn for six months, then start the cycle all over again?

(A beat. GRETA is searching for affirmation from the audience.)

Why are you all looking at me like I'm crazy?

It's just...what a WASTE, right? And it's not the hey girlies' fault! Internal misogyny is a bitch! That stupid subconscious desire and resentment of male gaze is what keeps me awake at night! Fuck the patriarchy and double standards of sex and DEFINITELY fuck capitalism....

(GRETA reels it in.)

It all just gives men too much fucking credit.

That's why I decided: not me. No Hey Girlies here. I'll make my own game with my own rules. Cool Girl Flip Cup on Steroids.

I'll be my own fuck boy. Lure them in because "I'm not like other girls." Then disappear, evaporate. Let them hurt their own feelings before they can hurt mine.

I'm fun. I'm flippant. I'm funny.

I slash feelings like it's Fruit Ninja.

I drink IPA's and joke they taste like blowjobs. I stand on tables at karaoke.

I'm fucking GAME, right?

Saturday's are for Cool Girls.

(GRETA is amused with herself, reflecting.)

(GRETA gets an idea.)

Hey. I'm going to let you in on a little secret. The perfect recipe for cool. A fool-proof spell to make a guy obsessed with you. My gift to the hey girlies.

Step One: A casual, but carefully curated, dating app presence. Lots of heavy metal band shirts and tallboy beers and the middle finger. Funny, but not too funny in a way that intimidates a man or lets him know that you're way smarter than he is. Cute funny. Picking profile prompts like: "Dating me is like dot dot dot".

Cute funny answers.

"Dating me is like...having a dog. My hair will be on everything you own but you won't mind because you have a dog. Also, I'm a bitch."

"Dating me is like...ordering oatmilk at a coffee shop: cute, expensive, and fucking annoying to straight men.

"Dating me is like...living out all your secret gay guy fantasies because I'll basically just be a dude because of my own secret gay insecurities and internalized misogyny, that will in turn let you explore your own homoerotic desires towards men but in a super closeted, completely deniable, "but dude, no homo" kind of way because, TITS.

(GRETA laughs a perfectly detached, performative, carefree laugh. Big beat.)

I'm just kidding: that last one was too long for the character count.

(GRETA laughs again. The audience probably doesn't.)

(GRETA closing in on the audience and impersonating a fuck boy:)

Jeez it was like, just a JOKE. GOD why do you have to be like soooo serious all the time just like, RELAX DUDE. OK?

(Beat.)

(GRETA has made significant progress on her personal and environmental transformations. She starts to take liberties away from the transformations to keep directly engaging with her audience. This should be fun and terrifying and thrilling for the audience and for GRETA.)

Step two: Mind train them. Nothing crazy, just easy little word associations that will ruin their life. Like, exclusively order Miller High Life at the bar -

(GRETA as a Cool Girl.)

Come on!!! WHAT?! Are you kidding?! High Life is literally the BEST. It's the champagne of beers!!!

(GRETA dropping the Cool Girl act.)

Or something like that.

Three: This is a big one. Be super obsessed with some vaguely sad song from the eighties that DEFINITELY reminds them of riding in the car with their absent father. A song that you also use to joke with them about how you'd revenge fuck their dad to it if they ever dump you - HAHAHAHA - except you're actually serious about it because you always have to have the last word when the two of you break up, because you ALWAYS break up, because why would you ever end up with a man when it's waaaaaay easier to joke about fucking their dad rather than reflect on why you give men reasons to not end up with you?!

(The chorus of Johnny Hates Jazz's "Shattered Dreams" comes on. GRETA dances like a white girl at the club or a lyrical dance recital)

“Ohmygod I love this song. What ever happened to Johnny Hates Jazz? I remember the first time MY heart got broken...it really is like running from this big empty house....”

(Music ends.)

(GRETA looks at the audience. Chef's kiss.)

Bingo.

Hook, line, and sinker.

Cool girl nirvana, no podcast necessary. You've got them wrapped around your little witchy finger.

You're welcome!

Seriously though, isn't it kind of wild how unaware men are through all of this? Like, you actually BUY this? HOW do men not realize that all women are thinking about other women whenever we're with them or like, headless man bodies, or that barista girl's hands at my favorite coffee shop? Am I right ladies?!

Right?

(An awkward moment. The mixed response is a little surprising. GRETA is puzzled. "Shattered Dreams" starts up again. GRETA dances it off like a dandelion in the wind.)

Hahahaha - JUST KIDDING! You better WATCH OUT, or I'll fuck your dad!
HAHAHAHA.

(The music ends. A serious reminder.)

Once they're under your spell, find the exit strategy. Remember ladies, a man is nothing like your girlfriends: they will always fall short. So you need to know the way OUT. Bye fuck boys!!!

(A few beats. Why is the audience, like, not getting it?)

My friend's think I'm "crazy" and that this game is a "red flag". I think they're just vulnerable to the mediocre charms of the male bare minimum. Fuck boys can't hurt your feelings if you beat them to the punch. So that's what I do.

(Changing gears. Deep breath. GRETA sits down at the bar she has built with her backpack. She places the chardonnay bottle, "The Bell Jar", and the wine glass on the table. She is in a happy place free of play pretend. She welcomes us in.)

Enough of that. It is time, for the highly anticipated: Sad Girl Sylvia Plath Sunday. Sunday's are for bettering ourselves, for being independent, and for a chance to just, be ourselves.

(GRETA shows us her book and her bottle of wine.)

I give to you: the body and blood of Christ, forever and ever, Amen.

(GRETA pours a glass of Chardonnay and opens her book. She takes a sip of wine. Suddenly, a baseball hat gets thrown in front of the bar. GRETA "sees" him land.)

Ugh, gross. Why do guys come to bars and sit directly across from girls with books? Rule number one: don't fuck with book girls. Whatever.

(GRETA goes back to her book. She looks up.)

Eye contact. Annoying! Bored now. Chardonnay. Sad Girl. Sylvia Plath. Page turn. Chardonnay. Look up and around -

Why is he still looking at me? He's...smiling?

Ugh. Not in the mood!

I guess he's cute? Cute as they ever are.

NO. We're sad girl-ing - Cool Girl stayed at home.

(Series of this pattern continues - wine, read, look up, smile. Finally, to audience.)

This is annoying. Cool Girl shows up when I'm annoyed.

It's fine - Cool Girl's fucking game. Besides, they all like Cool Girl.

(GRETA checks her watch.)

I guess if you don't count Saturday's game, it's been...7 months? I need a story for brunch!!!

Guess this is it. What other option is there?

(We see the transformation. She throws The Bell Jar out.)

So are you going to come over here and take a tequila shot with me or keep staring at me like a weirdo?

(To audience.)

We begin!

(GRETA goes for the hat, but when she reaches for it we hear a big breaking sound. Maybe it flies out of reach. It throws GRETA off physically.)

Uh, or not?

Come on babe, you know how to do this. One, two, three. High Life and NFL and sex in the stairwell of his apartment complex because “don’t be a pussy COME ON.”

(GRETA picks up the hat hesitantly. She puts it on.)

OK, he’s in, but he’s...

Not looking for anything serious right now?

(Hat off.)

What does that even mean - ugh that makes me feel crazy. Like what the fuck-

(GRETA stops herself.)

No, NO, it’s just...It’s not that I care, because I don’t, I just....

I don’t know what it is.

I wish there was a word for it.

(A Beat.)

Whatever. Let’s kick it up a notch.

(GRETA puts the hat back on. The bar becomes a car.)

Oh my god! Let's play a game. I want you to show me your favorite song, of all time. No matter how lame, or how old, I wanna know-

(Shattered Dreams begins to play. GRETA is taken aback and looks straight ahead, clutching the wheel. When it's over, she takes off the hat and exits the vehicle. She screams.)

WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS.

(GRETA stands dumbfounded for a moment. This next bit is a bit of an avalanche of word vomit. She's yelling at the hat.)

What is WITH this guy? I've never felt this way before. So, so, so...unimportant? So undesirable?? I feel like - oh my god. I don't even know my own feelings. Do I even have feelings? Have I ever felt anything real in my whole life? All I feel is this...blackhole in my stomach. And I'm confused and I don't want him around and yet I can't let go not yet I didn't win yet and honestly why doesn't he like me EVERYBODY LIKES ME. Why won't he answer my texts? OH MY GOD...I'M A HEY GIRLIE.

(GRETA pulls it together. She kicks the car over.)

Fuck him. Fuck all dudes, honestly. I don't have to put up with this-

(GRETA'S phone buzzes. It's a text from him.)

"I don't think this is working."

(A moment. To the audience. To the hat.)

No one's ever dumped me before.

(Texting on her phone.)

"Why do you say that?"

(Phone buzz. GRETA is silent. Stunned.)

(This is a long pause.)

It's a picture. He's.he's in...Moscow.

Fucking Russia.

With a girl. Blonder. Smiley-er. Cooler.

I don't know whether to hate her or to warn her?

She's the upgrade. Or the me I don't know how to be.

He looks...happy. Like actually happy. Why the fuck didn't he smile like that at me?

They look so, honest. So present. So...alive.

What does that feel like?

Still hurts though, right? The sting of rejection.

I mean, a picture? Pretty low blow, and that's coming from me.

The girl getting a taste of her own medicine.

(GRETA laughing.)

Suddenly I can hear nothing but podcasts.

“If he wanted to he would.”

(A moment, a deflation. “Shattered Dreams” plays.)

WOULD YOU JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP. PLEASE.

(It cuts out.)
(A reflection.)

Why can't I make him like me?

I don't even like HIM. It was never about LIKING him...but I have never needed someone to like me this much before.

Wait.

I don't want this.

I never wanted this.

I was just obsessed with their obsession. With feeling wanted over feeling...anything. Does this mean-?

(There's a suspicious noise overheard. We see a few papers fall from the sky.)

Jesus Christ.

*(A moment of silence. **GRETA** checks back in with the audience.)*

This could be good though? Some time alone. I think that could be really good for me now. Yeah. Some self-reflection. Sit with this feeling a little. Figure out what I actually like. I wonder if there's anything I could Google that -

(More papers begin to fall, then finally, the Lesbian Master Doc falls out of the sky. G walks over to it, and picks it up. Flips through a few pages. She looks up at us.)

Oh SHIT.

(Blackout.)