

Andrew

Hello everyone. This is Andrew Pond, Artistic director of Eclectic Full Contact Theatre. Welcome to Season 4 of The Half Hour Audio Hour. Every month, we'll be featuring a different playwright, allowing you to not only hear their work, but to find out a little more about them and their process. If you enjoy what you hear, please remember to like, follow, and subscribe to our podcast. And feel free to leave a review! You can help us out in continuing this work by heading over to [tinyurl.com/efcthhah](http://tinyurl.com/efcthhah), where you can sponsor us through a onetime or recurring donation and become our partner in highlighting the voices and stories of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists.

This month's production is "That Time of Night", written by Luke Brett, directed by Amanda Grissom, and starring Laura Coleman, Lizzy Mosher, Elyssa Trevino, and EFCT company Member Alexis Vaselopulos

Before we start, we'd like to briefly introduce you to Luke Brett. After the production, stay tuned for an interview with Luke for more insight into the play and this process.

Luke Brett is a Cleveland based playwright and actor with a talent for pop-up performances that create wonder from the ground up. He has performed his own work in unconventional spaces across Cleveland, whether that meant reciting original fabulist pulp stories at a bookstore or doing a handcuffed waltz on top of a hill in Public Square for the BorderLight Fringe Festival. He's also acted on the mainstages of Great Lakes Theater, Dobama Theatre, The Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, The Ohio Shakespeare Festival, and Cleveland Public Theatre. His plays have been produced at Playwrights Local, Hunger Theatre, Radio on the Lake Theatre, the Ohio Shakespeare Festival and the BorderLight Festival. He adores Cleveland and life

And now, That Time of Night

SFX: Sad saxophone music, city street, high heels

NORA:

June. 1948. It's like the city itself is relieved that nobody's around. It's between two and three. I'm walking down the street and about half my fingernails are gone. I don't keep my fingernails for long because I pick at em when I get nervous. I get nervous pretty frequently. No job. I used to work at a place called "Rita's," a night spot where girls like me sing and make drinks. They told me they'd fire me if I didn't stop picking at my fingernails. It made me nervous. But now I got no food at my place and nowhere else to go. So I figure what the hey, it's back to Rita's. I can hear the music from the club now. Door's got a chain lock on it, but they'll pop it open when somebody knocks.

SFX: Sound of NORA knocking on the door. Sound of the door opening, a chain lock rattling

NORA: Hey! Hey Rita?

RITA: Uh uh.

NORA: Oh come on, let me in, huh? I was just walking by the neighborhood-and-and I thought you might have work for me, you know I don't got so much money anymore and, well, with everybody gettin' married these days, I thought you might need an extra girl to sling drinks.

RITA: What, with those bloody cracks all over your nails? People around here- they don't want that. They don't want that.

NORA: Hey, come on now, I know you're short handed, when have I ever done a bad day's work? I mean, really ask yourself. When did I ever not clean up a mess, or not keep a happy guy happy, or-or not handle a guy who came in drunk? I'm quality.

RITA: You don't look healthy Nora! Now get outta here. I ain't got the time.

NORA: I can mix, I can talk, I can dance, I can do everything. I can do it all like you've never seen it done before. Not like these dim yes ma'ams who learned it out of a book. I can think.

RITA: Nora, they can think. But thinkin' aint popular, so they play it nice, which is what customers want. You can think, but you never do anything smart about it. Now Nora, the night I have had is bad enough without you in it, so for the last time, I'm telling you to beat it.

NORA: "Rita, look at me. Will you just look at me? I would do anything...anything...for something." The half of Rita's face I can see in the doorway looks at me a little while.

RITA: Meet me out back. Twenty minutes.

SFX: Sound of door slamming

NORA: I'm not bad at talking. You can only do it so much, but you can get people to crack when you beg. Twenty five minutes later she comes out.

SFX: Door opens, high heels walking

NORA: She's walking fast and I've got to keep up with her. We're headed for the cars in the parking lot. Rita stops us behind a long, gray Buick Super with a black top. It's a whale of a thing.

RITA: I need you to get this car away from my club. There's two hundred dollars in it for you if you do.

NORA: We don't talk after that. We both do a pretty stubborn job of waiting to see who talks first.

RITA: Two hundred dollars to just get it out of here, leave it some place, and come back. I gotta get rid of it, Nora. You're already doing a good job. I know you've got lots and lots of questions. But like you said Nora, you can think. So you're not asking them. Do yourself a favor and don't think. Don't think about it, it'd just make the drive seem longer.

NORA: I'm not looking at her, but I'm listening. God, I need the money.

RITA: Of course, if you don't want to, you can always go home and watch the wallpaper peel.

NORA: And you're gonna make sure I work?

RITA: Sure thing. A job, and two hundred dollars when you get back, You just have to take these keys.

SFX: Keys jingling

NORA: Rita's holding up her fob and when I reach halfway for the keys she drops them. Before I know what I'm doing, I'm catching them. "Where do you want me to drive it?"

RITA: To the East Side or the West Side, depending on who calls me first.

NORA: I'm thinking and I'm thinking and I'm thinking. God, I'd be stupid to do this. God, I need the money. I make a little fist around the keys. "What's in the trunk?"

RITA: I'm paying you not to think about that.

NORA: Yeah, but Rita, what's in the trunk?

RITA: It would be better, kid, it would be better- a lot better for you if you just drove it.

NORA: What, are you gonna make me open it?

RITA: Nobody's making you do anything, but it's the same amount of money whether you look or you don't.

NORA: I open it.

SFX: Trunk opens

NORA: Moonlight gets in and I get my first look at the Buick's cargo. It's a dead man. He sort of rocks when the hatch comes open. Tall, that's the first thing I can see. His neck and his knees had to bend to fit in there. His skin looks like empty clothes, like...like white rubber. With the moon coming in, it makes everything look white, even what he's got on. So it isn't until I see the hat next to him and read the letters on his uniform that it dawns on me...this flimsy body that looks like rubber is the body of a dead policeman. He's got a hole in him, somebody plugged him in the chest. I close the trunk. I put my head down on it.

SFX: Trunk closes

RITA: I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that we're already caught. That's where your mind is. Just look at you. "When we get caught," "If we get caught," that's where your mind is. Right away. That's a mistake. Everybody thinks they're already caught. Ya gotta learn to think something else.

NORA: I raise my head a little because I feel like she's threatening me.

RITA: I'll let you in on something, Nora. I found him like this.

NORA: "So....so. So why'd you put him in the trunk?" She looks at me and puffs a little bit of that cigarette into the wind.

RITA: Because he's worth something. The cops'll tear up whatever neighborhood they find him in.

NORA: And you...you want me to drive out to whatever neighborhood they're gonna find him in?

RITA: Yep. Everybody knows what boss runs what side. And whoever runs the side they find the body on...is a cop killer. Legenza's gonna give me ten thousand if I leave him on the West side and Ralo's gonna give me ten thousand if I leave him on the East side.

NORA: Of all the crazy ideas... So that was it. She'd found a declaration of war and was charging money to keep people's names off of it. Extortion, except this time it was happening to the gangsters. I don't know anything about gangsters. But I've had friends that knew people who did, and nobody sees those people around anymore. "Rita...Ralo and Legenza, they'll kill you."

RITA: They gotta kill each other first. They got town-sized appetites and only one half each. They're each trying to get rid of the other one. And this'll do it.

NORA: Which one you gonna sell to?

RITA: Whoever calls first. So now you know. There's the plan.

NORA: She puts out her cigarette.

RITA: Happy you looked? Now hey, come on kid. Let's get back inside.

NORA: Rita starts to walk but she feels pretty stupid once she finds out I'm not followin' her. "Huh."

RITA: Huh? What "huh" you were just outside beggin me.

NORA: Well Rita, (laughs, long and loud and free) I dunno. I just don't know, with these cracked hands of mine, whether I could even hold the wheel.

RITA: You mean you-

NORA: "I mean I begged when I knew I had to. And now I don't have to." I say. And just to show Rita who she's talking to, I sit down on the trunk.

RITA: You...vicious little priss.

NORA: "I'm more than happy to go home and look at my peeling wallpaper. Makes no difference to me." I point back to her club, to the place where it's warm inside and people are nice, to the big sign that says "Rita's." "But if those french-cigarettes-with-people-attached-to-them find out you've got a permanently dead cop in your trunk, you're lookin' at a bad night."

RITA: God in Heaven, Nora. Not everyone's as nice as I am! I could have never even come to the door! I've promised you I'll put you to work. I'm your boss.

NORA: "Sorry boss, but I haven't taken the job yet. Make me a better offer." Rita just stands in the dark looking at me for a few seconds. She takes me apart looking for weaknesses. Then she gets two fives out of her purse.

RITA: Well look at you. Here's ten dollars, paper.

NORA: I reach for them, but Rita yanks them away.

RITA: Uh-uh. Inside.

SFX: High heels walking

NORA: Then I'm walking and keeping it casual and headed back inside "Rita's." She opens up that door that used to be locked and we walk into the back room.

SFX: Door opening, music playing in background

NORA: Rita shuts the door and walks over to her desk by the window. She's got a little pull-chain desk lamp, lights up her whole corner. I stay in the middle of the room and take a look around. They got rid of the old rug. Now they got some new rug. Rita takes a seat behind her desk and the only other things in the white of the lamp are the phone and the window blinds. I park it in a chair and sit across from her. "Okay, now how about my ten dollars?"

RITA: Here's five. Let's establish something: If you work for me, then that's what it is. I don't need anymore fits, arguments, or renegotiations. You are done telling me what your prices are. But if we get through tonight and come out the other side, I'm gonna give you two hundred dollars.

NORA: Then she slides the other five across the table to me.

RITA: The whole thing. Mama to cub, that's how it's gonna be.

NORA: Rita's got a way of being nice that makes you want to hide under a blanket. She'll give you things, but she'll keep track. "What are you gonna do if they don't call back?"

RITA: They'll call back. Body of a cop? It's too good to pass up. It wins the whole war and they don't even have to use their own army. Just point the police in the right direction and bang. You hungry, kid?

NORA: Sure Rita, I'm hungry.

RITA: I've got half a sandwich from across the street and some chocolates somebody left. Here, fill yourself up.

SFX: Sandwich in paper

LAURA: A sandwich in some butcher paper and the box of chocolates come rolling my way. It kinda hurts, just how much I want them. "ppreciate it, Rita." I say in between big bites.

RITA: Sure, kid, sure. Now listen: If we don't get a call back from Ralo or Legenza, we call the police. Tell 'em we just found the body. We'll only be lying by about an hour and half. If only one calls and the other doesn't, I've gotta call the person who doesn't. I'll do that after you leave. Call 'em and really beg, make it seem like we're desperate. Because if Ralo and Legenza think for one second we've been talking to both of them, we're dead. Now when you're on the road, Nora, drive like the Virgin Mary's watching. You take those turns easy and don't run any lights. Cops are bored this time of night.

NORA: What happened to his gun?

RITA: Whose gun?

NORA: It had just hit me and now I couldn't think of anything else. "The...the guy in the back of the Buick. Rita, what happened to his gun? He'd have to have a revolver at least. Do you think he got shot with his own gun?" She doesn't like that. The question or the interest. She leans even further back in her chair until her face is half shadow.

RITA: What are you talking about that for?

NORA: Well we'd been talking about everything else...

RITA: What do you wanna know that for? Are you trying to give me nightmares?

NORA: "No. Hey, all right, so I won't ask. I'm sorry." Rita makes a face like suddenly she doesn't trust me as much and looks out the window. She's nervous. Maybe it's getting to her, the fact that there's a real man in her trunk and those were real killers that she phoned and that this isn't exciting, it's mostly just bad. Maybe she was alright with it so far, but my bringing up the gun puts her over the edge because we don't know where it is and that's a piece of the crime still out there somewhere. But I'm starting to think about that other maybe. Like maybe Rita didn't think up this whole plan in an hour and a half. She says. she found the cop and figured he was worth something, but what if she had the idea first and then...went looking for a cop? While I'm thinkin about it, Rita keeps taking a hard look out the window.

RITA: For God's sake, it sure does get dark out there. It's like there's nothing.

NORA: I nod, because she's not really listening either way. But it's true, what she says. Stay up this late and you start to feel like you're all that's left in the world. Rita squints as a light suddenly passes across her face and we hear the sound of an engine

SFX: Car pul;ling up and stopping

NORA: and we get scared. We get savagely, ice-in-the-throat scared and we look at each other and we hear the car stop. "Who the Hell's out there?" Rita's half out of her chair and I'm all the way out of mine.

RITA: I made the calls twenty minutes ago, do you think that's enough time to- from the East side or the West side?

NORA: There's no chance. It'd be impossib-

SFX: [Sound of a knock at the door]

NORA: I'm looking at Rita. It's her play to make, whether that door opens or it doesn't. She's got a little bit of animal in her eyes and doesn't know what to do. But she finds a pose for herself, calm lips and sturdy shoulders, and she gets up

SFX: [Sound of Rita's heeled footsteps, then door opening

NORA: She walks over to the door. I'm looking over her shoulder, and when the door opens I can see a column of darkness and the face waiting in it.

JANE: Hello, may I come in? I can pay any...cover charge, my name is Jane Davison. I'm looking for my husband. He comes here some nights. He's a police officer and ah...well, he hasn't come home yet.

NORA: That's all she says. It's enough. And now she's waiting for us to say something. I look at her pale face, at the worried lines on her forehead. A killer would have been better than this.

RITA: Honey, come on in. Come on in. Husbands. No sense of time. Come in, come in.

SFX: Footsteps

JANE: Thank you, I- sometimes he stays out late and I'm home by myself. I've been up and down 15th and Jackson and- oh. Hello.

NORA: She's looking at me. She thinks it's rude not to say hello to me, she stops even though what she's saying is that her husband's missing. Guess I have to talk. "Mighty cold, isn't it?"

JANE: Yes, it's very. Oh here, let me-

RITA: I'll shut the door, Mrs. Davison. You go on and sit. Tell me what your husband looks like.

SFX: Door closes

JANE: Thank you. There's-there's other places I can look, I don't want you to think you're giving me the worst news if you haven't seen him. For a start, he's tall. Six foot two. He has brown...brown eyes, but I should have started with his hair first. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I've been doing this all night and I can't seem to breathe enough. Connor. Connor Davison, he would have come in about half past midnight. Or maybe a quarter after. Dark, thick hair, but he keeps it short. Is he here?

NORA: Rita puts a blanket over the shoulders of the Widow Davison

SFX: Blanket rustles

NORA: and then leans down to look her in the eyes. She's got her fingertips on Jane's knees.

RITA: Now honey, before I answer, I want you to say something to yourself: "He's all right." Men, especially after a long day's work, they always want their time. Men just want time, time to be alone, time to think. They think they'll die if they don't have it, it's their own little magic pill.

JANE: He's...he's all right. He's all right, ohhhh my head, I- he probably is. He's probably getting a cab for someone. They all go out together. That might be it. For all I know, he might be trying to call me.

NORA: She's got this way of holding her jaw and pushing her eyebrows together like she's always preparing a remark and making sure it's not a bad one. She's a clenched hand full of nothing and I can't look at her anymore. I know it doesn't make sense, but I've gotta at least know...that I can't smile at someone and do what I'm doing at the same time. That I can't look her in the face and lie to her the way Rita does.

RITA: Well, if he is trying to call you, just remember, before he did that, he was making you worry. Hey, look at that, I almost got half a smile. Sure, it'll be all right. Mrs. Davison- Jane- Nora and I saw your husband come through here about two hours ago. Didn't we Nora?

NORA: Yeah. Yeah, I saw him. Tall. Tall guy.

RITA: Your husband was in here two hours ago, Mrs. Davison. But we took one look at him and we didn't bother. Sure. We know a good man when we see one and we don't bother with them- there's no money in it.

SFX: [Sound of the phone suddenly ringing]

NORA: There's the phone, but neither of us wants to get it. Not in front of her. Even Rita feels bad.

RITA: Would you mind gettin' that, Nora?

NORA: I dunno, Rita. Am I on the clock?

RITA: Sure, Nora. You're on the clock.

SFX: Lifting receiver

NORA: I pick up the phone. "Hello?" I ask. Before I'm done asking the question, I find out it's Legenza, calling from the East side. He's spitting his words out at me, dumb and violent. I don't get any kind of cocky attitude because he's dumb. He's scarier because he's dumb. His voice is like an angry dog on the other side of a door. He tells me he wants the body. I say, "Where?" and he says an alley between West eighteenth and Ashland Avenue. Down that alley, I'll meet two men. One of them is going to hand me a coat with ten grand in the pockets. I say, "What time?" and he says be there by three or the whole thing's off. He says if I'm lying or if I try anything, it won't be with a bullet. It'll be with his hands. I say, "Yeah, I see what ya mean." and I slowly, slowly get the phone back on the receiver.

SFX: Replacing receiver

NORA: I sit on the edge of the desk for a second, trying to get rid of his voice. Jane's in the chair still, spilling her heart out to Rita.

JANE: But it hasn't been so bad, him working the night shift like this. It just...well I guess I never fully calm down. Nights and night and nights, not just this one. You can only get more and more uncomfortable for so long until you hit a place that there's no getting used to, and I...well, for instance, I used to pick at my nails too.

NORA: Jane points at me. She only just looked over after I hung up. "My what?"

JANE: Nails. Picking at your- I- I didn't mean anything by it, I just- I understand, I mean. That's all.

RITA: Nora, who was that on the phone?

NORA: That was Doreen. Her car's giving her trouble, so she...she needs a ride to the club. I'll drive out to the West side, pick her up.

JANE: I-I think I'd better be going, I've taken up enough of your time.

RITA: Oh honey, stay! Get your strength back.

JANE: No, no, it's better if I go. You've both been...well, I should be getting home. Thank you.

NORA: And that's it, she's out of words. She's on her feet. She folds the blanket that Rita put over her. Her eyes are down, like the whole world would fall apart if somebody talked to her. She gets out before anything collapses.

SFX:[Sound of a door closing]

NORA: And then it's just me and Rita, fighting off the shock.

RITA: Well you weren't much help.

NORA: Who could have helped you? You're a natural.



RITA: And then you mouth off to me. You're no help, and then you mouth off to me. What is it, I wonder, that makes you feel like you're so much? Get over it. We can't all be beggars with hearts of gold. You think I call Ralo and Legenza because I'm doing well?! I ain't got any money, and what I have got, I spend to make it look like I've got even more. That's the only way I stay around. I've got to look rich enough for people to give me money. That's all it is, lies to make people feel like they're moving up when they come here. You don't like it? You think it's a sin for me to have what I have? I barely kept what I have. You should have heard some of the lies I got told. Before this was Rita's. Before I knew it was all a lie and that nobody moved up. Everybody stole from me. Everybody took. Ten years ago, I would have told that woman where her husband was, but that was ten years ago. If I don't have any honesty it's cuz I ran out.

NORA: Rita stops talking so I can apologize, but the fact that she expects it sorta bothers me. I give her a look as if to say, "Yeah, what else?" and she reads it loud and clear.

RITA: What did Legenza say? Where's he want you to go?

NORA: Wants me to drive the buick out to west eighteenth and Ashland avenue. Says two guys are gonna be waiting in an alley. The money's in a coat. They'll hand it over and that'll be that. I'll toss the body and come back here.

RITA: All right. You better get going then.

NORA: Not yet. There's one more thing.

RITA: What?

NORA: Write me a check.

RITA: Nora, I said I'd give you two hundred dollars.

NORA: "Sure, you say you'll give me two hundred. As long as nothing's in writing, I'll give you a million tomorrow. Write me a check and sign it. Or you can find somebody else to taxi around your corpse." She bites me with her eyes for a long, long second and then walks over to her desk. While she digs around for her purse and a pen, I sit close by on the edge of the desk. I watch everything she writes.

SFX: Writing, then tearing out a check

RITA: Here's your check, now get out of here.

NORA: I take the check and read everything on it twice before putting it into my pocket. But I'm not done yet. "Sure, Rita, sure. Just one last thing."

RITA: Hey-Hey!

NORA: I grab her phone and rip it out of her wall and crack it down onto her floor.

SFX: [Sound of a rotary telephone being smashed]

RITA: You're-you're actually crazy! I thought you were just greedy or stupid, but you're actually crazy! What's the idea breaking my phone?

NORA: You think fast, Rita, but you think a little too fast. Sure, maybe everything works out for me tonight: I dump the body on the West side and drive back with a coat full of money. But maybe that doesn't happen. Maybe, while I'm gone, you get one of your ideas and then Legenza gets another phone call. Something about how only two people need to know what happened tonight. Something about how the police aren't gonna be happy with just a body, they might want a shady character to pin it on. Y'know, one of those "street people?"

RITA: You think I'd do that to one of my own girls?!

NORA: It's heads or tails whether you would. But face it, I'll have a cop who got plugged in my trunk, you're the only one who knows, and I don't trust you.

RITA: Nora, you idiot! I need that phone!

NORA: You'll get it fixed. I'll pay for it, too. Just as soon as you give me the money. Mama to cub!

SFX: [Sound of a door slamming]

NORA: I walk out the door and Rita's still hollering something about why she needs that phone. But I don't listen to it much. The first food I've had in two days kicks around my stomach like a rock in a dryer and I'm wincing when I get to the Buick.

SFX: [Sound of a car engine starting, driving]

NORA: Then I'm behind the headlights, covering road and listening to the rolling, rolling sound of tires on the asphalt. Stays that way for a long time. Couldn't tell you the minutes. Hard not to think about Jane, but what's even harder is not thinking about myself and how things have gotten this bad. In my mind I keep seeing the moment when I opened up the trunk, when the shadow on Connor Davison got lifted and the moonlight hit him. I think about it over and over again, Connor's body in white light. And when I see his body I hear Legenza's voice over the phone. I hear Legenza's voice coming out of Connor's body like a curse, telling me I'm gonna die. That it won't be a gun, it'll be hands. But if I play it right, in an hour, everything'll be over. All I have to do is drive this car without getting too nervous.

SFX: [Sound of rain beginning to fall, windshield wipers, and a car screeching out onto the road]

NORA: Two things start happening: rain starts to patter on the windshield and suddenly a car slides onto the road behind me. No matter how I squint, I can't see the driver. It's just somebody. Then I remember the second half of Rita's plan.

RITA: If only one calls and the other doesn't, I've gotta call the person who doesn't. I'll do that after you leave. Because if Ralo and Legenza think for one second we've been talking to both of them, we're dead.

NORA: Somebody's behind me and when I get scared thinking about who that somebody is I slow down and somebody slows down too. It might be Ralo in that car behind me. I'm driving on his side of town. I take a turn and he follows me. The rain's hitting a lot harder now and I see a red light up ahead. Under the red dot of it, in the splash of my headlights I see someone standing on the corner. Waiting for me. All I can see is that they're holding a bag and I'm gonna be stopping right next to them. I roll to a stop.

SFX: [Sound of brakes whining and an engine running]

NORA: That car behind me is creeping up. This light won't turn. On and on, for no reason, it stays red. The waiting ages me like liquor and labor. Who I keep my eye on is a tough question, but I settle on the motorist. I keep my foot light so if they pull up alongside me I can switch to the gas and blow out. And then there's a tap at my window.

SFX:[Sound of tapping on a car window]

TESSY: Can I get a ride?

NORA: I can't take anymore knocking on doors. It's gonna kill me. She must have come up to the window while I was looking at- it doesn't matter how she got there. She's there now. She's blonde and she looks like she left in a hurry. I don't know where she came from, but it's gotta be better than inside this car.

TESSY: Can I get a ride? I'm in trouble. Hey. Hey, please.

NORA: I can't even get out of my own trouble. I'm thinking I don't want to involve this kid, but then the car behind me starts backing up, what for, I don't know. Maybe to pass me or maybe to put one through my window. And if that's the case, the only thing that might scare 'em away is a witness. I tell the blonde, "Hurry up and get in!" and the light turns green and she crosses in front of my Buick and that shark of a car passes us.

SFX: Car driving past

NORA: It makes a left turn and goes back to wherever strangers go at two in the morning.

SFX: [Sound of car door opening and closing]

TESSY: Sister, you're an angel! I been waitin' in that goop for twenty minutes. Hey, you don't mind if I put my bag in the back, do you? I had to plop all my beauty secrets and a toothbrush in it. Some night, huh? Boy, it feels good to be outta that mess. It's awfully nice of you to lend a hand like this. I mean, really.

NORA: She heaves her bag through the seats and jams a hand through her hair. Her voice has a lot of laugh in it. She smiles at me like...well, like she doesn't know what's in my trunk. Like we're just two regular girls. I get my tires rolling again and we're passing over the dark streets. "Where you headed tonight?"

TESSY: (Laughs) The hills. Me and my man are on the outs. Officially. Not that we were havin' no honeymoon up to now, but that bum sure got creative tonight. Oh here I go, complaining before I tell you my name. Tessy! Tessy James when I'm onstage, but it's really Dabrowski. Gosh. Big car. Hey, you're really an angel for picking me up. Thanks for this. What's your name, hon?

NORA: It's Nora. Welcome to the car. I'm not, uh...I'm not much for introductions.

TESSY: "Not much for introductions," huh? How do ya stay that way in America?

NORA: No one's ever been this happy to see me before. But it's good to have some company. Creepy out here.

TESSY: Boy don't I know it. Pleased to meetcha, Nora. Whew, I got a bad conversation stuck in my head that I need to get out. You got a man, Nora?

NORA: Nah.

TESSY: You live alone?

NORA: Just me and the noises.

TESSY: Well you picked the right way of living. I sure fell in with a real prince. You could tell him the sky was blue and he'd still find a way to convince you you're an idiot. He's a genius at makin' people feel stupid. No reason for it either. So there we are, home alone with our shoes off and he gets a phone call in the middle of the night, so what do I do? I ask him "who's that on the other end of the phone, makin' calls after midnight?" I don't even bring up the fact that it sounds like a woman, because I know how bad he can get. And then he screams at me, y'know? He screams at me! I mean, I'm practically worried for the guy, he's so upset. And so I ask him, "hey, what are ya gettin sore about?" So now I'm screamin' back and he's screamin' back more and it's a scene. Worst things we've ever said. And I'm feelin like I know what needs to happen and that's when I tell it to him. I tell him, "Legenza, that's it." Then I pack up and he don't even notice. Some romance.

NORA: My knuckles creep back. That name hits me so hard and gets me so worried I almost laugh about it. Before I can even say the name "Legenza," I have to shape up my voice a little. "This...Legenza character, is he pretty nasty?"

TESSY: Heh. Only when he's awake.

NORA: I'm starting to think that I'm glad I picked her up for her own sake and that's when we hear a hot, high sound rattling up the road behind us. White lights blast the back of our windshield.

SFX: [Sound of an angry car engine zooming close by and then driving away]

NORA: A car charges past us, turning my vision white and punching me in my left ear. It shakes me up so much that my hood and my front tires go skating. We almost lose the road. I get the machine back between the lines where it should be, but I'm jumpy. I'm in a bad way.

TESSY: Jim-i-ny! Buncha maniacs out on the road tonight. Thanks for the heart attack, buddy boy! Hey- hey Nora, are you all right?

NORA: I don't say anything back to Tessy. I've got one hand in my face and my fingers digging into my hair

TESSY: Nora?

SFX: [Sound of a car pulling sharply to a stop]

NORA: I can't take it anymore. I pull over to the side of the road. I put the Buick in park and Tessy and I both rock forward a little. I'm not proud to say it, I just start to cry. And there's lots of it.

SFX: [Sound of Nora crying angrily into her hand]

TESSY: Hey...hey, hey, Nora, it's-it's all right.

NORA: Kid...you gotta get out of this car. Right now.

TESSY: How come?

NORA: ...because it's not going anywhere good.

SFX: [Sound of rain hitting the windows]

NORA: She just stares at me. But for all I care, I may as well be alone. I'm tired of feeling like this. Like something that's too dirty to clean. I thought maybe tonight, with one crazy sprint, I could get out of it. If I could just pretend that nothing bothered me for a little while longer, I could get it all over with and be all right. But I think I'm done pretending this is gonna have a happy ending. Whether Ralo gets me or Legenza gets me or the police get me, I'm ready to call it a night. Tessy shouldn't have to be around for it, though.

TESSY: I ain't really ever been anywhere good, Nora. And it's rainin' out tonight. And if it's all right with you, I'd like to stay in the car.

NORA: "Okay, kid. Okay." And then we drive.

SFX: Car driving

NORA: Maybe I'm glad she didn't leave or maybe I'm just feeling a little untangled since I got a few tears out, but for some reason it's easier to go on. Everything isn't as hard as it was before. The car feels like it runs better.

TESSY: Hey, I gotta ask you somethin'. You live alone, so I know it ain't heartbreak- why are you driving around this late at night?

NORA: Would you take it personally if I lied to you?

TESSY: I would, Nora. I takes lies pretty personally.

NORA: Then I won't lie to you, Tessy. Mind your own business.

TESSY: Y'know something, Nora? You're my kind of party. I'm gonna be sorry when this ride's over. You got a radio in this thing?

NORA: I smile at her. "Sure kid. Play whatever you want."

SFX: [Sound of radio being turned on, stations changing, then jazz. Upbeat

NORA: We drive for about ten more minutes. The music keeps me from worrying and I don't see anymore headlights behind us. I stop the Buick when I see we're coming up on west eighteenth and Ashland avenue and I turn the radio down. All I can see is a dark alley.

SFX: [Sound of jazz drops]

NORA: "Stay here for a few minutes, I'll be right back." I say as I put my hand on the door. I'm not looking at Tessy, but she asks me:

TESSY: Where are we? Is this West eighteenth and Ashland?

NORA: Yep.

TESSY: That's what I thought.

NORA: Then I'm looking out my window but I never get the car door open. On both sides of my neck, I feel four little fingers slip down and then meet in the middle. They push in and my neck gets yanked back and most of my upper body goes with it. It's Tessy. She's choking me, she's choking the life out of me.

SFX: [Sound of stations switching and the radio volume going up and down]

NORA: My body drags across the radio knobs and it's loud and all I can see is the roof of the Buick. And then I feel Tessy's lips inside my ear.

TESSY: Did you really think he'd give you ten grand, you little freeloader?

SFX: [Sound of Nora coughing]

TESSY: Callin' up my man in the middle of the night. You think you can just blackmail him and get away with it?

NORA: Hands. He said it wouldn't be with a bullet, it would be with his hands. I'm squirming, but she's really got a grip on me. I can't really see anymore. Everything's hot, from my throat to my eyes.

TESSY: So he says to me, "Tessy James, baby, I'm gonna drop you off on the West side and you're gonna do a little hitchhiking. Baby, it'll work. Tell 'em a story. Make it sad, he says. If they don't let you in or they try to get you out of the car, make it sad. A screwup loves a screwup." He told me the plan and I was happy to do it because that's what you get for calling my man in the middle of the night, makin' him worry. Stealing his money. Yeah, I was happy to do it. And I'm happy to do this. Because I love him.

NORA: I guess I'm dying for somebody else's love story. Yeah. Sure. That fits. But I'll tell you a back alley fact about anyone trying to choke you from behind: They're not doing anything to protect their nose. It might not sound like much, but that little thing is a piggy bank full of blood. I put both feet up on the driver side door. I bend my knees to give my skull some action and I close my eyes and give it my all.

SFX: [Sound of a harsh impact]

NORA: Tessy's hands go flying off me and I can breathe again. She hits the window hard behind her. I can't turn around to get a look at her yet, but she felt that. Not just the pain either- I surprised her. She's rattled, she's not the killer anymore. In fact, I can tell by the sound of the car door opening she's had enough.

SFX:[Sound of a car door opening, the clearer sound of rain and footsteps in high heels]

NORA: She's running. She's made it out onto the road. I get my vision back and through the open door, I watch as the back of her dress passes under the blaze of the street lamps. White light. Tessy never leaves that white light, because up ahead of her, somebody steps out from behind one of the lamps and then-

SFX: [Sound of a revolver being fired]

NORA: Tessy doesn't run anymore. I crawl over the car seat to get a closer look, too curious and with too much blood rushing to think about how dangerous it is. I just want to know who fired that shot.

SFX: [ footsteps]

NORA: Jane Davison steps into the light with Tessy before she dies.

TESSY: H-hey girly...whadja have to go and do that for? (Dies)

NORA: Jane's just standing there in the rain. Little powder clouds from the revolver are floating past her shoulder. She doesn't look real. She doesn't look like...the same woman I saw back at Rita's. It's like two different photographs and this one's clearer. I don't try to step out of the Buick quietly, I know she knows I'm there. She's still lookin' at Tessy and then she says:

JANE: I thought she was you.

NORA: It doesn't scare me when she says that. I don't know why. She's still got the revolver, she could use it any second. But I'm not scared.

JANE: I've been following you since you left the nightclub. I almost changed my mind when I saw you picked up a hitchhiker, but then I thought, "No, no...it has to be done this way."

NORA: I look at the revolver in Jane's hand. "Why did you murder your husband?" She looks me right in the eyes and takes out a white handkerchief and starts wiping down the handle.

JANE: I didn't murder my husband.

NORA: She tells me. Then she kneels down, handkerchief over the barrel as she grabs it, and puts the revolver into Tessy's hand.

JANE: She did.

NORA: You thought you could pin it on me. You followed me from Rita's because you thought you could pin it on me. Why?

JANE: I was just looking...for someone who looked desperate. At first I was just asking about Conor to have an alibi, so the whole town could say where I was and think I was worried and that the marriage was happy, but then it occurred to me that I still had the gun and that I could frame someone. And I thought, I'll frame someone who looks desperate. And then I saw your fingernails back at the nightclub, and I thought, "Her. That's someone that the judge won't have time for."

NORA: I look down at my nails. On top of the fact that they're ripped up and half gone, they're starting to shake.

JANE: But that's all changed now. Now it's got to be...her. A different stranger than the one I picked.

NORA: "The judge won't have time for her either." I tell Jane. "That's Legenza's girl. They'll look at the gun and both bullets from it and they won't ask too many questions." Then Jane looks at the revolver for a long, long time.

JANE: Do you want to know what he did?

NORA: I nod my head yes.

JANE: He threatened to kill me. They don't lock a man up for threatening, the police can only do something after he kills his wife. There's...so many women who tried to go to the police. I read about them in those awful murder files Connor used to bring home. These women, they tried to leave, they knew their husbands were going to kill them, and in the file it says, "he'd said it before, he'd said it plenty of times, his friends had heard him say it," and then one night it happens. And then they're gone. Not even around anymore, no sign of them. Just...words in their family's prayers. And I wasn't gonna let that happen to me. I couldn't tell you what we were fighting about, he hadn't even been home for more than an hour, but he couldn't stand the sight of me and I tried to talk to him and that's when he said, "If you ask me one more question, Jane, I'm gonna kill you." I couldn't speak. I couldn't think of an answer, I couldn't think of what to say back. Then I waited for him to go to Rita's tonight- He's always drunk when he leaves Rita's. And I got close enough to take his revolver and I aimed it at his heart and said, "No you won't," and that's when I shot him. He told me he was going to kill me and that's when I realized: I'm not done yet. I want to be alive! (laughing) I know that sounds insane. But I want to wake up and be here and have a big plate of eggs for breakfast and I'm...I'm...I'm not done yet.

NORA: Jane decides that's all she has to say. She comes back from trying to put it into words and just looks at me.

JANE: If you feel you have to tell the police, go ahead. I won't try to stop you or hurt you. I can't. That's all out of me now, I'm...I'm done.

NORA: I walk up to Jane, and when I'm sure it won't frighten her, I reach down and hold her hand. "Jane, I'm not gonna tell anyone." I promise her. Jane's hand is soft and white. Next to mine, it looks like a poodle sitting next to a rat but she still holds on.

JANE: I don't know what I'm going to do now.

NORA: She says that, and I think to myself: It's the funniest thing. Ten minutes ago, that was me. No idea what to do or what might happen next. Now, for no reason at all, I know exactly what I'm gonna do and how I'm gonna do it. "Jane, close your eyes. Help me drag Tessa to the trunk of my car, we're gonna throw her in with your husband. Then we're gonna drop 'em both off on Legenza's part of town."

JANE: Why?

NORA: Because Legenza tried to kill me tonight, so I'm gonna have to set his world on fire.

JANE: That's...that's going to get a lot of blood all over your car.

NORA: Doesn't matter.

JANE: Why?

NORA: Because we're gonna leave the Buick at Rita's.

SFX: [Sound of TESSY'S body being dragged and loaded into the trunk

NORA: You follow me in your car, I'll come home with you, and then in the morning I'll cash Rita's check for two hundred dollars.

JANE: And then what?



SFX: [Sound of the Buick trunk being slammed shut]

NORA: "And then you and me are gonna have a plate full of eggs." Jane's eyes, they get kind of shiny and bottomless when I say that. And then she nods and she goes back to her car and we make it all happen. Conor and Tessy get found on an intersection in the East side. Once the news about that gets out, the police and Legenza's operation take turns gutting each other. It's war.

SFX: Distant sounds of sirens, machine gun fire and revolver fire

NORA: There's not enough bribe money in the world to keep the cops out, with one of their own dead. And Legenza wouldn't pay it anyway, not after they killed his girl. Both sides lose people and they scorch the Earth, but in the end, cops always have more friends and less consequences. Legenza ends up with chalk around him and Ralo takes over the whole town. We ditch the Buick just like we planned and we don't look back. Rita never gets any of her money, but I guess that's show business. And Janey and I- she likes it when I call her Janey-well, between Rita's check and Connor's pension, Janey and I have enough money to get out of town. We get set up in a little house near Lincolnwood. She puts bandages on my fingertips and makes sure I eat three meals a day. We're not starving, we're not alone, we're not looking over our shoulders. And when the sun comes down, the two of us usually go to sleep

SFX: City street sounds fade as sad saxophone music plays, then fades out.

Andrew

Thank you for listening to That Time of Night, here on The Half Hour Audio Hour. Next up is a brief interview we conducted with Luke Brett after the recording of this show.

Andrew

So Luke I want to say thank you not just for doing this interview but also for letting eclectic full contact theater. Be part of your script that time of night. We really do appreciate it.

Luke

Oh thank you I am I'm I'm just so over the moon that that time of night is getting a performance because um, it had been it had been a little while since I'd written it and I was like oh I love that play. But oh, well you know i. That's where I was so I was really really happy. Um, when I heard that it'd be part of the half hour audio hour.

Andrew

Excellent. So so tell me how long have you been writing.

Luke

Um, writing since childhood. But ah I'd say about about 10 years of making myself do it because I'm ah 10 years out of college out of as of this spring and so it's 10 years of doing it. You know, sort of, not in a vacuum but you know doing it. Um, when no one else is really making me except for me so I'll say 10 years of that.

Andrew

that is one of the hardest things to get used to is like I don't have a deadline now I don't have I don't I don't have ah I don't have a class. Um.

Luke

Yeah, no, no one's watching you be as lazy as you want when no one's watching. It's really it said it's a lot of temptation.

Andrew

yeah so what inspired that time of night.

Luke

I think one of the first things that inspired it was when I watched double indemnity I had never seen that movie before even though I really love film noir movies and that's you know? ah. It's it's considered one of the best and I was fascinated by the fact that Edward G Robinson's character, he doesn't fit into a stock character type when it comes to film noir movies. He's not He's not the detective. He's not the henchman, he's not the heavy, he is just this person who's in a very Twisty Noir plot and ah in my mind it made him the most interesting character in the mix. And and so I thought like well it'd be It'd be great to write a script where we have for people who because they are not stock characters. They are. They're unpredictable in terms of the story logic. You know there's not that voice in the audience's head going like well this is probably going to happen because they're the femme fatale or you know this is probably going to happen because they are the sweetheart or whatever So double indemnity made me want to write something where you weren't exactly familiar with Everyone's character type.

Andrew

And I have to say that's one of the things that I found very interesting when when we read the script is that it did just give off this these huge noir vibes it I was like I'm watching a black and white movie. This is awesome. But exactly as you said it's like there's no character here that I was expecting to see In a noir film or that you could as you said just sort of oh you're gonna go in here and so this is obviously the things that you are going to do

Luke

I'm just happy to hear you mention the vibes because that is so what I was um, going for you know, not just in terms of putting these putting these characters who are Untyped or outside of type in a noir plot but also in that ,that atmosphere of it's a nightclub. It's between 2 am and 3 am so everyone you come across from 2 am to 3 am like that's a much more loaded. Ah, thing. There's a lot of that ah kind of dangerous noir energy. So I'm really happy to hear that there was a strong film noir black and white movie vibe.

Andrew

Oh Absolutely absolutely and the... the dialogue just also just screamed noir. It was like yeah they're not.. They're not necessarily archetypes. But I'm like they're. They're talking exactly the way that you expect them to and that is awesome.

Luke

Oh thank you so much. That's all I I think that patter, the way that just that kind of like blunt vivid language of film Noir I've always loved it because when I um when I was young when I was a kid, The first things that I started reading were you know the literary classics and so I really loved floral descriptive, long-winded passages and a lot of language thrown in and then when I started reading like Dashlell Hammet, he would give you he would give you the full portrait of a new character in 6 words and it just you know he's just he's just described them. You know exactly what they look like and it was it was like a magic trick to me and so I've always loved that. Ah, that kind of brief Noir style dialogue.

Andrew

Yeah, it. It does have a very recognizable rhythm and tempo to it where if they're not hitting it. You're like I know that we're supposed to believe you're in a noir Story but um, it's not sounding right.

Luke

Yeah, it's it's it's tough and that's something that I've also um, just thought as I write scripts that are similar to that time of night you know, just if anyone ever has Questions because sometimes you watch those old movies and you're like wow they have amazing elocution because Humphrey Bogart is it's like so fast I have no idea how he does it. But it's so fast.

Andrew

Oh and so fast. It's like you've got you've you've got a 3 hour movie in 90 minutes because everybody's talking talking so fast.

Luke

Um, yeah.

Andrew

And yet there's still enough time for a lot of long meaningful stares through through shadows I Also like the fact that a lot of noir stuff there.... A lot of people are sort of like you know, working class or lower class and yet they still have amazing vocabularies. It's I Love it.

Luke

Yes there's um I I can't remember where I I heard it but I was listening to someone talk about film noir and they they mentioned an element that I'd never thought of before but it's um, it's you know people who have rough lives and they are in grimy settings and yet they are describing everything lyrically like you are in this kind of everyday worn down place but it's being described to you by metaphor and um, you know like some pretty intense Emotion even though our noir characters are considered to be tough jaded. Whatever you you get some serious yearning in those movies when somebody finally does sort of you know, break down or snap or or whatever.

Andrew

Yeah, it's its own kind of poetry and I've always found that very fun about that genre is it's. As you said it is. It's Blunt. It's spare and yet it can also have that lyrical poetic quality to it. So was this originally written to be done as an audio play.

Luke

Ah, yes, yes, it was.

Andrew

Excellent. So What is it about writing for audio that you enjoy.

Luke

well I think um, actually a ah big part of it has to do with with loving ah noir stories because um it was you know it. It. Came about through necessity that I wrote my first audio script and I wrote it for um, the Ohio shakespeare festival they did a broadcast of a script of mine. They reached out to me and they said you know could you adapt something that is Considered a classic and in the public domain and and that was ah a fun thing to sort of do research for because I was okay well what is in the public domain and I you know I found some like hg well stories I found um some stories that were written by, Ah, the author who created Zorro, but then I came across ah it was written in the 20 s and it's called the False Burton Combs and it is regarded by some scholars as the first hard-boiled detective story and I was like oh I want to I want to adapt that because I just I just like.

Andrew

Oh wow.

Luke

I love those stories so much and I will say not to um, you know, not not to derogate the original author. But um, it definitely reads like a first story of the genre. It's very ah in terms of the mystery. It's very Scooby-doo you know the detective Sees a guy and he sees a guy and thinks that guy is kind of shady and that's the guy who turns that's the guy who turns out to be um, the perpetrator so it ah it definitely read like an early entry, but as I as I was writing it I realized that it was it was extra fun to write a noir as an audio drama because the the language and the music Puts the audience exactly in the imagery of the story Once you hear that kind of dialogue and you hear that kind of music, even if you know even if you're not a fan of Noir It's just it's such an iconic style that you're like oh I get when and where I am you know whether or not you sprinkle in that you know? well it's 19 such and such um, that kind of dialogue and that kind of music and atmosphere. It's just it's really magic and so it it seemed like a perfect fit for audio drama and so that was the first Detective radio script that I wrote.

And then um I went on to ah write a ah few more others um up in excuse me up in Cleveland we did the the borderlight fringe festival and that was ah through radio on the lake theater. We did a fringe performance where I'd written a two-person detective story called the shadow of the clock and we we performed it live in front of a blindfolded audience and that was a lot of fun because we we ah we had. We. We had it all. We had a standup bass for the beginning of the of the play and you know about the same length as that time of night because that also stayed with me I was like you know for for audio drama 20 pages of script feels Absolutely right because um I I think that's more fair to the audience because if you're presenting a mystery you are asking for a little extra attention you know and um. You know I I just personally don't want to keep people on their toes for that long and so I feel like you also get more attention when you let people know that you're only going to have to be ah, picking out clues and analyzing them for about. 20 minutes and so that makes people you know, put their game face on and they listen to dialogue. So if someone's like well I was trimming the hedge at four o'clock and oh were you? you know and in ah in a normal genre. They wouldn't remember that anyone had a hedge but it makes ah, Because you're asking people to kind of zoom in on your on your story and your dialogue so much for for audio drama anyway I think it's you know 2020 pages which usually shakes out to about 30 minutes it's It's just kind of the perfect amount of time.

Andrew

Absolutely. I loved basically just how the whole arc of that time of night went and and I have to have to say I've read a lot of mystery. And ah and and stuff and even I didn't fully see the end coming. You got me with the double twist.

Luke

Oh okay, that know that I'm I'm really happy to hear that because I um well I.

Andrew

You you? yeah you you got me with you got me with the double twist I I kind of I kind of picked up on the first one and I was like okay and then all of a sudden wham I'm like oh okay, then are all right. Because because you also had me looking in a completely different direction because you had that wonderful line and as we said it before this interview. There are no spoilers in this in this interview because everyone's already heard the the script but you had me you had me going With—at the very top with the line where you you had her say Rita had gotten rid of the old rug and there was a new rug in her office and I would I went. Oh.

Luke

Um, oh yeah.

Andrew

Because Rita had killed him in the office and the rug was bloodstained so she got rid of the thick which you doubled down on when you were like maybe she had the idea and then went and looking for a cop.

Luke

Yeah.

Andrew

And I'm like oh okay, it's going to turn into Rita and then all of a sudden it went this other way and I'm like oh that's where it's going now and then the and then the double twist at the end I went poor Rita. Poor Rita

Luke

Yeah, for Rita? Um I I think my my I'm so glad that you um because I I was worried I really loved um when when the script was just sort of vague ideas I know that one of the things that I knew was going to happen is. Ah, you know you know Rita and and Nora are they're strategizing about like okay when the phone rings like it's either It's either. You know it's either this guy or this guy and um I knew I that's when I wanted Jane to knock on the door and have it be this horrible. You know like oh no like oh god. Oh god no the widow's here. Um, and ah like I I one of my I don't know I I love this script so much. But I think one of my one of the things that it it just makes me happy is that no one. You know, speaking of characters being outside type. No one is really trying to solve this murder. Nora just very casually is like oh so that so the murder weapon is just that's just out there somewhere and Rita is kind of like. What's wrong with you? like why do you care We're like why? why? Why do you care where the murder weapon is like we're trying to get rich quick like focus. Um and it was ah so i'm.

Andrew

Nothing. This it is. It is true. Nobody can nobody really cares. Why this dude was killed or how it was just like I found a dead cop I threw him in a trunk.

Luke

Yeah, it's ah yeah, and it was um, it was fun to to play with that because I know ah in in college One of the things that I was told as as an actor is you know if you are ever In a position where you've got to you know quickly make a cross backstage or whatever, make yourself as uninteresting as possible because it is human nature to focus on something you know you're not supposed to see. so you know when you're when you're Making a backstage cross between curtains really make yourself uninteresting and so it was fun to sort of write a mystery where as audience members we we totally know that the truth is going to come out right? like it would be so unsatisfying if we. Never found out who who shot this man but the characters are they are somewhere else entirely. Everyone's got their own thing going on and they're just trying to to get through it. But I'm just so glad that there was a double twist because I thought like I you know I think everyone writing a mystery is thinking like well they might have seen this coming but hopefully they don't see this coming like you know, hopefully hope hopefully nobody saw Tessie coming and was like oh she... because if I ask my friends once this goes live. They're like oh we knew we knew Tessie was was the gangsters girlfriend I'll be like man!

Andrew

Yeah, well well I mean the really nice. The really nice thing is that you you at at 1 point just have hers admit it even before even before she does anything. It's just like, So I was saying to him I said Leganza why you so upset? and I went oh and I'm just like this is I I was I was already I was already hooked by the whole Rita Nora Thing to begin with and then when when this person got thrown in. Well also you're like every character especially in something like this.

They're there for a reason we know they're there for a reason. So so Tessie can't just be this like you know, poor, Poor girl stuck on the side of the road I mean she's there for a reason I'm not sure what it is yet. But but yeah, the very ending of it I was just like Nope wasn't there did not see that coming that was not where I thought this was going to go so congratulations I.

Luke

no, it's wonderful to hear all this because like I was saying I you know this is a script that I finished um I think around 2021 or 2022 and then ah it, You know it it just sort of stayed as a file. So it's wonderful to to talk to someone who's you know, read it experienced it and you know just hear the reaction to these these twists I felt very mean writing some of the more friendly dialogue between Nora and Tessie because it's like because it's like the um you know I was just like oh man in a different play like these two could ah they go I could have been friends. Not this play...

Andrew

No, it's noir. Nobody's got any friends..

Luke

Um, yeah, no, nobody's nobody's got any friends.

Andrew

But yeah I I really I really did enjoy it. So do you have any Upcoming projects that you'd like to promote.

Luke

Ah, yes in in early April—April Fourth in Cleveland there will be a public workshopping of two scenes from a play that I wrote ah very very different in style. This was something that I wrote for the american Shakespeare centers Shakespeare's new contemporaries project I wrote it in. 2018 submitted it that year resubmitted it in 2019 and it became a finalist in that year and it is it is a comedy written in full iambic pentameter and it is about what the character ah what the character Jack Falstaff was like as a teenager and it is a zany messy. Um, it's it's. It's it's very screwball people are doing spit takes people are crashing through walls. Um, and and so it's it's called riot and dishonor which is um, that's a line from ah Henry the fourth part one the the king who is who you know the

The prince is hanging out with Jack Falstaff and everyone knows that's a bad idea. He's a poor influence and in Henry the fourth part one King Henry is talking about how Henry Hotspur is this. You know this model british soldier and citizen and he says I see riot and dishonor stain my... and I was like oh that's what I'll call the play about Falstaff because you know he Ah so we're presenting some some scenes from that and ah like I said that's a very totally different style of play. It's this very Merry. Ah. You know it's iambic pentameter and it is a total comedy but there's also a lot of focus in the poetry on what it means to not not be a kid per se but the ability to be a kid with somebody else and to be, You know silly and as you are and and so

very different from that time of night which has ah you know that time of night I guess another goal that I had for it was that I wanted all 4 characters to almost Be um, equally desperate in their situations. So it's in you know it's an intense It's an intense play because Nora like Nora needs the money she needs food. She's really going through it and and like I think. You know, maybe the only kind of comfortable character is Rita but she's you know she kind of she kind of can't stand her life. Um, she you know she spends all of her money trying to make it look like she has money. Um.

Andrew

I mean there's a desperation to her as as well. I mean some of it is brought on by herself by coming up with this idea of trying to play both sides against the middle. But I mean she does

have the other thing is she does have a dead cop on her premises I mean that's not that's not something she wants anywhere near her either. So I mean it's it I absolutely see That in that play. Every single one of them is desperate which is ah ah a recurring theme in War on ah on a regular basis for for everybody. It's all about people Being in really bad situations and in a lot of cases making the worst possible choice because of it. you know and if you had and if you had more doors that would be a farce ah Because Farce is really just people making the worst possible choice over and over again.

Luke

Oh yeah, no one in a farce ever says we'll just leave and come back later. Why don't you why don't we just try to do this Thursday when less stuff is going on.

Andrew

Well, this riot and dishonor sounds. Absolutely. Hilarious I Love that that idea look you put a spit take in anything you've already got me So because we've been talking so so much about ah about Noir and the the genre and all of that. Um, this is of course the most important question of the entire interview which is so what Noir film book or character is your favorite.

Luke

I think for me the probably what kicked off my like early interest in it was ah ah the character of he's unnamed. Um, he's in Dashiell Hammett's novels. He's in 2 I think there's one called the red harvest. And then I think it might be called the danish curse but that don't quote me on that but he... the detective is never named and Dashiell Hammett just refers to him as the continental op. He's just an operative. Um, he's just. Only referred to as the op and he um red harvest was the first detective book that I read and it is incredible. It. It has all of that ah snappy description all of that punchy language. But what I really like about it is that It shows the detective doing a lot of detecting. He is picking up on things, he is you know, he not only has the the personality of the character type but he's constantly ah doing things that you as the reader just wouldn't think to do and I know that Dashiell Hammett was a private detective I think he might have actually worked for the Pinkerton agency ah before he started writing these novels and so there are just little offhand things that make you just sort of like appreciate how strange of a lifestyle it is. I think more than once in the book the continental op has been. He's been awake for like a long long time and he doesn't have time to go to sleep because he's got to investigate something first thing in the morning so he just casually talks about just um, filling a bathtub with ice water and just sitting in ice water for for like for like 5 minutes and then you know and and it's you know in that kind of casual Bogart way of like didn't have time for a sleep. So I just filled a bathtub with ice water and sat in it and it didn't work as well as I wanted it to and then I get you know he? um and it has yeah as as you do, um so he that that kind of nameless character was ah.

Andrew

And as you do.

Luke

Very interesting and and a big influence because of course I wanted to I think I read that novel when I was oh I don't know like an upper classman in high school and I was ah you know one blown away that you could describe something effectively and quickly. I'd never read anything like that before and then to just the um you know, just like you were saying just just the vibe. The atmosphere of this of this genre. It just really got me hooked.

Andrew

That's awesome I Love that whole thing is just like yeah of course I filled a bathtub with ice water. What else was I gonna do? I'm like doesn't everyone do that and and and I think that's

what As you said,—what's really great about it is. It's just sort of like there was really no other choice and everybody kind of reading it or watching it is like what?.

Luke

Um, yeah, he's yeah, there's the yeah like what you're just going to um, do that Oh god.

Andrew

Yeah so well. Luke I want to say once again. Thank you so much. This has been absolutely wonderful. Ah, we really do appreciate getting a chance to be part of. That time of night. Thank you so much for allowing us to be part of it and on behalf of myself and everyone at EFCT we are very very grateful.

Luke

Well thank you again I'm just so so happy that ah that you know this this play is getting its first performance ever and so thank you and thanks everyone who gave it a listen.

Andrew

We hope you enjoyed That Time of Night. Next month, we will be presenting Felicity, by Dylan Malloy, And don't forget to head over to [eclectic-theatre.com](http://eclectic-theatre.com) to find out about all our other shows and projects.

On behalf of myself and everyone here at EFCT, thanks for listening