



**Sample Pages from
Look Me in the Eye**

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LOOK ME IN THE EYE

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Look Me in the Eye

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Characters

2M+3W+2 Either

Vio: Male, late teens.
Hyper and brash, full of testosterone.

Fea: Male, early teens.
Mousy, always nervous, never comfortable.

Rea: Female, mid teens. Introspective and quiet.

Rul: Female, mid teens. Overbearing.

Tor: Female, late teens. Fearless and sarcastic.

Offence Officer Flint: Male, indeterminate age. Grey hair.

Offence Officer Ash: Female, indeterminate age. Grey hair.

Setting

A sparse observation room. A few chairs. A platform at the back.

Time Period

The future.

Author's Note

This play deals with a grim subject. However, the playing of the subject should not be grim. For most of these characters, this world is an everyday reality. There is nothing special or horrific about the acts they are witnessing. If the actors play up the tragedy, they risk foreshadowing the end.

Five characters stand at the front of the stage. There are two guys: VIO and FEA. There are three girls: REA, RUL and TOR. They are in their own homes preparing to go out.

RUL is looking at herself in the mirror. She is fixing her hair and putting on lipstick. She hums a tune and examines her face.

RUL: Very nice. Very nice. Where is she? (*calling out*) Mom I'm going to be late. I never should have let her iron my blouse. It's so archaic. (*calling out*) Mom! What's taking so long? (*to herself*) Maybe I shouldn't wear the red anyway. This looks nice. Very nice. Very professional. (*calling out*) Mom never mind about the blouse. I'm going to stick with the sweater set. I'm going to stick with the sweater set! I don't want the blouse! I don't – Never mind. (*to herself*) The sweater's fine. I don't know what she's talking about. I know what I should or shouldn't wear. (*she smooths her hair*) Thank goodness I got my hair cut last week. Never know who's watching. (*she looks at her watch*) Sugar shoot I'm going to be late. (*she runs off*)

VIO is on the other side of the stage. He is answering questions.

VIO: I haven't seen him. I haven't seen him. My parents told me he was overseas. That's all I know. (*he looks at his watch*) I'm going to be late for my observation. I haven't seen him. Not for two years, not since he graduated. I'll get in trouble if I'm late. They don't like it if you're late. Can I go? (*he runs off*)

REA: Mom? Dad? I'm going.

FEA: The observation is a necessary element of my education.

REA: (*looking at herself in the mirror*) This is stupid. It's just the same as every other year. (*she rubs her face in her hands*)

TOR: Mom? I gotta go.

FEA: The observation is a necessary element of my education.

REA: It's just the same. (*calling out*) Mom, did you hear me?

TOR: I have to go. I'll get in trouble if I don't show up. I can't do that yet.

TOR & FEA & REA: (*each with their own separate reaction*) The observation is a necessary element of my education.

FEA: *(to himself)* Stop shaking!

TOR: I'll be fine. I love you mom. *(she exits)*

REA: *(looking at herself in the mirror)* It's just the same. *(she spits at herself in the mirror and exits)*

FEA: I'm gonna be late! *(he exits)*

The lights change. Two OFFENCE OFFICERS come to stand in their own light. Perhaps they wear long robes and are masked. If their hair is visible, it must be grey.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Assembly 186432 is now in session.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Offence Officers Flint and Ash presiding.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Regarding Groups 4673 to 4676.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: We command that the complicit stand forward.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Proof has been presented.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Offence has been committed.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Charges will be brought.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Group number 4673, crime of infraction.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Group number 4674, crime of commission.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Group number 4675, crime of conspiracy.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Group number 4676, crime of mayhem.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: The matter has been decided.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Accusation has been entered.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Indictment has been entered.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Judgement has been entered.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Execution of judgement will be immediate.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: All complicit will be sent to the Centre for Deterrence.

There is the sound of a gavel hitting the desk.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Next. Regarding Groups 4677 to 4681.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: We command that the complicit stand forward...

The lights change. The five characters enter to stand on the lip of the stage. The setting is a stark white room with a few chairs. The lip of the stage represents a floor to ceiling window. When the characters look out this window they are looking out into the audience. The OFFENCE OFFICERS move to stand at the back of the room. They should stand on cubes or a platform, with their backs to the scene. The other characters do not see them or know that they are there.

The five characters are watching something intently through the window. This “something” happens at regular intervals. VIO is excited and enjoys what he sees. FEA is trying to put on a brave face. REA is watching with a stone face and holding her stomach. RUL is standing calmly and smiling as if watching a garden party. TOR is also standing calmly but her hands are clenched into fists. She also closes her eyes at regular intervals.

VIO: Hoah! That is fierce.

RUL: Don't.

VIO: What?

RUL: Shhh.

VIO: Why?

RUL: We're supposed to be watching.

VIO: I am.

RUL: In silence.

VIO: Then stop talking.

RUL: I'm not the one who –

FEA: Shhh! They're probably watching us right now.

TOR: You think so?

FEA: They watch for anything that's not normal.

TOR: They do? Really? I wonder what would happen if I went like...

FEA: Don't!

RUL: Be quiet!

A siren sounds and lights flash.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Observation Quota Capital Crime Session 77724 is suspended for regulation break. Students stand from the window.

They all move away from the window. REA separates herself. She seems to be in her own world and doesn't pay any attention to the following banter.

RUL: I wish I was in another group.

TOR: You say that every year.

RUL: Is it too much to ask for a little less commentary? (to VIO) You're always talking!

TOR: He's just excited. Can't blame a guy for being excited over observation.

FEA: That's right. He's not doing anything wrong. He likes it.

RUL: We're not supposed to talk. We're supposed to be observing. That's the whole point.

FEA: She's right Vio you're not supposed to talk during the session.

TOR: Watch it there Fea, you're giving me whiplash.

VIO: So I get carried away. I love this time of year.

TOR: Me too. Just like Christmas!

VIO: It is. There's that feeling in the air. That anticipation, you know? We get out of school. You guys are like the second cousins once removed I only see once a year.

TOR: Awww. And I didn't get you anything.

RUL: I so wish I was in another group.

OFFENSE OFFICER FLINT: (holding out an computer printout)
Observation Quota Capital Crime Session 77724 please review the list of complicit and their crimes for the afternoon session.

RUL goes over to take the list as if she's done it a million times before.

VIO: And the list is like a big present right under the tree. (*crowding around RUL*) Oooh is there any malfeasance? I didn't get any last year.

RUL: Stop crowding me. I'm the group leader. I get it first. (*she proceeds to look through the list*)

VIO: Bang bang boomerang another comp's gonna hang. Or get shot. Shot doesn't rhyme. Bang bang supersnot. Another comps gonna get shot.

TOR: You're a regular poet. You should do that for a living.

VIO: Uh huh. Poet. I can just see my dad's face over that one.

RUL: The only poets I know are scofflaws.

FEA: You shouldn't be a poet then Vio.

VIO: Like I would.

TOR: (*to RUL*) You know scofflaws? Isn't that dangerous?

RUL: (*quickly*) I don't know scofflaws. I know about them. My dad told me.

TOR: So your dad knows scofflaws. Scary. He doesn't seem the type.

RUL: Stop putting words in my mouth.

TOR: That's an impossibility. There's too many of yours in there to make room for mine.

RUL: (*ignoring TOR, she hands the list to REA*) Here Rea.

REA looks at RUL for a moment and then takes the list. She does not read it. None of the others notice this pause on REA's part.

FEA: (*to VIO*) Didn't your brother do a lot of writing in school?

VIO: No.

RUL: No, it was something else out of the ordinary.

TOR: Wasn't he an actor?

VIO: You must be thinking of someone else.

RUL: That reminds me –

REA: (*handing the list to VIO*) You go next Vio. Merry Christmas.

VIO: Thanks!

VIO takes the list and FEA crowds him.

FEA: Let me see. Let me see.

VIO: Get off.

RUL: (to REA) Why'd you do that?

TOR: Hey. Group Leader. How come they upped us another day?
We're in here a whole week this time.

RUL: It's for our own good.

TOR: Remember when it used to be just one session? One afternoon
in and out.

FEA: The observation is a necessary element of our education.

TOR: Very good Fea.

VIO: (*handing the list off to FEA*) These observations are so much better
than the drug addicts and the smokers.

FEA: I like the drug addicts. They hallucinate. It's funny.

TOR: Yeah and then they go into withdrawals and claw their faces off.
Hilarious.

VIO: It works, don't it? Once you see someone with their face off,
makes it hard to smoke a joint with the same enthusiasm.

FEA: I didn't mean funny. Not really. That's not what I – how many after
the break? (*he buries his face in the list.*)

RUL: It's an hour till lunch.

VIO: And then the whole afternoon.

TOR: (*really to herself*) Great.

RUL: (to REA) You're quiet.

REA: Am I? Sorry. I'm not feeling well.

RUL: Do you like my sweater? It's new. I bought it just for the occasion.

REA: It's nice.

RUL: I thought you were going to wear those pants you bought last
week.

REA: Guess I forgot.

RUL: Sure did. Looks like you rolled out of bed and came as is.

REA: That's about right.

RUL: You can't do that Rea.

TOR: Why not?

RUL: (*ignoring TOR*) You have to present yourself properly. If we're going to have long-standing careers in this department we have to start now. We have to show them we're up for the task. Sweatpants are not up to the task.

TOR: Why not?

RUL: Am I talking to you?

TOR: Ooops. No ma'am. Nope, you're not talking to me. No way. No ma'am.

FEA: (*handing the list to TOR*) We're not supposed to joke around.

TOR: Sorry Fea. (*she makes a serious face*) How's this? Serious enough?

RUL: (*to TOR*) You could stand a little dressing up too.

TOR: What does it matter what I wear? Give the comps a little thrill before they go?

RUL: You look like a slob.

TOR: (*tossing the list on a chair*) Well I'm not going into the biz so maybe I don't think about it as much as you.

A siren sounds and lights flash.

OFFENCE OFFICER FLINT: Observation Quota Capital Crime Session 77724 is reinstated. Students stand to the window.

The five come forward and stand on the lip of the stage. They resume watching. There is silence for a moment as they watch.

REA: How long have we been doing this?

RUL: What?

FEA: Shhh.

TOR: Ten years.

REA: Ten years.

TOR: Happy anniversary.

VIO: Ten years. Hoah. That's a lot of bodies.

RUL: Shh!

VIO: It's too bad they only make us do this till we're twenty-five. Hey.
Any of you got grey hairs yet?

FEA: A couple.

VIO: I found one this morning.

TOR: People didn't used to go grey so young.

RUL: So?

TOR: So nothing.

RUL: You obviously have something to say.

TOR: They didn't go grey till their 50's and 60's, that's all. If it was such
a bad time how come it took them so long to go grey?

RUL: You ask too many questions.

TOR: Just passing the time. People used to get second chances too.

RUL: And third chances. And fourth chances. You don't need to spout
the stories at me. I know them as well as you do.

FEA: We're supposed to be observing...

TOR: They're not stories.

RUL: (*sarcastic*) Of course they're not. It's the truth.

TOR: What if it was?

RUL: (*overly bright*) Are you saying the system doesn't work?

TOR: I'm saying it used to be different.

FEA: (*with his hands over his ears*) I'm not listening. La, la, la, la, la.

TOR: (*tapping him on the shoulder*) It's all right Fea. We're done.

There is a moment of silence as they watch.

REA: I wish they couldn't see us.

VIO: Did you see that guy in the last batch? Screaming and pleading and reaching up like that?

RUL: It's pathetic.

VIO: Like we would save them or something. Oh, oh! Do you remember that one year, back when they did batches of twenty?

RUL: Vio...

VIO: And the whole lot of them stormed the deterrents and they tried to climb up and smash the windows in?

TOR: I remember.

RUL: Completely useless. The glass is unbreakable.

FEA: They didn't know.

RUL: So you're saying it's OK they tried to break the glass?

FEA: No I wasn't – I wasn't saying anything.

TOR: Leave him alone. He wasn't saying anything.

FEA: That's right.

TOR: He never says anything.

FEA: That's – hey!

VIO: I liked the bigger batches. With five it's so... contained. Look at them. They know they're outnumbered. They know there's nothing they can do. They know what's gonna happen. We know what's gonna happen. And that's what happens again and again and again. When there was more there was always a chance something might – *(he sees something startling through the window)* Hoah! Look at that!

All five react to seeing a commotion through the window.

FEA: They missed.

RUL: They never miss.

VIO: I can't believe it!

REA: Is he going to get away?

TOR: Where's he gonna go?

VIO: Get 'em. Get 'em.

FEA: I can't believe they missed they – oh.

VIO: Got 'em. Sweet!

TOR: I wonder how many times that happens.

VIO: Did you see him? Practically climbing the walls. Finally something cool to write about in my report.

RUL: They're taking away the deterrent too.

REA: Can't have a deterrent who misses can they?

A siren sounds. Lights flash.

OFFENCE OFFICER ASH: Observation Quota Capital Crime Session 77724 is suspended for provisional break. Students stand from the window.

The five move away from the window. REA sees the list on the chair. She picks it up, but does not read it.

RUL: This isn't regular.

TOR: Must be because of the guy.

VIO: I so want to do that.

TOR: What, climb the walls and try to escape?

VIO: Don't be stupid.

FEA: You want to be a deterrent?

VIO: Oh yeah. The last day of our observation I'm going to sign up for training.

FEA: They won't take anyone, you know. You have to do a gazillion psych tests.

VIO: I'll pass everyone. This doesn't bother me at all.

TOR: It's supposed to bother you some.

VIO: Why?

TOR: So you don't do something that'll get you shot.

VIO: Never happen.

FEA: Like missing.

VIO: Never happen. I'm steady as a rock. I'm a mountain. I'm Everestian. Nothing fazes me.

TOR: Oh no?

VIO: Nothing. Nada. Especially not some weaselly little comp. I'd look those saps right in the eyes. There'd be nothing in the room but me and him. Him and me. Me and him.

TOR: What about the women?

VIO: Uh, exactly the same except it'd be me and her. Her and me. Me and her.

TOR: Just checking.

VIO: And then I'd say to them...

FEA: I don't think you're allowed to talk to the comps.

VIO: I'd say it with my eyes. I'd say it with my eyes. I'd say, "I know what you did. I know everything about you. I know what's going to happen to you in 5-4-3-2 – POW!!"

TOR: You'd be a good deterrent.

During the above REA has just started to look through the list. She is interrupted by RUL.

RUL: (to REA) Want to go to the rally tonight?

REA: Huh? No. I don't think so. I'm not feeling well.

VIO: I'm so glad they went back to guns. The gas was so boring.

RUL: That'll be the second one you've missed.

REA: Is it?

TOR: Maybe she's not into the mindless masses like she used to be.

RUL: Was I talking to you?

FEA: You should go. Everyone has to go to the rallies.

TOR: It's not mandatory.

VIO: I love the rallies.

TOR: Of course you do.

RUL: When was the last time you were at a rally?

TOR: Hmmmmmm – don't know.

RUL: It looks funny if you don't go. It looks like you don't support the system. You do support the system, don't you Tor?

TOR: You don't work for them yet. No need to get all creepy-eye'd on me.

FEA: How can you say that? You know they're listening.

TOR: No I don't.

RUL: I'm sure they are. I'm sure they listen to people like you all the time.

TOR: Why would they when they've got people like you doing it for them.

FEA: (*a little hysterical*) We're supposed to be reflecting on the session. We're supposed to reflect on what we have witnessed and thank the Centre of Deterrence for making our society safe and complicit free.

TOR: Very good Fea.

FEA: Thanks.

REA: Do you think it works?

RUL: What?

REA: The system. Does it work?

RUL: Rea what's the matter with you?

REA: Nothing.

VIO: Of course it works. If you're stupid enough to do a crime you have to pay the consequences. Plain and simple.

FEA: Every crime is treated the exact same way. No lesser. No greater. And now there is no crime.

TOR: If there's no crime then what are we still doing here?

RUL: (*referring to TOR*) Don't listen to her. She's going to screw up her life and that's her problem – don't get involved.

REA: I wasn't... I... Do you think it works, Rul?

RUL: (*as if by rote*) The evidence of the system is all around us. You know that. Our generation has the lowest violence rate, the lowest addiction rate, teenagers don't even smoke anymore.

FEA: We're model citizens.

RUL: We are. We are the accomplishment of a government that cares about us. We are the product of years and years of work after centuries of failure. How can our generation be expected to carry the burden of society if we are not prepared to do so?

TOR: That's very good. Memorized and everything.

RUL: (*with a sudden burst*) You just watch yourself, you stupid... (*she regains her calm*) Come on Fea. I'll reflect with you. Let's move over here away from undesirable influences. Coming Rea?

REA: Huh? I'm fine, thanks.

RUL gives her a strange look. She and FEA kneel in the corner and hold hands. VIO paces, waiting for the session to start. REA goes to read the list again but can't. She puts it aside.

TOR moves over to REA and picks up the list. The two of them have a private conversation that RUL can't hear.

NOTE: If possible use a spotlight on TOR and REA to separate themselves from the others and suggest a private conversation. It's important to convey that RUL can't hear, even though the room is quite small. Additionally, allow RUL to be completely absorbed in the "reflection." VIO is also in his own world as he paces.

TOR: (*to REA as she flips through the list*) So. What's up with you?

REA: What? Nothing.

TOR: You're quiet.

REA: Am I?

TOR: Uh huh. Your head's not in the room.

REA: (*referring to the list*) Anything interesting?

TOR: Not really. The same crimes over and over again. Mostly infractions.

REA: They're always infractions.

TOR: That's because anything can be an infraction. Call it murder and there's a pretty narrow path. Call it an infraction and the sky's the limit.

REA: Do you actually read the list, or do you just pretend to?

TOR: *(she pauses before answering)* I read every line, don't you?

REA: Sure.

TOR: So. What happened between you and Rul?

REA: Nothing.

TOR: How come you're not riding her wave then? You and she used to be all talky talky. Rah, Rah. Love me love the observation. Comps get what they deserve. Saw so and so at the rally yesterday. Didn't see so and so, what does that mean? So, what's up?

RUL and FEA hum as they reflect. Perhaps they do gestures as well.

REA: How can you do that?

TOR: What.

REA: Talk.

TOR: I open my mouth.

REA: You know what I mean. How can you talk the way you talk?
Without fear.

TOR: I don't know any other way. It's the way we talk at home.

REA: Why aren't you afraid of getting into trouble? You're the only person I know who's not afraid to open her mouth. I think Fea would sew his mouth shut if he could. Then he'd never say anything to get in trouble.

TOR: Not a great way to live.

REA: You sound more and more like a scofflaw every year.

TOR: Do I? Gee, that's not so good is it?

REA: Not so good. Not if you don't want to get shot.

TOR: I just see what I see and I say what I say.



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