



NIBBLER

BY **KEN URBAN**



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NIBBLER was developed by the Department of Theater at Davidson College, Stable Cable Lab Company in New York, Theater of NOTE in Los Angeles and Rude Guerrilla in Orange, CA.

NIBBLER premiered Off-Broadway on February 23, 2017, at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, presented by The Amoralists in association with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater. It was directed by Benjamin Kamine, the scenic designer was Anshuman Bhatia, the costume designer was Lux Haac, the lighting designer was Christina Watanabe, the sound designer was Christian Frederickson, the projections were by Ien Deniro and Christina Watanabe, the puppet designer was Stefano Brancato, production dramaturgy was by Jeremy Stoller, and the stage manager was Whitney Dearden. The cast was as follows:

ADAM	James Kautz
TARA	Rachel Franco
PETE	Sean Patrick Monahan
HAYLEY	Elizabeth Lail
MATT	Spencer Davis Milford
OFFICER DAN	Matthew Lawler

The author wishes to thank all the actors, directors and designers who worked on the play during its development.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The seeds of this play come from the horror show of 9/11. During a time of absolute sadness, I wanted to remember a time when I felt real hope, and for me that was the summer before Bill Clinton's election. The play was originally a one-act. But it wanted to be a full-length.

While there has been the odd tinkering and a failed experiment or two, the core of this play has not changed since the 2001 draft. Regardless of whether you deem the author prescient or not, the scenes involving politics remained untouched in all drafts. In fact, in 2016, I cut a few lines that once felt too extreme, but given recent catastrophic events, I reinstated them since what was once extreme is our new "normal."

With love to the friends who shared side dishes and cigarettes with me at the Medport Diner back in the day, wherever you are now.

CHARACTERS

ADAM, 30

TARA, 18

PETE, 18

HAYLEY, 18

MATT, 18

OFFICER DAN, late 40s

PLACE

Medford, New Jersey.

TIME

Christmas Eve 2004 and summer 1992.

TEXT NOTES

A slash (/) indicates that the following line begins to overlap at that point.

Punctuation and layout of the lines give indication of delivery.

A NOTE ABOUT THE NIBBLER

The Nibbler is a puppet, operated by the actors after they have been nibbled. The operators should be fully visible and in character. Think of a classic *Doctor Who* alien, warts and all. Aim for the uncanny.

A NOTE ABOUT THE SONG

Sheet music for the song “When You Are a Person” (lyrics & melody by Ken Urban, music by The Avon Barksdale, Urban/Breitling/Stern/Brand) will be provided with a performance license.

When staging the song, keep it anti-theatrical and simple. It’s not the climax of the play. It’s part of the scene.

THE NIBBLER MIXTAPE

Songs to Learn and Sing¹

1. "Interesting Drug," Morrissey from *Bona Drag*
2. "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now," The Smiths, from *Louder than Bombs*
3. "William, It Was Really Nothing," The Smiths, from *Louder than Bombs*
4. "Enjoy the Silence," Depeche Mode, from *Violator*
5. "Fly on the Windscreen (Final)" by Depeche Mode, from *Black Celebration*
6. "Love Will Tear Us Apart," Joy Division, from *Substance*
7. "Sweatloaf" by The Butthole Surfers, from *Locust Abortion Technician*
8. "Julio Iglesias" by The Butthole Surfers, from *Hairway to Steven*
9. "Kerosene" by Big Black, from *Atomizer*
10. "Bad Penny" by Big Black, from *Songs about Fucking*
11. "The Wagon" by Dinosaur Jr., from *Green Mind*
12. "Little Fury Things" by Dinosaur Jr., from *You're Living All Over Me*
13. "Schizophrenia" by Sonic Youth, from *Sister*
14. "Hey Joni" by Sonic Youth, from *Daydream Nation*
15. "So What" by Ministry, from *The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste*
16. "Stigmata" by Ministry, from *The Land of Rape and Honey*
17. "Wrote for Luck" by The Happy Mondays, from *Bummed*
18. "Holiday" by The Happy Mondays, from *Pills 'n' Thrills and Bellyaches*
19. "Suedehead" by Morrissey, from *Viva Hate*
20. "Homesick" by The Cure, from *Disintegration*
21. "Headhunter" by Front 242, from *Front by Front*
22. "Hearts and Minds" by Nitzer Ebb, from *Belief*
23. "Right Now" by Van Halen, from *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge*
24. "The Killing Moon" by Echo and the Bunnymen, from *Ocean Rain*
25. "Monkey Gone to Heaven" by the Pixies, from *Doolittle*
26. "When You Are a Person" by The Avon Barksdale

¹ See note on songs/recordings on page 75.

NIBBLER

PROLOGUE

Christmas Muzak plays during the following projections:

Projection: "Welcome to Medford, New Jersey."

Projection: "Medford is one of the premiere suburbs of the Philadelphia area."

Projection: "Nestled within the beautiful South Jersey Pine Barrens, Medford is one of New Jersey's hidden gems."

Projection: "Whoever wrote this is smoking crack."

Projection: "Xmas Eve 2004"

Lights up on Adam sorting through the contents of a cardboard moving box: old cassettes, battered CDs, old photographs, band posters, high-school yearbooks. We are in his childhood bedroom.

He comes across an audio cassette with stickers on it. He reads the insert. It's a rehearsal recording of his old band.

He digs deeper in the box to find a cassette Walkman. He checks the battery compartment. He hits play. To his surprise, it still works. He pops in the cassette and puts on the headphones. He hits play. We hear the muffled sounds of "When You Are a Person."

He finds a photograph and he takes a long look at it. (As he does, the sound from the headphones cross-fades into playing over the speakers of the theater.)

Tara appears. She watches Adam listening to the music. She smacks him with her bag.

TARA. Maudlin as fuck.

Startled from his reverie, he hits stop on the Walkman (the music stops) and takes off the headphones.

ADAM. Tara?

TARA. Who did you expect?

ADAM. You look exactly the same.

TARA. Everyone's waiting for us at Medport.

You coming, Adam?

Pause.

ADAM. Let's fuckin do this.

Slam into music: hard, industrial and loud, circa 1988-'92. Think Ministry's "Stigmata" or Big Black's "Kerosene."

The actors set the stage for the next scene. They should move shit with the same intensity as the music. Once ready, slam into—

SCENE ONE: A THURSDAY NIGHT IN MAY

Projection: "May 21, 1992."

The Medport Diner. The exchange between Adam, Tara, Matt, Hayley, and Pete should overlap with a frenetic energy, spurred on by coffee and cigarettes.

ADAM. What's that? Around your neck? That / thing?

TARA. Oh, Pete, you're wearing it—

PETE. Of course, I'm wearing it—

TARA. Adam, I made this for Pete, from those shells, we found after / prom—

ADAM. Nice, really nice, um, shell necklace—

TARA. Don't be a dick—

Matt sings a line of a Morrissey song.

ADAM. (*Clocking Tara's reaction.*) Hey. What—?

HAYLEY. Pass me the fries. I need fucking fries, pronto—!

ADAM. (*Reacting to Matt's singing.*) It's a Morrissey night, isn't it—?

MATT. Every night's a Morrissey night—

HAYLEY. What's on them—?

TARA. The fries—?

PETE. Wait. She drove right over / the divider—?

TARA. Cheese and gravy—

ADAM. Yeah, her mom's minivan—

HAYLEY. Can I have a sip of your, what is that—?

MATT. Was she high—?

TARA. Oh, just water¹—

PETE. That question answers itself—

HAYLEY. Wait, what is it, Tara—?

TARA. Water—

HAYLEY. You know you're from Jersey when—

TARA. Shut it, I have a Jersey accent, so—?

MATT. So Julie was high? She was driving her mom's minivan—

HAYLEY. Who? Who? Who we talkin bout—?

TARA. Julie, and yes, Julie was high, she is always very very high—

MATT. Adam was just telling us that Julie—

PETE. Julie got super high—

HAYLEY. On?

Tara sniffs and rubs her nose, informing Hayley that Julie uses coke.

Oh, Yikes—

PETE. Exactly. Then got into her mom's minivan—

MATT. And then drove said minivan—

TARA. Right over the divider on Route 70.

HAYLEY. Double Yikes.

ADAM. (*To Tara.*) How do you even know this?

¹ Pronounced in the South Jersey way: "wooder."

TARA. You told me—!

HAYLEY. For the record, I hear Julie is a skank of epic proportion—

MATT. Yeah, her vagina's basically a Mickey D's drive-thru on a Friday night—

ADAM. Enough!

Matt sings a line of a Smiths song.

TARA. Ah, the Smiths—

HAYLEY. We listened to *Strangeways* three times yesterday—

MATT. Excuse me, but that song's not on *Strangeways*—

TARA. Can I just say you look really nice tonight, Hayley—?

PETE. Why do you like such gay music, Matt—?

HAYLEY. Thrift store find

And Pete, enough, don't rag on Matt's music, you like / it too—

MATT. Fuck you Pete

Is it Thursday—?

TARA. Yes—

ADAM. What day would you like it to be—?

TARA. I heart the Smiths—

PETE. We should do something—

TARA. Such as—?

PETE. I'm just suggesting we do something—

TARA. It's not a suggestion, Pete, until you suggest a plan of action, then it's a suggestion—

HAYLEY. Tara does have a point—

Matt sings a line of a different Smiths song.

ADAM. First off, Hayley, Julie's not a skank, and second—

PETE. Wait, we're talking about / Julie again?

ADAM. And second, Matt cut the Smiths shit, OK?

MATT. What's Julie doing next year?

PS: Fuck you Adam—

PETE. College in the South I think—

ADAM. No she's staying in Medford—

TARA. She is? Why?

ADAM. Drop it—

TARA. Why is Julie staying in Medford? Did something happen with you and Julie?

Awkward pause. (Things can slow down a little bit from here on out.)

Um, OK. Julie is not to be discussed. Add Julie to the ever-growing list of subjects not to be discussed with Adam.

PETE. Burn. Major Burn.

TARA. Adam's dad, I assume, that's also not to / be discussed—

ADAM. Tara!

TARA. OK OK Subject dropped.

HAYLEY. Hey Tara, you got any news on school? It's kinda late for them to let you know now—

TARA. Still on the waitlist. My mom doesn't want me to go even if it works out which it won't—

HAYLEY. Look, Trenton State is gonna be great, Tara.

ADAM. What's the big deal anyways about that other school?

PETE. Adam, it's Stanford.

HAYLEY. We'll be roomies in the fall. It will be so fun.

MATT. Hey guys?

PETE. Yeah?

MATT. We graduated.

ADAM. This is true.

MATT. I mean as of yesterday we are high school graduates.

PETE. Class of '92.

ADAM. I didn't even go.

TARA. There are like nine hundred people in your class.

ADAM. Yeah, well, public school

MATT and ADAM. We expect less.

PETE. Your mom mad about you not going?

ADAM. These days she doesn't even know I'm alive.

NIBBLER

by Ken Urban

4M, 2W

In the summer of 1992 in Medford, New Jersey, Adam and his gang of friends face life after high school. But when the fivesome encounter a mysterious visitor from another world, their lives are forever changed. A dark comedy about that time when everything and nothing seems possible.

"...part science-fiction yarn, part horror tale, part sex farce, part memory play... a melancholy comedy about growing up and apart. ...Urban offers a poignant thesis: When we find ourselves, we lose something, too."

—**The New York Times**

"NIBBLER is a very real story about crossing that not-always-defined line between teenhood and adulthood. ...Like the titular character, you'll want to sink your teeth into this one."

—**The Huffington Post**

"...wildly inventive... one of a kind. ...Urban's script is witty and original, an undeniably new take on growing up and moving on."

—**Charged.fm**

"The writing is honest, clever, and totally shameless. ...NIBBLER's treatment of a fundamental feeling of confusion and dread—the fear of the change you don't expect, and also the fear of the change you see coming—is something anyone can appreciate. ...It's funny, it's sweet, and it's constantly surprising."

—**Theasy.com**

Also by Ken Urban

THE AWAKE

THE HAPPY SAD

SENSE OF AN ENDING

and others

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