

ANNIE BAKER
THE FLICK

the setting:

A falling-apart movie theater in Worcester County, MA. The set is the raked movie theater audience, fifteen rows of red velvet seats with a dingy carpeted aisle running through the center. The upstage wall is the back wall of movie theater, with a window into the projection booth. There is a set of heavy double doors around a corner leading out into the movie theater lobby. We, the theater audience, are the movie screen. The beam of light from the projector radiates out over our heads.

the characters:

SAM, 35

shaved head. Caucasian.

He often wears a beat-up Red Sox cap.

At one time very into Heavy Metal, not so much anymore.

AVERY, 20

African-American. bespectacled.

if you spoke with him on the phone, you would wrongly assume he was a straight white guy.

He wears red slightly European-looking sneakers.

In love with the movies.

ROSE, 24

Caucasian. sexually magnetic, despite the fact that (or partly because?) her clothes are baggy, she never wears makeup and her hair is dyed forest-green.

MAN/SKYLAR, 26

note on costumes:

Sam and Avery wear the same degrading movie theater uniform in every scene. It is a polo shirt (probably dark blue or purple or maroon) with a little name tag/pin, and black pants. Maybe the polo has "The Flick" embroidered in yellow or white on its chest pocket? Because Rose is the projectionist she doesn't have to wear a uniform. But maybe she wears the black pants anyway. Or the same pair of jeans every day.

"/" indicates where the next line of dialogue begins.

PRE-SHOW

After the theater audience has filed in, the house lights slowly dim (onstage in the movie audience and also in the theater audience). Bernard Herrmann's intro sequence to "The Naked and the Dead" starts playing, and the light from the projector beams out over our heads. Images that we cannot decipher are being projected. Dust motes are illuminated by the light.

This lasts 2 minutes (the length of the song) and all we can see are abstracted dancing images shooting out of the film projector.

Then the song ends, and the unknown movie ends, and there is a bright flash of green, and then white, and then the sound of the film reaching the end of its spool in the projector. The movie theater lights automatically flicker on, and after about 5 seconds...

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The door at the back of the movie theater is thrown open.

Sam peeks his head in, looks around, then closes the door.

A second later, the door opens again and Sam drags in a large trashcan that he uses to keep the door propped open. Then he exits again and re-enters carrying a large push broom and dustpan. Avery follows him in, carrying a push broom and dustpan of his own.

SAM

We call this the walkthrough.

Pause.

SAM

Pretty simple.

You just ah...

Avery watches as Sam walks down the last row of seats with his broom, sweeping up popcorn kernels, etc, and pushing them into the dustpan. When Sam finishes the last row and moves to the second-to-last row, Avery awkwardly begins sweeping the last row on his side of the aisle. They continue this way, Sam always one row ahead of Avery, each of them on their own side of the aisle. Avery is trying to figure out the best way to sweep; it's harder than it looks. In the third-to-last row, Avery encounters something we cannot see on the floor. He frowns with distaste, then bends over and gingerly picks up a Subway sandwich wrapper. Tiny pieces of shredded lettuce flutter to the ground. Sam looks over, stops what he's doing, and watches Avery, without offering any suggestions.

Avery walks up the aisle, throws the Subway wrapper in the large trash can, along with the contents of his dust pan, then walks back and goes back to sweeping. For some reason it's not working—the tiny pieces of lettuce that we can't see are sticking to the ground. Sam is still watching him. After a while:

SAM

Yeah. With the little pieces of lettuce you just kind of have to—

Avery interrupts him by bending down to hand-pick the pieces of lettuce off the floor. He mostly disappears from our view.

Sam watches. then goes back to sweeping. He's about three rows ahead of Avery when Avery finishes picking up the tiny pieces of lettuce. Cradling them in his palm, Avery walks up the aisle again to the trash can and shakes his palm off into it. Then he goes back to sweeping. After moving on to the next aisle:

EVERY

What do you do about spilled soda?

SAM

We do one big mop at the end of the night.

Avery nods. They go back to sweeping. After about twenty seconds:

EVERY

What if people are still here?

A pause.

SAM

Like—

EVERY

Have you ever had anyone like just sit here and refuse /to—

SAM

Sometimes people sit here until the end of the credits. But then they go.

Avery nods.

SAM

And they'll get the message when you start sweeping.

Avery goes back to sweeping. After a pause.

SAM

Roberto told me that he once...that one time this couple was like having sex, like fully fucking on the seats when he came in.

EVERY

Whoa.

SAM

But he just like ignored them and like went about his business.

They continue sweeping. After a pause:

EVERY

Who's Roberto?

SAM

Oh. He doesn't work here anymore.

Pause.

SAM

He joined the Marines.

Avery nods, a little uncomfortable. They go back to sweeping. They're almost done. Sam is in the second row and Avery is in the fourth row.

When Sam finishes he just watches Avery.

SAM

Did Steve tell you about the soda machines?

EVERY

Uh...like...

SAM

How to clean them? About the seltzer?

EVERY

...No...

SAM

You gotta soak the spouts in seltzer overnight.

EVERY

Oh. Okay. Cool.

SAM

I'll show you.

In a minute.

About ten more seconds, then Avery finishes sweeping. They head up the aisle together, and dump their dustpans in the garbage. Then Sam takes the garbage can and starts rolling it out the door. They are almost out the door when Sam says:

SAM

So you're into movies?

EVERY

What? I mean yeah! I love movies.

And they're gone. The doors swing shut behind them. Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Sam, alone in the middle of the theater, sweeping. After a few seconds, Avery runs in, fastening his little pin and holding his broom.

EVERY

Hey!

SAM

Hi Avery.

Pause.

EVERY

Sorry / I'm—

SAM

You're late.

EVERY

Yeah. I was just about to...yeah. I'm really sorry.

SAM

Yeah. Uh-huh. I /just—

EVERY

My dad was supposed to give me a ride but then he couldn't and I had to take like three different buses to get here and I'm still trying to figure /out the whole—

SAM

Uh-huh, yeah, I don't really need an explanation, it's just—

EVERY

No, no, of course, I just feel bad and I can totally reassure you that it won't /happen again.

SAM

It just puts me in an awkward position because /I'm—

EVERY

The thing is, I'm actually like...I'm actually like this obsessively punctual person and I'm like never ever late and this was just like a crazy um anomaly with the buses and now I know and I can promise you it will never happen again.

Pause.

SAM

Fine. Fine.

Pause.

SAM

I mean, it's no big deal.

But I'm sort of defacto in charge on Saturdays/ and—

EVERY

No, I know.

SAM

It just puts me in an awkward position. That's all. Steve's never here so it was it was just me and I had to /ask—

EVERY

I can promise you that it won't happen again.

Pause.

SAM

I had to do soda and make a whole batch of popcorn by /myself.

EVERY

I'm so sorry.

SAM

No. It's cool.

Pause. They start sweeping. Then, unable to help himself:

SAM

I'm just. I'm just like—I don't know why Steve doesn't fucking promote me. I'm so sick of this shit.

Avery nods, a little confused.

SAM

I should be a fucking projectionist by now!

AVERY

Oh. Yeah. I'd love to be a projectionist.

SAM

Well, he'll probably promote you before he promotes me. He like clearly thinks I'm *diseased* or something.

Pause.

SAM

He promoted Rose and I've worked here five months longer than her. She keeps saying she'll make me her alternate, but. You know. Who cares.

They go back to sweeping.

SAM

(looking down at the floor in his row)

Aw fuck.

What is this.

Avery stops and peers over from his side of the aisle.

SAM

Someone spilled like chocolate pudding or something. Are you fucking kidding me?

AVERY

Are you sure it's not, like...shit?

A pause. Sam bends down and inspects it.

AVERY

Oh god.

SAM

...Definitely not shit.

AVERY

Are you sure?

SAM

Uh-huh.

AVERY

Because I'm kind of um...I'm kind of shit-phobic.

SAM

There are like weird little *balls* in it.

It's like *chocolate tapioca pudding*.

Who brings pudding into a movie theater??!!

Sam gazes at it for a while, then straightens up, steps around it, and goes back to sweeping. Sam notices Avery watching him and gets a little self-conscious.

SAM

...I'll take care of it later.

They sweep for a while. Then:

SAM

What does that mean, shit-phobic?

AVERY

Like other people's shit makes me like...it like makes me want to puke.

SAM

Well sure.

EVERY

Yeah. But with me it's like really...like if I go into the bathroom stall and someone has, um, like if someone's left something there I actually sometimes like...I actually need to puke. Like sometimes I actually puke.

SAM

Whoa.

Pause.

SAM

Have you heard of that website where people send in pictures of their shit and then people rate it?

EVERY

Yes I have heard of that website. That website is like my worst nightmare.

Sam giggles.

SAM

So if I wanted to be like really like cruel I could like leave my laptop open with that website up and you /would—

EVERY

I would literally puke all over your laptop. Like, literally.

Sam giggles.

SAM

Oh man.

A happy pause in which they realize they've broken the tension, and then awkward pause following that happy pause. They go back to sweeping. A minute later, someone appears in the window of the projection booth. It is a girl. She is moving around, changing film, appearing in and out of view.

Sam notices her.

SAM

Oh. Hey. That's Rose.

Avery looks up.

SAM

HEY ROSE!

She doesn't hear him.

SAM

Huh.

I guess she like hates me or something.

ROSE!

(pause)

ROSE!!

Wow.

She really hates me.

EVERY

Maybe she can't hear you.

SAM

She can hear me.

ROSE!

I want to introduce you to her. She's cool.

ROSE!!!!!!!!!!

Rose continues moving around in the projection booth, oblivious.

SAM

(a cry of pure agony/unrequited love)

ROOOSSSSSE!!!!!!