

A PORCELAIN PARADISE

WRITTEN BY

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EXT. QUIET STREET - SUMMER - STARRY NIGHT

A group of mischievous, giggling teenage boys place a gnome in a random garden for the crack.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The bedroom window is open. BILLY (18) is in bed tossing and turning in the hot, sweaty heat. He hears the hustle and bustle of the bin lorry. Billy's eyes open, he sits up to look out the window. He sees the bin lorry and a random gnome on his front lawn.

EXT. BILLY'S FRONT GARDEN - MORNING

CLOSE UP of gnome.

INT. BILLY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE UP of Billy's face confused. Billy stands up in just his boxers. He finds joggers on the floor and puts them on and grabs his phone, and puts it in a pocket. He leaves his room and sleepily walks down the stairs. Billy heads to kitchen.

INT. BILLY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Billy scowls as he glances at a newspaper sprawled out on the kitchen table, bold words read LOCKDOWN: NO END IN SIGHT. He heads over to a cupboard and picks out a mug and places it by a box of tea bags. He opens the box to discover it's empty.

NIHILISTIC GNOME (O.S.)

Oh Billy, come out to play!

CLINK! CLINK! can be heard in the distance. Billy turns his head then shrugs. He then hears a cough outside and notices his elderly neighbour NIGEL in his front garden.

EXT. BILLY'S FRONT GARDEN - MORNING

Billy heads out of the kitchen to open the front door. As he steps into the garden, he sees NIGEL (75), an elderly neighbour looking sad.

BILLY
Alright Nigel?

NIGEL
Morning Billy, did you hear them
bunch of hoodlums last night?

BILLY
(SHRUGS)
Nah, didn't hear anything. You got
any teabags spare? Ran out.

NIGEL
Yeah, I got a couple, let me go
and get them for you.

Nigel walks back into his house leaving Billy alone outside. Billy looks around his garden and notices the gnome. He stares at it for a second, then Nigel returns and hands Billy a box of tea bags.

NIGEL
Just been on the phone to my son
and his kiddlywinks. Been horrible
not seeing them, but what can you
do? It is what it is.

BILLY
I bet.

NIGEL
Pardon?

BILLY
Hopefully it'll be over soon.

NIGEL
Well, hopefully if people stay in,
it will be... unlike them hoodlums
causing ruckus!

BILLY
Well, I better be off. Thanks for
the tea.

As Billy turns, he notices the gnome has moved slightly. Thinking his mind is playing tricks on him he heads back inside the house.

INT. BILLY'S KITCHEN

Billy places the teabags on the counter and one inside his mug. He fills up the kettle and switches it on. Billy then opens the fridge to find no milk. With frustration, he slams the door sending magnets flying, two music tickets and a calendar fall onto the floor. He picks the tickets up and stares longingly at them. He sticks them back onto the fridge and then picks up the calendar. Seeing on the calendar that the concert date is today's date, he uses the pen attached to cross out the whole month in annoyance.

NIHILISTIC GNOME (O.S.)
Oh Biiiiiilllyyyyy! Come out to
play!

CLINK! CLINK!

Billy, thinking it is Nigel calling, heads to the front door. When he opens the front door, he finds the gnome just in front of the doorstep. Billy, baffled, stares at it.

BILLY
Who are you?

Nihilistic Gnome smiles, arms out wide.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
I'm the motherfucking Nihilistic
Gnome!

Billy stares blankly at Nihilistic Gnome.

BILLY
Okay... what! I don't understand.

Nihilistic Gnome slightly leans forward with a smile.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
Niall for short, I'm here to piss
on your line in the sand!

BILLY

(BEWILDERED)
What sand?
(MUTTERS TO SELF)
Must still be in dreamland.

Billy rubs his sleepy eyes and looks back at the gnome. The gnome looks up eagerly at Billy.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
You demanded, I ascended.

BILLY
Nope... this has gotta be some misunderstanding.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
Hollering Casa-gnome-a five times in harmony, at the mirror Billy?

BILLY
(ANNOYED)
There is no way my vocabulary would utter such absurdity.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
Billy I'm here to expand your mind urgently! Hush, hush let me in buddy.

Nihilistic Gnome starts to CLINK towards the open front door. Billy steps in front, blocking his way.

EXT. BILLY'S FRONT GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

A duel stand off like a western persists until Nihilistic Gnome backs off into the garden Billy pursues in toe.

BILLY
I'm not *allowed* to let you in because of social distancing, sorry.

The Nihilistic Gnome angrily points up to BILLY.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(RAP)
I'm kinda a big deal, a prodigy,
porcelain pillar of society,

I'm ranked third in the rapping
gnome community
I'll use telepathy to rhyme words
in your alphabet spaghetti,
Rid yourself of your policies and
follow me,
You've gotta grasp that you have a
moral stand!
Don't be burying your head in your
hands!
We need to beat the curve!
You need to stop masturbating I
mean procrastinating.
There are enough of them wankers
out there masking and sacking.
They should start calling it
Union-Jacking!

BILLY
(eye roll)
Get a load of yourself.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(spoken word)
I think you've had enough one on
one time with yourself!
(Rap)
Look son, the web, newspapers and
television isn't a religion to
invest in...

INT. NEXTDOOR NEIGHBOUR'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Nigel starts looking out of his window hearing noise and
sees Billy, but not Nihilistic Gnome.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(O.S.) (CONT'D)
(Rap)
...As you wait in this paralysed
pharmaceutical paradise.

EXT. BILLY'S FRONT GARDEN - MORNING

Nigel is seen coming out of the neighbouring front door.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

(Rap)

In a quarantine nightmarish dream
what a scream! Fancy going for ice
cream?

(resumes speech)

You son look like you need some D
in your life, wanna go halves on a
cornetto?

NIGEL

Alright Billy?

Billy becomes too engrossed with his conversation with
Nihilistic Gnome that he does not notice Nigel.

BILLY

(TO GNOME)

No!

NIGEL

(TO BILLY)

Did you happen to read the new
manifesto?

NIHILISTIC GNOME

Fab?

BILLY

(TO GNOME)

Nope.

NIGEL

(TO BILLY)

If you ask me, it's all about the
economy rather than *safety*! *All*
these policies of dos and don't
are lost on me! My hands are
beginning to look like sun dried
tomatoes, and what's with *all* this
panic buying?! Yesterday's
delivery came *without* toilet roll,
pasta, avocado... It was a right
disaster. Instead they sent baby
wipes, onion noodles and smashed
banana still in its skin!

Nihilistic Gnome points his head to Nigel. But Billy still has not noticed Nigel.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
Screwball?

BILLY
(ANGRILY)
We are *all* screwed!

NIGEL
(TO BILLY)
I hear you, sonny, the world *is* screwed. The days when we were the cream of the crop, a chocolate flake sitting on top of a 99, now sits above one big *melting* pot! *What* has become of our country?!

NIHILISTIC GNOME
Flake?

BILLY
I don't want a *fucking* flake!

NIGEL
(TO BILLY)
Yeah, see you later mate!

Nigel smiles and waves to Billy and walks back through his front door back inside the house.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(MUTTERS)
You're the flake.
(Rap)
Stop being such a Prima-donna queen!
There are plenty of pleasurable things to be had and seen!
Like saving money in the restaurant scene.
Fancy a curry, we could have a Korma?
Pubs are all about table service, you'll feel like the Queen!
Wanna go out and consume a Corona?

BILLY

I don't wanna be pushing up
daisies!

Billy takes out his phone from his joggers and taps away
ordering off Amazon.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

I agree! Don't wanna be spending
my time surrounded by daisies! I'd
rather die, get recycled and come
back as a water closest.

BILLY

Least I could put a lid on your
ignorant sordid deposits!

NIHILISTIC GNOME

Ask yourself punk, do you wanna be
a cov-idiot or a mask-hole?

BILLY

Neither. Do you even know what
they mean? You egotistical twit.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

Of course! Cov-idiot is an
agoraphobic. And as for mask-hole,
stands for nationalistic,
soulless, capitalist pricks!...
I'm more of an anarchist.

BILLY

More like psychotic! It's *that* way
of thinking that's so blinkered!
No wonder our nation is so
splintered!

NIHILISTIC GNOME

More like symbolic. It's this way
of thinking that you become
fingered puppets. No wonder our
nation is full of drunkards!

BILLY

It's bad rhymes.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

My rhymes are ill!

BILLY

Keep going on this way, *you will!*

NIHILISTIC GNOME

Are you threatening me, Bill?!

BILLY

You're doing my nut in.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

(RAP)

Interruptin'? I'm eruptin', gonna
jump in,
I'm, Paracelsus' wet dream,
I ain't no joke like Joaquin,
Phoenix from the ashes... scene!
Picture scenery so fresh and
clean,
And wean yourself off them Tory's
tits,
Mother-sucker digest refresh gotta
stop throwing fits and battling
your wits,
Call it quits on the suppressive
shtick.

BILLY

You are milking this nefarious
nihilistic gnomie.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

Who's the most glorious victorious
notorious - me,
Not inglorious oblivious delirious
Billy,
Shielding himself from the
toxicity.

A female COURIER (30, uniform) pulls up in the background
in her delivery van and Nihilistic Gnome notices this.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

(SINGS)

Whoa whoa Miss Postwoman no more
medicine.

(RAP)

He could pass for a pharmacy with
his rattling,
I spit the truth you dribble away
your youth.

BILLY

You're just like the Pied Piper
polluting with your uneducated
delusions.

GNOME

I'm ninety-nine percent fool proof
guaranteed to succeed bleeding
your fruit,
Sowing the seeds in your orchard,
Implanting scrutiny,
Rumbling your sanctuary,
Juices bestowed salutary,
Curing your insecurity,
Let's cheers to mutiny,
 (nursery rhyme melody
 slower)
Billy Billy quite solitary,
How does your garden grow?

BILLY

With safety and integrity.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

No! With curiosity and frivolity,
And pretty masquerade all in a
row.

BILLY

To and fro on a carousel under its
glow,
This ain't no Punch and Billy
show,
Severe strings rid my puppeteer.

NIHILISTIC GNOME

It's all going to end in tiers,
Last dance with informality.
Relinquish your personality 9,
Douse your personality 8,
Relish in your personality 9,
Indulge your personality 8,
Quit the stiff upper-lip unitary,

With *me*, you will lose all your
in-a-bil-ity.

The Courier walks over to Billy.

COURIER
(TO BILLY)
Hi there, handsome, William Gnome?

BILLY
(TO COURIER)
...Yes.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(SCARASTICALLY)
Oh woo-up deee dooo!

COURIER
(TO BILLY)
I have a parcel for you, I'll
leave it here, honey.

BILLY
(TO COURIER)
Yes please... thank you.

The Courier leaves the parcel on Billy's front doorstep.
The Courier then walks away out of Billy's garden.

INT. BILLY'S HALLWAY - MORNING

Billy picks up the parcel and steps back into his hallway,
his back is to Nihilistic Gnome. Nihilistic Gnome is
curious but cannot see what Billy has brought, Billy then
turns around and places a SEROTONIN GNOME - a female gnome
- next to the other Nihilistic Gnome.

SEROTONIN GNOME
(SWEETLY, TO GNOME)
Hi I'm Serotonin Gnome, but *you*
can call me Sarah.

NIHILISTIC GNOME
(SARCASTICALLY)
How original.

SEROTONIN GNOME
(SQUEALS HAPPILY)

Ooo daisies!

END.

Script Commentary

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A Porcelain Paradise is about one's mental battle in the midst of a pandemic. I wanted the two characters to symbolise the two responses: fear and boldness. Billy responds in fear and the gnome is bold. At the beginning of the script a group of mischievous teenagers leave the gnome; this represents the outside world of living, freedom and fun.

I wanted to address the mental strain under these tough circumstances. I wanted to explore both perspectives using humour in a satirical style; using rhyme takes away the denseness of the subject. I chose the month of August because you now have the freedom of choice to go out or stay in. It is the inner battle which causes the stress. "You're damned if you do and damned if you don't". I did not want to take sides; I wanted to leave it open ended. There is no right or wrong. There is a line that I am pleased with:

"with me, you will lose all your in-a-bil-ity" I get a lot of enjoyment out of creating metaphors, double entendres, and play on words. Inner Billy (inability) in other words, without the gnome he will be nothing.

I chose a gnome as the representative of the conscience; the gnome is a fictional character who is key to the humour. The name 'Nihilistic Gnome' is significant as it reveals the tone of this character. Nihilistic can be shortened to Niall, a good play on words.

The name William Gnome is more evidence that there is a battle within his head. I wanted to give hints throughout the script that this conversation with the gnome is all in Billy's imagination. "Film is a visual medium. You must find ways to reveal your character's conflicts visually" (Field, 2003, p. 46) Before Billy sees the gnome, we see he is triggered by the mention of the pandemic, I show this visually by his reaction to the newspaper and the tickets.

Serotonin Gnome is also a play on words. Serotonin is a chemical that is associated with antidepressants; another nod to the mental health issues lockdown has caused. The name Sarah is similar to the beginning of the word.

I created Nigel, the neighbour, as I knew I wanted to have a dual conversation between Billy, the Gnome and a significant other, knowing it would expand the content. Meet Nigel, a seventy-five-year-old, hard of hearing, strong minded, opinionated, nosey neighbour. This stereotype is an understatement. The idea of having Billy not acknowledge Nigel, but still answer both parties, as well as the Gnome, respond to both, was challenging. All three are driven by anxiety and not really listening to each other.

The last thing I wanted to write about was the pandemic, however I feel anything that resonates with the general public is engaging and by adding humour it can season the rawness of life, gripping people's attention. I feel it was important for myself to release some of my inner thoughts, I find writing therapeutic; making sense of past and presents memories. I keep replaying situations in my mind to see it all from a different perspective and find a better understanding. The Gnome represents boldness, the part of me that challenges systems, whether right or wrong. Billy represents fear of the outside world and breaking the rules. The conflict caused by the Coronavirus exacerbates people's emotions: fear, anger, aggression, sadness and hopelessness. All this is brought on by mixed messages from officials, creating many different opinions in the general public

My script was seven minutes and should be ten minutes. Looking over the script I felt unsure where to add anything new, I didn't want to keep repeating the same jokes by bringing in other characters. I soon settled on extending the rap as I felt this was the important part of the script. This is where the debate of dealing with lockdown was at its peak. This is the core of the story, to show the conflict within Billy, which is represented by his argument with the gnome. "There is one word that says it better. That word is conflict. Something that opposes the goal you've given to your protagonist. Without that opposition, the story becomes more like a diary, there is no sense of dramatic tension, and ultimately, no reason for the reader to make an emotional investment..." (Brooks, 2011, p. 56)

When writing a script, I was confined to the dialogue between each character; I could only briefly build the atmosphere and set the scene. I enjoyed the challenge of crafting my dialogue. It was my last piece of work that gave me confidence where I incorporated a falsetto style into the script. "Less is more. The more personality and humour and edge you are looking for, the truer this is." (Brooks, 2011, p. 248). My challenge was to use the fundamentals of rap and make it cohesive with the storyline. I made use of my poetic flare adding the rhymes and rhythm into the dialogue.

When I came to research scripts, I opted for a screenplay of my favourite film "Cruel Intentions". By using the screenplay of this piece, that has been on repeat every year for the last twenty years, I would be aided by both the visuals and the lines.

The format of writing to one minute per page and coming to terms with the structure came with its limitations, as a writer I find myself writing less than the word count. I had to extend my script to fit the criteria. When I feel stressed and strained it becomes more of a battle to focus on the end

goal. When I gave myself a day off a lot of fresh ideas were birthed. By balancing between script writing and novel writing I believe I could achieve the two most important parts of each style, the dialogue and the atmosphere of the novel. I want to develop my skills in dialogue writing by more practice.

This is my first attempt at writing a script. There are two challenges ahead of me, sending my piece to publishers and gaining knowledge and experience in these trials and tribulations of the writing journey. The other aspect of this journey is the filming, to bring a piece of work to life and get enjoyment and fulfilment out of my creation is a healthy exchange between the process and production. Self-promoting using social platforms is another way of gain attention. Platforms like YouTube is an example and is easy to manipulate.

References

Brooks, L., 2011. *Story Engineering Mastering the 6 Core Competencies of Successful Writing*. Cincinnati: Writers Digest Books.

Field, S., 2003. *The Definitive Guide To Screen Writing*. St Ives: Ebury Press.