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Principles of Directing

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Script Analysis of *Man of Infinite Sadness* by Brian Tanen

Given Circumstances Analysis

The physical and psychological environment in which the story takes place; the play world's operative conditions as ordained by the playwright.

I: Who?

- a. **Holly** –
 - A woman in her late twenties.
 - Engaged to Ward.
 - Attractive.
 - Works in a business building.
 - Is very put together.
- b. **Ward** –
 - A man in his early thirties.
 - Engaged to Holly.
 - Attractive.
 - Works in finance.
 - Is generally happy.
- c. **Maya** –
 - A woman in her late twenties.
 - Single.
 - Low self-esteem.
 - Works with Holly.
 - Not very put together.
- d. **Charlie** –
 - A man in his early thirties.
 - Single.
 - Used to be unsuccessful.
 - Works in finance.
 - Somewhat dorky.
- e. **Crying Man** –
 - Cries almost every day around 1:00.
 - Works in the same building as Holly and Maya.
 - Wears a suit.
 - Has a medical condition that requires him to cry daily.

II: What?

- a. **Vocational Groups** –Holly and Maya work an office building with a rooftop. Their specific jobs are unclear. The Crying Man works in the same building. Charlie and Ward work in finance.
- b. **Economic systems and social classes** – In order to afford a Porsche, both Charlie and Ward must be high upper-middle class or upper class, and Ward says that Charlie has a “top finance job” (18). Independent of her fiancé’s wealth, Holly is middle-class with a business job, as is Maya and the Crying Man. Holly and Maya both buy inexpensive clothes (17).
- c. **Political and religious systems** – Due to time period and location, the political system is the American democratic republic. The only references to religion are in the form of a dream that Holly has about Ward and her being in heaven (23).
- d. **Dominant philosophies/ideologies** – Maya believes that to be beautiful, one must be thin and perfectly put together, like Holly. Holly believes that only she, the Crying Man, and Maya understand sadness; Ward is too successful to feel it.

III: Where?

- a. **Regional/national** – While not clearly specified, it can be inferred that the action of this play transpires somewhere in an urban city in America because Holly and Ward live in an apartment, and no foreign references are made. Evidence for the city includes a bus route and a car thief, both of which are not aspects of small towns.
- a. **Scene-by-scene breakdown** –
 - Scene 1: The kitchen of Holly and Ward’s apartment.
 - Scene 2: The rooftop of Holly and Maya’s work building.
 - Scene 3: A movie theatre.
 - Scene 4: The rooftop.
 - Scene 5: The kitchen of Holly and Ward’s apartment. A bedroom or bathroom is suggested to be located offstage.
 - Scene 6: A restaurant.
 - Scene 7: The rooftop.
 - Scene 8: The kitchen of Holly and Ward’s apartment.
 - Scene 9: The same.
 - Scene 10: The rooftop.

IV: When?

- b. **Time period** – Modern Day
- c. **Scene-by-scene breakdown/Time of day** –
 - Scene 1: 7:30a.m., breakfast.
 - Scene 2: Around 1:00p.m., lunch, later that same day.
 - Scene 3: 7:30p.m., after dinner, a week later.

Scene 4: Around 1:00p.m., lunch, a day or so later.
 Scene 5: 4:30p.m., before dinner, later that same day.
 Scene 6: 6:30p.m., dinner, Thursday after previous scene.
 Scene 7: Slightly before 1:00, lunch, the next day.
 Scene 8: 4:30p.m., before dinner, later that same day.
 Scene 9: Fantasy – time unclear, but likely the same day.
 Scene 10: Around 1:00p.m., lunch, a week later.

Plot Analysis

Provide the definition for Plot here.

Previous Action: actions that do not transpire in the staged action, but are referenced in exposition. (NOTE: non-linear flashback scenes and exposition are not tantamount. You only deal with exposition here.)

- a. Maya grew up with four sisters who all discussed their periods (5).
- b. She never saw her “father cry once over anything that mattered” (9).
- c. All of Maya’s sisters married (14).
- d. Ward and Charlie attended college together and were fraternity brothers (17).
- e. Charlie could not obtain a date (18).
- f. While in college, Charlie and Ward and other friends took went to Smith, a women’s college, and got lost on the way. They executed several U-turns and received two speeding tickets, but eventually arrived. It was finals week and everyone was asleep, so they wandered for an hour before going back to the car. Their keys were locked inside. They called a locksmith and went home (18-19).
- g. The Crying Man has been diagnosed with “chronically blocked tear ducts” and allergies (28).
- h. Ward and Holly became engaged and began living together; it is unclear which occurred first.
- i. Holly and Maya became friends through work (18).
- j. Holly has seen the Crying Man before (8).
- k. The morning of, or night before, the beginning of the play, Ward’s car is stolen from across the street where he parked it the night before (3).

I: Protagonist: The identifiable and basically good character whose actions determine the outcome of the play.

Holly

- a. Identifiable:
 Holly is identifiable because she is in every scene other than one fantasy scene involving just Maya and the Crying Man, but during this scene she is discussed. She is also identifiable to any audience member who has not been fully satisfied with his or her life, despite positive circumstances s/he may be in. She is a friend, a fiancée, and a coworker.
- b. Basically Good:

Although she believes she has fallen in love with someone other than her fiancé, it is justified because Holly feels lonely and misunderstood in the relationship she has. She is basically good because when she and Maya fight, she comforts her friend despite hurtful things Maya may have said.

c. Actions Determine the Outcome of the Play:

Holly's actions determine the outcome of the play when she confesses that she loves the Crying Man to Maya. This, along with the appearance of a suicide attempt, motivates Maya to make contact with the Crying Man, thus determining the outcome of the play when the Crying Man explains his tears.

II: Beginning Stasis: The situation at the beginning of the play; the protagonist's status quo.

In *Man of Infinite Sadness*, Brian Tenan employs an early Point of Attack.

- a. In the beginning of the play, Holly is in a stable job, a long-term relationship, and has been watching the Crying Man for awhile.

III: Inciting Incident: The event that interrupts and destroys the protagonist's beginning stasis.

Maya eats lunch with Holly on the roof for the first time and sees the Crying Man.

- a. This destroys Holly's stasis because it breaks her routine. Maya has now seen the Crying Man as well, and she is interested in him. It is no longer Holly's secret. This, along with the pressure of the approaching marriage and Maya's desire for a match, breaks Holly's stasis.

IV: Main Action: What the protagonist must do to regain stasis.

In response to the Inciting Incident and in effort to regain stasis, Holly must acknowledge her inexplicable sadness by reestablishing her claim to the Crying Man and using him as a scapegoat to her feelings.

- a. "CM: What's so sad about your life? H: Nothing. My life is ... great" (22).

V: Major Complications/Rising Action: Any action or event that interferes with the protagonist's achieving his/her goal.

a. Complication One:

- i. Maya wants to approach the Crying Man and accuses Holly of having "dibs" on him (9).
- ii. This makes it difficult for Holly to accomplish her Main Action because not only has Maya seen the Crying Man, but she wants to make contact with him, which

would ruin Holly's perfect fantasy. Also, if Holly agrees that she has dibs it will reflect badly upon her because she has a fiancé.

- iii. Holly denies the dibs and brushes off Maya's desire to approach him to downplay the Crying Man's importance to her.
- b. Complication Two:
 - i. Maya says she will not see Charlie again.
 - ii. Part of Holly's motivation for setting Maya up with someone is to distract her from the Crying Man. However, if Maya is uninterested in him, this will not be successful.
 - iii. Holly repeats several times how interested Charlie is in Maya to make him appear more appealing.

VI: Major Crisis: The turning point when the protagonist must make a choice that determines the ending of the story.

- a. Maya professes her love for the Crying Man to Holly and says she is going to speak to him.
- b. Holly's secret about the Crying Man is out, and all her defenses against Maya being interested in him have failed. Holly is stuck because of her engagement, and has been denying an interest or claim to the Crying Man the entire play. Thus, she must now choose whether to admit her feelings regarding him or continue denying them and allow Maya to confess her love to the Crying Man.

VII: Major Structural Climax: The single moment when the protagonist does something that resolves the Main Action.

- a. Holly confesses her love and, with Maya, rushes to the Crying Man's side.
- b. This action determines the outcome of the play because it is the reason that the Crying Man speaks to the women and provides the reason for his tears. If Holly had denied her feelings or convinced Maya to leave the Crying Man alone, they would not know why he cries and the illusion of the Crying Man would not be shattered.
- c. While she attempted to reestablish her claim to the Crying Man and was rejected, and thus also lost her scapegoat, part of Holly's Main Action has been fulfilled. She has finally acknowledged her sadness and, in doing so, realized that it's okay to feel sad or overwhelmed even though she has everything she wants.

VIII: Ending Stasis/Falling Action: The few and relatively insignificant actions that transpire after the Major Structural Climax.

- a. Maya decides to call Charlie, and Holly claims to be happy with Ward.
- b. Holly is in a new stasis. She has learned to come to terms with her sad emotions without funneling them through a vague, fantasized Crying Man.

Root Action Statement

The smallest division of a play's plot; the series of actions are divided into a moment-to-moment configuration.

In Brian Tanen's *The Man of Infinite Sadness*, Holly, a thin, attractive, working woman in her late twenties, struggles to come to terms with her negative emotions by channeling them vicariously through a man she often sees crying at work; however, Holly's friend Maya also becomes interested in the Crying Man and confesses her love for him, which causes Holly to face the fantasized Crying Man and her emotions head-on, resulting in a new perspective free of the Crying Man as an emotion funnel.

Thematic Analysis

I: Thematic Topics

- Sadness as a legitimate, and not always fully understood, emotion.
- Dreams vs. reality
- Relationship difficulties

II: Thematic Statement: A thematic statement describes the playwright's point of view on a subject and offers interpretation of the story's meaning.

- a. In *The Man of Infinite Sadness*, by Brian Tanen, Tanen addresses the topic of sadness as a complex emotion that is legitimate despite positive circumstances.
- b. Holly is sad although her life is extremely positive, and she does not fully understand this, just as she does not fully understand the Crying Man's tears.

Central Production Metaphor

A metaphor that stimulates the imagination of the production artists and unifies all elements of production.

- a. *The Man of Infinite Sadness* is the reflection of a face in a puddle on a cloudy day.
- b. Rainy days often have a sense of melancholy, just as a cloud of sadness hangs over Holly. The reflections in puddles are often rippled and unclear, just as Holly's perception of both the Crying Man's and her own emotions are unclear. Particularly, the face reflection is important because Holly sees herself in the Crying Man, she sees her face, when it is not her at all who is staring back at her.