

# Odyssey (The Rooster?)

Written by David Baldwin and Jamie Tinch

Directed by Pamela White

### Director's Note:

On the surface, *Odyssey (The Rooster?)* is a story about alcoholism, competition, and what it takes to keep a relationship intact. The competition especially shines through in the script. David and Jamie's story begins with a drinking game that they are both determined to win. After losing, intent on not letting David win, Jamie starts a new game: one that holds much higher stakes. And David is more than willing to play along.

On a deeper level, *Odyssey (The Rooster?)* is a story about toxic loyalty in a relationship that is holding on by a thread. The looming end to this relationship is portrayed through scenic elements and props, specifically flickering lights (bulbs on their last legs) and a nearly empty bottle of tequila. The desperation to keep the relationship intact comes more from my work with the actors. We spent about an hour of our short time together on table work, talking about the relationship between Jamie and David, as well as the weight that all of these characters' lines carry. We located the moments of tenderness amidst the competition that keep the relationship working when all other signs point to divorce. I also made it very clear to the actors that this moment has the potential to be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Their acting makes those stakes clear.

My hope is that the audience will be able to ride this rollercoaster of emotions alongside the characters. Ensuring that the actors took every single one of their lines seriously was integral to creating this effect, and I also had some fun playing with the characters standing up and sitting down in time with the tension rising and falling. And although the play seems to end on a happy and healthy note, the flicking lights will remain on the table, and there should still be some tequila left in the bottle. My intention is to have the audience leave still questioning whether or not this relationship is going to make it.

## Cast:

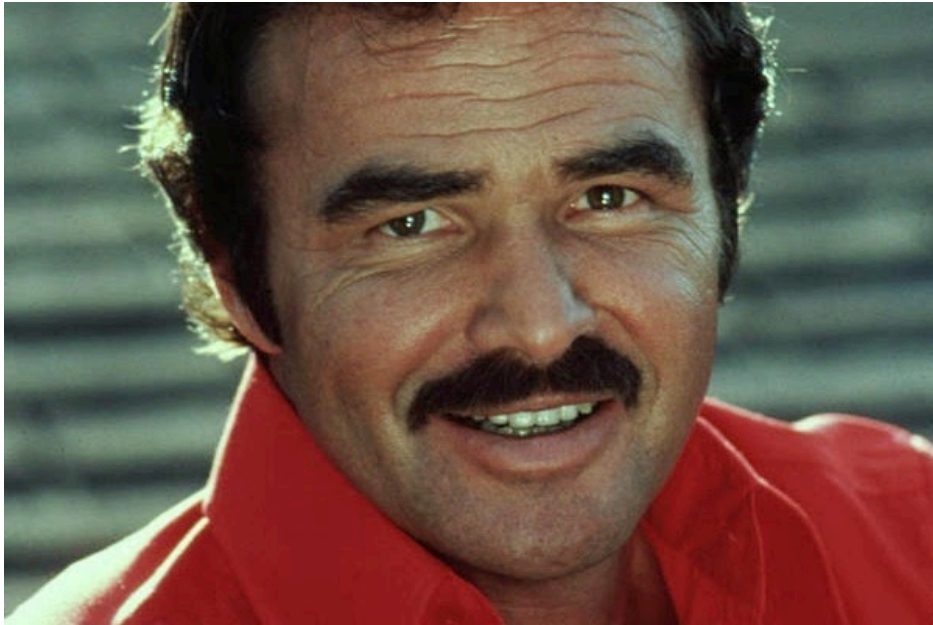
Jamie was brought to life by Jillian Quinitiliani



David was brought to life by Julian Perez



# RESEARCH PHOTOS



A look at Burt Reynolds' Mustache



El Espolon Tequila Blanco – Jillian Quintiliani bought a bottle and we rinsed it out to fill it with water





Two angles of Lucy Chen's apartment from the television show "The Rookie" – Used as inspiration for the imagined layout of David and Jamie's kitchen



Image of a small kitchen – Used as inspiration for the imagined layout of David and Jamie’s kitchen



Therapy scene from the television show “Falcon and the Winter Soldier” – Used to help the actors understand the mood of the play, and served as a source of inspiration for the final position of the actors



Photo of a woman in a robe with a messy bun – Used as inspiration for Jamie's costume + hairstyle



Inspiration photos for David's costume

# Notes from Meeting the Playwrights

Q1: What was your inspiration for writing this piece?

- Began with Isaac Byrne's Odyssey assignment – needed a prop and a strange seduction
- The director gave David and Jamie a lot of free reign
- The objective of the characters: I'm going to read off this bottle until you break
- The rules of the game:
  - If you don't break, the other person has to drink and you get to insult them
- Only really pursued this out on paper once after class – not a lot of deep thought into the backstory of the characters (lots of room for director and actor choices)

Q2: What were the intended ages of the characters?

- Probably in their early forties – the characters were based on David and Jamie since they had minimal time to work together
- Likely have been married for 5-7 years – long enough to have a 3 or 4 year old dog and to have had an abortion and a divorce

Q3: How many times do you imagine this conversation has happened before? How much time has passed since the cheating and abortion actually happened?

- This game has been played many times before – it's basically an inside joke
- This is new information brought to the table – it is the first time the characters have had this conversation

Q4: What, or who, is Sammy?

- Sammy is the dog that Jamie and David have together! – They were deciding who would take the dog after a divorce

Q5: Anything else you're dying to share?

- Liz Phair's "Divorce Song" song was the original music – the original director seemed to have been using this project to process his own divorce



I. What is this world in terms of politics?

At least within the household of Jamie and David, politics seem to be very liberal. Jamie makes it very clear that she likely would have forgiven David for sleeping with someone else, and maybe even been fine with that relationship, if he had just been honest with her. David also does not say that Jamie shouldn't have gotten an abortion because it goes against God's wishes or the law, but simply because she should have consulted the father (him) before making that decision. Politics also do not appear to be a bone of contention for anyone in this world.

II. What is this world in terms of social status/factors?

Given that this world seems to be based in the reality of 2023, men certainly hold slightly more power in society than women. However, in the space of this kitchen, David and Jamie seem to be on pretty equal playing ground. However, we can still see David feeling that he should have some sort of say or control over Jamie's body, while Jamie was much more willing to let David have full reign over what he does with his body so long as he is honest with her about it.

III. What is this world in terms of religion?

Religion does not hold a huge amount of importance in this space. No Gods or religious beliefs/"rules" are ever mentioned by the characters, even when discussing issues of infidelity and abortion. If anything, sex and alcohol can be compared to religion in this world. Jamie and David practically praise "the rooster," both in reference to El Espolon's mascot and the male anatomy.

IV. What is this world in terms of economic factors?

This kitchen seems to live in a middle class world. Having done some research, El Espolon tequila is not absurdly expensive. However, given how quickly David and Jamie go through \$30 bottles of liquor, I doubt that they are terribly concerned with their finances. However, Jamie does mention not being ready to be a mom. Of course, this could simply be in reference to her emotional maturity, however, I wouldn't be surprised if there was some subtext regarding not being financially prepared to have a baby. We do also know that David has some sort of secure job, given that Jamie mentions his "late nights at work" (which were actually times when he slept with Amanda, but this implies that he has a steady, full-time job). It also says something that Jamie was able to afford an abortion in the first place.

V. When does this play take place?

This play takes place in the year 2023. Since the time of year is not specified, I have made the executive decision to have this story be set in early December of 2023 (right after Thanksgiving).

VI. Where does this play take place?

This play takes place in the kitchen of a small apartment where David and Jamie live.

VII. What is rewarded and what is punished in this world?

Honesty is certainly rewarded in this world. Both David and Jamie make it very clear that they would have been significantly less mad at each other had they simply told each other their secrets instead of hiding them. In this vein, one could also say that communication is heavily rewarded in this world's relationships. The opposites (dishonesty and secrecy) are punished and cause great problems in this world. Humor also seems to be rewarded in this world. We can see this in the fact that the name of the game that David and Jamie begin the scene playing is to get the other person to laugh. Given the competitive nature of the game, one can also conclude that winning is rewarded in this world, and losing is punished.

VIII. Who has power in this world and why?

Power is given to the people who "win" in this world. Though David and Jamie ultimately decide to break their agreement and "go halvesies on Sammy," it was Jamie, the loser, who had to ask permission from David, the winner, for this change in the rules. This power dynamic comes from the competitive nature of this household and relationship. Knowledge also holds a great amount of power in this world. This also comes down to the competitive nature of David and Jamie's relationship. However, it also has a lot to do with how secretive both characters are shown to be. If you can figure out the other person's secrets, you have a lot to use and hold against them. We can see this in the fact that Jamie and David go back and forth for several lines about "what Jamie knows/has against David," and in the fact that tension begins to release between the two once secrets begin to be shared (since there is less of an imbalance of power). Knowledge also tends to make a person feel more confident, which naturally holds power for humans.

IX. How important is money in this world?

Within the confines of this kitchen, money does not seem to hold a huge amount of importance. It is never mentioned in David and Jamie's conversation, game, or arguments. However, having done some research, money is definitely an important factor in creating the environment and situation in which this world resides. It allows David and Jamie to finance their (at least momentary) excessive drinking, and it gives them the privilege of having a comfortable place to live and drink together in privacy.

X. How does the environment affect the characters in the play?

The environment (setting-wise) is not specified in the text. However, my theory is that the characters are sitting in their own kitchen. In this world, there is definitely additional tension created by the fact that their *home* no longer feels like a safe haven or an unconditionally loving space. This could also explain why David and Jamie have no inhibitions when drinking tequila excessively straight from the bottle (something people don't typically do in public for the sake of upholding their image and staying composed).

XI. What are the events of the play?

- A. Jamie sits alone with a bottle of El Espolon tequila
- B. David enters
- C. Jamie and David review the rules of the game they are about to play
- D. David reads the description on the bottle in a funny way, attempting to make Jamie laugh
- E. Jamie doesn't laugh, so David takes a shot and Jamie insults his mustache
- F. Jamie continues where David left off reading. She caresses David's leg at one point
- G. David does not react, so Jamie drinks and David insults her body odor
- H. David continues reading where Jamie left off
- I. Jamie eggs David on, saying he can do better
- J. David stands and reads a government warning against drinking while pregnant very seriously
- K. Jamie does not react; David reads the warning again, more gravely
- L. Jamie responds without emotion; David screams the government warning at her
- M. Jamie laughs bitterly and takes the bottle from David.



- N. Jamie repeatedly tells David that “she knew,” ultimately revealing that David had been cheating on her for a year or more
- O. Jamie chastises David for lying to her about sleeping with Amanda, then breaks the rules of the game by taking a shot after laughing
- P. David reveals that he started sleeping with Amanda because he found out that Jamie had gotten an abortion behind his back
- Q. Jamie argues that she can choose what to do with her body without David’s input, and that the pregnancy was an accident anyway
- R. David reveals that he is Jamie’s husband, and says that he would have been a great dad. He takes the bottle back and drinks.
- S. Jamie and David exchange the bottle several times in silence, drinking from it
- T. Jamie quietly starts reading the bottle’s description again
- U. David and Jamie start laughing and making chicken noises/motions
- V. David gets two cups for Jamie to fill with Tequila. They sit knee to knee
- W. Jamie admits defeat, but they agree to “go halvesies” on the prize
- X. David pulls Jamie in for a hug.
- Y. David and Jamie toast to the rooster.

**XII. Where do we start?**

We start with Jamie sitting alone and in a very tense relationship with both the bottle of tequila she is holding and David, who walks in late.

**XIII. Where do we end up and why?**

We end with David and Jamie wrapped in each other’s arms, portraying a very gentle and relaxed relationship between the two of them, and between the people and the tequila they are drinking. Part of the reason we get there is because of how much alcohol the characters consume over the course of the three pages (they are entirely wasted by the end of the show), but this also comes because the characters decide to finally talk through their issues and be more open with one another (openness = decreased tension + increased relaxation).

**XIV. Where/when does the tension rise? Where does it release?**

- A. Slight tension increase at the very beginning with the first line being “You’re late” – sets up a hostile/intense environment
- B. Tension is upheld through mentions of winning (sense of competition)

- C. Tension decreases for audience when David begins reading the description on the tequila bottle (the funny accent should get some laughs)
- D. Tension increases back to original state when Jamie doesn't laugh and tells David to drink
- E. Tension decreases for audience when Jamie insults David's mustache and David responds by saying "Ooooh"
- F. Tension potentially decreases for the audience when Jamie starts reading from the bottle
- G. Sexual tension increase when Jamie starts caressing David's leg while reading from the bottle
- H. Sexual tension diminishes when David does not respond to Jamie's advances
- I. General tension increase when David insults the smell of Jamie's skin and mentions that the two have stopped having sex.
- J. Tension decrease when David starts reading from the bottle in another funny accent
- K. Tension increase when David reads the government warning for the first time
- L. Tension increase when David reads the government warning a second time (more gravely)
- M. Tension increase when David yells the government warning at Jamie (the third time he reads it)
- N. Slight tension decrease when Jamie laughs – even though her laugh is bitter, it breaks the silence and stress for the audience
- O. Tension increases gradually as Jamie and David go back and forth about what she "knows"
- P. Tension increase/withstood for characters when Jamie brings up Amanda – potential tension decrease for audience members due to the shock value of the reveal
- Q. Tension increase when Jamie yells at David about lying to her and the two go back and forth about "fuck him" – audience may laugh at "fuck you" "yeah, fuck me" "yeah, fuck you"
- R. Tension increase for audience when David reveals Amanda got an abortion – tension simply withstood for characters (depending on actor instincts, actually getting to talk about this might be decreasing the tension between them)
- S. Tension increase when David and Jamie argue over whose decision the abortion should have been
- T. Moment of shock for audience (intended to be a tension increase) when David reveals that he and Jamie are married.

- U. Tension starts to fall but mostly withstands as Jamie and David pass the bottle back and forth to drink
- V. Tension decrease when Jamie starts reading from the bottle again (especially when she starts giggling)
- W. Tension decrease when David makes a cock-a-doodle-doo sound and Jamie start clucking (while they are both laughing)
- X. Tension decrease (at least for characters) when Jamie cracks the “Oh, you know I love a good cock” joke
- Y. Tension decrease when David wraps his arms around Jamie and melts into him
- Z. Tension decrease when David and Jamie clink glasses – gives a sense of finality to their tension being resolved

**XV. Is there a decision that makes the ending inevitable?**

Jamie’s instinct (given how wasted she is, I don’t know that we can actually call it a decision) to go back to the game the couple was playing at the top of the scene seems to be the driving factor in releasing the tension and getting the characters into a more gentle relationship and interaction with each other. Had she not opened the door for a cock joke, the scene likely would have ended in great tension. Knowing that she probably did this because she was drunk, though, one could also argue that David and Jamie’s collective decision to continue drinking excessively made the ending inevitable.

**XVI. What is different at the end?**

First of all, both Jamie and David genuinely seem happy to be where they are and with each other at the end of the play, whereas they both seemed eager to be anywhere else at the beginning. The characters also have a different relationship to the tequila. One might say that it is a more healthy relationship, given that they are taking proper shots rather than just chugging tequila from the bottle. With that, one could also argue that David and Jamie’s relationship with the tequila mirrors their relationship with each other. The emotional environment also changes from hostile to home-y.

**XVII. What is the emotional experience of the play?**

This play creates an emotional rollercoaster for the audience. Tension increases and decreases constantly. This whole story feels like the trend of “never let them know

your next move.” Although the play has a happy ending, the audience should be left waiting for the next bad thing to happen.

XVIII. What is the story of the play in one sentence?

Over the last drops of a bottle of tequila, a relationship finally falls apart, then comes back stronger.

XIX. How can you make your audience go on that ride?

I plan to work with my actors on making sure that they take every sentence seriously. Although this play may make the audience laugh at times, this comedy won't work if the actors aren't taking their characters' struggles, stakes, and objectives seriously. In this vein, I will spend the first rehearsal really breaking down the script with my actors and encouraging them to learn the subtext of their lines as well, if not better than, they learn the text itself. I also want to really focus on the shifts that happen. There is a constant rollercoaster of tension throughout this piece, but showcasing the distinction between the “beats” is especially important for this story.

XX. What moments are key to creating that experience?

- A. The first image of David walking into Jamie sitting alone with a bottle of tequila and saying “You're late.” – lots of subtext to play with here for actors.
- B. Jamie caresses David's leg while reading about the rooster, followed by a brief back and forth regarding what caused the two to stop having sex.
- C. David reading the government warning on the bottle (making sure that the intensity increases each time)
- D. Jamie revealing that David has been cheating on her
- E. David revealing that Jamie got an abortion without consulting him
- F. David revealing that he and Jamie are married
- G. Jamie responding to David saying that he would have been a great dad with “I know.”
- H. David and Jamie laughing together over an inside joke about the rooster
- I. David pulling Jamie in for a hug and Jamie melting into him
- J. Jamie and David clinking glasses in a toast to the rooster

XXI. Additional Research

- A. Who is Burt Reynolds?

1. [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000608/bio/?ref=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000608/bio/?ref=nm_ov_bio_sm)

B. El Espolon Tequila Blanco

1. <https://www.espolontequila.com/en-us/tequila/blanco/>

C. Cost of abortion (surgical and via a pill)

1. <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/health/abortion-cost>

D. Cost of apartments in NYC (2023)

1. <https://www.apartments.com/rent-market-trends/new-york-ny/>