Emilly Elizabeth Custodio s1810412

The Red-Thread

CHARACTERS:

BRUNO – protagonist; 12, 16, 18 and 30 years-old.

GABRIEL – love interest; 12, 16, 18 and 30 years-old.

GABRIEL'S MOM - voice only.

ELVIS – 16-18 and 30 years-old.

FERNANDO – 16-30 years-old.

ARTHUR – 18 years-old.

HELENA – 18 years-old.

CARLA – 30 years-old.

BARTENDER – 30 years-old.

OBSERVATIONS:

All actors must be of a Brazilian, or at least another latino ethnicity since the play is set in Brazil.

The clothes tell a story too. Prologue scene both boys are wearing "love colors" (purple, red, etc.) At 16 Bruno is supposed to be wearing darker tones that starts to fade to white as he starts to come to terms with his sexuality. As for Gabriel he'll go from white to more vibrant colors. Prologue scene they'll be stuck with a red-thread binding them in their wrists, and the red-thread must always be present and visible during the rest of the play – even if GABRIEL or BRUNO are not present in the scene.

SCENE 1 - (*PROLOGUE - 12 years-old*)

BRUNO and GABRIEL are sitting at a sidewalk outside of their houses and BRUNO is showing GABRIEL string tricks with a red-thread. You can see the door to their houses and there's a big bin on the corner of the stage.

BRUNO:	See, it's a spider-web!
GABRIEL:	Awesome.
BRUNO:	Elvis taught me today at school.
GABRIEL:	Can we do something else?
BRUNO:	What you wanna do?
GABRIEL:	I don't know. (Beat) Carla and Helena are skipping rope at the square, we can
	join them.
BRUNO:	Ew. No. That's girl's stuff. Here, give me your hand.
GABRIEL:	Why?
BRUNO:	It's a magic trick.

(BRUNO does the 'hand trap' trick with GABRIEL)

- GABRIEL: Wow! How did you do that?
- BRUNO: Magician never tells.
- GABRIEL: Tell me!
- BRUNO: No!
- GABRIEL: Give me the thread, then. Let me try!

(GABRIEL reaches for the thread)

BRUNO: No!

GABRIEL: Come on!

(GABRIEL jumps on BRUNO trying to get the thread. BRUNO lies down on the floor, GABRIEL is sitting on top of him, pining the boy's hands above his head. BRUNO keeps trying to fight him off. Eventually he gives up and they both stay put on that position for a while. GABRIEL subtly begins to lean in and BRUNO doesn't do anything to stop him)

GABRIEL'S MOM: Gabriel, lunch is ready! Come inside!

(BRUNO quickly sits up, throwing GABRIEL on the floor)

BRUNO: Get off me!

(GABRIEL gets up. The RED-THREAD is shown binding both the boy's left hands. They don't seem to notice)

- GABRIEL: I'll still get you to tell me.
- BRUNO: I wanna see you try.
- GABRIEL: Later?
- BRUNO: Later.

(GABRIEL stands up and walks away to stage left. We see the RED-THREAD stretching.) (BRUNO starts looking around for his thread but can't find it).

SCENE 2 – (LOCKER-ROOM – 16 years-old)

BRUNO is in a locker-room with ELVIS and FERNANDO. A soccer match has just ended. They're all dripping in sweat. FERNANDO is a little distant from the other two boys.

ELVIS: Dude, if we keep playing like this, the guys from Notre-Dame won't stand a chance!

(BRUNO laughs and takes off his jersey. ELVIS hands him a towel)

ELVIS:	I really need this win, man. (Beat) Helena said if we win, we're gonna
	you know.
BRUNO:	Are you serious? (Laughs and taps ELVIS on his shoulder) And my boy becomes
	a man!
ELVIS:	Funny.
BRUNO:	Don't worry. I'll win this one for you.
ELVIS:	What about you and Carla?
BRUNO:	We broke up.
ELVIS:	Tell me something new.
BRUNO:	(Laughing) Fuck you.
ELVIS:	What was it this time?
BRUNO:	I hooked up with Isabela.
ELVIS:	Bruno!
BRUNO:	I couldn't help it!
ELVIS:	You never can.
BRUNO:	I'm a dude. It's not my fault.

(FERNANDO turns to face ELVIS and BRUNO)

FERNANDO: You're not a dude. You're a dickhead.

(BRUNO and ELVIS look at him)

ELVIS:	Excuse me?
FERNANDO:	You heard me.
ELVIS:	Well, it's not your business.
FERNANDO:	Carla is my friend, so kind of is my business.
ELVIS:	How cute. Girlfriends gotta stick together, right? (ELVIS laughs and looks
	at BRUNO for support)
FERNANDO:	Oh I see. That's supposed to be funny because I'm gay.
ELVIS:	(Whispering loudly to BRUNO) You know what I think? (Beat) I think
	Fernando here has a crush on you.

(BRUNO awkwardly laughs)

FERNANDO: Fuck off, Elvis.

ELVIS: Chill, dude. (*ELVIS puts on his shirt*) Focus that PMS anger on your game tomorrow night.

(FERNANDO doesn't reply. ELVIS closes his locker)

ELVIS: OK. I'm off. I'll see you at the party tonight?

BRUNO:	I can't. I'm gonna study with Gabriel.
ELVIS:	Again? What are you, his girlfriend?
FERNANDO:	You know, Elvis. I think you're the one that has a crush on Bruno.
BRUNO:	Shut up, Fernando.
ELVIS:	Yes, Fernando shut up. (ELVIS picks up his backpack and starts to exit
	the stage. He turns to BRUNO) See you tomorrow night then, man.
BRUNO:	Later.

(ELVIS exits stage)

(FERNANDO is quiet, looking at BRUNO, who is still shirtless)

BRUNO: What are you staring at?

(FERNANDO looks away, closing his locker and walking out of stage) (BRUNO puts on a clean shirt with his back to the audience).

SCENE 3 – (GABRIEL'S ROOM, 16 years-old)

GABRIEL is lying on his bed with his school's book and notebook in front of him. BRUNO is pacing around the room, annoyed and distracting.

- GABRIEL: Are you gonna study or what? (*Without taking his eye off the books*)
- BRUNO: We've already studied the whole week. (*Beat*) Let's go to the party.
- GABRIEL: Don't want to. (Making notes on his notebook and/or highlighting book)
- BRUNO: You never want to.
- GABRIEL: We have a test tomorrow morning.

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- BRUNO: We won't stay for long.
- GABRIEL: Yeah, right. As if Elvis would let you do that.
- BRUNO: What is that supposed to mean?

(GABRIEL doesn't reply)

- BRUNO: You got a problem with Elvis?
- GABRIEL: No. Can we just study?
- BRUNO: What's wrong with Elvis?
- GABRIEL: There's nothing wrong with him.
- BRUNO: So let's just go to the party.
- GABRIEL: (Raising his voice) No! (Looks up at BRUNO)

(They stare at each other for a moment)

- BRUNO: Well, I'm going.
- GABRIEL: Fine. (Goes back to highlighting the book)
- BRUNO: I want you to come.
- GABRIEL: Why? So I can sit in the corner while you make out with half the girls from our class?

(BRUNO watches GABRIEL in silence. GABRIEL doesn't take his eyes off his book. BRUNO picks up his things and exits. GABRIEL throws a pillow at the door frustrated)

SCENE 4 – (2 YEARS LATER; BAR, 18 years-old)

BRUNO, ELVIS, ARTHUR and HELENA are all dressed in graduation clothes around a table at a bar, drinking beer, live music playing on the background. There's a big beer bottle at the center of the table. ELVIS has his arm around HELENA.

ELVIS: A toast- (raises his beer glass) to getting out of this shit-hole!

(They all have a toast)

ARTHUR: Bruno, where's Isabela?

(BRUNO finishes his beer glass in one sip)

- BRUNO: (Laughing and clearly drunk) Who?
- ELVIS: She dumped his ass this morning.
- HELENA: Why? Who did you cheat her with?
- BRUNO: Ha-ha, very funny (*Takes the beer bottle on the center of the table and pours more into his glass*).
- ELVIS: She's moving to São Paulo.

(BRUNO drinks his beer)

- ARTHUR: To be fair, long distance never works.
- HELENA: (*To ELVIS*) Thank god we're both staying here. (*ELVIS gives her a quick kiss on the lips. She turns to BRUNO*) But it's not like you ever liked her.

BRUNO: She was cool.

ARTHUR: You know who's staying here...

ELVIS: Carla! (*Turns to BRUNO*) You know, I heard she's single again.

(BRUNO drinks)

BRUNO: Not my problem.

ELVIS: When was the last time you two talked to each other?

(GABRIEL enters. He has a beer bottle on his hand. He stays at SR and doesn't interact with the group. BRUNO's attention goes to him)

ARTHUR: Probably at our last game's afterparty. Didn't you two hook up there?

(BRUNO nods, distracted, still with his eyes on GABRIEL)

- ELVIS: Oh man, I'm gonna miss playing with you guys.
- ARTHUR: I know, man. (Looks at the time) Oh, we gotta go!

ELVIS: Oh yeah, let's go. Bruno, you're paying, right? (Looks at BRUNO and sees he's not paying attention. Snaps his fingers in front of him) Earth to Bruno!

(BRUNO quickly turns his attention to the table)

BRUNO: What's up?

ARTHUR: What are you staring at?

(They all look in GABRIEL's direction)

- HELENA: Wasn't he your friend?
- BRUNO: He is my friend.
- ELVIS: Whatever, man. We gotta go to the party, come on.

(BRUNO takes money out from his pocket and gives it to ELVIS).

BRUNO: You guys go ahead. I'll catch up with you later.

(BRUNO gets up and walks over to GABRIEL. ELVIS, ARTHUR and HELENA start heading out through SL)

- ELVIS: Do you think he noticed he gave me more than what's in our bill?
- ARTHUR: The way he's wasted? Definitely not.

(The three of them laugh and exits)

BRUNO:	Hey.
GABRIEL:	Hey.
BRUNO:	I didn't see you at graduation.
GABRIEL:	I didn't go.
BRUNO:	Why not?
GABRIEL:	I had other stuff to do.
BRUNO:	Didn't you get your diploma?

- GABRIEL: I got it this morning with the principal.
- BRUNO: Oh.
- GABRIEL: Congratulations on winning your last game.
- BRUNO: Oh! Yes! Thanks!
- GABRIEL: I meant to go but...
- BRUNO: Don't worry. You wouldn't like it.
- GABRIEL: Why not?
- BRUNO: I don't know. You never really liked those things.
- GABRIEL: What things?
- BRUNO: You know... normal teenage things.
- GABRIEL: That's not true. I went to most of your games.
- BRUNO: Oh sure! (*Laughing*) you never liked it though.
- GABRIEL: That's... mostly true.
- BRUNO: Mostly true?
- GABRIEL: (Looking down) I didn't hate all of it...
- BRUNO: What did you like it then?
- GABRIEL: (Looks at BRUNO) I liked to watch you play.

(There's an awkward silence where they both stare at each other from a few feet away) (BRUNO looks at GABRIEL's beer bottle)

- BRUNO: (*Pointing at the bottle*) That's a first.
- GABRIEL: Oh yeah. I thought I'd try it but it's awful, man. Don't know how you like it.
- BRUNO: (Laughs) Can I?
- GABRIEL: Go for it.

(He gives the bottle to BRUNO who immediately takes a sip)

GABRIEL: So, are you staying in town for college?

BRUNO: Yes.

GABRIEL: Med?

BRUNO: Yes.

(GABRIEL nods and looks ahead. BRUNO drinks more of the bottle)

GABRIEL: Remember when we were 12 and we wanted to be magicians?

(BRUNO stares at GABRIEL for a while in silence)

BRUNO: No.

(GABRIEL nods and walks to CS looking down. BRUNO drinks more, finishes the bottle and leaves it on the corner of the stage)

GABRIEL: I'm moving to Rio.

BRUNO: What? (Looks at GABRIEL)

GABRIEL: Yeah.

BRUNO: For college?

GABRIEL: For forever. (*Beat*) My grandma is really sick, so my mother wants to move in closer to her.

BRUNO: Why can't she come live here with you?

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- GABRIEL: Because our entire family is in Rio. It's easier if we move...
- BRUNO: No!
- GABRIEL: What?
- BRUNO: You can't move.
- GABRIEL: What's it gonna change for you?
- BRUNO: What question is that? You're my friend...
- GABRIEL: Am I? (GABRIEL walks closer to him) When was the last time we hung out together?
- BRUNO: That's not fair. You never liked doing anything.
- GABRIEL: We are next door neighbors. When was the last time you came over?
- BRUNO: Why are you putting this all on me?
- GABRIEL: You're the one that said we're friends.
- BRUNO: So you're saying we're not friends.
- GABRIEL: I'm saying (*beat*) whatever.
- BRUNO: No. You can't do this. I invited you to the parties, I tried to get you to play soccer,I tried to hook you up with almost every girl friend of mine and you always saidno.
- GABRIEL: I said no to all your stupid shit. But you never wanted to hang out just the two of us anymore.
- BRUNO: So all my time had to be devoted to you?
- GABRIEL: I'm not saying that! (*Beat*) You know what, you were with a different girl every night. When it wasn't a girl, it was the guys from the soccer team. If I was there, I wouldn't have made a fucking difference.
- BRUNO: Of course you would.
- GABRIEL: No, I wouldn't. Just like me going away now won't affect anything in your

precious life.

BRUNO: Stop it!

GABRIEL: Oh please, then... tell me how you're gonna miss me.

(BRUNO hesitates for a while, then grabs GABRIEL's collar and kisses him. When GABRIEL goes to kiss him back, BRUNO backs off)

BRUNO: I - I have to go.

GABRIEL: What?

BRUNO: Good luck in Rio.

(BRUNO exits)

(GABRIEL touches his lips).

SCENE 5 – (12 YEARS LATER; BRUNO and CARLA's kitchen, 30 years-old)

CARLA is sitting at the kitchen's table, tired. There's a plate and a coffee mug on the table, and a clock on the wall where she keeps checking the time. BRUNO walks in SL, drunk.

CARLA: Where were you?

(BRUNO only looks at her but stays silent)

CARLA: You know what, I don't wanna know.

BRUNO: Good.

(BRUNO walks to the fridge, takes a beer bottle out of it, bangs it on the kitchen counter to

open it and drinks)

- CARLA: It's 8AM.
- BRUNO: Are you my mother?
- CARLA: No... (*CARLA gets up and takes the dishes to the sink. She's not looking at him*) Helena called.
- BRUNO: Yeah? (*He sits at the table*)
- CARLA: She and Elvis are having a boy.
- BRUNO: I hope he doesn't get Elvis's nose.
- CARLA: She asked us to be godparents.

(BRUNO nods and takes a sip)

(CARLA turns to look at him)

- CARLA: I want kids, Bruno.
- BRUNO: Carla, please... It's been a long night.
- CARLA: As are all the other nights.
- BRUNO: I'm not doing this again.
- CARLA: (*Raising her voice*) I'm the one that can't do this again, Bruno!
- BRUNO: What do you want from me?
- CARLA: I want you to behave like my husband!

(BRUNO takes a sip from his beer bottle)

(CARLA hesitates but walks over to him and sits on his lap and attempts to kiss him, but he turns his face away. CARLA gets up, turns her back to him and walks to CS)

CARLA:	You're gone every night. You come home every morning and you don't even try
	to sneak in. You're always drunk and you won't even kiss me anymore. It's like
	you're trying to send me away. (She turns to him) Well, you got your wish.
BRUNO:	What do you mean?
CARLA:	I'm done, Bruno.
BRUNO:	Come on, Carla Don't be dramatic.

CARLA: No. I'm serious. (Beat) I want a divorce.

(BRUNO stares at her for a moment incredulous, grabs his beer bottle and storms out)

SCENE 6 – (BAR, 30 years-old)

BRUNO is drinking alone, there are already three bottles of beer empty on his table and he's drinking from a fourth one. FERNANDO enters and sees him.

BRUNO: Do I know you?

FERNANDO: It's Fernando.

BRUNO: Oh yeah... Are you still with... (beat) I wanna say Antonio?

FERNANDO: Yes. And not really. (*Beat*) How are you doing? How's Carla? I heard you two got married.

BRUNO: Well, now we're not. (*Drinks*)

FERNANDO: I'm sorry.

BRUNO: Can I ask you something? (FERNANDO nods) How do you do it? How do I do what? FERNANDO: BRUNO: Be who you are. You know... Gay? (BRUNO nods) You can say it. It's not a bad word. (Beat) I just- am. FERNANDO: I don't know. I don't have a saying on who I love and if it's another man so be it. Straight people don't hide who they love, so why should I? BRUNO: But everybody teased you in high school... FERNANDO: I just don't care what other people think, I guess. BRUNO: Easier said than done. (BRUNO drinks again). Yes, but once you do it, it's the best feeling of freedom in the world. FERNANDO:

(BRUNO stays in silence and drinks)

(FERNANDO watches him for a while)

FERNANDO:	You know, I used to drink a lot before I came out.
BRUNO:	What do you mean by that?
FERNANDO:	Just –
BRUNO:	(Raising his voice) Are you implying that I'm gay?
FERNANDO:	Bruno, calm down.
BRUNO:	You come here making assumptions about me and you want me to calm
	down? Get out of here!
FERNANDO:	Bruno, it's ok –
BRUNO:	Get the fuck out! (BRUNO gets up abruptly, and the bottles fall out of the
	table onto the floor)

(The BARTENDER enters, running to see what's going on and stands between BRUNO and

FERNANDO, facing BRUNO)

BARTENDER:	I'm going to have to ask you to leave.
BRUNO:	He's pissing me off! (points at FERNANDO)
FERNANDO:	It's OK. I'm going. (Beat) I really hope you find courage to be yourself one
	day.
BRUNO:	Fuck you!

(FERNANDO exists stage)

- BARTENDER: Bruno, we talked about this. No more fights. You have to go.
- BRUNO: No. I want another beer.
- BARTENDER: Go find it somewhere else then.
- BRUNO: Fine. I will.

(BRUNO pushes the BARTENDER out of his way but barely manages to take a few steps before stepping on one of the beer bottles on the floor, falling face down and passing out) (BARTENDER runs to help him)

SCENE 7 – (A FEW MONTHS LATER; STREET, 30 years-old)

BRUNO comes from SR walking down the street with a water bottle on his hand. He looks healthy and happy. He runs into ELVIS, who's coming from SL.

ELVIS: Bruno? (Beat) Hi, man!

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BRUNO:	Elvis! Hi! (Hugs him)
ELVIS:	I didn't know you were out!
BRUNO:	I was just released this morning.
ELVIS:	That's great, man. And you're OK?
BRUNO:	I'm OK, man.
ELVIS:	Good. I'm glad.
BRUNO:	And how's Helena?
ELVIS:	She's great! Her and Carla are out shopping all morning today. I'm on my way
	to meet them and oh shit, sorry dude.
BRUNO:	No. It's OK. How's Carla?
ELVIS:	She's great too. Happy. She's dating again. But the guy's kind of lame. The
	other day was Helena's baby shower and Arthur and I invited him to go out and
	watch a game while the girls did their thing but he preferred to stay with them.
BRUNO:	(Laughs) Good. She deserves to be happy.
ELVIS:	Wow. Rehab has really changed you. (Beat) So, where are you staying?

BRUNO: My mother's house. Just until I find my own place.

ELVIS: That's cool! You know, that old neighbor friend of yours, Gabriel... he moved back here.

BRUNO: What?

- ELVIS: Yeah. It's been a month already. He's in his old house.
- BRUNO: Oh. (Beat) You talked to him?
- ELVIS: Said hi to him the other day at the supermarket... (*Looks at his watch*) Oh shit, I gotta go, man! But it was great seeing you. Nice to see you on your feet again.

BRUNO: Yeah...

ELVIS: Take care!

BRUNO: I will.

(ELVIS exits SR)

(BRUNO stands still on CS contemplating for a while. There's a pull on the RED-THREAD, as if it's calling him, and BRUNO follows it across the stage and exits SL)

SCENE 8 – (GABRIEL and BRUNO's sidewalk, 30 years-old)

This is supposed to be the same scenario as the PROLOGUE. BRUNO is standing on the same spot as they were when they were twelve, looking down on the ground where the RED-THREAD bound them together, reminiscing and smiling. He's about to knock on the door when GABRIEL opens it. He has a bin bag full on his hand and he's all dressed in more 'fashionable' clothes.

BRUNO: Gabriel?

(GABRIEL dumps the bin bag on the big bin on the corner of the stage and looks at BRUNO. He smiles and goes back to his front door).

- GABRIEL: Bruno? What are you doing here?
- BRUNO: I was going to ask you the same question. I thought you were in Rio...
- GABRIEL: My grandma died.
- BRUNO: I'm sorry.
- GABRIEL: It's OK. It's been a few months.

BRUNO: And your mom?

GABRIEL: She stayed there.

- BRUNO: And why did you come back?
- GABRIEL: I don't know. I always had it on my mind that I was there for my grandma and now that she's gone... (*He looks down*) I don't know. It didn't feel like there was anything left for me back there. Besides, (*he looks up at BRUNO*) I missed this place.

(They both stare at each other for a moment in silence)

- GABRIEL: I heard you married Carla.
- BRUNO: We got divorced.
- GABRIEL: I heard that too. And that you went to rehab.
- BRUNO: Kind of.
- GABRIEL: Damn it. That's what I get for leaving town.
- BRUNO: I guess I just needed you around.

(GABRIEL is caught off guard. He looks back into his house, trying to avoid eye contact with BRUNO)

- GABRIEL: I have water boiling-
- BRUNO: You know, we have a lot of free time in rehab. I learned plenty of new tricks with strings.

(GABRIEL looks at him and smiles)

GABRIEL: Yeah?

- BRUNO: Yes. I felt like I was twelve again.
- GABRIEL: Well... (*He looks at his house and then back at BRUNO*) I'm making coffee. Do you want to come in? Maybe you can show me those new tricks.
- BRUNO: (*He smiles*) I'd love to.

(GABRIEL opens the door for BRUNO)

- GABRIEL: And maybe you can finally tell me the secret of that 'hand trap' trick.
- BRUNO: (Laughing) Magician never tells.
- GABRIEL: I guess I'll have to find a way for you to tell me.
- BRUNO: I wanna see you try.

(They both walk in through GABRIEL's front door).

THE END.

RESPONSIVE CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

There's an old Asian legend that says that people who are destined to be together are bound by an invisible red-thread that stretches and tangles infinitely but never breaks, meaning that they'll find each other eventually. I thought it would be interesting to write 'The Red-Thread' based on that, to reflect on the world's heteronormativity, since when one usually talks about soul mates, the other immediately goes to the imagery of a man and a woman, when in reality the whole LGBTQ+ community can be included, as the legend never mentions gender, just 'two human beings'.

Originally the story would take place in the UK, and Gabriel would have a Brazilian background. However, I decided to make the whole play set in Brazil to give more representativity to the Brazilian and/or Latino community, thus the reason why I also put under 'observations' that all actors should be of a latino background. "Latino individuals are still underrepresented in mainstream theatre, but there is a small and steady rise. (...) My advice to you is, if you don't see the type of theatre you want, step up and create it as Latino artists have done in the past and continue to do today." (Mateo, 2018).

It was challenging to write 20 pages and cover a large life span, but it was my idea since the beginning to watch Bruno since the early days of his sexual awakening, as he finds out he's attracted to Gabriel on scene 1 and consequently is "tied" to the boy forever (symbolized by the red-thread), and also through his teenage and adult years of denial, up until the moment when he finally comes to terms with his sexuality. My workshop tutor suggested that I'd read plays such as 'In Event of Moone Disaster' by Andrew Thompson (2017) and 'Constellations' by Nick Payne (2012) so I'd have an idea about how to cover time lapse in a playscript.

I meticulously thought of every line I put on the script. "When people converse (...) the rarely just talk for talking's sake. Instead, they use dialogue to help them meet a goal or serve a particular agenda." (Alessandra, 2010). Even the most subtle 'hey' Gabriel and Bruno say to each other is there for a reason and meaning. It has been often repeated in our lectures that characters – just like people in real life – never say what they truly mean. It's all in the subtext. "The more a character talks *around* the truth, the more fun it is for an audience to figure it out." (Alessandra, 2010). In 'Beautiful Thing' by Jonathan Harvey (1996), the characters never openly admit their feelings for each other, it's all in their body language and dialogues that play with subtext, and I added that to my own play. Bruno and Gabriel never say 'I love you' or 'I

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want to be with you.' Instead they have lines like "Do you remember when we were twelve and wanted to be magicians?" or "Tell me how you're gonna miss me".

I kept stage and acting directions to a minimum, adding only things I thought were extremely necessary, because I believe it's nice to give the creative freedom for directors, actors and the production crew to figure out how to make a script come to life.

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