

# CONSENT

Written by

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Logline:

A horribly bullied, queer, small-town teen fights back, attempts suicide, reconnects with his estranged mother, and finds true love  
- all in one weekend.

A small suburban town in NJ about 2 hours northwest of NYC.  
(Or AnySmallTown, USA, 2 hours outside a major city.)

For Outfest

1. First 10 pages only
2. Synopsis
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KEVBOT: "Looks like he likes it."

DIVANIECY: "You people suck."

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON -- A LITTLE EARLIER

From afar, Seth can be seen near the batting cage, speaking with HEATH, a well-build, good looking jock, who grabs the baseball bat away from Seth.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON -- CONTINUOUS

Five high school SENIORS, KYLE, HORSE, DERRICK, CHRISTIAN and AYDEN, begin to surround Seth as Heath steps aside.

As we get closer:

The SENIORS start to drag Seth towards the bleachers, all the while surrounding him.

SETH  
What is wrong with you, losers? LEAVE  
ME ALONE! Just --

Heath hands a jockstrap to Kyle who shoves it into Seth's mouth. They carry him under the bleachers. TWO OTHER SENIORS hold Seth down by his shoulders and legs. They all look over at Heath.

HEATH  
Not the face. Just his stomach.

KYLE  
You got it, boss.

Kyle, Horse, Derrick, Christian and Ayden begin to violently stomp on and kick Seth in the stomach. Seth's cries are muffled, tears stream down his face. They stop kicking.

HEATH  
Why'dja stop? You pussies?

Led by Horse, the largest bully, they resume kicking Seth.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
(to Derrick)  
Hey! Get this for the page.

Derrick, the geek, iPhone in hand, starts videotaping.

VIDEO IPHONE SHOT:

CLOSE UP of Seth in excruciating agony. Christian kicks hardest.

CHRISTIAN  
We don't need no faggots --

HEATH  
Shut the fuck up. They'll know it's  
you. Duh!  
(to Derrick)  
Mute the sound.

After a bit, Heath stops them.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
Okay. We don't wanna kill him.

KYLE  
Not yet anyways. (laughs)

CHRISTIAN  
Why not?

Heath lifts the bat.

HEATH  
How should we end this clip? Huh?

He hands the bat to Horse. Then stands over Seth's face and unzips his zipper.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
(to Kyle)  
Take the gag out. Quick.

As Heath pisses on Seth's face:

CHRISTIAN  
You like that don't you, faggot?

ON "SETH'S BIG GAY FACEBOOK PAGE:"

The video clip runs with sound muted. More messages include:

LovinOurLord: "God's punishment."

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON -- EVEN EARLIER

Seth stands in the batting cage holding a bat. He practices swinging. Heath sneaks up behind the bleachers and scares him. Heath grabs the bat.

SETH  
Asshole, gimme that.

HEATH  
Take it from me.



VOICE #1  
Turn that fuckin' --"

The camera stops.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON --  
CONTINUOUS

In the bleachers, the TWO BULLIES holding Seth down let him go. Seth tends to his nosebleed, pinching his nose-- coughing, spitting and in extreme pain.

KYLE  
Did somebody kick him in the face?

HORSE  
Don't look at me? Ayden's got the cleats.

DERRICK  
Do we get someone or, like, call 911?

HEATH  
Just get outta here. Go! I'll take care of him.

The SENIORS scatter. After a moment:

HEATH (CONT'D)  
You gonna be -- ?

SETH grabs the bat from the ground and holds it up.

SETH  
Just LEAVE ME ALONE!

Seth quick tilts his head up and pinches his nose. Heath walks away, looking back a few times. Seth grabs his phone and texts with his head raised high.

ON HIS IPHONE SCREEN:

To: "Latreese Jones, Janiece Davis:

"I need to come over?"

Reply from: Latreese Jones:

"K."

Seth grabs his bat and a nearby backpack. He finds a pair of shorts and wipes his face with them. He takes out ear buds, puts them in and hits play. "Who Am I," vocal by PETULA CLARK, plays as he runs as fast as he can. Seth becomes lost in the song and his own head. He tends to his nose as he runs.

INT. DIANE'S CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

DIANE, a middle-aged woman wearing dark sunglasses (we first see her face in her side mirror) takes large gulps of coffee from a giant mug and drives very fast across a lot of nothing road. Diane sings along with the song playing on the soundtrack, which then ends.

INT. BATHROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Seth tends to his nose. The bleeding has stopped. He checks his stomach which is super sore. LATREESE and JANIECE, also Juniors, walk in.

                  SETH  
Don't you knock?

                  LATREESE  
It's my house.

                  JANIECE  
It's her house.

                  SETH  
It's her house.

They see his wounds. He covers up. Latreese lifts his shirt.

                  LATREESE  
Heath did this.

                  JANIECE  
Rich white boy thinks he can --

                  SETH  
Doesn't matter.

                  LATREESE  
We gotta call the cops, Seth.

                  JANIECE  
Cops won't do shit, Treese.

                  SETH  
Dudes, I'm good.

INT. DIANE'S CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

Diane checks the time, speeds up even more. She's doing 95. A COP car appears behind her. She sees it and slows to 75...65.

                  DIANE  
Sonofabitch...

INT. LOCAL PUB -- LATE AFTERNOON

COACH LAWSON ("BOYD"), late 20s, is having a beer. He gets an anonymous text with a link which he clicks on and is taken to a new post on "Seth's Big Gay Facebook Page." He seethes.

INT. DIANE'S CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

The car is in park. Diane impatiently waits. She gets out of her car.

COP  
(via bullhorn from car)  
Ma'am, step back into the vehicle or I  
will be forced to call for backup.

DIANE  
(to herself)  
You've got to be shitting me?

COP  
(via bullhorn)  
Step back into the vehicle...

DIANE  
Fine. I'm stepping back into the  
vehicle but can you hurry this along?  
I was speeding for a reason!

COP  
(via bullhorn)  
Step back --

Diane has stepped back into the vehicle. She goes to light a joint, then realizes she shouldn't.

INT. JEEP WRANGLER -- EARLY EVENING

Coach drives near a fancy part of town, slowly. He drinks beer as he drives.

INT. GRACE'S HOME -- EARLY EVENING

Seth runs in and races to the upstairs bathroom. GRACE, early 30s, proper, hears him from the kitchen. She walks up the stairs and tries to open the bathroom door. It is locked.

GRACE  
Everything copacetic in there?

SETH  
Yep. Just a bit stinky. Gonna shower.

GRACE  
Good boy. There's a new organic  
shampoo in the bin.

INT./EXT. JEEP WRANGLER -- EARLY EVENING

Coach sees Heath with Kyle and Ayden walking. He pulls into a driveway, almost hitting the boys and gets out of the car. Kyle and Ayden scurry away. Heath stands and faces Coach.

HEATH  
Whatta you want?

Coach grabs him by the throat. Heath struggles. A NEIGHBOR comes out. Coach lets go. Heath falls to the ground.

HEATH (CONT'D)  
My mother's gonna hear --

COACH  
Fuck your mother.

Coach stares him down, then gets back into the car and drives away.

INT. DIANE'S CAR -- EARLY EVENING

The COP is standing outside Diane's window.

COP  
Ma'am if you don't remove the sunglasses, I'll be forced to write up a second citation.

DIANE  
For what? Concealing how tired I look?

COP  
Ma'am...

She pulls up her sunglasses, then puts them back down.

DIANE  
There, happy? Now gimme the goddam ticket. Jesus!

INT. BATHROOM -- EARLY EVENING

Seth is out of the shower. He looks at his bruises, then gets a text and laughs.

INT. GRACE'S HOME -- EARLY EVENING

Coach stomps in, carrying a brown paper bag. Grace emerges from the kitchen.

COACH  
Seth home?

GRACE  
He's upstairs, showering. You reek of beer.

Coach goes upstairs and tries the bathroom door.

COACH  
Seth, open up.

Seth does.

COACH (CONT'D)  
You good?  
(Seth nods)  
Show me.

He does, quickly. Then covers up. Coach hands him the bag. He opens it. It's a pack of Reeses peanut butter cups. He smiles. Grace is at the bottom of the stairs. Coach signals to hide the bag.

GRACE  
What is going on?

Nothing. SETH Nothing. COACH

A title appears:

Saturday

INT. DIANE'S CAR -- EARLY MORNING

Diane passes the "Welcome to" sign in town. She scoffs, sips coffee. Two tickets sit crumpled up on the passenger seat along with a half empty bag of chips. A LOCAL COP gets behind her. She sees him. Siren sounds.

DIANE  
Jesus, give me a fucking break...

She pulls over. He gets out. She rolls down her window.

LOCAL COP  
Ma'am...

DIANE  
Again with the ma'am. Do you guys have some state to state quota -- Donny?

LOCAL COP/DONNY  
Di-ane!

She gets out and hugs him hard.

DIANE  
Donny McG! How the hell are ya?

DONNY  
Can't complain. Well, I can but no one  
wants to hear.

DIANE  
Smart man.

DONNY  
Missed ya, Di.

DIANE  
You're probably alone there, Donny.

DONNY  
Town got awful dull when you left.

DIANE  
You're sweet. You been eatin' good.

DONNY  
Yeah. Maribel cooks now. She took a  
class online. You visiting or --?

DIANE  
Found a place on Pine. Thank Jesus for  
Rent.com. On my way to sign the lease.

DONNY  
Swell, Di. Welcome home.

EXT. BATTING CAGE -- MID-MORNING

Seth wears his baseball uniform and awkwardly holds a bat. He  
stands at the plate, frustrated. Coach stands with him.

SETH  
I suck! C'mon, Coach!

COACH  
Seth, I'm not putting in a designated  
hitter for JV ball!

SETH  
Why not?

COACH  
Because those are the rules.

Coach gets behind Seth and helps him out, roughly--spreading  
his legs, lifting his shoulders, but being careful, knowing  
he's hurt. Then he pats his butt.

COACH (CONT'D)  
Bend your knees. Now, stick your butt  
out a bit--woah! Too much! Straighten  
up. Now, you ready to swing?

SETH  
Sure. I got some Glenn Miller on my  
iPhone. No?

## SYNOPSIS

CONSENT chronicles the story of a queer 17-year-old trying to get along in today's America—an increasingly divided America where the fates of kids who are 'different' seem to be at the mercy of geography. At the heart of the piece is an unapologetic gay teen love story.

Seth, a high school junior, is a unique individual who frequently questions rules and accepted modes of behavior. He lives in a town that expects conformity and capitulation. Seth is also coming to terms with his sexuality. All these things make him the target of bullying by his fellow students. They, too often, mercilessly beat, humiliate and torment him.

Even his two best friends, Shatonda and Janiece, wonder if his being gay is something "natural."

Seth's mother, Diane, has returned to town after a two-year, three-month absence. She wants a relationship with her son and in getting to know him discovers some disturbing details about his current living situation, specifically, his relationship with his baseball Coach who is his current guardian, along with Coach's religiously devout wife, Grace, the high school guidance counselor. Diane would like Seth to live with her but Coach has other ideas.

In the midst of all of this, Seth crushes on fellow schoolmate, Brian, who happens to be the main bully, Heath's, brother. Brian returns Seth's feelings and the two begin to get to know one another and are soon having sex.

Seth confesses his relationship with Coach to Diane who confronts and threatens Coach. Grace blames Seth for her husband's misguided ways and kicks him out of the house.

Heath finds out about their relationship between Brian and Seth and freaks out and texts his fellow bullies who surround Seth. In self-defense, Seth stabs one of the bullies. He is left alone and tries to kill himself but is rescued by the school janitor.

Things take a dramatic turn as a sequence of events converge and Seth's already chaotic life spins further out of control.

Most of the film takes place over one weekend.

## STATEMENT

I've been predominately a playwright for two decades, despite the fact that film has always been my true passion. Then a funny thing happened on lockdown. I began to adapt a couple of my plays for the screen, including CONSENT. And an even funnier thing happened, I started to get amazing feedback on my work and my scripts began garnering awards via Festivals and Competitions worldwide. This was quite encouraging for someone who could not seem to get hit by a bus with his stage work (artistic directors in this country did not seem to want to help tell diverse and specific stories, but I digress).

So, my objectives have dramatically shifted in the past year. I am pursuing a screenwriting career with a fervor. I have already shot and completed my first short film, FIG JAM, which I am very proud of. And I want to hone my skills as a screenwriter. In adapting CONSENT, I realize that as much as I have tried to revisit the story and tell it visually, there is still quite a bit of wordiness to it. The Outfest Screenwriting Lab would enable me to move closer to being ruthless in eliminating excess dialogue.

I've never really had a mentor. That isn't a woe-is-me statement, but reality. I seem to always run up against people who want to change my style. I know that the Outfest group would appreciate my queer slant on storytelling and simply try to help me continue to discover my voice and champion it. That is everything.

I initially wrote the play CONSENT after Rutgers student Tyler Clementi jumped off the George Washington Bridge. The fact that gay teens and teens struggling with their sexuality feel they have no alternative but suicide because the people around them see them as abnormal is insane, and yet, epidemic. Still. That's why I adapted the play. I felt the story was meant for the visual medium and I always had the first scenes in my head. And, if anything (sadly) the story has become even more applicable to our times. But I need to be sure it feels like 2021. Outfest would be vital here.

The setting is a small suburban town in NJ--two hours northwest of NYC --honestly it could take place in any small suburban town, but I chose NJ because it's what I know. Too often when small suburban towns are portrayed, they're exaggerated or cliché. Truth is each small town is its own melting pot of sorts and that hasn't really been mined enough--certainly when it comes to the queer aspect combined with diversity in these towns. The Lab experience would be most helpful in zeroing in on what is and isn't important.

My protagonist, Seth, is a unique queer individual who frequently questions rules and accepted modes of behavior and he is bullied for it. He also moves from an unnatural sexual relationship with his Coach to a very healthy one with Brian, a fellow student. At the heart of the piece is this unapologetic gay teen love story--which we rarely see in any medium--not one that isn't portrayed for laughs or done very "carefully." Seth represents ALL the individuals out there who are often seen as different or weird or strange--simply because they don't conform to the dictates of fellow students. They have their own minds and likes and ways of thinking and seeing the world. I think this represents most people deep down. Even the ones who capitulate and conform often only do so to fit in but would rather figure out who they really are.

I think that the romance between Seth and Brian is one that many people will root for, despite all that is working against them. How often do we get a gay teen love story that is real and palpable and maybe a little uncomfortable in its authenticity?

But Seth's story needs to remain specific because universality comes from specificity. The Lab would allow me to explore Seth's many shadings.

I'd like the opportunity to push the envelope when it comes to really delving into the lives of these characters and not just tossing PSAs at audiences.

Please allow me the opportunity to explore, what could be a truly relatable work, at the Outfest Screenwriting Lab. I know there are teens out there who need to see their stories told. I sure did.

FJA