

BOBA TEA AND HELL

Written by

Janet Allard

**Context:** *This was a writing test. The parameters of the scene and major turning points were given to me by the narrative lead. They asked for a 10-15 page scene with one major choice at the end and an addendum describing how this choice might play out later in the game. Later, I identified various points in this scene for smaller decisions or dialogue branches, just so you know there would be more interaction along the way - but those aren't scripted here.*

janetmaliaallard@gmail.com  
(646) 281-6188

INT. BACKSTAGE - THE THEATER

OLIVIA RIVERA, a sweet, funny 17 year old of Puerto Rican/Caucasian heritage, wearing a techie headset, watches intently from the wings as BRENDON GAINES, a sensitive and disarming seventeen year old of Korean and Caucasian heritage, sweats in the bright stage lights, rehearsing the Neil Simon play, "The Odd Couple". He faces off with AUSTIN, a linebacker-looking high-schooler.

BRENDON (PLAYING FELIX)  
You're also one of the biggest  
slobs in the world.

AUSTIN(PLAYING OSCAR)  
I see.

A long pause. Brendon doesn't know what's next. He shifts his weight, his eyes go wide - he gives Austin a pleading look. Austin tries giving him the same cue...

AUSTIN (PLAYING OSCAR) (CONT'D)  
I see.

BRENDON (PLAYING FELIX)  
And.....

Brendon freezes like a deer in the headlights, his mind goes blank. Olivia glances down at her script, whispers to him from offstage.

OLIVIA  
"completely unreliable"

He hears her. Relieved.

BRENDON (PLAYING FELIX)  
(with conviction)  
And completely unreliable.

AUSTIN (PLAYING OSCAR)  
Finished?

Brendon glances offstage - his eyes meet Olivia's.

OLIVIA  
(whispers, urging him on:)  
"Undependable."

BRENDON (PLAYING FELIX)  
Undependable!

AUSTIN (PLAYING OSCAR)  
Is that it?

OLIVIA  
 (whispers)  
 "And irresponsible."

BRENDON (PLAYING FELIX)  
 And irresponsible!

THE VOICE OF MRS. FERGUSON, the stand-in director, interrupts from the empty audience.

MRS. FERGUSON (OFF SCREEN)  
 Okay. And. That's it for tonight everyone.

Brendon glances off-stage at Olivia. He gives a sigh of relief. She smiles.

MRS. FERGUSON steps up to the front edge of the stage. She's got short cropped grey hair and arty glasses.

MRS. FERGUSON (CONT'D)  
 We've got our first audience tomorrow. So get some rest and Brendon--

Brendon glances up sheepishly.

MRS. FERGUSON (CONT'D)  
 (sternly raising an eyebrow)

Look at those lines.

Brendon walks offstage, and hands Olivia his hat. She puts it down on a prop table with carefully taped-off squares holding various props: poker chips, silver wear, a plate of fake spaghetti. Backstage is her domain.

BRENDON  
 And the Tony Award for worst actor in a leading role goes to...this guy.

OLIVIA  
 It wasn't a *total* train-wreck.

BRENDON  
 Thanks for saving me out there.

He starts to head out. But Olivia doesn't want to let him go - she spontaneously steps toward him--

OLIVIA  
 (Hopeful but trying to  
 play it cool)  
 Hey! Want to grab coffee?

This stops him. He wasn't expecting this. He glances away, avoiding her look.

BRENDON  
 Thanks, but I've got to--

Olivia  
 (Olivia stammers  
 awkwardly)  
 --To go over your cues. Or if you  
 don't drink coffee - I actually  
 hate coffee - they have boba tea.

Did she just invite him somewhere? A cloud passes across his face. Instantly, the cloud's gone. He flashes a smile.

BRENDON  
 What exactly IS boba anyway?

CUT TO:

INT. THE LOUNGING LIZARD

A hippie throwback coffee shop. Lava lamps and a cover band, playing some mellow groovy music in the corner. OLIVIA and BRENDON each curled up comfortably on a well worn couch drinking boba tea. Olivia watches Brendon intently-

OLIVIA  
 I can't believe you've lived this  
 long and never tried boba tea.

BRENDON  
 (chewing)  
 Mmmmm.  
 (playfully)  
 Um..it's kind like alien jello.

OLIVIA  
 Slimy yet subtle. With a hint of  
 tasteless gummy bear.

BRENDON  
 I feel like I need to have it every  
 day from now on. I have no idea  
 why.

OLIVIA  
You should try it with Hot Takis.

She offers him her open bag of bright orange crunchies--he accepts.

BRENDON  
I love hot food! We should go to  
this place by my house. They have  
20 million kinds of hot sauce.

Olivia stares at Brendon as he talks. For a moment her expression is wistful. Is that a future date suggestion?

OLIVIA  
20 million, huh? Wow. So, uhh,

She get's lost in looking at him, she's starting to fall for him. Then, she remembers why she asked him here - and her expression fades to worry. She looks down, then holds up her script. Back to business.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Take it from the top?

He straightens up, they run cues.

BRENDON  
Unreliable, undependable,  
irresponsible. I think I've got it.

OLIVIA  
Mr. Willis would have told you to  
say that with an inner smile---

He looks away. Uncomfortable.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Sorry. I just can't believe what  
happened to him. It doesn't even  
seem real.

BRENDON  
Yeah, what a crazy accident--

OLIVIA  
Accident? You don't think it's  
related to all the weird shit  
that's been going on?

BRENDON  
That stuff seemed kinda harmless.  
Like some kids pranking everybody--

OLIVIA

With bloody entrails? I mean where does your average person even get a goat heart anyway.

BRENDON

It's classic drama club revenge - Maybe someone didn't get the part they wanted or something.

OLIVIA

It's so beyond that though. Especially if whatever it was killed Mr. Willis.

BRENDON

*Whatever* it was?

OLIVIA

Or whoever.

Brendon takes a breath. This is hitting too close to home. He looks away, shaking his head dismissively.

BRENDON

Yeah, it's some out of control shit.

OLIVIA

(testing him)  
Demonic shit.

He looks up at her suddenly. Their eyes lock. Pause. What does she know? He recovers quickly and flashes a charismatic smile --He gets up abruptly--

BRENDON

Hey, this has been great, but--

She asks him gently, trying to get him to open up:

OLIVIA

What's going on, Brendon?

BRENDON

(charming/covering)  
Nothing, thanks for your help. I'll see you--

She locks eyes with him - pressing more firmly.

OLIVIA

How'd you get the lead in the play?

BRENDON  
 (he shrugs and smiles)  
 I auditioned, like everyone else.

OLIVIA  
 (more pointedly)  
 How'd you go from being Mr. Stage  
 fright to Mr. Charismatic  
 overnight?

He shakes his head - scared but trying to hide it

BRENDON  
 Practice I guess?

She grabs his arm. They hold a stare. She knows. He knows she knows. He bolts.

EXT. COLLEGE TOWN STREET - EVENING

Brandon's out the door of the coffee shop. He lunges into the street, recklessly navigating ONCOMING CARS. Cars slam on their breaks, HORNS BLAZING. Olivia emerges from the coffee shop moments behind him. No such awkward street crossing for her. Olivia leaps from the hood of an oncoming car to the roof of another. Her agility is stunning. Brandon tries to stay ahead but is losing ground. Ahead, he spies an open lot with a water tower rising out of it. He runs as fast as he can across the field, looking behind him, she's not there. He keeps going.

EXT. AN OPEN LOT - EVENING -CONTINUOUS

A Water tower looms above him, reaching up to the sky. He reaches the ladder and climbs- fast. WHOOSH, a sound, he looks behind him, nobody. A moment of relief. He gets higher and higher, the ground getting smaller below him. He's almost to the top now, Maybe he's lost her. SLAM. Her boots land on the metal grate above him - her hand reaches from above, grabs him and pulls him up onto the platform by his shirt. She's a badass and she's no longer messing around.

OLIVIA  
 What deal did you make with them?

BRENDON  
 What are you talking about?

OLIVIA  
 Bad Acting, Brendon. No Tony Award.

She SLAMS him down on the metal grate platform. Pushes his head off the side. One move, and he's over. He struggles to get up but she's demon level strong.

BRENDON

Wait! Okay. I said a few words they wanted me to say, got a few things for a spell or something.

OLIVIA

What kind?

BRENDON

A window opened- if you could even call it that-- a door --

OLIVIA

(her eyes widen)  
You opened a portal?!

BRENDON

I just wanted to fit in. Don't you get that?

OLIVIA

(sarcastically)  
What was that line from the play?  
Unreliable, undependable,  
irresponsible.

BRENDON

We'll close it, send them back where they came from.

OLIVIA

You ARE the portal, Brendon. It's attached to you.

BRENDON

What?!

OLIVIA

You die, it closes. Forever. No more people die.

He's afraid. He didn't realize. His eyes beg her to save him.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Sorry, Brendon. It's not personal.

She pushes him off the side, he grabs her arm. Clinging on for dear life. He glances below --the ground seems very far away--



BRENDON

Wait! They're using me as bait to get to you.

OLIVIA

That's why you agreed to meet me?

BRENDON

No! I like you --I wanted to warn you.

OLIVIA

I knew I couldn't trust you.

BRENDON

They've got Sarah.

Olivia's eyes widen - taken aback, this is her best friend - it hits a particularly vulnerable place in her.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

That's why she wasn't at rehearsal today. They're coming for the people you love - one by one.

OLIVIA

(stunned, disbelieving)  
No, she just texted me.

(He digs a necklace out of his pocket- Sarah's necklace. He holds it up to show her.)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You were there? Did you help them?

Her eyes narrowing- as she inches his fingers from her arm.

BRENDON

If you kill me the portal closes.  
She'll be stuck in hell.

Tears come to Olivia's eyes. She doesn't want to lose her best friend.

BRENDON (CONT'D)

I can help you. We can get her back.

Her face softens, she momentarily wants to believe him.

OLIVIA

Want to tell me, how?

BRENDON  
 (pleading with some charm)  
 Not while I'm hanging from a water  
 tower.

OLIVIA  
 Why would I trust you? You made a  
 deal so you could win fame,  
 attention and popularity-

BRENDON  
 I didn't know what would happen.

OLIVIA  
 Demons, Brendan, you could have  
 guessed.

He looks into her eyes, certain - steady - promising her:

BRENDON  
 I fucked up, I'm gonna make this  
 right. We'll outsmart them.  
 Together.

She considers.

MOMENT OF DECISION: OLIVIA EITHER KILLS HIM OR SPARES HIM.

CHOICE 1: KILL HIM.

OLIVIA  
 There's no together.

She breaks his grip on her arm - and lets him go, he falls backward, arms open wide like he's swimming through air, like she could still save him. He lands with A THUD on the gravel below the water tower. Blood seeps out around him - a spreading pool. Total silence. Nothing happens at first. Then the SOUND OF A HURRICANE LIKE WIND, it picks up as Olivia turns to face it. Then, the whole earth shakes like the world has broken open. A CRACKING, SPLITTING SOUND like trees snapping, as BRENDON's body disintegrates, morphing into white dust. The dust is swept into the air taking the shape of wispy faces and becoming part of a swirling tunnel of wind. Then abruptly- it all stops. Nothing. Silence. The portal is closed.

OLIVIA turns away, clenches her fists and screams melting down at the top of the water-tower. Mad, sad, destroyed. Just when she was getting close to someone. These demon assholes.

CHOICE 2: SPARE HIM.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Together.

Her eyes meet his. Camaraderie. She pulls him up. He's shaking -- shaken, but very very glad to be alive.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

If you're lying...

She gives him a cold hard stare, he smiles sheepishly.

BRENDON

Kill me later. It's not like it would be hard for you.

OLIVIA

(with a slight smile -  
bantering with him)

You know when someone says "trust me", it means they can't be trusted.

BRENDON

Come on, we don't have a lot of time.

She motions to the water tower ladder.

OLIVIA

After you.

He starts to climb down. She climbs after him. The setting sun turns the sky bright red behind them.

BRENDON

(trying to bond with small  
talk)

So what's it like being a demon?

OLIVIA

A 300 year old Lich Deamon to be exact.

They climb down together as the scene fades out.

**ADDENDUM:** How the choices might influence the story going forward.

**CHOICE 1: KILL HIM:**

Going forward, Olivia's more mad and more determined. These Demons gave her no choice but to destroy a human she was quickly getting attached to.

She's realized she's putting everyone she's close to or wants to get close to in danger. They are demon targets and it's because of her. Brendon's suddenly gone, which creates more panic at the Drama Club and now detectives are on the scene and she's being questioned as the last person who saw him. At least she closed the portal, but the demons are already in. She's got to destroy them. No more thinking this is all going to work out by dodging and trying to blend in, this is war. But first, she's got to get the hell out of town, lure these demons away from all that she loves. No time to pack, she jumps a freight train out of town and hits the road.

#### CHOICE 2: SPARE HIM

Olivia's got someone on her team now. She doesn't feel alone in it for the first time and she's starting to fall for this human. He's the only one who knows her secret. She enlists Brendon to help her get Sarah back from Hell, destroy the demons and send them back to where they came from. But can she truly trust him? The demons want him to lure her to them. If he betrays them, they'll destroy him. If he delivers her to them, what could he gain? Immortality, superhuman strength. Together they devise a demon trap - but will it work? And will Brendon stay the course?