

Where the Lovelight Gleams

A Drama in One Act

Kyle J McCloskey

Kyle J McCloskey
725 Weyburn Terrace, Apt 70
Los Angeles, CA, 90024
Kylejmcloskeyplaywright@gmail.com
(267) 421-3407

Setting:

Southern California Woods, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Present Day

Characters:

41212 - 40's, Latina

21507 - mid 20's, Jewish

77312 - Late teens, African American

All women

On the Program:

The Conservation Camp Program was initiated by California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to provide able-bodied inmates the opportunity to work on meaningful projects throughout the state in 1915. This can be cleaning parks, picking up trash, or fighting the most dangerous blazes in the world, all for less than a dollar an hour.

Fuck this shit.

I'm a beating heart off the beaten path

The God of Shame, feel my wrath

Can my filthy soul take a bath

In the Light of You

In the Light of Truth

- The Avett Brothers -

Instead of fall, it's fire season

with treasonous winds that scatter

scuttling embers and rake bursts

of leaves into luminous cataclysms

of pop and clatter

across withering mountainsides

shrouded in steamy veils of smoke

- Alan Toltzis - Fire Weather

Short Synopsis: On Christmas Eve, three incarcerated firefighters (all women) battle fires in Southern California. The play juxtaposes the vast California landscape with the action that takes place inside the van as they race from fire to fire. As they travel, they begin to grow tighter as a community through conversations regarding income inequality, culpability, religion, faith, femininity, queerness, failure, despair, hope, and love. In the middle of the play 77312 and 21507 begin a romantic relationship fueled on the principle of survival and hope, only to nearly lose each other to falling branches in the plays eleventh hour. We watch as 41212 grapples with the promise of release and the lies she's told herself to survive up to the moments she finds herself in the play. In the final moments of the play, we are asked the question: what is a human life worth?

Land Acknowledgment: This play was written and workshopped on the Ancestral Lands of the Gabrielino/Tongva Peoples.

MOVEMENT 1 - 3:45 PM

Christmas Eve
Somewhere In the Southern California woods
Close to Malibu
Which has been evacuated

There is a Pine Tree
Beautifully decorated for Christmas.

"I'll Be Home for Christmas" plays
Either Bing Crosby or Phoebe Bridgers or your fav
Whatever the production needs

We live in the beauty, until:
The entire tree goes up in flames.
It burns, and burns;
A glorious expression of pain.

In darkness:
Three Inmate Firefighters
41212, 21507, and 77312
Take their place
They've been on shift for 8 hours already

They stand in the tree's glow,
Powerless to the burning.

We watch the tree burn for what seems like forever,
Yet eventually the flames die out.

Smoke fills the set.
There always seems to be a thick layer of smoke.
There always seems to be Ash and Embers falling from the sky.

What little daylight there is barely breaks through the smog.

41212

Alright,
We better get movin'
We're losing daylight

21507

(Scoffs)

Daylight

77312

I can't see shit

41212

Flip em on'

All three, at the same moment, turn on their headlamps.

Alright everyone -
Shovels up

They pick up their shovels

And -

ALL

DIG
DIG
DIG

41212

Get down, get in
Put your body into it
Legs, arms, backs,
Head, mind, soul
That tree won't move itself
SO:

ALL

DIG
DIG
DIG

21507

Ooooooo my God
Go be a firefighter they said
Save people's lives they said
Get jacked as shit they said
Uuuuuuggggggghhhhhh

ALL

DIG
DIG
DIG

77312

Uuuuuuugggggggghhhhhhhh
Why why why why why why
Are we trying to move this bitch
If it's already burnt up?
What, is it gonna burn again?

41212

Trees not removed are just Tinder
For the next
Wave of Flames
Keep your heads down
Focus
Let's go
I want to get out of here
SO:

ALL

DIG
DIG
DIG

77312

YO -
I got the root!

77312 begins to smash the root wildly

41212 quickly jumps in

41212

No no no no no
C'mon, honey
You smash like that
And you'll break your back
Like this:
Clear the soil away from the bottom
Bend from the knees
Put your ass behind it
And then:

She smashes fluidly; three thrusts on each side is all it takes.

The tree's root is loose.

77312

Oh, Shit -
Like this?

*77312 tries again,
Is still a miserable failure.*

41212

Uhm...
No
You'll get there.
You're still new.
You'll get it

21507

Or you'll be like me
And suck forever

41212

C'mon -
We all gotta get the stump
AND:

They all attack the stump and the other roots around the tree

ALL

HUH
HUH
HUH

77312

Fuck this

*They pull out a cigarette and a zippo
They start playing with the strike*

41212

Are you kidding me, Rookie?
You just watched this tree
BURN
And you're going to smoke a frickin' cig???
Really?!?!?!?

77312
 Okay
 Fine
 Jesus Christ

41212
 WE'RE ALMOST DONE
 LET'S GO
 READY, SET:

ALL
 HUH
 HUH
 HUH

21507
 Should have just stayed put
 Should've cut lawns
 Made coat hanger jaws
 Reheat slop in a pot
 Ugh
 Fuck
 I could have been in Bed
 Cooked up dinner in a Bowl
 Sold it for a pack of Backwoods

77312
 A whole pack?

21507
 My shit fucks

77312
 What's it got?

21507
 Ramen
 Nutraloaf
 Contraband
 Sriracha
 And...
 Mountain Dew

77312
 Sounds fucking gross -

21507

It is.
BUT!
A kick in the teeth
And a kick in the Ass
Keeps ya' goin' you know?

77312

Hell -
You know what?
Anything with a kick
I'd give it a go
Even your nasty ass
Mountain Dew
Ramen Stew
Bull Shit

41212

Enough
Come on -
Lets get this out
You can talk on the ride
Back to Camp

ALL

HUH
HUH
HUH

41212

HARDER!

ALL

HUH
HUH
HUH

41212

FASTER!

ALL

HUH
HUH
HUH

41212

STRONGER!

ALL

HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH
HUH

The tree starts to tip

ALL

TREE FALLING

*The tree falls and collides with the Earth
Embers and shards float up into the sky
Creating a mirage of amber, scarlet, and gold*

41212

Wow...
Every time....
Wow...

*They all look up to the sky.
They take it in for a few moments.*

77312

Should we....

41212

Yeah

41212 bends down

The others join in, bent around the tree

Remember -
Legs, not back
1
2
3!

When they lift,

*The tree floats up into space,
Becoming a million little shards.*

*The third most incredible mosaic
Of shards, light, and fire
You've ever seen.*

*The shards begin to dance across the sky
The firefighters continue to trudge forward offstage
"With the log".*

LIGHTS OUT.

MOVEMENT 2 - 5:00 PM

*We're in the van
An old white creeper van
Blacked out windows*

*There is one little light at center
Harsh, cold
That lights the back
A chainlink fence separates the inmates from the front seat*

41212 massages their knees

21507 is in the corner, breathing

77312 is playing with their zippo

They sit in silence in the very, very low light

Where'd you get that? 21507

Swiped it off some kid 77312
I used to mess around with

21507
(Curious)
Kid?

77312
Yeah, you know -
Thick shoulders
Thick skull
Thick -

21507
O.K.

41212
I had one like that

77312
 Oh yeah?
 What happened?
 Lose it during "Nam"?

41212
 Excuse you
 I'm
 What...
 10 years older than you?

77312
 You're 29?!?!?!?

41212
 You're 19?!?!?!
 Well I'm....
 A little older.
 It was bright red
 Lost it on a fishin' trip

21507
 Fishing?

41212
 I loooooove fishin'

21507
 But a lighter -

41212
 You melt the line
 To the hook
 After you knot it off
 That way it doesn't
 Snap if somethin'
 Bigger than you're expectin'
 Comes along and takes a chomp.
 We were on a big ass boat
 Down near San Diego and....
 I was messin' around too much.
 Kaploosh!
 Into the Pacific.
 We just'd chum the water, too
 I wasn't 'bout to mess around

41212 (cont'd)

With Sharks and Barracuda and stuff
So, Bye, Bye Lighter

77312

Yo, I want a gold one.
This one's fine
Silver
Basic
But Gold's somethin' else

21507

My brother's a white lighter guy

41212

77312

Woof

Oh boy

41212

That's somethin' else

21507

Yeah he's a bitch

(A moment)

I miss that bitch

77312

He the only one?

21507

Like, sibling?
Yeah.
You?

77312

Your brother ain't my brother

21507

No, I mean -

77312

Only kid

21507

Surprised

77312

Why - Black people can't be only kids?

21507

Oh!
I mean
No
I didn't -

77312 starts to crack the fuck up

77312

Take your panties out your pussy
I got a Brother and a Sister
Shit!!!!!! You shoulda seen your face!!!!!! -

77312 is cackling off their ass.

21507 goes in, about to hit 77312

Bitch - I hit back!

41212

Please don't hit each other.

(A beat)

21507

What're you in for?

77312

Possession
2 years
Yo, this might just be a line
But I swear - It wasn't even mine
Swear to God
My cousin's the one with the habit
I was just holdin' it down
Now, he's got the rabbit
And I got two years
Well, early release for
"Good Behavior"

21507

First time?

77312
 First time.
 Last time, too.

41212
 Hmm.

77312
 I swear.

(To 21507)
 You?

21507
 First time.
 Burglary

77312
 Shit

21507
 Yeah, my brother
 Picked up this scheme
 Skim the top of Social Security Checks
 Old dudes never knew.
 We were pullin' good cash, too.
 800 a week was weak

77312
 How'd you get caught?

21507
 How's anyone get caught?
 Cameras?
 Carelessness?
 Wrong place wrong time?

Yeah, He got more time than me
 He's somewhere up North
 I'm not sure
 I dunno when he's gettin' out

A beat

41212

(Sensing tension)

You do what you do.

21507

Yeah?

What about you, Mee-Maw?

41212

(Not happy about that)

Intent to Sell.

Controlled Substance:

Cannabis.

21507

Fuckin' weed?

41212

15 years

77312

FIFTEEN YEARS!?!?!?

21507

FOR FUCKIN' WEED!?!?!?

41212

It's 10

For Good Work

And good behavior

(Whatever that means)

21507

How much fuckin' Weed were you movin'?

41212

Wasn't my first time

Which -

*41212 bangs on the screen door.**They yell up to the front*

HEY!

What's going on, Man?

41212 (cont'd)

I wanna stretch!
When we getting there?!?!

We hear two bangs back

What a prick.

(Resigned)

9 years
8 months
24 days
I'm fuckin' close.
That's why I'm hard on you all.
No funny business, you hear?
You keep your head on straight,
Do the work right,
Answer with a smile,
A "Yes, Sir!",
And go on.

77312

Man, but that's so -

41212

I'm aware.
But you do it,
And you never worry.
You never gotta worry if you do things right.
And I've done that -
Above and Beyond.
I'm gettin' out of here as soon as I can.
April 1st can't come quick enough.

21507

Man -
That'd be some rich fuckin' April Fools
Walking into your hearing
And they -

41212

Noooooope
Don't even play like that.

21507

That's what I'm saying:
Could you imagine?

41212

No.
And I won't.
I'm getting out.

77312

Yeah. I mean -
Why else would you do this?

(The Voice breaks in)

VOICE

ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS
WINDS HAVE PICKED UP
FIRE HAS JUMPED
REROUTING TO
CALABASAS

(Hang up)

41212

Ugh...
I want to go home.

77312

Man, how fucked up is that?
Calling us "Volunteers"

21507

I've never been to Calabasas

41212

Drake and Kanye live there

77312

Ah, Sad Whiny Dude Central
Fun.

41212

It's wild over there
You could fit an entire city block of people
In the guest houses.
I used to cut their lawns:
It is un-frickin-believable
Breathtaking vistas
Swimming pools the size of Airplane Hangers
A porch for people's porches
Every Italian sports car you never head of
Frickin' Nuts.

77312
So much for an early evening

41212
We might hit overtime after-all

77312
And thats....

41212
Seventeen cents more!

The van hits a huge bump.

77312 hits the front wall.

41212 barks

COME ON, MAN
DRIVE THE FRICKIN' CAR

(A beat)

When we get there
Let's put you (77312) on pack
And you (21507) on shovel

21507
Because I was so helpful last time

41212
You're still learning.
Can't fault you for trying

21507
Three years of learning
Three years of trying
Three years of

(They make a raspberry)

77312
Heffa, three years
And you still can't use a shovel?

21507
And I still can't use a fuckin' shovel.
I'm passed learning

21507 (cont'd)

I'm learned.
I suck.

77312

(Cracking up)

Damn - three years

21507

Wanna switch?

77312

Hell no

41212

Gotta have hope in yourself.

(A beat)

77312

And what you gonna do when we get there, Mee-Maw?

(A moment)

41212

Clean up your mess

LIGHTS SHIFT