

This section of “You Done?” is an excerpt from the beginning of a one-act I wrote in the 2018 spring semester. This one-act follows the relationship of a young, married couple as they come to terms with the fact that their relationship may have run its course. This piece started with the simple question “you done?” and evolved from there. The goal of this piece was to create characters that felt real, spoke honestly and naturally, and, most importantly, resonated with readers in sometimes uncomfortable ways. I wanted to depict a relationship failing in which no one party is to blame. I didn’t want there to be easy answers or finger pointing, but rather a look at how two people may love each other and still simply not work out. People communicate differently, people have different needs, people are complex, and above all, people are not perfect. It’s rare for me to feel particularly fondly about anything I write, but I’m proud of this work because I feel like I achieved many of the goals that I had for it. It’s nearly a year later, and I still feel a deep love for these characters and the story that they share.

You Done?

Excerpt from a One Act
Kristen Sarasin

Cast of Characters

Kara: 24. Drained, tired, agitated, and bordering on aggressive. Yet, she retains a softness and there's no doubt that she cares for her husband. Married to Ryan.

Ryan: 25. Angry, struggling, stressed. Yet, ambitious, hardworking, and hopeful that things will work out. Married to Kara.

Scene:

The living room of their apartment in Missouri.

Time:

Current day. Spring.

Lights up on a cozy living room. It could use a day or two of tidying up, but it isn't nearly as bad as it could be. A plush couch is centered behind a wooden coffee table.

A bowl of pretzels rests on the table along with a half-finished beer, disarrayed papers, and a bottle opener.

A bookshelf is visible from behind it. The shelf is disorganized with piles of books, picture frames, and knick-knacks scattered across the shelves. The frames all contain family photos, pictures of Kara and Ryan together, or group pictures that include both of them. There are also a variety of photos of their recently deceased dog.

A cushioned dog bed is located near the shelf. The toys are neatly stacked in it, and a folded blanket is placed over it.

Ryan rigidly sits on the couch with his gaze locked on his laptop screen. In direct contrast with this, his tie is loosened and his sleeves are rolled up. A door is heard creaking open and then closed. He looks up briefly and then returns to his laptop.

Kara steps into the room with hesitation and a bag of Chinese takeout. A beat goes by. There's an uncomfortable air between them. Kara shifts in discomfort.

KARA

(with forced enthusiasm)

Well? How'd the interview go?
He still doesn't look at her.

RYAN

I couldn't really tell you.

KARA

Oh. Alright.

Beat.

RYAN

I just...I just don't know. I'm younger than the other candidates. Less experienced.

Kara kicks off her shoes and crosses over to the table onto which she puts the bag of food. She doesn't sit down, but instead hovers.

KARA

Oh c'mon, there's no way of you actually knowing that.

It's just insecurity talking.

RYAN

It's not exactly hard to guess. I'm a recent graduate going after a teaching position. There's hundreds of us in every state.

KARA

It's like that with every job. We're all just graduates going after things we're not qualified for.

RYAN

(with a glance at Kara)

Not all of us.

Kara wilts. Irritation flickers across her face.

KARA

Have a little faith in yourself.

RYAN

I'm a weak candidate at best.

KARA

Fake it til you make it, though, right?

RYAN

Yeah. I guess.

KARA

No, no guessing. Just knowing. Appearing confident is the best thing you can do.

RYAN

Funny. I thought the best thing I could do was get a job, pay for my entire half of rent, and start paying off my student loans. Who knew all I had to do was appear confident.

The words linger for a moment.

Ryan fidgets.

With a deep breath Kara attempts to redirect the conversation.

RYAN

/Are you ever going to actually sit down?

KARA

/I got dinner.

She starts to unpack the bag of takeout with determination. She sits on the couch after, but doesn't angle herself towards Ryan.

RYAN

Thanks for dinner.

KARA

Your favorite.

RYAN

Yeah, I can see that.

KARA

I even got you extra crab rangoon.

For a moment Ryan perks up and forgets his irritation.

RYAN

How did I get so lucky?

KARA

(a terseness in her voice)

You know, I wonder that too.

A beat follows.

The uncomfortable air returns.

The food is laid out on the coffee table and they start to eat.

Kara picks at it while Ryan digs in.

RYAN

Is this from the place next to Price Chopper's?

KARA

Li's? Yeah. They have better food.

RYAN

I like the place near Walmart. They give you way more.

And, they have the best crab Rangoon I've ever eaten.

The move was worth it just for that.

KARA

(shrugging)

Not sure I can get on board with that. Anyways, they're an extra fifteen minutes away.

RYAN

It's definitely not that far.

KARA

It is on my way back from work.

RYAN

Ah.

KARA

Plus, I really hate it there. The food's greasy and it's the only time I've ever gotten food poisoning.

RYAN

I wasn't criticizing you. I was just saying.

KARA

Right, and I'm just saying that I hate that place and I got food poisoning from them.

RYAN

It was just the stomach flu, Kara.

KARA

I didn't agree with you then, and I don't agree with

you now. It was their chicken lo mein. Not the fucking stomach flu.

Ryan snorts.

Kara glares.

The moment lingers, but then passes. They continue eating.

RYAN

How was work?

KARA

Another day in retail hell, another dollar.

RYAN

At least it wasn't a sale day.

KARA

Yeah, that's this weekend. Winter clearance.

RYAN

You guys have had a winter clearance sale, like, four times now.

KARA

Gotta get the inventory out somehow.

RYAN

You're gonna be the only opening cashier, aren't you?

KARA

Oooh, how'd you know. *She takes a bite of food, chews.*
Beat passes by. I actually think they're going to
move me out back. They started training me on pricing.

RYAN

I thought out back was for full time employees.

KARA

It is.

RYAN

Would be kind of difficult to balance that and vet
school.

KARA

I hate that term. It sounds so fake. *(In a mocking
voice)* Vet school, where I'm going so I can become a
vet!

RYAN

That wasn't exactly my point.

KARA

I know what your point was.

RYAN

Think of how much shit you get now for the one day a
week that you're not available.

KARA

Yes, I'm aware-

RYAN

Once you're enrolled in classes it would be downright impossible to balance the two.

KARA

Yeah. It would.

RYAN

So?

KARA

So what?

RYAN

What are you going to do? Let them make you full time and deal with it later?

KARA

Look. I... we need the money.

RYAN

Sharply:

Believe me Kara, I know we need the fucking money.

KARA

I can't keep getting 30 or 35 hours a week.

RYAN

Try talking to Shelley again.

KARA

That won't do shit.

RYAN

She loves you. She'd do anything to make you stay.

KARA

She might love me. But there just aren't enough hours to go around up front. She's the one who suggested that they start training me out back.

RYAN

I'm surprised. She seemed to like you up front.

KARA

Out back is the only way I'll be guaranteed hours. She's helping me out a lot by sending me there.

RYAN

So you don't think you're going out back. You know it.

KARA

Well, yeah. It's not much of a choice.

RYAN

But you can't be full time there and in school.

KARA

Irritation growing:

Yes. I think that's been established.

*A pause.**Kara still picks at her food.**Ryan pushes his away and turns towards Kara.*

RYAN

You've been out of undergrad for almost two years.

Kara stiffens.

KARA

I'm also capable of counting.

Ryan rolls his eyes.

RYAN

Don't get like that.

KARA

I'm not getting like anything.

RYAN

You're being snippy.

KARA

Because you're being difficult!

He leans back into the couch and puts his hands up in a peaceful/placating gesture.

RYAN

I just wasn't sure if you'd thought about what going full time meant. I didn't think that was being difficult.

KARA

Ryan, we need the money.

RYAN

Right, but-

KARA

You know what furthering my education would do?

RYAN

Cost money.

KARA

Exactly. Cost money. Money we don't have. And quite frankly? I don't want to ask my parents for anymore loans. It's humiliating. Plus, we both know they can't really afford it either. They struggled enough helping us move out here.

RYAN

The longer you wait, the harder it will be for you to go back to school.

KARA

Yeah, well someone needs to be able to pay the bills.

A beat goes by.

Kara rubs her temples.

Ryan looks away.

KARA

I'm sorry. I... I didn't mean that.

RYAN

I'm pretty sure you did.

KARA

That wasn't a fair thing to say.

RYAN

Fair never seems to matter too much though, does it?

KARA

Ryan, all I meant was that-

RYAN

This isn't me picking a fight. But you meant exactly what you said.

KARA

Ryan-

RYAN

It's not like I'm not looking for a job.

KARA

I know, I know.

RYAN

I don't think there's a high school in a thirty mile radius that I haven't applied to.

KARA

I know.

RYAN

Fuck, make that a forty-five-mile radius. (*incredulous, but not particularly heated*) "Someone needs to pay the bills"? You didn't even pay rent the first year we lived together.

KARA

It was a shitty one-bedroom apartment right off campus and you told me not to worry about it. And that was four years ago. This is now.

RYAN

Yeah. This is now.

They shift on the couch. Unsure of what to say now or how to take back words.

Kara starts wiping crumbs off of the table and then glances over at Ryan. She opens her mouth and then closes it.

Ryan eats the last crab rangoon from the carton.

KARA

You done?

RYAN

Yeah.

Kara repacks the rest of the food. She stands and picks up the takeout, and then strides off stage.

END SCENE ONE.