

FUMBLE

By Justin Alejandro Gonzales

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

0 male, 0 female, 3 either

Noa [m/f] A student. In recovery.

Sam [m/f] A student. Also in recovery. Noa's accountability partner and roommate.

Student [m/f] A student. Enjoys football.

Time:

Evening, during a big game broadcast.

Setting:

The public bathroom of a college dormitory hallway.

Notes:

This script was written for Plays on Tap 2024, a play festival made in collaboration with and performed for alcoholics in recovery. Please perform this script with the proper gravity.

Characters have been assigned a gender for the sake of readability. Please change pronouns according to casting.

In The Bathroom

(At rise: A public bathroom in a dormitory hallway. A row of chairs represent toilets whose stall doors are implied. There is also a trash can next to a desk, which represents a sink. NOA sits on the edge of a toilet behind a closed door, waiting with a mild mix of boredom, disappointment, and frustration. She is slightly intoxicated. SAM enters with a bag slung over her shoulder. She scans the room before knocking on the closed door.)

SAM

Noa? Is that you in there?

NOA

Oh, hey Sam. Thanks for coming.

SAM

Of course, why wouldn't I?

NOA

Well, you had that test, right? You can't pause the timer, can you?

SAM

Yeah, it's still running as we speak, but I get multiple tries. You know, there's more than one bathroom on this hallway. I walk in the other one and I proclaim "Noa, I've come bearing gifts!" And the girl in the stall doesn't say anything, right? So I knock, and she says "What?!" She said it just like that, too. So, just so you know, I've sacrificed my reputation to get you this toilet paper.

(SAM opens her bag and produces a roll of toilet paper.)

NOA

Oh, yeah. Sorry. Wait, you brought me toilet paper?

SAM

Yep, a fresh roll from my private collection. Heads up!

(SAM tosses the roll over the door and it donks off of NOA's head. She holds it, not sure what to do with it.)

NOA

Uh, I appreciate it, but . . . why?

SAM

Well, when a friend texts you “Come get me, I’m in the bathroom,” it seems like a safe assumption. Thought maybe you were just embarrassed to say it, or something.

NOA

Thanks for the thought, but you can have it back.

(NOA rolls the roll under the door. SAM takes a moment to notice it and hurriedly picks it up. She tears off the portion that touched the floor and puts it in the trash. She puts the roll back in her bag and washes her hands.)

SAM

Hey! Didn’t I tell you this was from the private collection? This floor is filthy; that’s at least twelve squares, totally contaminated!

NOA

I think you’ll be fine. The economy will survive.

SAM

Yeah, yeah. Anyway, what’s up, then? Are you alright?

NOA

I’m fine. I mean, I feel physically fine, but . . . I had some drinks tonight, Sam.

SAM

Oh. Well, hey. We all make mistakes. It’s an expected part of the process.

NOA

I know. But . . . it doesn’t make it . . . not feel bad.

SAM

Yeah, I get it. But hey, being down on yourself isn’t going to make it feel better. It’ll make it worse. That shame cycle, it gets you.

(NOA sits up straight and takes a deep breath, then releases long sigh.)

NOA

I think I needed to hear that out loud. Thanks, Sam. I’m glad to have you around.

SAM

I wouldn’t be a very good accountability partner if I wasn’t, eh?

NOA

Nah, I guess not. In fact, you’re the best one I know; I can’t get rid of you!

SAM

That's the funny thing about friends . . .

NOA

And roommates.

SAM

And roommates . . . so, on that note, do you want to go home?

NOA

Yeah, soon. Can we just chat here for a second?

SAM

Sure. What's up? Do you want to keep the door closed?

NOA

For now, please. I just feel kind of embarrassed about this whole thing. And it doesn't have anything to do with toilet paper!

(SAM sits next to the door.)

SAM

Okay. What happened?

NOA

So. You know I was here for the game day party. This is with my old friend group, so they still drink and everything, but they know I'm in recovery, and I've been sober for a while. Even though I know there's going to be alcohol there, I'm thinking I can just focus on being with my friends and enjoying the game, and I'll be fine, right?

SAM

Right.

NOA

I walk in—they're expecting me. I walk in, and we greet each other and everything; "Hey," y'know. "It's been a while, good to see you." But there's this new guy there, Hal I think? He introduces himself and says "I brought some beers if you want one." And I tell him I don't drink, and he says—you know what he says? He says "Ah, come on, that's half the fun."

SAM

Ah.

NOA

I mean, I don't blame him. He doesn't know me, but . . . speak for yourself, y'know?

SAM

Right.

NOA

Anyway, we have this tradition where we all take a jello shot at the kick-off. And Sam, I swear to you, I wasn't even thinking about it, but I took one. I tasted that vodka and I sort of froze. I couldn't believe I did that. I've been how many weeks sober, and in just one instant . . . and y'know, nobody even said anything to me.

SAM

That's what I'm thinking. They know you're in recovery. They didn't try to stop you?

NOA

Nope. And then, I just gave up. Y'know, it's that old fallacy: "Well, I've already ruined my streak, guess today's my cheat day!" Like it's a . . . some kind of game, and not a life-ruining addiction.

SAM

Mm. Yep, I've been there.

NOA

So I sneak in a couple of more shots before halftime, before I slink over to Hal while he's pouring himself a cup and ask him to pour me some, too. And he gives me this look. I don't even know what it was. It was really subtle, but he has this look and he just says "Sure." And he pours me some. It's when I'm sipping in the corner, trying to hide, the shots starting to hit, that I realize what I'm doing, and I excuse myself to . . . I don't know what to call it. Reconcile with myself? And then I texted you a bit later. And now here we are. In the bathroom.

(A STUDENT enters and is given pause by the current picture.)

SAM

Hey. You come for some toilet paper? I got some of the primo stuff right here if you want.

(SAM pats her bag.)

STUDENT

Uh, maybe later, thanks.

(The STUDENT washes her hands at the sink.)

NOA

(to STUDENT)

How's the game going? Any big plays?

STUDENT

Yeah, for the other guys. We fumbled the ball and they took it all the way home. But we've got a good team. As long as they keep their head in the game, they can bounce back. Well, see you.

(STUDENT exits. NOA and SAM chuckle between each other.)

SAM

I bet I look like a real weirdo right now.

NOA

Nah, I've seen worse. I found someone sleeping in here, once. That was weird.

(A pause. SAM stands.)

SAM

Well, what do you say we get out of here and finish the game back at our dorm?

(NOA stands.)

NOA

Let's.

(NOA opens the door. She and SAM hug.)

NOA

I'm glad you're in this with me.

SAM

Me too. I'm sorry your friends weren't looking out for you like that.

NOA

Yeah, well. I think it's hard for them to fully understand, y'know?

(NOA and SAM begin to exit.)

SAM

I know something they'll understand!

(SAM jokingly punches into her hand.)

NOA

Come on, Sam. They'd knock your block off.

SAM

“Knock my block off?” What is this, Peanuts?

NOA

Woah! That’s a pretty deep cut, for a business major.

SAM

Alright, keep it movin’ . . .

(Laughing, NOA and SAM exit together.)

End of Play