

WAKE UP CALL
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Paradise Valley Community College
Honorable Mention, One-Act Play/Scripts

CHARACTERS: ALLISSA, a 19-year-old woman
ZACK, a 20-year-old man
MRS. ROBINSON, a 40-year-old woman

SETTING: A three-quarters view flat of the back of the Velvet Freeze Ice Cream store - "Phoenix's Favorite Since 1946"—facing on an alley in an older part of town. The walls are a dingy pink. Two steps lead to the back door in the center of the long side of the flat. A sign above on it reads "Employees and Deliveries Only." A grubby graffiti-decorated yellow dumpster sits downstage at an angle to the store. One side is blackened from smoke from a previous fire. It's getting toward dusk, present day.

AT CURTAIN RISE: Zack leans against the short side of the wall close to the corner, out of sight of the door. He lights a cigarette.

(The door opens. Allissa enters, closes the door and sits on the top step. A "soda jerk" style cap is tilted at a rakish angle on her head. She pulls a cell phone from the pocket of her pink and brown uniform. She punches a number on the phone, looks at her watch.)

ALLISSA: *(on phone)* Hey, Gina. I'm off in twenty...yeah...Sure, come on over. Mom's working the late shift...yeah, again...she doesn't like it except for the money's good she says. *(sniffs)* Hold on, something's burning. *(sniffs again)* I'd better check the dumpster. Last week some homeless person set it on fire...yeah. Later.

(Allissa pockets the phone as she walks over to the dumpster. She sniffs but doesn't detect anything. Zack blows smoke rings so they appear to come from around the edge of the building. Allissa turns around, sees them.)

ALLISSA: *(startled)* Hey! *(ZACK saunters into view following his smoke rings as they dissipate. He tosses the cigarette on the ground and grinds it out with his foot.)* *(surprised)* Oh, it's you. What—?

ZACK: Hey yourself.

ALLISSA: *(mystified)* What are you doing back already?

ZACK: *(petulant)* Hi Zack, glad to see you. *(Allissa starts to speak but he waves his hands in dismissal.)* That's alright, that's alright. I know it's a big shock seeing me so soon. Three weeks till fall semester to go. Still working on my tan.

ALLISSA: *(laughs)* Okay, okay. So? What are you doing here?

ZACK: My dad got called back to work early. Some big spender client or whatever. So, I caught a ride with him. You got a problem with that?

ALLISSA: *(not sure how to take that)* No. Of course not. *(a little miffed)*
What's with you anyway?

ZACK: *(arrogant)* What's with me? What's with me? I missed you.

ALLISSA: You what?

ZACK: Back up, back up. So, Zack, how was your summer?

ALLISSA: *(taken aback, apologetic)* Sorry. How was your summer vacation, Zack?

ZACK: I missed you, you know?

ALLISSA: No. I don't know. You never called. Not once.

ZACK: Truth. But—

ALLISSA: So? What are you doing here?

ZACK: I've been thinking about you.

ALLISSA: *(shaking her head)* Oh yeah. I'm so sure.

ZACK: No, really. All the time. Lately.

ALLISSA: *(wagging her finger at him)* A-ha! The real truth comes out. You ran out of girls, didn't you?

ZACK: *(cocky, shrugs)* So I got bored. No action over there, you know what I mean?

ALLISSA: *(skeptical)* On Coronado?

ZACK: Island of the newly wed and the nearly dead.

ALLISSA: *(laughs)* I'm so sure.

ZACK: Truth. *(walks a funky walk, showing off)* But. the Zack is back, baby. You should be glad. We should celebrate. Tonight. Pool party at my house. What do you say?

ALLISSA: You should be committed. Anyone who leaves an all expenses paid summer vacation on Coronado Island is nuts. This is Phoenix! It's still one hundred ten here, dude!

ZACK: My mother's words exactly.

ALLISSA: Did she come back early too?

ZACK: Nah. She's still doing her beach thing, working on turning herself into a forty-two year old Gucci bag.

ALLISSA: *(laughs in spite of herself)* Your mother would kill you if she heard you say that.

ZACK: *(shrugs)* Truth hurts.

ALLISSA: I for sure could have used some beach time this summer. It's been a long, long, long hot—

(ZACH walks up close, too close, causing her to take a step back. He reaches up and touches her hat.)

ZACK: *(low voice, almost suggestive)* I bet you know how to keep cool. Scooping that ice cream? Leaning against the freezer doors?

ALLISSA: You are really weird. And horny. *(takes another step back)* Why don't you go around to the front door, I'll fix you a sundae. *(ZACK grabs at her hat.)* Stop it, Zack, it's hair-pinned to my hair.

ZACK: *(playful but edgy)* Ice cream is not what I had in mind.

ALLISSA: *(laughing but nervous)* Obviously. *(ZACK makes another grab for the hat.)*

ZACK: When? Tonight?

ALLISSA: *(shakes her head)* Look, I've got to get back to work. Call me sometime. Okay? *(ZACK makes a grab for the hat and pulls it off.)* Ow! *(angry)* That hurt. Come on, give it back, you jerk. *(ZACK playfully keeps the hat out of her reach. He holds it behind his back.)*

ZACK: Give me a kiss and tell me you're sorry for calling me a jerk and I'll give you your fruity little hat back.

ALLISSA: *(annoyed)* No. Keep it. Jerk. *(ZACK flings the hat back to her.)*

ZACK: *(petulant)* What's with you? You weren't this way last Spring. You got a boyfriend or something I should know about?

ALLISSA: No. I've got a job to finish, Zack. Some of us have to work over the summer.

ZACK: *(Grabs her arm, looks at her watch)* You get off in ten minutes. *(He tries to pull her to him, she resists. The door opens, he releases her. MRS. ROBINSON pokes her head out. ZACK ducks out of view around the corner of the building.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: Allissa!

ALLISSA: I'll be right there, Mrs. Robinson. I thought I smelled smoke again. *(MRS. ROBINSON comes out of the door and stands on the top step.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: Oh no, not the dumpster again?

ALLISSA: Everything's okay. Probably some homeless person smoking in the alley.

MRS. ROBINSON: Or smoke from those forest fires up in the high country drifting our way. This whole state could go up in flames if we're not careful.

ALLISSA: No kidding.

MRS. ROBINSON: And these old buildings. *(shakes her head)* Backing up to alleys like this? One goes, the whole block will catch fire. It's a worry. *(MRS. ROBINSON looks around at the ground outside the door.)* There's always cigarette butts, or worse, everywhere out here. I think the bums like to hang out back here after we close. I suppose I should put up a chain link fence but they're so expensive and tacky.

ALLISSA: *(looking meaningfully in ZACK's direction)* I think there was a bum out here, but I saw him leave. *(ZACK makes a silly face at ALLISSA.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: *(firmly)* Another reason you shouldn't be out here by yourself. Come get the trash bags. I'll be in the office getting the cash receipts and deposit together.

ALLISSA: Okay.

(MRS. ROBINSON goes back into the store. ALLISSA starts to follow. ZACK comes back around the corner.)

ZACK: Bum? Homeless person? *(emulates Travis from "Taxi Driver.")* You talking to me? *(Allissa waves him away frantically. Mrs. Robinson comes back to the door.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: Oh, and Allissa, I've locked the front door. Betsy's doing the floors.

ALLISSA: I'll can help her as soon as—

MRS. ROBINSON: She can take care of it, don't worry. You go ahead and go after you take out the trash. Just stop by the office before you leave. Okay?

ALLISSA: No problem. *(Without another look at ZACK, ALLISSA goes into the store. She closes the door. ZACK does a slow burn, shakes his head. He lights another cigarette, paces up and down, looks at his watch. He takes his cell phone out of his belt clip, punches a number as he smiles smugly.)*

ZACK: *(on phone)* Hey there Gina, baby. How ya doin'?...Yeah, it's the Zackster, back in town...Hey, I hear you and Allissa are having a little party later...yeah, I'm at the Velvet Freeze...just talked to her...She's busy right now. Cleaning up...So what's the plan?...No, she couldn't talk long...yeah, cleaning up like I said...Okay, sounds good...What is it?...Seen that...seen that...that one too. *(The door opens and ALLISSA struggles through it with two big plastic trash bags crammed to capacity.)*

ZACK: *(hushed voice)* Gotta go. Bye. *(He snaps the phone closed. As ALLISSA, unaware of ZACK, drags the bags down the stairs, ZACK tiptoes up behind her. He tickles her.)*

ZACK: Boo! (*startled, ALLISSA whirls around, drops one of the bags, it breaks, spewing plastic cups and plates.*)

ALLISSA: (*mad*) Damn you, Zack. Look at this mess! (*ZACK shrugs, trying his best to act coy and cute.*)

ZACK: No need to get your panties in a knot, Allissa.

ALLISSA: Why are you still hanging around here? Why?

ZACK: (*whiny*) I wanted to see you. Is that a crime? (*Mr. Helpful all of a sudden.*) Here, let me get that other bag for you.

ALLISSA: No thanks. You've succeeded in making more work for me with this one.

ZACK: Come on, why are you so mean to me? I said I'll help you clean up.

ALLISSA: (*sarcastic*) Don't get your hands too dirty. (*ZACK uses his feet to kick the spilled trash into a pile.*) I'm going to get another bag. (*she starts up the stairs*)

ZACK: (*not looking at her. Petulant.*) I know you're anxious to go hang with Gina. You'd rather spend my first evening back with her than me.

ALLISSA: (*suspicious*) How'd you know that? (*realization sets in*) You sneak! (*Zack shrugs indifferently; nonchalantly keeps kicking the trash into a pile. Allissa's cell phone rings. She answers it.*) Hi Gina... yes...um-hmmm...um-hmmm...no, don't worry, he's not coming. I'll—(*suddenly ZACK dashes up to her grabs the cell phone.*) Hey!

ZACK: (*on phone*) Bye Gina! (*He hurls the cell phone into the dumpster where it hits with a hollow clang. Allissa is open-mouthed, stupefied by his action.*)

ALLISSA: (*so mad she can hardly speak*) I can't believe you did that. My new camera phone...my mother calls me from work...my dad calls me from Iraq—

ZACK: (*seemingly unsure of why he did it*) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I don't know why...I'll get you another—

ALLISSA: (*screams in frustration, stabs her finger toward the dumpster*) No, you'll get me that one.

ZACK: No way. You gotta be kidding. No way I'm going into that—
(*Suddenly the door opens. MRS. ROBINSON comes out with a worried look on her face.*)

MRS. ROBINSON: What's going on out here, Allissa? (*She takes in the broken trash bag, ZACK and a very distraught-looking ALLISSA.*) What —?

ZACK: (*hurries to answer, very proper*) Hello, Mrs. Robinson, isn't it? I'm Allissa's friend, Zack Oliphant. (*He shrugs nonchalantly*) As you can see we've had a little mishap with the trash bag and I was just helping her —

MRS. ROBINSON: I see. (*She looks at ALLISSA again. ALLISSA is trying to maintain control. Her anger is pushing her close to tears.*) I'll get another bag. (*Muttering to herself as she goes back into the store.*) That last bunch was a little cheap. (*MRS. ROBINSON disappears into the store.*)

ZACK: (*contrite*) Hey, Allissa, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

ALLISSA: (*emphasizing every word through clenched teeth*) Prove it. Get my phone.

ZACK: I can't go in there. It's full of germs and —

ALLISSA: (*gestures wildly toward the dumpster*) It's empty, Zack. Our trash pick up was yesterday. (*The cell phone rings in the dumpster. ALLISSA and ZACK look at each other. ZACK reaches for his cell phone. He punches a number without taking his eyes off ALLISSA.*)

ZACK: Probably Gina. I'm calling her. (*MRS. ROBINSON enters with a trash bag, long-handled dustpan and a broom. She hears the cell phone ringing from the dumpster, stops, looks from GINA to ZACK. He turns away.*) (*On phone.*) Gina, Zack. Listen, is that you calling Allissa's cell?

MRS. ROBINSON: (*To ALLISSA*) Why is there a cell phone ringing in the dumpster? (*The cell phone quits ringing. It beeps loudly three times to signal that a message has been left. ALLISSA's discomfort visibly increases. She doesn't answer.*)

ZACK: (*turns back to ALLISSA, holds out his cell phone.*) It's not her. She wants to talk to you. (*ALLISSA takes the cell phone from ZACK, hardly able to look at him.*)

ALLISSA: (*on phone*) Don't call my cell phone, please, Gina...It's...it's in the dumpster...Why? (*All eyes are on ZACK who hunches his shoulders and shrugs in a "why me?" gesture.*)

ZACK: It was an accident.

MRS. ROBINSON: Accident?

ALLISSA: (*on phone, matter-of-factly*) Zack accidentally threw my cell phone into the dumpster on purpose, Gina. I'll call you when he gets it out. Bye. (*ZACK holds out his hand for his cell phone. ALLISSA shakes her head*)

MRS. ROBINSON: (*angry, stern*) Listen here, mister. You get your little butt into that dumpster and get that phone.

ZACK: (*ignores her*) Give me my phone, Allissa.

ALLISSA: No. Get mine.

ZACK: No way. I already told you.

ALLISSA: (*to MRS. ROBINSON.*) He's afraid of germs.

MRS. ROBINSON: (*scoffs*) Hah! There's more germs on cell phones and keyboards than toilet seats. It was on the news just the other day. What kind of big baby are you, anyway? (*The cell phone starts to ring again to ALLISSA's and ZACH's dismay.*) Come on. Can't be that difficult to get it.

(*ZACH turns away in a pout. The phone continues to ring then beeps again to signal a message. It immediately starts to ring again. The tension of not knowing who is calling cuts through ALLISSA like a knife.*)

ALLISSA: (*quietly*) Zack, please, it could be my dad calling. He'll worry. He doesn't get many chances to call. (*ZACH fumes, torn by an internal struggle*)

ZACK: Alright, alright. Quit nagging. I'll get your damn phone. (*He grabs the plastic trash bag from MRS. ROBINSON and drapes it over the edge of the dumpster. He grabs the top edge of the dumpster with both hands.*) You'll have to give me a boost. Maybe I can reach it with that dustpan. Get it over here so I'll have it when I need it.

(*MRS. ROBINSON leans the dustpan against the dumpster. She and ALLISSA each grab one of ZACH's legs.*)

ALLISSA: Tell us when you're ready.

ZACK: (*a little worried*) I only want you to boost me up so I can look in. Maybe as far as here. (*he indicates his waist*) I wish that phone would quit ringing. It's driving me nuts. (*The phone quits ringing. Another message beeps.*) Okay. Now, be careful.

MRS. ROBINSON: Okay. On the count of three. One. Two. Three. (*The three manage to get ZACK draped over the edge of the dumpster. His upper torso is out of view.*)

ALLISSA: Do you see it?

ZACK: (*loudly from inside the dumpster*) No, it's pretty dark in here. Now I wish the stupid phone would ring so it'd light up. You know what, it really stinks in here. (*the phone starts to ring*) There it is. I see the light. (*he grunts as he tries to wiggle forward a little*) I can't quite reach it. Maybe give me another little push. (*he cautions them with one free hand*) Easy now I— (*ALLISSA and MRS. ROBINSON look at each other and smile. They give Zack a little more than he expects and he goes headfirst—cursing all the way—into the dumpster. The two women stifle their laughter.*)

ZACK: (*furious*) Damn it, you two. You did that on purpose. Shit. These are new jeans. Damn. (*The phone quits ringing. No message beeps this time.*)

MRS. ROBINSON: (*pretends remorse*) Oh my god, Zack. We're so sorry. I think that trash bag slipped (*laughs*) and you just (*laughs*) shot in there like a little greased pig.

ZACK: Not funny. If I get tetanus or something my dad'll sue your ass. You can count on that.

MRS. ROBINSON: Bring it on. (*to ALLISSA*) I'd better get a chair and a flashlight. (*see hurries into the store*)

ALLISSA: (*to ZACK, trying to keep a straight face*) While you're in there, sweetie, can you find the phone and hand it to me over the top? (*the phone starts ringing*)

ZACK: Now I've got you, you little—(*screams*) Shit, there's something...it moved...under the phone...get me out of here...come on, Allissa, I'm not kidding.

ALLISSA: Oh, you're just imagining things, you big baby.

ZACK: No, I'm not. It moved, I swear. Under the phone. Covered in plastic. Shit, I'm getting out of here.

(*ZACK's hands desperately grip the top rim of the dumpster. He kicks and claws his way loudly to the top, pushes himself up and throws one leg over, then the other and drops to the ground. He breathes heavily, freaked out. The ringing stops. No message.*)

ALLISSA: (*laughs*) Look at you. Phew! I can smell you too. (*laughs again*) Okay, give me the phone.

ZACK: (*breathless, still plainly frightened*) I didn't get it.

ALLISSA (*doubtful*) You didn't get it? (*angry*) Zack! (*MRS. ROBINSON enters with a plastic chair and flashlight.*)

MRS. ROBINSON: How'd he get out? Did he get your phone?

ZACK: (*frightened*) There's something in there, in the bottom. I touched it. I swear it moved. I swear.

ALLISSA: (*exasperated*) I'll get it myself. You are worthless, Zack. Here. (*she tosses his cell phone*) Catch. (*ZACK, arms weak from the ordeal, misses. His cell phone crashes to the ground. He makes no effort to pick it up since it's obviously broken.*)

ZACK: Don't, Allissa.

ALLISSA: (*to MRS. ROBINSON*) Let me have that chair. (*ALLISSA drags the chair up to the edge of the dumpster. She stands on it, hoists one leg over the edge and peers in.*)

ZACK: Don't go in there, Allissa. I'm telling you, don't.

ALLISSA: Go to hell, Zack. Or go back to Coronado. Just go.

MRS. ROBINSON: Here's the flashlight.

(ALLISSA takes the flashlight and peers into the dark dumpster. She catches her breath and gasps.)

ALLISSA: *(aghast with disbelief)* Oh my god, oh no —*(She scrambles down, but when she tries to walk she is so weak she almost stumbles. MRS. ROBINSON catches her arm.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: What is it? Is there really something —?

ALLISSA: *(grasps her mouth and wretches)* I think I'm going to be sick. I —*(MRS. ROBINSON guides her to the steps and ALLISSA sits like a sack of potatoes.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: Put your head down between your knees, Allissa. That's it. You'll be okay. *(ALLISSA does so. ZACK looking equally as ill sits next to her on the steps. MRS. ROBINSON gently takes the flashlight from ALLISSA.)*

ZACK: Is it—?

ALLISSA: *(to MRS. ROBINSON)* Don't look in there. I think you should call the police.

MRS. ROBINSON: *(skeptical)* The police? *(Undeterred, MRS. ROBINSON climbs on the chair and shines the flashlight into the dumpster. She sweeps it all around.)* I don't see —*(the flashlight comes to a halt)* —oh no. Oh no, no, no. *(She takes a deep breath and cups her face in her hands.)*

ZACK: Is it—?

ALLISSA: *(nodding her head in great sadness and knowing)* It is, isn't it? *(MRS. ROBINSON, dazed by the impact of what she saw in the dumpster, carefully gets down from the chair.)*

MRS. ROBINSON: *(shocked, but trying to regain some composure)* It's a baby. New born from the looks —*(Her voice trails off, she covers her eyes again.)*

ALLISSA: Is it—?

MRS. ROBINSON: *(nods)* I'm going inside to call. *(she exits into the store)*

(ZACK and ALLISSA sit side by side on the steps, each enveloped in their own personal reaction to the shock they have experienced. ZACK takes out a cigarette, puts it absent-mindedly in his mouth but forgets to light it.)

(Beat by beat, as the sirens start far off in the distance and come nearer and nearer to the site of the tragedy, the distance physically and emotionally between the two increases, until they are almost 180 degrees apart on the steps.)

(The blue flashing lights of a police car reflect on the building. As the curtain falls, the cell phone rings.)

THE END