

Paolo Mangahas

Lesson 8

21 March 2020

Exercise: Write the scenario of the play. You may write in detail and narrative and the description of what happens in each of the scenes of the play as you imagine it unfolding on stage.

Pay particular attention to: style, plot reveals, setting, song breaks (if any), concrete action, and if necessary, snatches of dialogue.

Act 1

Scene 1

The stage is pitch black. We hear the familiar ping of a mobile phone. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is the face of MARA, crouching in front of her phone. It is an almost eerie scene as only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

We then hear a male and a female voice from the other end of the stage, arguing. They are Mara's PARENTS. Their fighting intensifies as their voices grow louder. Mara's face is sad, afraid.

Then at the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's phone screen. The screen shows a social media app, where Mara posts a photo of her, lounging by the pool with the caption: Hanging out by our pool ATM, appreciating my wonderful life. How did I get so lucky? #Blessed

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 2

Stage reveals the hallway of a university where STUDENTS are walking through and fro. Mara is standing in the corner, watching others pass by.

A group of POPULAR GIRLS appear, chatting with each other and sharing how fabulous their summer break was. Mara is listening and watching from the corner. Mara longs to be part of that group.

Mara is on her phone. At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's phone screen. The screen shows a social media app, where Mara posts a photo of her in the school campus with the caption: It's great to be back in school and to hang out with my friends again! #Grateful

The girls notice Mara staring at them. They exit stage, walking past Mara and looking at her with pity.

JEN, Mara's one and only friend, approaches Mara. They exchange pleasantries. We see the dynamics of their friendship, how Jen is thoughtful but lacking in sense sometimes (comical) with Mara being the more cunning one between the two of them. They have a comical dynamic. Mara is open about her disgust with her life and the people around her. We begin to see what motivates her. A monologue here (what she truly longs for).

In the middle of her frustration, Mara pauses to post something on social media. At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's phone screen. The screen shows a social media app, where Mara posts a selfie with the caption: My life is perfect #LifeGoals

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 3

The stage is pitch black. We hear the familiar ping of a mobile phone. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage. She is in the same corner where we last saw her in school, but this time we know she is at home because we hear the voices of her parents arguing again. It is a toxic environment.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. The screen shows a messaging app, where Mara is texting Jen. We see their exchange of messages. Mara continues her rant and Jen tries to reassure her (albeit comical). We hear more of Mara's inner struggle.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 4

We find Mara walking along a bridge, taking selfies. She fiddles with her phone, walking along, not looking where she is going. A taho vendor rushes past her, accidentally knocking her over. Mara drops some of her books over the bridge. She gets mad at the poor vendor, saying hurtful things. She is incensed, but continues to work on her phone as the vendor apologises.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. The screen shows a social media app, where Mara posts a photo of her and with the caption: It's a lovely day like me. #SorryNotSorry

Mara then looks at the vendor, whips up her phone then takes a selfie with him with a big smile. The vendor looks perplexed at her seemingly schizophrenic personality.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. The screen shows a social media app, where Mara posts a photo of her and the vendor with the caption: Bumped into this hardworking taho vendor. I love taho! #BeKind

As soon as Mara posts the photo, she continues to berate the vendor as she walks out (to the corner of the stage) looking down at her phone as usual.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 5

The stage is pitch black. We hear the familiar ping of a mobile phone. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage. She is in the same corner where we last saw her out by the bridge, but this time we know she is at home again.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is reading an email—another rejection letter from a publisher. The email indicates how impressive Mara's work is, but that she is not marketable.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 6

We are back in the university hallway where there is a large gathering of students. CLAIRE, one of the popular girls is signing books. It is the launch of her book (something very shallow) and everyone seems to want to get a copy.

Mara is watching from a distance, seething with envy.

Claire reads an excerpt from her book and not only is it cheesy, it is stupid. But everyone applauds her.

Jen approaches Mara to reassure her. More dialogue between the two that shows just how frustrated Mara is with the system. She fumes out into a corner where she switches on her phone.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She posts a photo of her and Jen with the caption: Comparison is the thief of joy #LoveYourLife

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 7

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage. She is in the same corner where we last saw her in the university hallway, but this time we know she is at home again.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is watching YouTube viral videos (some shocking, some comical, some plain stupid – but all viral with millions of views).

We are still seeing her phone screen. A message comes in from Jen. They exchange messages. Mara shares her longing to be a viral sensation too. Maybe this time, people will notice her. But how?

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 8

We are back in the university hallway where Claire and her friends are all huddled looking at Claire's phone. They are all happy at how popular Claire's book is.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Claire's mobile phone screen. We see all the good (but sometimes inane) comments from her followers.

Mara and Jen are huddled in one corner of the hallway, observing Claire and her friends. They too are scrolling Claire's social media account, disgusted at how shallow all the comments are. The two friends talk about how unfair the whole system is and how it perpetuates popularity for the sake of popularity.

Mara is bent on beating the system. She discusses her idea with Jen – her plan to go viral. They come up with a number of crazy ideas (mostly comical ones from Jen). They discuss and deliberate. Mara's desperation is palpable as she heads home.

But first, a wefie.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen where she is posting her photo with Jen with the caption: Who needs followers when you have your best friend? #BFF

Jen points out the irony of Mara just posted.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 9

We find Mara on her way home by the bridge, on her phone as usual, not looking where she is going. She almost bumps into the same taho vendor, who is still apologetic. Another confrontation ensues.

Mara looks intently at the vendor and gets a eureka moment. A conversation. She makes it clear that the vendor owes her big after the last encounter. She proposes an absurd idea on how he can make up for it: Mara asks the vendor to pretend to jump over the bridge. The vendor looks bewildered, but he agrees. Anything to finally rid him of this crazy person.

Mara excitedly maps out the choreography.

The vendor precariously stands on the edge of the concrete precipice, doing everything that he and Mara rehearsed. He pretends to cry, until it actually becomes a real cry for help because he is afraid of heights and did not think this through. He is paralyzed and could not move out of fear.

The whole time, Mara is streaming this whole scene live on social media.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen where we see the live streaming taking place, as Mara theatrically convinces the vendor not to jump and end his life.

Banter between Mara and the vendor here (unintentionally comedic because they are both coming from different motivations – Mara talks about suicide while the vendor talks about being stupid for agreeing to this; to the viewers of the live feed though, the dialogue seems to make sense).

People enter the stage one by one all looking down at their mobile phones, watching the live streaming. More projections of mobile phone screens pop up at the top of the stage—all showing the live action happening.

In a dramatic show, Mara grabs the vendors hand and helps him up from the precipice. She makes sure to capture everything on cam, concluding with a dramatic embrace.

Mara ends the live feed and the vendor shoves her away. He detests her and also himself for agreeing to this charade.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. One by one, the other projected images disappear. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 10

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. She is at home. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is re-watching her dramatic video with the vendor and is ecstatic about how many views and shares it has gotten; it is slowly going viral.

Mara opens another app and messages Jen: I did it!

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

ACT 2

Scene 1

We are in the university hallway where Mara is animatedly recounting to Jen the brilliant execution of her plan and how her life is about to change.

In the hallway, we see all students looking at Mara with admiration. Many of them congratulate her; praising her for her heroic act.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of numerous mobile phone screens, one after the other. Some screens show Mara's video being played and replayed; some screens show messaging apps where people are sharing the video with messages like "must watch!" or "faith in humanity restored" or "I go to school with this brave girl" etc.

We see a montage of mobile screens projected at the top of the stage, all praising Mara.

Claire and her friends approach Mara and Jen in the corner and they each give Mara a big hug.

Mara is beaming with pride. All her dreams are coming true. Jen, meanwhile looks worried.

A dialogue here about Jen's apprehensions. Mara dismisses her. She is beyond ecstatic. She snaps at Jen, accusing her of being jealous. Jen's feelings are hurt. Mara leaves Jen, feeling smug.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The other projected images disappear one by one too. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 3

Mara is on her way home by the bridge, on her phone as usual. She sees the vendor. A dialogue here. The vendor is oblivious to Mara becoming an overnight sensation. He asks about how it all went. Mara lies to the vendor, saying it did not take off as planned. He asks for a copy of the video but Mara says she deleted it. She walks out in a hurry.

Doubtful, the vendor reaches for his mobile phone. At the top of the stage we see the projection of the vendor's mobile phone. He is on Facebook and chances up the now trending video of him on the bridge. He sees many messages from friends and family worried about him, asking him if he is okay.

The vendor is shocked how all this has panned out. He switches off his phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 4

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. She is at home. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is re-watching her viral video. She is proud of herself. She almost believes her own lie.

She switches to other social media apps, taking in all the praise she has been receiving. Everyone loves her.

A message comes in. It is from a producer of a renowned TV show, asking to meet with her.

Mara jumps for joy. She replies. She switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 5

We are back in the university hallway where Mara is telling Jen the good news. Jen does not seem too happy. Mara reassures her that she has got this under control. Jen does not look convinced.

A monologue here. Mara believes this is her ticket, the chance she has been waiting for to show the world what she can offer. Finally, someone will listen to her. Sure, she may have manipulated the system, but it is the same unfair system that has denied her of what she deserves. She is only doing what she can to make her dreams come true.

More students approach Mara, congratulating her. They all take selfies with her and then post on their social media channels.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of numerous mobile phone screens, one after the other. They all post selfies with Mara, who is looking and acting like a celebrity. Mara scrolls through them looking smug.

Mara goes on a social media app and posts a note: I am humbled by all your kind words. Don't forget that everyone has what it takes to be superheroes. #NotAllSuperheroesWearCapes

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The other projected images disappear one by one too. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 6

Mara is on the set of a popular TV show where she is being interviewed by the host. She is asked about her experience saving that poor vendor from jumping off of the bridge. Mara feigns humility. She is clearly enjoying this and milking it. She even embellishes here and there.

We see the whole interview projected at the top of the stage. People from all walks of life are watching the same projection (in this case, the projected screen becomes a shared one with the audience and the actors on stage).

Jen walks in and goes center stage. She is the only one not watching the projection on screen (the only one facing the audience. She is looking down on her phone, watching Mara's TV interview (this differentiates her from the rest of the people who do not know the truth). She looks worried. She switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Act 3

Scene 1

Several months have passed. We see Mara in the university hallway surrounded by fellow students. She is clearly a star. She is reading an excerpt from her newly published book, which is about the courage to help others in need (revolving around that viral incident). She proudly announces that it will come out in bookstores soon and asks everyone to please buy a copy.

After the event, Jen approaches Mara. They talk. Jen is proud of Mara. Mara is not as warm as before. She has changed. There is now an air of celebrity about her. She coldly invites Jen to her book launch.

Jen congratulates her again and Mara gives a passive aggressive statement about Jen not trusting her plan to begin with.

Mara exits the stage, leaving Jen standing alone in the hallway. Jen whips out her mobile phone and starts typing.

At the top of the stage we see a projection of Jen's mobile phone screen. She is on a social media app and posts a note: The most dangerous lies are the lies you tell yourself. #TheTruthWillSetYouFree

Jen switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 2

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. She is at home. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is on a social media app, reading all the comments and praises from fellow students about her book reading. All of them cannot wait to get a copy. She checks her Instagram account and she has more followers than she ever dreamed of having.

A message from Jen pops up. She apologizes for not being supportive enough, but explains that she was only worried about the consequences. Mara starts to reply (*typing...*) but decides to delete her message and does not respond to Jen.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 3

Mara is in a popular bookstore, all set for her book launch. She is being interviewed by a renowned author.

We see the entire event projected live at the top of the stage. A number of people are watching the same projection (in this case, the projected screen becomes a shared one with the audience and the actors on stage).

Among the people watching the interview is the vendor, who looks as though he just chanced upon the live stream. He is the only one not looking at the projection on stage. His mouth is agape at the lies Mara weaves throughout her story. He is shocked about how Mara has exploited him. He reacts negatively. Some bystanders recognize him and points at him. They start filming him on their phones.

At the top of the stage we see a projection of the vendor (as filmed by someone) disputing Mara's TV interview.

We see more projections of mobile phone screens popping up at the top of the stage (around Mara's TV interview), each showing the vendor and his denial of what Mara is saying.

Oblivious to what's happening outside the book launch, Mara feels she is on top of the world. Mara asks to take a selfie with the famous author.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen (amidst the other phone projections of the vendor). Mara posts a selfie with the caption: So this is what happens when your dreams come true. #SorryNotSorry #Grateful #Blessed #LifeGoals

Mara turns off her phone and the projection of her mobile phone screen disappears, while the other projections showing the angry vendor remain, until one by one the screens disappear too and the stage goes back to black.

Scene 4

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. She is at home. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is on a social media app, going through videos of her book launch, reading all the good comments and messages until she comes across one negative one, then another. She scrolls through social media, seeing more negative comments about her until she comes across videos of the vendor denying everything she said.

We see the entire rant of the vendor projected at the top of the stage.

Mara looks mortified. She checks her Instagram account and sees that all her followers have unfollowed her, leaving only Jen, just like before. She screams. She switches off her phone and the projected image of her mobile phone disappears. That part of the stage where Mara is sitting goes black (Mara disappears from view).

Slowly, the top of the stage begins to light up with numerous mobile phone screens, one after the other, each one showing the vendor's rant and some sensational headlines criticizing Mara, like "Young author's entire book debunked by vendor." "Author took advantage of poor man to advance career." "Young girl's autobiographical account apparently a work of fiction."

It goes on and on, even without Mara on stage until all screens switch off one by one and the stage goes back to black.

Scene 5

We are in the set of a popular TV show where the vendor is being interviewed. He recounts his version of the story. He seems to be enjoying this. He embellishes here and there until he starts spinning his own tall tale.

We see the whole interview projected at the top of the stage. People from all walks of life are watching the same projection (in this case, the projected screen becomes a shared one with the audience and the actors on stage).

Mara walks in and goes center stage. She is the only one not watching the projection on screen (the only one facing the audience. She is looking down on her phone, watching the vendor's TV interview (this differentiates her from the rest of the people who do not know the truth). She looks deflated. She switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 6

The stage is pitch black. Light shines upon a face in one corner of the stage—it is Mara, crouching in front of her phone. She is at home. It is the same eerie scene; only her face can be seen in the dark stage.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Mara's mobile phone screen. She is on a social media app, going through posts about the vendor. He is now a media superstar. She chances upon his newly created Instagram account. He now has more followers than her. She looks at all his content where he looks like he is enjoying and milking the moment (comical). He too will be coming out with a book.

Mara switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 7

We are in the university hallway where Mara is walking with her head bowed low, conscious that everyone is staring at her. We hear a strong murmur of muffled voices around the hallway. Students are pointing at her and whispering to each other.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of numerous mobile phone screens, one after the other. We see different messaging apps. They all contain negative comments and messages about Mara and her story, like “Did she make up the whole thing?” “I can’t believe she did that!” “I always knew she was a fake!”

Jen approaches Mara and tries to console her. Mara reacts negatively. A monologue here about people just waiting for her to fail, how her life will never amount to anything, and how truly unfair life is.

In the middle of it all she stops to post something on social media (insane yet comical). Then she runs away.

Jen looks at her phone to check what Mara posted. At the top of the stage we see a projection of Jen’s mobile phone. She reads Mara’s tweet: They say the end justifies the means, but the means have led me to the end.

Jen wonders what it means. She switches off her phone. The projected image on stage disappears. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

Scene 8

We see the same bridge where Mara and the vendor did their little skit. Mara is standing on the edge, crying. She has given up. She has lost all hope. A monologue here. She is ready to jump.

Jen, who has been running after Mara, enters the scene, panting. She tries to help Mara, convincing her to get off the ledge. The two of them engage in real talk. The whole time, Mara just looks ahead into the horizon, the realizing that Jen has been streaming the whole thing live on social media.

At the top of the stage we see the projection of Jen’s mobile phone screen where we see the entire scene taking place.

More people start walking in as they watch the live streaming on their phones. At the top of the stage we see numerous projections of mobile phones popping up, all showing Mara on the ledge of the bridge.

More dialogue ensues between Mara and Jen until Mara realizes that Jen has been filming her. Mara gets so angry that she swipes Jen’s phone and throws it over the bridge.

The projection of Jen’s screen disappears. The other projected images disappear one by one. The lights go out. The stage goes back to black.

END