

About *The Apocalypse Project*

I wrote this play in the last few months of 2019. I write many of my plays with a group of young collaborators, and this draft is built around the people who were in the room. As such, I invite you to tailor this play to your ensemble. **All roles can be played by as any gender.** This flexibility is imbedded into the play itself. More details below.

This is a play about the current moment expressed through an alternate reality where adults have vanished leaving pain and rubble; the young people have to put the pieces together in a world they did not create. Because that is the charge every generation leaves for the next - to fix the mistakes of the past while making new mistakes. The challenge when I wrote it is the challenge for producers as well - to make a play that's not a trudge toward death, that's not consumed with grief for the people who are gone, but touches on these elements. To make a play that's harrowing yet gleeful. Dark and yet fun, serious and glib. To fill it with trash and decay, but to have the green poking through.

So, let's talk about The Letter from the Adults.

This play culminates in a letter from the adults. When we staged it with my teenage actors, I asked the actors' parents to volunteer to read this letter. I asked that these volunteers keep their participation secret from their child. As the parent reads the letter, the cast comes out and listens. This sense of surprise was important to me. It locates the moment in the present. This also makes the play necessarily theatre.

Instructions on Casting / Gender

I originally wrote this play for a group that had two girls and eight boys. I never pre-cast, so every part was gender neutral in the writing process. Some of my students are LGBT, so even the romantic relationship was written without pre-assigning the characters gender. For clarity, I have left the pronouns from the original cast in place. While I do think that gender and gender roles in a world sans adults would be fascinating to examine, we couldn't pull this off in this process.

To producers: cast the play first, then adjust the pronouns to fit the actors. Change the names if you need to.

I had an actor request to play a character who is "non-binary, uses he/him pronouns," and so we added a reference to this in the original production. Future productions should be inclusive as well.

On Numbers

This was initially written for a cast of ten actors. It can be done with as few as nine (cut DJ) or with many more. With additional actors, please be sure to add them to the Altierra ensemble. If you have fewer actors, try to stage the play to suggest that the Altierra compound is more populated than the named characters.

Time and Setting

We set *The Disappearance* to be February 14, 2020, two months after the production of the play. Music and cultural products that were popular when we produced the play, like *Old Town Road* and *Fortnite*, would be the last bits of culture preserved in the consciousness of the characters. For future production, you have two options:

1. to keep *The Disappearance* on the original date and assume that you're creating an alternative history.
2. or to set *The Disappearance* a couple months after your production.

If you set it a couple months after your production, please adjust references to fit whatever is popular. For example, remix lyrics from whatever is leading the charts for memorial at the top of Act 2.

CHARACTERS

Altierra

The Expelled

T — Our narrator. In 2020, T is 14. T wants to be a Youtuber. Youtube may be dead, but that doesn't stop T. Having always been kept safe by others, T craves adventure.

LOR — In 2020 Lor is 19. Asthmatic. Worrier, but resigned to the fate.

SCRAPPER — Lor's sibling. Scrapper runs hot, and is always up to start a fight. Wants nothing more than to go out and DO SOMETHING.

MR. AVERS — Bombastic traveler. Mr. Avers has seen the country.

SHANE — Hotheaded Shane doesn't think much of humanity.

The Others at Altierra

BOLT — Leader of the Altierra Compound, though sees self as more of a facilitator. Optimistic about the future.

MEAN MATH — In charge of water at Altierra

ADAM — A part of the Altierra compound

OZLI — A young member of Altierra.

DJ (aka Danger Jo/e) — The one you want on weapons at the compound.

St. Michaels

BOOTLICKER — Henchperson for the Headmaster.

BRAT — Another henchperson for The Headmaster.

THE HEADMASTER — Dictator of St Michael's.

The Road

COLLIN BECK — Wild-eyed. Looks young for his age. A bit intense.

YOUNG ADULT — 21-year old scavenger

SECOND YOUNG ADULT — 21-year-old scavenger

THE FERAL CHILD — Wears a baseball cap. Seen in Prologue AND end of Act 1.

THE CITIZEN — Really loves what Lor does.

SAD DISNEYKID — Wears a Disney shirt that's too small

CHRIS — Lor and Scrapper's cousin. A bro. Used to resent older people, but loved what he inherited when they left.

JOHNNY B — Canadian EMT.

MOM and DAD — Lor's imaginary parents at Sad Disneyland.

Ensemble Parts

Additional Altierra kids, others in the battle at St. Michaels, mourners at the memorial, audience in the Oregon show, costumed members of Sad Disneyland, New York musical theatre kids, and Firestarters.

This show can be done with as few as ten actors, though it can probably be reduced to nine if you cut DJ from Altierra.