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The Shape of Things: A Theatrical Examination of the Progression of Emotional Manipulation

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Director's Note

Kylee Lorio

In February of 2020, I stood in the sweltering racks of a bargain section bookstore at the University of Arizona. I quickly shuffled through the titles and pulled the cheapest one from the shelf. I paid for it, read it on my 2 am flight to Baltimore, and by the time I landed, I was moved.

That work, the very one being live streamed for you tonight, perfectly encompassed all that I have stood for my three years while at Bridgewater College in a way that no other has before. The tale of Adam and Evelyn displays an infatuating and enthralling love that straddles the border of unhealthy and abusive. This production showcases infidelity and manipulation with a sinister, psychological twist that is terrifying beyond comprehension--solely because it can, and it has, happened.

We have all seen this ending before. We have watched our friends lose themselves to an emotionally abusive partner. We have begged them to leave. We have begged them to open their eyes, to wake up to the reality, to act against their abuser. Despite our intervention, we have all watched our friends choose to stay. We have all watched them change. We have all hoped that, when we meet again, we would recognize the person in front of us.

Sometimes, we are lucky. Sometimes, we are not.

For the last three years while at Bridgewater, I have dedicated my time and my studies to domestic and relationship violence advocacy. I spent my time as a peer health educator, providing first year students and athletes with the warning signs of relationship manipulation. I founded our women's organization and interned at shelters. I created our domestic violence awareness march, the Walk a Mile in Their Shoes event, dedicated to raising awareness for victims of domestic violence regardless of gender. I even appeared on podcasts to speak on my own experiences of relationship violence.

To me, it is only fitting that my culmination thesis accurately reflects what has shaped me. Since a chance encounter in an Arizona bookstore, I have poured my heart and my soul into the development of this production. Every detail of this production, from the lighting to the costumes, reflects the experiences of a victim of emotional abuse.

As a society, we are obsessed with the surface of things: the shape of them. Tonight, I implore you to search deeper. I request that you reflect on your own interpersonal relationships and when the curtains close, I invite you to take a deeper look at who you really are when you are alone.

With that in mind, I present to you my thesis project: *The Shape of Things*.