

CYPHER: variations on therapy, sex, and baseball

by DJ Sanders

Mental illness is deeply rooted in today's pop culture. Taking a pill can reportedly solve your problems or at the very least alleviate the pain. Some partake in the gym culture or playing sports to work out their daily aggressions. Others look to sex for the physical gratification that could one day lead to emotional acceptance. While still others pull out their checkbook and buy affirmation from a licensed psychiatrist who is given the duty to validate one's sanity, if only for a half hour.

CYPHER: variations on therapy, sex, and baseball is a series of four related and unrelated segments exploring themes of patient-doctor boundaries, the fine line between love and lust, and America's favorite pastime, baseball. From segment to segment we see the developing relationship between Amanda and Cypher as the dynamics are constantly changing. The third man enters into each segment complicating the relationships in what becomes an absurd love triangle.

Each segment focuses attention on an object which holds the power in that room and allows whomever possesses it to control the action. The segments are titled appropriately to reflect these objects of power: "Three Bullets," "Letter Opener," "The Key," and "The Papers." The chronology of the four pieces is debatable as are their veracity in light of each other.

From page one, the audience embarks on a psycho-physical journey placing them on the edge of their seats in the first segment which has been described as *Natural Born Killers* on stage. As the intensity slowly subsides, this *Rashomon*-like drama begins to appeal to the audiences' intellectual side as they work to piece together attempting to solve the many mysteries hidden throughout these variations.

Cast and Set Breakdown for
CYPHER: variations on therapy, sex, and baseball
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CAST REQUIREMENTS

2 men playing roles in their mid-thirties
1 woman playing a role in her mid-thirties

Race is unimportant in casting

SET REQUIREMENTS

Act One includes two similar sets

Segment One: a bedroom. *Minimum requirements:* a double bed (two twin beds pushed together is suggested), a lamp, and two chairs.

Segment Two: a room in a mental institute. *Minimum requirements:* two twin-size beds (pull apart the two beds used in Segment One.)

Act Two includes two similar sets

Segment Three: an office. *Minimum requirements:* a desk, two chairs, and a phone.

Segment Four: an office. *Minimum requirements:* a desk, three chairs, and a phone.

Dialogue Sample from
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from SEGMENT ONE: Three Bullets

(In very low light, a bedroom with a double bed, a lamp, and two chairs.)

DOUGLAS RICHARDS tiptoes into the room. He quietly gets undressed and climbs under the covers)

DOUGLAS

Goodnight, Amanda.

(DOUGLAS goes to kiss his wife on the cheek)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

Amanda?

(CYPHER chuckles. DOUGLAS turns on a lamp in the room to find CYPHER in bed next to him)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

Who the hell are you? What are doing in my bed?

(CYPHER gets up and stumbles over to a light switch, turning it on.)

AMANDA RICHARDS is seen tied to a chair. She is wearing a nightgown and has a gag in her mouth. An empty chair sits next to her chair. She tries to articulate her husband's name)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

Amanda! Are you okay? What has he--
(to CYPHER)

What have you done to my wife?!

(DOUGLAS advances on CYPHER. CYPHER pulls out a revolver. DOUGLAS stops. CYPHER uses the gun to direct DOUGLAS over to the empty chair. DOUGLAS stands in front of the chair)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

You can't do this.

CYPHER

(pointing the gun at DOUGLAS)

I have a gun and three bullets. I can do whatever I want.

(CYPHER pushes DOUGLAS down into the chair. CYPHER puts the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead. AMANDA tries to scream through her gag)

CYPHER (Cont'd)

Don't move!

(CYPHER cautiously backs away still pointing the gun at DOUGLAS. CYPHER looks around on the floor)

DOUGLAS

(whispering to AMANDA)

Amanda, are you okay?

(AMANDA tries to speak through her gag. CYPHER picks up a tie from the floor)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

Did he--?

CYPHER

Is this your tie?

DOUGLAS

Yes.

CYPHER

(rubbing his cheek)

Silk.

(goes over and rubs AMANDA's cheek)

Feels nice.

DOUGLAS

Whatever you do--

CYPHER

Hands behind your back.

DOUGLAS

What?

(CYPHER puts the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead)

CYPHER

I said: "Hands behind your back!"

(DOUGLAS places his hands behind his back. CYPHER uses the tie to tie DOUGLAS' hands behind his back)

DOUGLAS

Ouch!

CYPHER

It's silk. It shouldn't chafe. Where's your belt?

DOUGLAS

What?

(CYPHER puts the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead)

CYPHER

Listen to me, dammit! Where's your belt?

DOUGLAS

What do you need my belt for?

(CYPHER smacks DOUGLAS across the face. AMANDA tries to scream through here gag)

CYPHER

WHERE'S YOUR BELT?!?

DOUGLAS

It should still be in my pants. Over there. On the floor.

(CYPHER looks over and spots the pants. CYPHER gets the pants and pulls the belt from it. CYPHER returns and uses the belt to fasten DOUGLAS' feet to the chair)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)

Ouch! That's tight.

CYPHER

Don't struggle. It'll hurt less.

DOUGLAS

Look, if you want money, take it!

CYPHER

I don't want money.

DOUGLAS

(nervously)

What do you want?

CYPHER

I want you to tell me what I want!

DOUGLAS

How am I suppose to do that?

(CYPHER removes AMANDA's gag)

CYPHER
Doctor Richards knows what I want.

DOUGLAS
Amanda, do you know him?

CYPHER
Shut up!

DOUGLAS
What does he--?

CYPHER
(putting the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead)
I said: "SHUT UP!"

AMANDA
Do as he says!

DOUGLAS
Please...

(CYPHER pulls the gun away from
DOUGLAS. DOUGLAS goes to open his
mouth and CYPHER puts the gun back to
DOUGLAS' forehead.)

CYPHER walks over to AMANDA and runs
his fingers through her hair and then
down her neck. AMANDA winces)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)
Leave her alone!

(CYPHER points the gun right at
DOUGLAS. With his other hand he works
it down to her breast but pulls it away
quickly in frustration.)

CYPHER paces around the room again
trying to calm himself down.

CYPHER goes to the bed and lies down
for a moment)

DOUGLAS (Cont'd)
(to AMANDA)
What has he done--?

CYPHER
(sitting up)
Comfortable bed. Is this where you two make love?

DOUGLAS

What?

CYPHER

Does it bounce...?

(bounces on the bed)

It bounces. Do you two have "bed-bouncing sex?" Or is it just "love-making" where you hold each other close? Your penis in her vagina, holding tight, rocking back and forth, whispering "I love you."

AMANDA

This won't help you.

CYPHER

I want it to!

AMANDA

Cypher...you are not thinking clearly.

DOUGLAS

You know him?

AMANDA

Doug, let me take care of this.

DOUGLAS

How do you know him?

CYPHER

SHUT UP!

(beat)

I want to play a game. A game!

(CYPHER goes over to DOUGLAS)

CYPHER (Cont'd)

Did your uncle ever teach you to play baseball?

DOUGLAS

Yeah.

CYPHER

So, you like baseball? Huh? You like it?

DOUGLAS

Yeah.

CYPHER

Thought so. You look sporty. Well, we're gonna play baseball. Nine innings. But my rules. Okay? Nine innings. Nine questions for each team. You're the home team and I'm the visitor. You two take turns at the plate. Understand?

DOUGLAS

You'll have to untie us first so we can pitch the ball and swing the bat.

CYPHER

You don't need to go anywhere to play by my rules.

(calming down)

Here's the rules. Each of you asks me a question that I'll answer IF you answer a question I ask. If you don't answer or I don't like your answer, you lose...your turn. The object of the game is for you to figure out why I'm here-- but you can't ask that as one of your questions. I may be insane, but I'm not stupid. Nod your heads if you understand the rules.

(Silence)

CYPHER (Cont'd)

(shouting)

Do you both understand the rules?!

DOUGLAS

(nodding)

Yeah.

AMANDA

(simultaneously)

Yes.

CYPHER

Good. Let's begin. Who's first?

(starting with AMANDA using the gun to point)

Eenie, meenie, minee, moe, catch a tiger by it's toe, if he hollers let him go, eenie, meenie, minee, moe!

(stops at DOUGLAS)

Batter up! Ask a Question.

DOUGLAS

I...don't know...

CYPHER

Think!

DOUGLAS

Give me...a minute.

(CYPHER starts to hum "Take Me Out to the Ballgame")

CYPHER

(singing)

"...buy me some peanuts and cracker jacks. I don't care if I ever get back, cuz it's root, root, root for the home team. If they don't win it's a shame. Cuz it's one, two, three strikes you're out at the old ballgame!" Batter up! What's your question?

DOUGLAS

Why do you have three bullets?

CYPHER

Ooo, good question. Three bullets...now I get to ask. My turn. What do I want to ask?

(goes and reclines on the bed)

This bed is really comfortable. I want to know... What is love-making like with Amanda?

DOUGLAS

That's private information.

CYPHER

Is it?

DOUGLAS

(surprised)

What?

CYPHER

I want to know what it's like to make love to this beautiful creature. I want all the details. When, where...

DOUGLAS

I'm not gonna tell you that!

CYPHER

You have to play by the rules...

AMANDA

Just do it, Doug.

CYPHER

(continuing)

...or else we can play by another set of rules.

(CYPHER goes over to AMANDA)

CYPHER (Cont'd)

First base...

(CYPHER licks AMANDA's cheek)

AMANDA

Stop it!

CYPHER

Second base...

(CYPHER grabs AMANDA's breast)

DOUGLAS

Leave her alone!

CYPHER
Third base...
(CYPHER puts his hand up AMANDA's
nightgown)

AMANDA
Please...don't...

DOUGLAS
Leave her alone!

CYPHER
Tell your husband to answer the question!

AMANDA
Doug...please...

DOUGLAS
Let her go! I'll answer the question!
(CYPHER pulls his hand away from AMANDA
and points the gun at DOUGLAS)

CYPHER
I'm waiting...

(Pause)

CYPHER (Cont'd)
Answer!

DOUGLAS
We used to do it all the time on Tuesdays.

CYPHER
Used to?

DOUGLAS
I work a lot now. There's not much time.

CYPHER
Why Tuesdays?

DOUGLAS
What?

CYPHER
Why did you two "make love" on Tuesdays?

DOUGLAS
You can't keep asking questions.

CYPHER

I have a gun and three bullets. I can do whatever I want!

DOUGLAS

Tuesday was my night off. Amanda got home around five-thirty from the hospital.

(CYPHER smacks DOUGLAS with the gun)

CYPHER

It's a rehabilitation center.

DOUGLAS

What?

CYPHER

Sick people go to a hospital, Doctor Richards works in a rehabilitation center.

DOUGLAS

Wait a minute--

CYPHER

Finish answering the question.

DOUGLAS

Amanda...

(CYPHER pushes the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead)

CYPHER

I want you to finish answering my question!

AMANDA

Doug. Please...answer his question.

DOUGLAS

After dinner we would go to bed early.

(CYPHER goes over and lays on the bed)

CYPHER

In this bed?

DOUGLAS

Yes. And...we would get undressed.

CYPHER

Did you help each other get undressed?

DOUGLAS

No. We just got undressed like we're ready for bed.

CYPHER

Like you're dressed now?

DOUGLAS

Yes. Then we'd start to kiss each other and hold each other. Then I'd climb on top of her. We'd pull her nightgown up and my underwear down and make love.

CYPHER

That's it?

DOUGLAS

I answered your question.

CYPHER

That's pathetic, Dougie! Sounds like you've been strikin' out at the plate, sport-o!

(going over to AMANDA)

Now it all makes sense, Amanda.

DOUGLAS

What does?

CYPHER

(going over to DOUGLAS)

You already asked your question. It's my turn to answer. What was your question?

DOUGLAS

Why do you have three bullets?

CYPHER

Right! I have a gun and three bullets! I can do whatever I want! That's why! So I can do whatever I want. If not... Pow! Pow!

(puts the gun to DOUGLAS' forehead)

POW!

(AMANDA gasps in terror)

CYPHER (Cont'd)

Did I scare you, Mandy?

(goes to AMANDA)

I'm sorry.

(starts to touch her)

I could comfort you. You could comfort me. Huh? I want you to comfort me.

AMANDA

You want me to ask you a question.

CYPHER

Yes! I want you to ask me a question. It's your turn. Your turn to ask a question. Ask me. Ask me.

AMANDA

When did they release you from Chadwick?

DOUGLAS

He was one of you patients.

CYPHER

(pointing gun at DOUGLAS)

Shut up! I'm trying---I'm trying---to concentrate.

AMANDA

Cypher, Cypher, it's all right. Look at me. I just asked you a question. When did they release you from Chadwick Center?

CYPHER

I get to ask a question now, right?

AMANDA

Yes, you do.

CYPHER

Those are the rules.

AMANDA

Yes.

CYPHER

My rules. They're my rules!

AMANDA

Yes.

CYPHER

I want to know---what was---your best sexual experience like? I want you to---describe it for me!

For more information or to obtain the full script, please contact

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