

## ChuckEology

by

Bailey Jordan Garcia

NAME: Bailey Jordan Garcia

PRONOUNS she/they

WHERE ARE YOU FROM: Camarillo, California

BIO: BAILEY JORDAN GARCIA is an NYC based playwright and actor who is currently earning their BFA in Theatre from The New School (zoom edition). They had a reading of their full length piece, *Tvilah (or Arriving Where She Left)* with The Bechdel Group last October, and just won "Best Play" in The Players Theatre's Short Play Festival with their 10 minute, *What To Expect When You're Expecting Our Lord and Savior*. [baileyjordangarcia.com](http://baileyjordangarcia.com)

What are you catching up on during social distancing?

Writing. So much writing. (Shakespeare with King Lear and all that jazz) Along with that, I'm finally going to try to watch all of those shows on HBO that everyone's like "you gotta watch" but I have no time. So I'll try to get Euphoria and Watchmen done in a week. And I am completely stocked up on plays to read as well.

Yes! I give permission for my play to be published.

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*HELEN*  
*30s/40s*

*JASPER*  
*16*

*CHURCH GOERS*  
*10-30 people, various ages*

**place:**

an abandoned Chuck E. Cheese  
in Suwanne, Georgia

**time:**

about 100 years  
from now  
give or take

Notes:

// means the next line or action should start

[this] means to not say it, but rather imply it

## CHUCK E CHEESE

Darkness.

Then all of a sudden

All of the lights, arcade games, animatronics, video screens turn on with a flourish

To the left of the room, there's a huge play structure. Slides and ladders. A kid's dream

To the right of the room, a plethora of arcade games

In the middle of the room -- the usual Chuck E Cheese gang on a stage. Looking as prestige as they can -- some eyeballs replaced with skee-balls, one has a joystick instead of a hand. The stage has tv screens everywhere

Slowly, people start to emerge -- maybe 20 or so of various ages -- some from the employee break room, others from out of the slides, maybe a couple from inside the arcade games

They start to gather in the middle of the room -- kissing one another on the cheeks, hugging, when saying hello

Everyone eventually finds their place on the floor

Three people in a cyborg Chuck E Cheese costumes walk onto stage

Applause!

A beat.

*Chuck E's Happy Dance* blasts

The Cyborg Chuck E Cheeses dance in perfect synchronicity with the Chuck Es on the screens that are right behind them

More applause!

The Cyborg Chuck E Cheeses walk off stage

HELEN steps onto the stage, clapping for the performers

HELEN

Aren't they fantastic? They've been practicing that one for a couple of days now. Good morning everyone.

CHURCH GOERS

Good morning

HELEN

A few announcements before we start, this morning. Uh, let's see... wine and bingo night will be hosted over by wack-a-mole starting at 7pm, Jasper is currently out sneaking around Jane and Lisa haven't seen him since last night -- so keep an eye out for him -- that boy's always up to some prank or somethin, and a reminder we have been stocking up the hand sanitizers

She holds up a big bottle of hand sanitizer

HELEN

to dunk the kids into for their baptisms next week, so make sure to keep washin' your hands with soap and water. No less than two minutes, okay? Great.

So I want to start with telling you all a little story that happened last night. I was over in the green slide, wrapping up my consoling sessions for the day. And I'm gathering up my papers and tickets and whatnot. And all of a sudden. I hear a little [knock knock knock] on the ladder. Cheese, it scared me. And this is after Munch's Make Believe Band played their last song -- this is LATE at night. So I hear this knock. And I scootch over to the end of the slide and ask "Who is it?" and I hear a little voice go "Billy Albin". And -- oh there he is right now, let's get an applause for Billy. Also I got Billy's permission to share this with you all today, so this wouldn't just stay between me, Billy, and the big mouse up there. So I invite Billy in and we sit down together and I ask him, I say "Billy, it's so late at night. What's troubling you?" and he says "I can't fall asleep. I keep trying to imagine the pre-cheese time". I was baffled. To hear an eight, nine year old start questioning the pre-cheese time. Very bright for his age. But I think he brings up a fair point. I think it's time to talk about knowledge. To talk about why we don't talk about the pre-cheese time. Why we don't need to acknowledge what will only harm us and hurt us. Why there is no good looking to the past if there ain't anything to learn from it.

HELEN opens what appears to be a bible

## HELEN

So let's start when the world was new. When there was only Adam and Richard and Logan and Brianna and Mark and Carrie. Our book, the word of the Mouse himself, *begins* not with the pre-cheese time, but begins right here with our ancestors. The beginning of our time begins with the original six barricading the doors of where we are standing right now. Trying to save themselves from the beginnings of the plague. Our six at the time were from 16 to 25 years old, which in those days was considered very young. Completely separated from any loved ones from outside. No way to reach them. They were alone. All they had, was the little drone that drops off food and supplies every few days. Imagine that. Being torn from everything you know. That is *strength*. To put that in your past is the biggest act of bravery. They put their skills to the test. Logan knew some about electronics, and she is why we can control the sound system and use the pizza camera, to this day. Mark cooked and taught everyone else how to -- including my great-grandfather. Everyone used their knowledge to help others. Help the good of our society. And I know what you're thinkin'. You're thinkin' "Helen. I thought this was going to be a speech on how knowledge is bad". Well, you're wrong. Knowledge is a double bladed pizza cutter. It can be used for good, but you can just as easily cut your hand using it. Well, two years after the original six called Chuck E Land home, Brianna went up on the roof one day to collect the food from the drone. The drones used to carry these things called newspapers -- which is this written description of the news that day. And there was a section that listed everyone who had died. Brianna, having nothing else to do, skimmed through pages and pages, and eventually stopped. When she saw her father's name. She was in shock, she started bawling, and begging and pleading to the others to just open the doors so she could visit her poor mother. But they refused, keeping their own safety from the outside world a priority. The next day, Brianna tried to escape by walking through that door right there [the employees only door] and slowly climbing down the roof, but instead she slipped on a loose brick and fell. And that was the end of Brianna. Why she chose to look through that list? Well, she wanted to know something that she would have been far off better not knowing. If we know all we need to know, and we are content and safe and happy, why discover something that will confine us to a life of misery? Hm? Why purposely make ourselves unhappy when we all deserve a place were a kid can be a kid? Right?

Laughter from the group

JASPER tries to sneak in from behind the basketball hoops game

## HELEN

There's the little prankster. The spirit of Chuck E callin' you to wake up and come to church?

JASPER

Somethin' like that.

HELEN

Well, we are all very glad you came here to join us. You'll be gettin' baptized too, next week, right?

JASPER

Yes m'am

HELEN

Good. Well, take a seat. We were just talkin about how happiness is the Mouse's way. And so that means it's our way. Knowledge of the world, of the past -- everything we need to know can be found here, right in this room.

JASPER scoffs

HELEN

Excuse me?

JASPER

Nothing. Sorry m'am.

HELEN

No, please. We want to hear you. Carrie 3:18 says that all opinions should be heard. There is not one right and one wrong in the world.

JASPER

I just. Uh. I think maybe knowledge is useful in life. For us even.

HELEN

Talk about that.

JASPER

I think there are things we could learn, um, by... by, uh learning about the outside world. About the pre-cheese time. You know?

HELEN gestures for him to continue

JASPER

Okay. Like, um, i heard that there was once a heater that worked. And I mean, learning how to fix that can't be a bad thing. We wouldn't need as many blankets in the winter time. Or, like, I don't know. Learning how to play an instrument other than those fake drums.

HELEN

See, but knowing about the heater in the first place is your problem. If you didn't learn about the heater at all, then you couldn't be sad about it being broken.

JASPER

I guess.

HELEN

Good.

JASPER

But what now? Like what am I suppose to do now that I know about the heater? There's not a way to un-remember it. So it makes me sad. But now you're saying even more knowledge will make me even sadder. So how can I follow Chuck E's way? How can I be happy?

HELEN

That's an excellent question, Jasper. What a bright group of children we've raised. The answer lies in ignorance. We have to stop trying to push forward. We have to look around us at the games and toys and colors and go, "My Mouse, am I lucky. Am I grateful and thankful to live in a wonderful time in a wonderful place."

JASPER

What do you think it's like outside?

HELEN

Hun, that was my segue back into my sermon.

JASPER

But what do you think it's like out there? What's -- What's in there [the bible]? What does it say about the outside world?

HELEN

Well. In the book of Brianna it speaks of the plague. It, uh, it talks about people in different homes, different societies. The world, completely empty otherwise. That outside there's nothing needed for miles and it was declared that this is how the world would be for the rest of time.

JASPER

Bullshit.

HELEN

Excuse me?

JASPER

You heard me. Bullshit. Complete and utter bullshit. You are so full of crap. This whole... everything is so --

(to the church-goers)

There's a world out there. There are people and animals

HELEN

How do you know that?

JASPER

Because I went outside

A gasp and silence from the church goers

JASPER

There was a crack in the wall behind "Shootin Hoops" and I've been chipping away at it for awhile. Like over two years. And finally last month I could fit through it. And I went out in the parking lot and climbed over the construction fence and there was like... a world. Like in those "On the street with Chuck E" videos. There are actual streets. With actual cars. With actual people. And I don't know how or when the plague went away or if there was ever even one to begin with. But there are people just like us. Roaming the streets. We don't have to be here anymore.

Chaos among church goers

HELEN

Okay, okay now. Don't get riled up. Maybe this is just a little prank by Jasper

JASPER

It's not a prank -- I saw // what I

HELEN

But I believe that he did see people. Livin' their lives. Walkin' among the streets. They could be living their lives to the fullest. But are they? Here, we make the most out of everything we can find. Found a string and a button? New game. A betting on how high of a score someone'll get on *Frogger*? Every other Sunday night. We don't need out there. We are happier in here, no matter what we have. This is our home. We will not leave our home for anything that's out there.

The church goers agree -- verbally and loud

JASPER

Okay. Fine. Live your lives. Do whatever you want -- Miss out on this whole world around you. I'm goin



HELEN

I don't think so, Jasper.

The church goers block JASPER's exits

HELEN

Do you know what you did? You exposed them.

JASPER

What? No -- I -- I didn't get the plague or anything. I just went outside -- I didn't even touch // anything

HELEN

Not to the plague. To things they had no need to know. Happiness, fully taken away.

JASPER

I -- look I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. It won't happen again.

HELEN

You can be sorry all you want, hun. Sorry doesn't erase memories.

JASPER

You can just ignore it, right? You were saying before that, uh, that ignorance is the opposite of // know--

HELEN

Sure. But it becomes very difficult to ignore something, when there is a constant reminder of it

JASPER

What do you mean?

HELEN looks at the group of church goers

JASPER

Please. Let me just go. I'll leave right now and I'll never come back

HELEN

Hm. What a funny, funny boy. Well, let me tell you a little thing called sin. Sinning is doin' anything that's against the Mouse's will. And when we sin, we have to face the consequences. We must pay for our actions.

HELEN snaps her fingers

Two of the church goers pick JASPER up

HELEN

You know what to do

JASPER

Please PLEASE STOP. I'LL DO ANYTHING I'LL GO AWAY. PLEASE. I'M SORRY. M'AM. PLEASE

They drag him through the Employee's Only Door

HELEN

Now where was I? Knowledge. Is a very dangerous tool. What we need to do is shut our mouths and it'll lead us to be content. Because finding content-ness out there isn't possible. But in here, there's a high probability of it. There is happiness here. And may anyone who tries to ruin what we have perfected be struck down.

BAM -- a body hitting the floor outside

HELEN

Amen.

All the lights flicker off

Besides for the middle screen with Chuck E. Cheese's face

Glowing

Smiling at us

...

..

.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY