Thursday Night Acting Class, Mike Teaching 8/12/21

Reyneen, “The Pelican Brief” (new)

Recall: I feel okay. I kind of didn’t try to control it. I was underprepared coming into today. I tried to not be afraid to fuck up. I don’t think I fucked up. I think I was very captivated by Greg and comfortable taking the time and not focusing on being word perfect. It was fun, I was pleased with it. (I can feel you not judging yourself and letting yourself be. Your ease in the scene and lack of tension left you feeling so grounded in your skin.)

Take #2: It was different, I think the beginning made more sense. (Energized, active. Once halfway through the scene, what’s your agenda? What do you want?) I don’t wanna be alone. I want to feel safe and with somebody. This is the first time I’ve been able to breathe. I want to sleep but not be alone. (And now she trusts him and needs him. Lean into that. I’m giving you a secret agenda that’s unplayable.)

Take #3: I was struggling with the monologue. (It wasn’t a time note, just the logic. Then the through line made sense. It just felt a little choppy. They’ll say on set, pull it together. Also the prep at the top did it change it?) Yeah. Calahan moment- the “I still do thing” in the script, it’s that I see the attraction, in this incarnation I started talking really fast and then I kept it up. I didn’t feel like it was very natural. I liked parts in each.

Critique: You haven’t told anybody, it’s poured out of you. I think there’s a post coital moment in this. There’s an exhaustion that comes after the climax. You’re finally able to breathe after this. It’s not quite an aftermath scene yet. There’s epiphanies that are happening. I think the launch needs to come from a deeper place. Asking you the last time you slept, I’m not sure she realizes how exhausted she is until this moment. How’s Calahan doing? (I did a lot of imagination work on the event of him exploding and I never loved so much in my life. I didn’t feel very present today.) You have Calahan, take your time. Breathe, check in with yourself. The only thing I don’t want you to do is plan it and watch it. Just say whatever it is you’re gonna say.

Take #3: I like parts in each too, but the third I like the most. That moment at the end, when you feel anxious about something you begin to move. I don’t want to lock you in but there’s something to be said, I know he’s looking at me but I’m not looking at him, it just feels right. Connect with him and know that there’s that connection. There’s a lot of stuff that goes on there. When you’re simple and don’t try to do too much you become really powerful and in command of the scene itself. When you plopped down you were so grounded and then you started moving. The more you chase it, the less confident you become. The less you feel in control. If you let the moments pass he’s gonna look up. You can control that through your own ability to stop. There are moments where I’m like wow, strong moments from you, real confidence. When you start to slip, it’s an old habit. Right now you’re just present with yourself. A lot of good work here.

Greg, “The Pelican Brief” (new)

Recall: The launch I kept trying to figure it out while it was happening. I knew that going in. I don’t know exactly how to start this scene. I felt like it was still fishing around. When she started asking me questions I felt more grounded. (I love what you’re doing. I feel like the launch feels a tiny flat. It’s a question of the moment before. At one point did you realize she’s not lying?) That probably started to hit in the middle.

Take #3: The last take I lost a little bit of the story because I got more into her. I had a lot of fun. It’s a fun thing to try and find the right levels of. There’s a dance of romance and thrill. Juggling that. And it’s fun trying to find beats where you can clear that out and finding moments where it’s a joke.

Critique: Like 45 minutes ago. This is the moment it’s fallen into your lap. You believe her. You’ve under-evaluated the information. You’re not gonna get any sleep tonight. Having said that I love how easy you are with the dialogue. And you’re not freaking her out. I love how you talk about your mentor. And underneath that, this is you’re back in the game.

Take #2: One note for you, I want you to pack up but quietly.

Take #3: I love how much care you have for her. You’re so effortlessly charming her. Being honest and open with her while also being able to get a laugh.

Maritza, “The Accused” (new)

Recall: I’m present right now, the adrenaline is surging right now. For my homework I was having resistance with this character, Stuart addressed that and caught me identifying with the text. I’ve been absorbing the lines and doing my best not to catch moments. Thinking, asking questions, processing. I’m trying not to note where the moments are happening. (I agree it’s less tonight than it has been, when it’s happening and she’s asking you these questions, as you’re heading into that, when do you feel like you’re free to answer vs. beats when you’re aiming?) No and that’s part of the problem, I don’t really feel it and fall into the rhythm. I rationalize it, the script says it.

Critique: You guys shot out of this like a canon. We’re gonna slow it down. The minute you see she’s ‘frustrated’ that’s what you think to say it. The anecdote for this, Listen. Really listening, that comes with trust. Lots of successes and failures. I write listen at the top of every script. If you’re really listening like you are right now, it’s going to come out exactly as it’s supposed to come out. Whatever’s happening in this moment, right now, is how it’s happening. And when someone asks you if you wear underwear. That’s gonna take a moment. The way you deliver it is dead on, but it needs to come from listening, not the way it’s written. You’ve gotta trust that it’s there if you’ve done the homework. As long as you’re really asking the question. In the duress and spin, it’s easy to revert back to the way you played the line. It separates you from yourself and what’s happening. We’re not going to totally solve this. It’s going to keep coming back. (I worked through this a lot in Saturday and I think it’s reared it’s head.) It’s gonna keep happening. When I go to set on Monday it’s gonna happen. At some point in the process you’ve gotta let everything go. If you didn’t hear it ask them to say it again. You are able to stop and breathe and be as present as you are right now with any dialogue. I’m gonna look at her and whatever she gives me I’m gonna respond.

Take #2: Number 1 did we learn that you’re capable of listening and hearing someone say words to me and sticking with it and allowing all of myself and imagination to play on me. That’s done, that’s not a question, it’ll be different but the idea of that you can’t be present. It just takes stopping the spin. The important thing: We will do anything we can to avoid really being there because it’s dangerous, difficult and vulnerable. There’s a certain amount where you come out of the scene and feel so uncomfortable looking at the class. I don’t know that she cries at all in the scene but if you have an impulse it’s okay. I think you have a thing with tears. I don’t think you’re gonna let her see you cry in this scene. Figure out how to hide that, maybe at the end of the scene. You don’t trust her yet. She hasn’t earned it. Have some behavior at the top. Have a plan of what you’re doing in your home rather than answering the door. The night in question I know you’ve done homework on it and I’m not gonna question it, from my heart to your heart I want you to slow down with it and stop. Capture little polaroids in your mind. Like what this guy’s hand felt on your wrist. What is that? Take the homework that slowly. I want the event fresh and alive in you but I don’t want you to show it. Maybe some moments you’ll open them up but you don’t ever have to show it.

Allie, “The Accused” (new)

Recall: I felt like when we first texted it a lot of my beliefs weren’t built. Stuart helped me clear some of those things up. Not so much in anticipating beats but going so fast through the beats and not taking time to listen to everything she says. Right at the end I was fully affected by her. At the beginning it was like moving through the moment too fast.

Take #2: The objective changed a little bit. In this the agenda wasn’t so much about being tough on her but it was I want her to trust me. (You hadn’t in the first take have enough discovery, arc or journey. This time you had that. When you don’t have that it doesn’t give you enough juice in the scene.) Doing it this way, everything she was giving me was playing on me. It wasn’t just about berating her but getting her on my team. I felt like I was discovering a lot.

Critique: From the first moment. You learn a lot and it goes on across the door not being let in. Deal with that. You have to earn your way through the door. I love the tests you give her. If she’s not present to you, get her present.

Take #2: You were so fucking dialed in. there was also empathy this time. There was warmth and tough love. That played beautifully.

Kevin, “Network” (new)

Recall: (Did you massage it?) I updated the references. I wear a watch but most people don’t wear watches so I added that too. (You gotta do a scene from this. It fits your psychology so well.) I don’t know, I think it is an exercise. I’ve been running away from a personal monologue and I’ve been looking for ways to address personal angst. I’ve been reading self righteous bullshit. (Do you want to do a personal monologue?) Maybe at some point. (This is the end?) No probably 65% the way through. He says a thing about the Saudi’s the big head has a talk with him. That’s the monologue I thought I was gonna do first, but it didn’t work.

Take #2: I felt pretty good. (It is really good, it’s really fun to play with and would be fun to shoot on an old tv.) The big thing I need to let go, part of it is that it’s written like a madman and I was worried of letting go and sliding into that. I guess in my head, the note of letting it go felt less prepared and it was just going.

Critique: I loved it. You’ve got it. I kept thinking about Midnight Cowboy. What has led him to this moment? (I’ve gone mad and I think I’ve been imbued with the spirit and everyone’s exploiting this and put him on screen each night. That’s first he’s gonna get laid off and then says he’s gonna kill himself on air. The guy who dies is the head of the network. In my head, I’m not acting. This guy has been my shield and this is kind of a testament to him and shot across the bough to the new bosses.) What’s your agenda here? (I’ve lost my mind, everything I’m saying, I believe. I go to bed and a voice comes to me. It’s a mix of the spirit and paying tribute to this guy, but also a back off.) I think the agenda shifts around a little bit. By the end it’s shut it down. I’m trying to cement in you going out with the need of saying this and also how much of this was planned and what’s off the cuff. You’re jettisoning you out of this day. Your prep coming into it can throw you more off balance, when you step out here you’re still reeling. Then as you’re going you realize you’re speaking to all those people and you don’t know where it’s gonna go. You, Kevin are very calculated. Decide where the moments are happening where you go off the rails. I think you can go further and let go of your plan and allow yourself to spin.

There were moments for me that felt like discoveries that were happening. I asked about agenda because your excitement in this takes away from the truth. The information that you’re saying could be stronger. In the frustration that they’re not gonna get it is when you can spin out of control. The end telling them to shut off has to come from another gear. I’d love to get you to a place where you don’t know what’s coming next. Your anger sometimes gets in the way of trying to tell them what they need to hear. One of the beats at the top he found the eulogy . The more you can do that, how much can you invest in that spin. One of your super powers is the opposite, how you can crystalize a thought. This is the opposite of that. I think you should do the movie and play in this world. I think this is something you should shoot.