

Who I Am

by Shannan Browne

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Premiered in the Van Loggenberg Studio, Pinetown, South Africa. 30 March 2009

Note from playwright:

The play is set for teenagers in South Africa, but is adaptable for any teenagers around the world.

Synopsis:

This is a play about a girl who has to decide who she is and who she is going to let influence her opinion and truth about herself.

5 CHARACTERS

Ronel – Grade 11, good student, balanced individual

Alison – Grade 11, trendy, mischievous, slightly over-the-top

Taya – Grade 11, Top of her class, uptight, logical character

Chevon – Ronel's older sister, second Year University, boyfriend is overseas

Christen – Alison's older sister, second Year University, Chevon's best friend, in love with David

Setting: Verandah / Garden at the back of Ronel and Chevon's parent's home.

Set: Outdoor bench and outdoor table with 3 chairs around it.

Entrances and exits are to and from the main house stage right.

Scene 1:

Ronel (*off stage*): Come outside ladies. (*Entering with cool drink in hand*) It's such a lovely day; we can't waste it sitting inside.

Enter Alison (with a cup of tea) and Taya (with her cool drink)

Alison: I'm going to curl up on this seat right here for the whole afternoon! *(she curls up comfortably)*

Taya: Not only do you love cats Ali, you also act like one.

Alison: Nothing wrong with knowing how to chill out, Taya. You should try it some time. Get a cup of tea, close those horrible school books and just RE-LAX!

Taya: Whatever! Then I'd end up next to you with D's on my report card.

Alison: As my dear big sister says: "Any mark you get above 50% means you've worked too hard." So I'll take my 60% and my cup of tea thank-you very much.

Ronel: You're so lucky that your parents don't mind what you get.

Alison: Oh, they mind, but I show them that my marks are above the grade average and I convince them that I can't be doing too badly if I'm above average. I reckon my last year is the only one where I have to get my A's. So, until then, I'm working on my relaxation techniques.

Taya: Alison, you are nuts.

Alison: No, dear Taya, I like to think of it as having my priorities right. Besides what's the point in me stressing when you do enough stressing for all of us put together?

Taya: *(about to protest, she stops, takes a moment to think and then agrees)* I do, don't I?

Alison: Yes, you do; but I think it's great, it makes my life look like a piece of cake!

Ronel: Ah! Speaking of cake, did anyone bring out the cupcakes we bought on the way home?

Alison: Cupcakes? Oh, I forgot about those. Cake is the only thing that is going to get me off this bench. I'll be back. *(Alison heads off to fetch the cupcakes and serviettes from inside the house)*

Taya: Am I really that bad, Ronnie?

Ronel: *(smiling at her good friend)* Yes my friend, you are that bad. Remember when we wrote our grade 10 maths paper last year?

Taya buries her head in her hands at the embarrassment of the memory and groans.

Ronel *(laughing to herself)*: You couldn't hold any of your food down for the whole day. You broke into that hectic sweat and the teacher had to give you that towel. I only laughed because I know you and I know that's what you are always like; but, somehow, you still manage to get those 'A's girl! I don't know how you do it, or why you stress so much, but clearly it works for you.

Taya: I don't know if it is working anymore Ronnie. I'm starting to think it's really bad for me. I get these panic attacks, and I have these nightmares where I get the wrong paper, or I can't remember anything, or time starts speeding up and I can't write fast enough and then the teacher rips the paper out from under my pen, and I wake up either screaming or crying. I hate it.

Ronel: No way, I didn't know it was that bad. You never said anything before.

Taya: I've been hoping it would go away, but it's getting worse and I'm not sure what to do about it.

Ronel: Have you spoken to Mrs Teek? She was great when I asked her about my subject choices in grade 9. Maybe she can help you, or at least tell you who to speak to.

Taya: I can't go to a teacher. What if they think I'm some kind of lunatic or they take me out of the A class? ...What if she tells my parents? I'd die!

Ronel: Well, at the rate you're going it sounds like you are going to die anyway. *(Ronel teases Taya)* Strangled by lines of poetry, stabbed by the brutal exam pen, or, heaven forbid, drowned in a vat of mathematical equations!

Taya: Ha ha, very funny. *(she gives Ronel a friendly tap/punch)* This is serious man.

Ronel: I know it's serious, but you aren't doing anything to fix it, so I'm going to be a true friend and rip you off until you do something about it.

Taya: That's just mean.

Ronel: No, don't look at it as mean, look at it as an act of undying love!

(Alison arrives back with cakes and serviettes in her hands.)

Alison: Undying love? What have I missed out on? Who's in love with who?

Taya: Stop picking up stompies Ali, you know you'll get burnt.

Alison: Well tomorrow is Valentine's Day ladies, so of course I'm willing to get burnt!

Taya: Only you!

Alison (*winking & smiling*): Naturally. (*She passes out cakes*) With these cakes I would like to propose a toast ladies. (*All stand and raise cakes*) I would like to congratulate us all on being wonderfully loving friends and always being there for each other. Our single status is every man's loss!

Taya: Hear! Hear!

Ronel *sits back in her chair and Alison notices.*

Alison: Ronel? Why aren't you joining in the toast?

Ronel (*rather uncomfortably*): Well, I'm not sure whether I fit into the "single" category or not for tomorrow...

Alison (*shocked*): What? What are you talking about? Have you started dating someone and you haven't told us?

Taya (*teaming up with Alison*): Ronel? You wouldn't? You couldn't? No way! Are you keeping secrets from us? That is so wrong!

Ronel (*trying to protect herself*): No guys, I swear I haven't started dating anyone and I'm not keeping secrets from you. I'm not even sure what's going on myself...

Alison: Well, best you explain yourself very quickly then.

Ronel: Ok, Ok. It was at second break today. I checked my phone, because I wasn't sure if my mom would be able to fetch us; and there was an sms from Dylan.

Taya (*excited*): No way! Dylan from DB High? The cute one in his last year?

Ronel: Yes, that one. Remember we all put our numbers down on that list for the New Year's Party at Pat's house?

Alison: Yes, but that was ages ago, and that party was lame. I couldn't believe that they only had songs from the 1950s! And when that one guy started to sing I wanted to run, cannot believe he had the audacity to ask me to dance too! Like I want to spend my New Year dancing like a chicken with him. Really!

Taya: Al, can we get back to Ronnie here.

Alison: Oh, ja, sorry. Dylan. Right, he was the one in the Levi's and the Jeep Shirt?

Ronel: Yes, and those beautiful green eyes.

Taya: Earth to Ronel. The sms ... what did the sms say?

Alison: Hang on. You two hardly spoke to each other that night, you were too busy at the pool table whipping those DB boys into shape!

Ronel: Actually Dylan complimented me on my pool. I told him that it wasn't good luck, it was good maths.

Alison: Oh Ronnie, you didn't?

Ronel: Of course I did, it was the truth!

Alison: A hot guy talks to you and you bring in maths! What am I going to do with you two?

Taya: Clearly if he's sms'd her, then maths isn't such a bad thing Alison!

Alison: Whatever. So how did a conversation on maths get you here?

Ronel: Well he said that maybe he wasn't good at pool, because he wasn't good at maths. I said it was possible and he asked if he could sms me if he had any questions, because I seemed to know what I was talking about. I said sure he could, and so he sms'd me a couple of times last month. But the sms today was different. He asked me if I'm busy tomorrow night.

Alison (*hardly containing herself*): AND?

Ronel: Well... We are doing our Friends Valentines aren't we?

Alison: Oh no, you so did not turn down a Valentine's Date? Tell me you didn't? Please tell me you didn't.

Taya: But she is busy.

Alison: Taya, she has plans that can be changed! We are having a Friends Valentines because we don't have dates, now Ronel could have a date. That changes everything!

Ronel: But I promised you guys.

Alison: Taya, do we have a problem with Ronel going out with a good looking boy for Valentine's or are we going to make her stay home and be miserable with us?

Taya: Well, she did promise.

Alison: Taya. I'm going to hurt you.

Taya (*jealously*): Ok, ok, no, we don't have a problem with our gorgeous friend leaving us all alone and single to go on a date with a good looking boy tomorrow night. (*Sarcastically*) Happy Al?

Alison: No need to be jealous Taya, we are going to live this moment through Ronel.

Ronel: Say what?

Alison: Because Taya and I have generously let you ditch us for a boy, you are going to have to humour us now.

Ronel: What are you talking about?

Alison: Simple. We are letting you go on this date on the condition that you let us give you a make over!

Ronel: Noooooo.

Alison: Yessssss.

Taya: What do I know about a make over?

Alison: Taya, just keep quiet and work with me here. OK?

Taya: OK fine, but I think I'd prefer the Friend's Valentines night.

Alison: Too late she cried. You've already told Ronel she can go on her date. Speaking of which, Ronnie, you need to sms him back and tell him you are free tomorrow night.

Ronel: Well, if I'm getting a make-over, then clearly I'm busy.

Alison: Ha ha Miss Smarty Pants. You have sealed your fate on this one, so sms him already.

Ronel: I don't have my phone with me.

Alison: Taya, please go and fetch Ronel's phone.

Taya: Fine, but this sounds like trouble. *(Goes to fetch the phone shaking her head and muttering)* Trouble, trouble, trouble.

Ronel: Really Al, I don't want a make-over, this dating stuff is hard enough without all the extra bits.

Alison: Too true! BUT, if we get you looking like a hundred bucks, then won't your confidence be higher?

Ronel: I suppose...

Alison: Won't your self-esteem go through the roof?

Ronel: It might...

Alison: Won't you feel better about yourself?

Ronel: I guess ... but what's wrong with who I am now?

Alison: Nothing Ronnie, you are great! But maths just doesn't sell.

Ronel: But it's who I am Ally.

Alison: How do you know that's who you are when you have never tried other options? Why can't you be stylish and trendy too?

Ronel (*thinking*): Ok, you have a point. I've never been all dolled up before. But, then again, I've never wanted to. My gut feeling knows that isn't me. My gut says you are the extravert here, not me.

Alison: Thanks, I'll take that as a compliment. But seriously, will it really hurt that much to try something new, something different, to test your gut?

Ronel (*submitting to her friend's persistence*): No, I guess it wouldn't. Alright, you win. Let's go with the make-over and see what happens. (*Tentatively*) I have nothing to lose. Right?

Alison (*excited again and ready to get going with the make-over*): Right!

Enter Taya with the cell phone

Taya: Here you are Ronel. Sms away girl.

Ronel (*taking the phone*): So what do I say?

Alison: Pull up his sms first. What did he say exactly?

Ronel (*scrolling through her phone*): Um... Here it is... "Hi Ronel. How are you? I was just wondering if you are busy tomorrow night? Lemme know. Dylan." That's it.

Alison: Hmmm. Ok, you have to say how you are first of course, and ask how he is. Then say that you had plans, but they fell through this afternoon.

Taya: That's lying Al. She shouldn't lie.

Alison: It's not lying. She did have plans and now we have officially cancelled on her. So she doesn't have plans any more.

Taya: I'm telling you: Trouble, trouble, trouble.

Alison: Oh just shoosh already. Start sms'ing Ronnie.

Ronel (*typing her sms*): Ok, here goes..."Hi Dylan. Thanks for your sms. I'm good thanks. How are you?" ... Then what?

Alison (*prompting*): Then type: "No, I'm not busy tomorrow as my plans have fallen through. Why do you ask?"

Ronel (*finished typing*): "...ask?" Ok, then I finish off with "Ronel" do I?

Alison: Yes, you do; and then send it before you start thinking again.

Ronel (*nervously looks at Alison and then her phone and back again*): Are you sure. Al I don't think...

Alison: I'll send it for you then (*Alison takes the phone from a shocked Ronel and sends the sms quickly*) Done! Now let's wait and see.

Taya: You really are mad Alison. Trouble, trouble, trouble...

Alison: Ja ja ja Taya, we heard you the first time. Now it's time to plan an outfit. Up you get Ronnie.

Alison pulls Ronel out of her chair and starts assessing her as if she were a model. She pretends to work with a tape measure and look at her through her imaginary camera. Ronel starts to pose and the three are having a laugh modeling and posing. Then Ronel's phone beeps with an sms. There's an excited pause as they all stop and stare at the phone on the table. Ronel goes to her phone as the others watch her.

Ronel (*reading sms*): Here goes nothing ladies..."Hi Ronel. Glad you are well. I was hoping you were free so we could go for dinner tomorrow night. Would you like to? 7pm at Guido's? Dylan." ... Oh wow! He wants to go on a date!

All three are ecstatically happy on stage. Alison remembers Ronel hasn't replied.

Alison: This is so exciting! Ronnie you have to reply to him. Make it cool and sexy.

Taya: How on earth can a sms be sexy?

Alison: I don't know, like call him gorgeous, or tell him you'll wear something sexy.

Taya: Alison!

Ronel: No way! I'm not letting you talk me into that too!

Alison: Ah, come on; just one little extra word or two. End the sms with..."from your woman."

Ronel: *(talking as she replies on her sms)* Not a chance! I'm replying with...
 "Thanks Dylan, I would like to have dinner. See you at Guido's at 7pm. Ronel." ...
(she sends the sms). Done!

Alison: You two are no fun. *(Pretending to be upset and then reviving as she realises what's ahead)* But that's ok, because we have a make-over on our hands.

Ronel's phone beeps.

Ronel: *(reading sms)* "Great. Later."

Taya: Well that wasn't a romantic or sexy sms.

Ronel looks at Taya with a worried expression. Alison reassures her.

Alison: Of course not, he's a guy. Apparently just getting a response from them is a big deal.

Enter Chevon, Ronel's older sister, and Christen, Alison's older sister; they are both in second year varsity together.

Chevon: Howzit ladies, what are you all excited about?

Alison *(jumping in before anyone else says anything)*: Nothing Chevon, we were just talking about how sad guys are when it comes to Valentine's Day. We're all

heading to Taya's house tomorrow night to mourn the lack of decent males in our lives.

Taya: We are?

Alison: Of course we are Taya. The same as every Valentine's Day, every year.

Christen: Why don't I believe you little sister?