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Focus, a play

An Interactive Qualify Project Report

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WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

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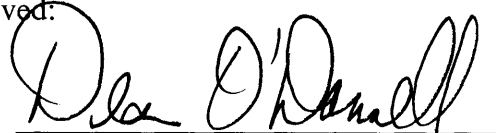
By

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark D. Barr', written over a horizontal line.

Mark D. Barr

Date: October 19, 2000

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dean O'Donnell', written over a horizontal line.

Professor Dean O'Donnell, Advisor

Abstract:

The purpose of this IQP is to examine how a person can come to full moral cognizance from a state of moral ineptitude through personal experience. This is done through a dramatic medium to more realistically portray the emotional states of those involved, as this is where moral conversion truly takes place. My play tells the story of one such journey, and examines the ramifications for the characters involved.

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Introduction:

This play originally began as an attempt to create a modern morality play that was centered on the development of a unique moral standpoint. It was to be centered entirely in a classroom, and dealt with the spiritual journey of one of the students, and how he came upon moral awakening. However, it became clear, that a play that was didactic in nature was hardly a play, but really more of a lecture. A lecture that no one would actually want to sit through two hours of. So I got rid of the classroom, but kept the characters I had conceived. What was also left was the earth shattering moral views and consequences that accompanied the original story, instead it became a play about some people doing stuff, and seeing what happened. It's the what happened part that made the play what it is, I just mostly left them alone, and let them do their own thing, and then afterwards tried to pull back in the philosophy that defined the original concept. How I actually brought the story to the original philosophical groundings changed with each draft, and eventually resulted in this version. It is not as strictly didactic as was my prior intent, however I believe that it does achieve, at least to some extent, the fulfillment of its moral purpose.

So, that all aside, we follow the antics of a college student, as he tries to come to grips with the world he is experiencing, with hilarious consequences, or devastating consequences at least. Whereas first, I set out to compose some deeply serious, world changing drama, I finally came up with a rather simply, after school special style story, that many people should find easy to relate to. But then of course things go horrible wrong, which is what makes it an interesting play, or just confusing.

This play is intended for college students, or less specifically anyone who has attended college, so that the situations presented are not entirely foreign. Thus being comfortable with the setting, and the general developments, the audience is free to be entirely confused by the

philosophical content. The intrusion of moral theory is done subtly so that it is never very clear that moral virtue is being exercised, let alone by whom. Thus a play, which began as a metaphysical musing, quickly deteriorated into a melodrama about college life, and then became again a deeper story about moral conversion in the face of stolid world.

The preparatory paper I wrote is included here, only to show the direction this play started from, it has little resemblance to the final version of this project.

Philosophical and Moral Basis

The play has two essential components that define its moral and philosophical character. The first represents a traditional exploration of theories of self and being. This is done through examination of the popular writings works of several great philosophers, in which can be see the growing of man from his first cognitive discoveries to a fully living moral being. The second and subtler facet of the play is the gentle guiding and culmination of these philosophers' works into an entirely distinct moral theory. The play then is simply a vessel through which we are guided from basic knowledge to a state of full moral cognizance. The play is presented as the teaching of a generic course in philosophy, and this is precisely what it is though with biased goals. In the play itself, we observe the way in which these lessons impact and mold the student characters, but whose effects are also felt by the audience, who learn along with the students. It is nothing more than a veiled means of presenting a moral theory, along with the necessary foundation, without anyone quite realizing what is happening.

The almost formal, lesson style, teachings in the play begin with Descartes' Discourse on Method and the Meditations. Descartes is used as the initial basis since he begins by rejecting all previous knowledge of

the world as illusory, and resorts only to the one assumption that has any merit. Specifically that he is aware of himself and that this awareness is proof enough of his own existence. Having thus proved himself to exist, he can continue to explore the world without being overcome with futility. This may seem a superficial step, but is quite necessary, for if we did not even exist what would be the point of seeking knowledge of ourselves or of the world. Since he is uncertain of the world and certain only of his own thoughts, Descartes chooses the forum of the mind for his first investigations of selfhood. The external world is a realm of uncertainty, in that its existence depends on the functioning of other physical objects whose wholeness can not be known. To experience the world we must use our physical bodies, our hands, eyes and ears, but what then if these were faulty? The mind itself can be made known to a motivated investigator, as it does not depend on any outside force save that of our own thoughts, which themselves contain a purity that releases them from this trap of uncertainty. There seems then to be a clear distinction between mind and body, an irreconcilable gap bridged only by our meager powers of perception that merely are as they are without any proper quantifier. But as clearly as we think, do we also perceive, so therefore something indeed does exist outside of ourselves, but our knowledge of it is tainted and fading. Amidst all this uncertainty there are some bedrock's upon which we can create a full image of self. It is clear that we do exist, as the power of our own thought shows, but what else can too exist? In his investigation, Descartes seeks all those things which can be held entirely in the mind yet have their existence outside of ourselves. To this end he examines the ideas that fill the mind, and stumbles upon concepts that are also pure in themselves. These are things such as logic, mathematics and geometry. These are concepts that exist wholly in themselves, and which can not be perverted by any instance of self. He uses often the concept of a square,

or rather the fullness of what a square is, and argues that there can not be a three-sided square as this contradicts the very nature of 'squareness'. He discusses many such concepts that lead him to knowledge that we exist in a framework that is governed by certain rules that are irrevocable. There are essences and natures outside of our selves that exist fully no matter our opinion of them. This itself hints toward an external existence of some kind. In his internal journey, Descartes also finds that he holds in his mind the concept of a greater and Supreme Being that encompasses infinity and more. This like his mathematics, is something that can be known and understood with out any necessary perceptions of the world, and in fact is defined of other concepts that can have no place in the external world, yet remain in their purity. In this he finds a great certainty in the existence of God, but as of yet he lacks any purpose or reason for either his own existence or that of God. Indeed they exist, but so far lack a particular instance in which we can experience either can be known. For we are not simply disjoined minds reveling in their own selves, but rather both mind and body and living in a perceived time. Thus he turns his great lens of truth outward and begins to investigate the external world, which our bodies frequent.

From his internal investigations Descartes has proven to himself that he exists in and of himself, but that there is much that is greater than himself, and also that that there can be truth to that which he perceives. He begins then to examine the essence of objects known only by their physicality. In his famous Wax Argument, Descartes looks at a small piece of wax, that by itself would seem to have no inner truth. Yet after transforming this wax in a variety of ways, reshaping, melting, burning, he finds that there is still a certain waxness about each of the new forms. He thus perceives that physical objects have some immutable essence independent of their physical instance. This like knowledge of self

contains purity of purpose, which Descartes equates with existence. Indeed he see this very trait of immutability with in himself. Those he grows and changes, he is still and always has been Descartes. Yet it takes a volatile world for this immutability to be grasped. Thus it would seem that indeed there is a world in which we live, one in which is greater than islands of existence finding temporal instances. Yet still the veil of perception blinds us to seeing always the inner essence of that which surrounds, and this fills us again with uncertainty. Descartes wonders at length, if when he leaves his den, that it persists in itself or if it only finds meaning in his presence alone. To this question he can find no answers, save that of consistency. He can not be certain about the true nature of his den or of that of the world, but there is about it the air of repeatability if not certainty. Whether or not if den disappears and reappears, it is always there when he enters it, exactly as he left it. Thus in order to function as a physical being, he must simply accept the persistent existence of the physical world.

This is the body of what can be derived from Descartes; he has shown us that we indeed are living thinking beings with much inside and outside of ourselves. But this tells us nothing of how we are to be living beings in the framework that so constantly surrounds us. Descartes has taken only the first step in asserting our nature to live, and this must be done before we can decide how it is we are to live.

From here we then begin to look for further guidance in our search for a deeper purpose and understanding of what it really means to be a thinking being. For deeper understanding, we then examine Locke in his Essay on Human Understanding, as this deals in general on how we come upon knowledge and acquire it. Locke acknowledges that we are living beings fitted out with both mind and body, and as such are capable of knowledge of ourselves

and of the physical world. He believes however that these two facets of our being should make us aware of our duties as living beings, both to others and to God. Unlike Descartes, he believes that we are not endowed with any innate knowledge, but rather given the ability to discern truth in the clouds of perception. The only vessel for this discovery is our very experiences. Experience and experience alone if the fountain of knowledge from which all things can be learned, we must however shift through these flowing waters to find the golden nuggets of truth that lie amongst the sands of confusion. It is this ability to sift and discover that lends knowledge about God. Though like all things that we can perceive, we too play a part in the interaction and event, which define the world, we also can begin to glimpse the truths that dictate how this ballet of physicality comes about. Discerning these rules show us of a greater law that rules the very rules. In this we see the face of God, the being of cause and effect that makes the great stages and tells the dancers how to move. We also see the human distinctness in this clarity of sight; this vision creates a power and a responsibility within us. With our great foresight and insight we are the free spirits that Descartes describes, but our knowledge of nature law tells us also that we have a dance we must dance. We are stamped from our very creation with the innate ability to gain and use this knowledge of the world and ourselves. This creates a schism between Descartes ideas and Locke's knowledge with ideas. Locke, like Descartes, believes that some knowledge can be gained without experience, but does require a deeper experience of the essence of self, and is not simply reaffirmed by our learning it. Locke thus wholly dismisses any concepts of innate knowledge or divine imprinting, yet can not escape the idea that we are purposeful beings made within certain bounds and expected to live by them. Thus he does believe that there can be absolute moral truth, but is unable to find this truth simply through his philosophical investigations.

This begins to hint toward the greater culmination of these philosophical musings, in how we can come to moral understanding and more so, how knowledge or morality can create a moral conversion within us.

Since experience is the great fountain from which knowledge is derived, Locke pays particular attention, like Descartes, to the practical applications of experience. Descartes was interested in the true essence of physical form, yet was forced to admit, though uncertain, that his desk was always his desk, and that the sun would rise each morning. Locke too looks to the ordinary, but tries to see deeper into what this consistency can reveal about the nature of existence. Descartes states that concepts like geometry can be purely known by the mind, Locke however examines a physical triangle and though he can observe the sums of the angles, this by itself is meaningless without other triangles to also examine in order to see the deeper law in effect. The knowledge by itself is not sufficient to help understand reality without a physical instance to bind the knowledge to. For Locke a great importance is placed not on the value of knowledge, simply for knowing, but in what it reveals to us about the world as we use that knowledge as physical beings. We are created as blank slates, free of any impression until we begin to behave as physical beings and impression upon ourselves both knowledge and experience that gives the knowledge meaning. Knowledge thus is greater and prior to any experience, but like the slate he likens us too, we are made to be written upon. Experience is the pen that transcribes knowledge within us. Indeed some knowledge can be gained through reason alone, but the act of reasoning is the experience of our very self and the purpose of making. In this Locke makes the leap from simple knowledge and ideas, to the application of those same concepts and what they show us of our place in the world. It is clear to Locke that though created blank, we were indeed created with a purpose and a plan.

The essence of our being is this ability to discern, and thus it is our responsibility to discern our place within a greater whole and to grasp how it is we must behave so as to be in accord with our purpose. This is no small leap, we see now that we are not simply thinking beings, but moral beings. Philosophy, which began as the search for truth, becomes the truth of ourselves and the truth of accord with nature. Though Locke makes many distinctions as to our nature, and that of knowledge itself from the writings of Descartes, there remains this strong theme of self-discovery. A theme of moving from certain knowledge of one's self, to the world and then of our place within a greater whole. It is this journey that the play attempts to embody by showing it in application to the student characters we see, and further by inviting the audience to experience this same journey. However we have only reached the beginning or moral cognizance, and thus the 'class' continues and looks to the writings of Hume for an enriching of our understanding.

In his work *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Hume lays the out the foundation for moral understanding through the tools of Reason. And it is in this that we begin to see the struggle between reason and the passions. The whole of moral duty is directly discernible by our reason even if our perception itself were to fail us. For Hume the question of morals is deeply embedded within our very actions. It is foolish to believe that every action would be equally pleasing to all, yet within this there are grains of truth that determine the utter justice of the action. This is perceivable at a deep level within us that responds to peace. We seek plainly not war or oppression but accord with nature as it has been revealed to us, though this can often be, necessarily, against our own personal wishes. But in all things this accord with nature can be sensed and fulfilled. Just as we can glimpse the rules that dictate the motion of the stars, so too can we see what in ourselves leads to the greatest peace.

Though this is done purely through the functioning of reason, that is through an examination of the maxims and minims that result from any given action. Justice then becomes an absolute due to our human nature, the essence of our ability to choose. Though the truth of all can be glimpsed, we are incapacitated by our faulty perception and further by the guile of our passions, so that truth often is not that of the objective but that which is the greatest only for ourselves. Yet when we earnestly seek to exercise reason purely then we can begin to see the natural progression of our action through the perceivable world and then weigh that action accordingly. Sentiment can further obscure this and often seems the palpable force of determining morality, but this should not be the case. Sentiment is that part of ourselves that yearns for total accord with nature. Though morality does not always lead to accord with nature, only to perfect alignment with our physical and spiritual purpose. What lies at the core of this is, is that of the will of the perpetuator, creating an action. It is only through love or hatred that we seek chorus with the physical instances of a greater essence. A moral act is that which is done through love that is with equal concern for the totality of creation and the world, we perceive. If one lives strictly out of love, then that person would logically seek what is best for all of creation. Justice then becomes a merely artificial virtue that results out of the good nature in which we were made. We can discern truth behind instance, and look upon that with love or hatred as dictated by the passion, but we are neither obliged nor coerced to behave in any particular way towards the physical world. One filled with love would naturally act out of love and see the goodness of his works in his own sentimentality, or behave wicked and be justified in the worthlessness of creation. Hume puts forward the idea that benevolence is indeed in accord with nature, but there comes the contradiction between purely good and purely evil acts. If one uses reason alone to quantify the

worth of nature according to his will, some action will naturally result in maxims for some and minims for others. Though we might create great good, we might also create some evil. If we endeavor to do no evil in our good, how can we resolve this stalemate? This, Hume says, is the function of reason, but we must ask: why it is we should act at all? We begin to see with Locke that we are purposeful beings who should act out of responsibility to the purpose for which we were created and endowed with the abilities we have, yet Hume says nothing of Duty only of accord and union. Though we may desire accord, we also long to fulfill our purpose for this is the greatest alignment we could seek. Physicality, as Descartes has shown, is but one facet of our being. It is not enough to seek harmony with nature and be at war within. Hume reconciles this merely by saying the benevolence is that part of humanity, which cries out the most for peace, and by obedience to this we may be free as the lone thinker found with Descartes is. Yet in our journey from self-awareness to complete moral beings, we seek incentive and the proper path. Hume shows us a pleasant medium but does not offer the moral totality that we need. Hume's world is a drab ideal of fiend pleasantness under the guise of a loving existence. The love he speaks of is on the same level as fear though, where we act only to perpetuate a state of safety. However our discerning consciousness pulls us to a greater truth where fear has no ground and the love that Hume seeks is completed.

For this completion of love and reconciliation of the passions we look to Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Kant begins with a definition of the will, specifically that a will is that which is truly good in itself. Further that it is good without application or instance yet remains so in both. This suffices Descartes definition of the concepts so pure that they truly exist. This good has meaning in that an action is good when it is not out selfishness but out of a greater duty. This duty lies

not in oneself, as Hume would seem to say, but we are merely instruments of this duty, which sees its perfection in our actions for its sake. Duty then, to Kant, is the necessity to act out reverence for the law. This is not meant to imply that morality is dependent on social or civil law, though often it is applicable to such, but rather that the law we obey is not one that is thrust upon us, but rather one that is made manifest in us through our very being. Much like the immutable laws that Descartes sees in geometry, so does Kant see the moral law as an innate, universal force that has its say in all of our actions. This results in a condition Kant describes as the Categorical Imperative, that one should seek through every action to conform to the universal law, and indeed every action should itself be an instance of universal law. In short, what is right in one situation is right in any and every. Though the passions may seek to pull us in other directions, it is this duty that pulls us back toward the good will and moral purity. It is through innate knowledge that we can distinguish between the would be results of actions to see their conformance with the Categorical Imperative, and through the same use of this law that we can gradually align our lives into total moral perfection. To this end, Kant gives us an application of Universal Law, that we must treat each other not as means, but rather as ends in themselves. That we should with every action to satisfy the moral cravings of each other person, and think not of our own personal pursuits. While a very compelling law, this raises the questions of motives. If we are not to use others as a means, then how can we through our actions and interactions seek to moral purify ourselves, for would this not be submitting others to our own moral superstitions, so that we alone might be satisfied. The universality of the perfect will would strike against this, telling us that indeed that which we perceive as perfection is, and that through our own cleansing we to can bring others, as ends, to their own moral sanity. Kant is well aware of the

vicious circle we begin to turn when morality tells us to seek it, but to do so only because it in itself is good. Yet then we see that we seek morality for we yearn to align ourselves with it, and then we thus seek only our own ends, not that of true morality and so forth. Kant tries to resolve this by an examination of pure reasoning and also of the unintelligibility of the external world all, which leads us only to the original faith in the supremacy of morality. Kant offers various standpoints to see within and beyond this circle, which results in the unexplainably of questioning the nature of morality and the severe limits we have in understanding it. Yet never does Kant seeks to reconcile the passions with his idea of good will, we are told simply that the duty and the will are supreme and knowable through the functioning of reasons. Yet we find ourselves as spiritual and physical beings in a very real and physical world. We seek then practical application, as Locke constructed, to perceive in this world and find completion. In the morality of Kant we would find ourselves frozen in action out of fear that we were not exercising universal law, but in doing so have subjected ourselves to a fallible and wicked law. In all practicality, we are not and can not be purely rational beings, and as such we can not seek the Categorical Imperative, no matter how noble its ends may be, for our assumptions would be flawed and this would result in greater moral ineptitude. Though the inner duty we sense pulls us to something akin to the Categorical Imperative, what we seek is that accord that Hume skirted, whose full joy is only suspected in our hearts. Again we would be laden with fear the worst of all the passions which can all but blind us to any functioning of reason. The truth of what we seek is hidden amongst all of this that we have seen, what we truly seek is a moral theory that is both pure and practical.

With Descartes we began to see that we have an existence and reason and instance in a greater whole. Locke further showed us that this very knowledge that we find in nature and ourselves pulls us towards knowledge of that greater force that lends the laws and the purpose to existence. Hume tried to show us morality in such a framework, but succeeded in only showing us how to live peaceably with each other in a physical sense, yet without resolving the cries of our spirit. Kant created a moral masterpiece, yet one that was lacking in the practicality of life, leaving it forever beyond our grasp and grounded in our fears. Yet in all of this, using the very powers of discernment that Locke spoke of, we can begin to gather the bits of truth that permeate all of this and attempt to construct a moral theory that contains both the purity of purpose and the practicality of life. It is to this end that I have endeavored, and have thus created the following moral inkling that is to be the culmination of the play. This coalescence of thought I have named Spigot Theory, for the analogy that best explains life under such moral conditions. The theory I put forth is not one that is comprehensible using reason alone, but rises rather on a deeper conversion to morality that comes about in a person only when reason has failed and fear has destroyed all. It is a theory based solely on love of life, and all that can rise out of it. We are to be seen as great cisterns that hold virtue and grace, and a spigot from which we can pour forth these living waters. As an intellectual we seek only knowledge of self, and thus delve deep into ourselves and grow drunk upon the life we find within. So great is our thirst that we can easily close off the external world and live only with and for those waters. And indeed we must all fail victim to this addiction of grace and come to learn the great value of that which was freely given us, and defines us. Only when we thirst do we know the great value that these waters have. But too easily do we become bored on only this internal search though indeed does it yield

much. This exploration of self makes us yearn for the knowledge in others and of others and of the world, and thus armed only with the meager knowledge of self to we turn upon the world. In great torrents do we then pour forth our waters from the spigot of our soul, and drench the lands about us in our search for truth. And many do come to drink that water which we esteem so highly, and we rejoice in the perfection of it. Those who thirst, we satisfy, and when we thirst so too are we satisfied. And in this sharing, this giving do we find equal purpose with that of glimpsing into ourselves. But too often does our precious water pour wasted upon the ground, or is hoarded by those who do not truly thirst. In horror do we then realize that our mighty cistern can be emptied, and that there are those who hunger for our every drop, but would give us nothing. The joy of sharing, the joy of knowing is as nothing compared with the terror of being made empty. Only in this experience to we come to truly treasure our knowledge, and to seek the knowledge of the world, but immobile are we from those who seek only to strengthen themselves and weaken others. In despair we close the spigot and hold our precious water forever within lest it be wasted, yet now we are stuck only in fear. We dare not give anymore of ourselves, yet we can not be satisfied only in and of ourselves. And forever could we remain transfixed in this terror were it not for the saving light of God. We have learned from looking in that we hold back the great waters of grace that can bring satisfaction to those who thirst, and in the sharing have we learned that it is indeed good and right to give with out end. But we are finite beings; our cisterns have shallow bottoms. Yet in the giving our waters were not depleted, but rather increased and increased. This is where reason fails us, and fear has its strongest hold. Were we to depend solely on reason, we could come no farther than this despairing in the meager knowledge of self, and the ravishing of the world. Moral conversion thus can not be wholly grasped in idea alone, but rather

must be experienced. In this it dwells with in us, and warms us with the light of truth, if only we will let it. Thus this is to be a play rather than a moral discourse. It is only when we see how these lessons take hold and change those on the stage that we can begin to see how it will open us up. When we embrace this, we will see the end of despair. Where before we sought only to share our waters with those that thirst and would share themselves with us, we now see that we can never tell whom it is who thirsts and who lies. What then are we to do? We simply give and give and give, even if our precious water will be wasted or spilt on the ground, so in this giving are we given even more from the source of all life. And in this and this alone can we find joy. For our many failing along the way have shown us that indeed have we been created with a purpose, a purpose that yet eludes us but beckons us ever further into union with something greater than ourselves. Morality that speaks to our reason does not satisfy our passions, thus satisfies nothing. We must learn the proper balance, the balance of love. If truly we love truth, then truly will we see the essence of truth in all things, and seek for it more than we would for ourselves. It does not matter if those who approach the fountain of our waters do not thirst or have nothing to give in return, for in the act of love are we filled and our true purpose known. Hume sought this love, but bound it with in the scope of reason, and this is quite contrary to our actual purpose. Contradiction it seems, but to those who have nothing to return more and more should be given. First we must know ourselves, and then know of the world, before we can possibly find our joy, for it lies not inside of ourselves, or outside of ourselves, but in others. A spigot that gives no water has no purpose, nor does one who quickly wastes all of its water upon the ground and satisfies none. Though abstract, this embodies the essence of all morality. We are not to fear, but rather to seek to serve others with out end. Often our deeds will go unnoticed, or worse go wrong and

result in evil, but if we earnestly seek to serve others more than ourselves can we know joy and peace. Though accountable for the evil we create, we are saved by the good we created. We must still contend with our passions, but we have known our passion, and it achieved nothing. We may also still do some evil, but we have lived in total fear, and no evil could be worse than this. And always we look to something outside of ourselves for guidance, so that even when we can not see that path, we are still led by he who made the path and its destination. Only in experiencing and doing can we know this, and though the means to this is treacherous and long, all other paths led no farther than this one's beginning. It is only after we have lost everything that we can be willing to give everything to those who stole from us, and in this simple act find the peace and accord that all else has only hinted at. Our sole purpose is but to love and serve one another, morality then is just the manifestation of this love through knowledge of ourselves. How then is it to be applied? We are to act always out of love for one another even if it means our own demise, and in those times when we can not see clearly, to look within ourselves for the vision of the one who sees all and loves all.

What then is this force that changes us, that brings us from moral ineptitude to full awareness of life? Quite simply, it is pain. Pain itself is awareness, contact with a presence of the inevitable within us. We must first know pain before we can know joy. Those whose life is sheltered, protected lives and know nothing of pain or struggle, do not truly live. As we grow within ourselves we tend to plunge down a great spiral of being, beginning with cognizance, to sensuality to the despair of emptiness. This back, spiraled pit can become a pinnacle of joy. Despair becomes joy only when we cease the battles with the tides of fate. That great looming force and presence, that we can so easily deduce with our philosophy, has ensnared us in we know not what. When we struggle, and try to remake the world in our

lesser image, do we despair at the futility and searing of our lives? Yet we can make peace with the world and bring an end to the war within. Though our lives may be terrible, they contain a terrible beauty. If we strive for this beauty, then we battles not the waves, but sail with them to the fullness of life. How can philosophy become poetry? This is the true message I seek in my play, to account for the inner struggles of several, to show how what is dry and lacking can come together to fill us and renew us and grant us the very awareness of life we believed we where exercising. I have tried here to account for the process by which this change can occur, but it is not something that can be written, rather it must be experience to be truly known, else it is simply another imagined shade of blue. Thus may the rising and failings of our lives be the songs that sing the universe into being.

It became clear to me early on in the writing process that any play that was so firmly entrenched within the realm of deep philosophy would be inaccessible to the average person, and of little interest to anyone but the full-time philosopher. So through the various drafts and revision, the play left the classroom behind, and with it all intents to try to directly teach something. What was left then, was the emotional and moral journey of the characters, but not the all knowing voice of a teacher-character that pulled the story along through moral supremacy. It is this journey that, freed of didacticism and feigned objectivity, truly embodies the overall moral message that I sought to achieve. It does not say that only one path in life is correct, or try to convince you that anyone's actions are proper and justified. It simply tells what happened to several people, and lets you make up your own mind. For moral conversions, as I so laboriously stated above, come about only through experience and introspection, not through someone telling you that you're wrong.

Cast of Characters:

Rory McGraw - Eighteen, freshman

Professor Banack - Young philosophy teacher, recently completed his doctorate.

Matt - freshman, friend of Rory.

Sally - Nineteen, sophomore

ACT I

(The set is divided in three general areas, with a wall separating each section. There are two rooms, one on each side of the stage, and in the center a wide hallway. On the left-hand side, a mock dorm room is made. It has simple wooden furniture, perhaps bunk beds. Clothing is heaped in a pile by a small free, standing closet. There is a desk covered with various academic books, and soda cans. There may be other such oddities to distinguish it as a student room, such as posters, a computer, even a stereo. The room should remain harsh in the impersonality of the furniture, but also very lived in. The room is separated from the rest of the set by a simply wall with a door. This side of the hallway should like the inside of a residence hall. Plain white walls, a bulletin board with student events, and several other doors with other students names on them. The hall itself should be quite plain, with nothing in it. It should be of equal width with each of the two rooms. The room on the right is a professor's office, and should resemble closely the students room. It should have the same harsh wooden furniture, but lack any of the familiarity associated with one's room. There should be a bookcase, crammed full of philosophical works, and several chairs. A philosopher's stole hangs on a large hook by the door. The single wall outside the office should resemble a hallway inside a school building. There should be another bulletin board, and a clock. Perhaps a small sign with office numbers and arrows. Professor Banack's name is inscribed on a removable plate on the single door that opens into the office. The entire set should be fairly small, not taking up the entire width of the stage, but the hall itself should continue all the way to the backdrop. The lighting should always follow RORY, only the particular room should be illuminated, everything else must remain in darkness.)

Scene I

(The lights come up only on the central hallway of the stage. Several students are milling about heading in either direction. RORY enters from the back and walks down the length of the hallway toward the office. RORY is a typical young college guy, dressed in dark pants, and a plain, dark colored, long sleeve shirt. His clothes should always be wrinkled and scuffed. BANACK is sitting at the desk in the office grading papers, though that part of the stage remains in shadows. BANACK wears corduroy pants and a polo shirt. A bright crystal hangs from a back cord around his neck.)

MATT:

(Walking up to RORY) Hey Rory! You want to go grab some food? I got about a half hour till my next class.

RORY:

Nah, can't. I have to go meet with Professor Banack, and I'm probably already late. *(glancing at the clock on the wall, scowls)*

MATT:

Yeah, that's why some people wear watches. *(amused)*

RORY:

Well people do lots of things. How bout I give you a call later, and we scrounge up some pizza?

MATT:

Sounds good, well g'luck with your meeting.

RORY:

Thanks, later.

(MATT walks off stage. RORY approaches Banack's door and knocks lightly. The lights come up on the office.)

BANACK:

Ah Rory, come in, have a seat.

(RORY slowly enters the office, and walks towards a chair opposite BANACK)

Close the door, if you don't mind.

(RORY returns to the door, and, as he closes it, spots SALLY walking down the hall. SALLY looks at him and smiles brightly as the lights slowly fade on the hallway part of the stage leaving only the office illuminated.)

RORY:

You wanted to see me, Doctor *(draws out the word)* Banack?

BANACK:

Yes I did Rory, please have a seat -

(RORY enters the office and sits down opposite BANACK)

and close the door.

(RORY stands again, closes the door and sits back down)

You see Rory, I've been going over the class' reflection papers from last week and, well, I had a couple of questions about yours.

RORY:

(nervous) Like what?

BANACK:

Well, really just one question... hmm how to put this. *(pause)* You see, the whole point of these reflection papers is to reflect on the reading assigned for that week. It's suppose to give you a way to review the important concepts we covered, and give me a way to make sure you're doing the reading.

RORY:

Uh, wasn't that what I was doing?

BANACK:

(sighs) I read your first reflection paper, and though there was nothing in it specifically about the reading, I just figured the class discussion you referred to was of greater interest. Fine. Then I read your second one, again nothing about the reading, a couple of wild ideas and references to the class discussion, but nothing about the reading. Then I get this *(gestures towards the paper on his desk)*, same thing. Lots of writing, but not a single sentence about the assigned reading for the week, which leaves me with just a single question: Have you read any of the three books we've gone through so far this term?

RORY:

(very nervous) Well yeah, I mean I read most of it, not all of it, but, I mean I've read the important stuff...

BANACK:

You would mind sharing with me any particular things that stood out to you while you were doing all this supposed reading?

RORY:

Well, I don't know, hmm, uh...

BANACK:

(shakes his head) Rory, this is not some joke intro class that you can just sleep through.

RORY:

I know, it's just that I don't really need to... I, well, get more out of the class than the books. They just don't seem that important...

BANACK:

I know the reading is important, that's why I ask everyone to do these reflection papers. *(sighs)* Rory, I did you a favor by letting you into this class, against my better judgment, and in return, you give me this crap. *(grabs the paper off his desk)*

RORY:

I'm sorry, I...

BANACK:

Rory, I do not like to fail people, I certainly am not afraid to. And if you keep up this quality of work, you will leave me no choice.

RORY:

No, I'll do better

BANACK:

You're damn right, you'll do better. I won't have you make a fool of me!

RORY:

I wasn't trying to.

BANACK:

So? This is how you repay favors then?

RORY:

No, it's just...

BANACK:

Did you ever once think that there might be more to this than just reading a bunch of books? That maybe there was a point to this crazy thing called college. Just some place to sleep, eh? A class to pass, nothing more?

RORY:

No, I just thought that -

BANACK:

Of course not, why would you ever think that there might be more at stake than your grade? College is not just something to do between getting drunk. It is supposed to prepare you, get you ready for life! And look how you prepare yourself.

RORY:

I'm sorry. Really, I want to do well, I want to pass this class. I need to pass this class. What can I do?

BANACK:

It all comes down to the grade doesn't it? One meaningless letter that can decide our entire future.

RORY:

So what can I do? I'll rewrite the papers if I have to.

BANACK:

(pauses, leans back in his chair thinking) I'm not quite ready to fail you yet Rory, naturally I cannot accept these papers, but that isn't enough to fail you, one more perhaps, but not yet.

(RORY signs with obvious relief)

You see, Rory, you remind me a lot of myself. You are intelligent, maybe even a little too much for your own good, but you make foolish choices. You need to realize what actually benefits you and what doesn't. Slacking off certainly isn't helping you any.

RORY:

I won't slack off anymore, really you'll see.

BANACK:

I, like you, flitted through most of college, unsure of anything, just taking blow off classes, and partying all night. And suddenly I had a degree, no job, no place to live, no future. Nothing, nothing at all. But I busted my ass, and got myself together. Went back to school, really worked at it, and kept going all the way through a Ph.D, and for what? So I could watch kids like you piss away their life, their future, and never actually achieve anything? I'm trying to help you Rory, don't be an idiot.

RORY:

I won't professor, I won't.

BANACK:

Good. I want you to bring your next reflection paper directly to me, and it had better be the best of all of them. And don't forget about the oral reports next week, I don't want anymore BS (*throws the paper he was clutching back on the desk*). I giving you a chance Rory, a chance nobody would have given me.

RORY:

I know professor, thank you.

BANACK:

It will be more difficult now, without the three papers, but you can do it Rory, you had better do it, one more slip up and that's it. I will fail you if I have to, (*pause*) if you make me.

RORY:

Ok, professor, I won't fail. Thank you, thank you for giving me another chance.

(BANACK nods, and turns back to his desk and papers. The lights dim on the office, and come up on the hallway as RORY exits. SALLY is sitting in the hall outside BANACK's office, she stands as RORY enters the hall and closes the door behind him. Once the door is closed, the meek persona that RORY had is gone. He scowls and shakes his head.)

SALLY:

Hello.

RORY:

Uh, hi (*awkwardly*)

SALLY:

You're in my philosophy class with Professor Banack, aren't you?

RORY:

Yeah, I guess.

SALLY:

Yeah, you always sit in the back and harass whoever is trying to speak. *(chuckling)*

RORY:

Only the ones that deserve it, someone has to think straight in that class...

SALLY:

(She brightens as RORY is speaking) Thank you, *(pause)* do you really think I'm beautiful?

RORY:

Huh? I mean, of course you are. *(caught off guard)*

SALLY:

(smiles, then slowly) Do you have a partner yet? For the oral reports?

RORY:

(awkwardly again) No, not as such. How 'bout you?

SALLY:

Well, now I'm kinda hoping you'll be my partner.

RORY:

(trying to act cool) Yeah, sure, whatever. That'd be cool.

SALLY:

(smiling again) Great! I'm Sally, by the way.

RORY:

Uh yeah, Rory.

SALLY:

Yeah, I know. *(awkward pause as they look at one another)*

Uh, well I have to go. I have a meeting with Banack now.

RORY:

Oh ok, well see you then.

SALLY:

(smiles again) It was a pleasure meeting you too. I'll email you so we can get together.

(RORY moves out from in front of BANACK's door, and SALLY moves toward it to knock)

RORY:

Cool. Yeah. Ok, well till then I guess.

(SALLY smiles and knocks. RORY turns and flees off stage down the hall. BANACK comes to the door, and lets SALLY in as the lights on the stage go out.)

Scene II

(The lights come up on the bedroom and hall. RORY is sitting at his desk with an open book, doing some sort of schoolwork. There is classical music playing in the background. Lights stay up on the hall throughout this scene as the door to RORY's room is left mostly open/. Other residents should be seen walking the hall. A person may leave their room with a towel and shower supplies and such, or a perhaps a guy and his girlfriend go into a room. Activities so enforce the idea of the set suddenly being in a residence hall. MATT enters the stage from the back, and walks up to RORY's rooms with a pizza box, and knocks on the door.)

RORY:

Yo? *(turning towards the door)*

(MATT enters, and sits on the bed with the pizza box)

MATT:

One large pepperoni pizza, as you requested, Master. *(joking, half bow)*

RORY:

Maybe I'll even share it with you.

MATT:

Not likely, I've seen the way you eat. So how did your meeting with Banack go?

(MATT opens the pizza box, and grabs a slice. Rory grabs a slice too, and speaks between bites)

RORY:

Oh pretty good, you know. We had a nice talk about how my recent papers lack all virtue, then I believe he threatened to fail me, then gave me a nice fatherly speech about this and that. Plus I have to bring the next paper directly to him for approval or death, so all in all a great time. *(pausing)* No, no wait it was horrible.

MATT:

Yeah, that certainly sounds like him. I had him for a class last term, I'm pretty sure he made at least one person cry each class. *(pauses, chuckling)* And it was usually me. Have you noticed the weird crystal he wears around his neck?

RORY:

Of course, it lets him read our every thought and fear. I understand that if you don't pass the class, he imprisons your soul with in it, and uses your life force to strength his own ungodly powers. *(laughing)*

MATT:

(laughing) So that's what happened to Ben, I always wondered. Poor bastard.

(They are quiet for a minute as they eat the pizza. After a minute MATT looks up and notices the music playing)

Gwah! Why are you listening to that crap, put something decent on.

RORY:

(shyly at first) I met a girl.

MATT:

No way. Really? *(genuine surprise)*

(RORY nods)

Cool, what happened?

RORY:

Well, after battle'n with Banack for my immortal soul, I was coming out of his office and I bumped into this beautiful girl. And she was like "Hey" and stuff.

MATT:

Sweet! So what'd you say?

RORY:

Well I was too busy panicking to say much, but she was like "so I need a partner for this project, and your just so damned handsome, so why don't we go back to your room?"

MATT:

(shaking his head) Oh I'm sure it happened exactly like that.

RORY:

(smiling) Close enough, the important parts are there.

MATT:

Does your future wife have a name?

RORY:

Sally.

MATT:

Ah Sally... Rory and Sally sounds great man, best of luck. *(chuckling)*

RORY:

Jealousy does wicked things to men, I pity you, brother.

MATT:

If you pity me, then why this terrible music? (*waves his hand indicating the classical music still playing in the background*)

RORY:

Isn't it obvious? (*smiling broadly*) She's coming over!

MATT:

And, what, you want her to leave?

RORY:

No, jackass, chicks dig this kind of stuff. I'm mister sensitive for the rest of the evening.

MATT:

Even better, the best relationships are always based on lies. Whenever I like a girl I always pretend to like repugnant things, that way is such a pleasure to spend time with them... doing stuff I hate. Because otherwise it's too easy to confuse a relationship with good 'ol honest dirty sex.

RORY:

You know, it's the support of your friends that really helps you get through life. (*angry, sighs*) It's nothing like that at all, I just don't want to frighten her away with the weird crap you always leave on in your room. And what if I happen to like this music?

MATT:

Then perhaps I should call you Sally, cause your probably gay, my friend. And before you get any ideas, I'm spoken for.

RORY:

Damn the luck, damn damn damn the luck. (*feigning despair*) Well then get the hell out of here, so I go back to living my lie.

MATT:

You don't want me to stay? I could use some help philosophizing too.

RORY:

No, you'll queer my deal.

MATT:

Strange how everything comes back to 'queer', isn't it?

RORY:

Thanks for your charming insights, now go! She'll be here soon.

MATT:

Alright, but I expect full details in the morning. *(smiling)*

RORY:

That depends on whether or not she's still here come morning.

MATT:

(laughing) Like I said, details in the morning. later.

(Matt gets up, and takes the now empty pizza box with him as he leaves. After he leaves, RORY takes a quick look around his room, scowls at the clothing on the floor, and tries to stuff the large mass into the tiny closet. As he tidies up, Sally enters the stage from the rear, and walks down the hall towards RORY's room. She knocks lightly on his door.)

RORY:

(takes a deep breath, then opens the door) Sally!

SALLY:

Hey Rory.

RORY:

Hey! Come in.

(RORY lets SALLY enter the room, then closes the door. She walks towards the bed, and sits down on it, reclining. An inviting smile on her face.)

So I've been looking over the various topics, and I think our best bet is to attempt to refute pure reason.

SALLY:

Yeah, I never did like the whole idea of pure reason, takes all the fun out of living. *(SALLY gives RORY a knowing smile causing him to blush)*

RORY:

Yes, well it should be simple enough. We just start with Descartes and show the logical progression through to Kant, that way we can debunk it from the start, and just show that every one that leeches off Descartes was a thief and an idiot, stealing ideas that were farcical.

SALLY:

Yeah, I hate that stupid Kant and his Categorical Imperative bullshit.

RORY:

Yeah, I'm sure he felt his Categorical Imperative every night alone, and probably a couple times a day too.

SALLY:

(laughing, a bit too much) Oh Rory, you're so clever, that's what I love about you.

(RORY, stunned just stares at her stupidly. SALLY sighs)

Rory, why don't you come sit by me?

RORY:

Is that a Categorical Imperative? *(trying to be clever... failing)*

SALLY:

It is, unless you like exploring your pure reason alone. *(smiling)*

(RORY gets up from his chair, and sits on the bed close to her.)

RORY:

(nervous) Well, anyways... I was thinking that we could use Descartes' wax argument to show that reason alone is not capable of comprehending the concept of immutable nature.

SALLY:

(edging closer to RORY) Hmmm... I was also thinking of exploring things that change shape over time, not wax though. *(smiles again)*

RORY:

Well it's a critique of pure reason that we're after, I think you will suffice. I know I've certainly lost all my powers of reasoning.

SALLY:

Good *(smug)*, the last think I want is use reasoning everything away.

RORY:

But without reason what other faculties of perception am I left with?

SALLY:

The ones I'm interested in.

RORY:

Hmmm, this doesn't sound quite like philosophy.

SALLY:

Oh Rory! I feel the same way too!

(Sally reaches for him, as the lights on the set quickly darken.)

Scene III

(The set remains dark for several moments. A phone is heard ringing. It rings for times then stops. It is quiet for a moment, then rings four times again. It stops then begins ringing a third time. At this the lights on the bedroom come up. RORY is in bed with SALLY, SALLY begins reaching out of bed towards the phone that sits on the nearby desk. Clothing lies strewn about the room and furniture)

RORY:

Gwah. Don't answer, its probably just Matt. I told him never to call me while you were here.

SALLY:

He probably doesn't know I'm here.

RORY:

You've been here every night for a week, and he knows it. He's just being a bastard, just the kind of guy he is.

SALLY:

Oh Rory, don't talk about your friends like that. Sometimes I wonder what you say about me when I'm gone.

RORY:

Naturally I say you're the light of my life, and when you're not present I move about as if blind. Not that there is anything worth seeing except you, my love.

SALLY:

I wish I knew if you were being serious or if you're just trying to score again.

RORY:

Why, was I about to score? *(give her a sheepish look, and pulls her closer in bed. The phone begins ringing again. RORY reaches down, and unplugs it from the wall.)*

SALLY:

No, your certainly were not. I need to get to class, and you have to go meet with Professor Banack today. You did remember to rewrite that silly paper for him, didn't you?

RORY:

Of course mother, and I washed behind my ears before bed.

SALLY:

Calling me mother isn't going to keep me in bed.

RORY:

Then what will my muse?

SALLY:

Nothing, we both need to go.

(They get out of bed, and quickly put on the clothing that lies about the room. Rory grabs his backpack, and they head towards the door.)

What about your paper?

(RORY walks back towards the desk, and picks a stapled pile of paper)

RORY:

Thank you my love, as always your counsel is indispensable.

SALLY:

You think you're really cute when you use big words and talk all philosophically, don't you?

RORY:

(looking appalled) You mean I'm not!?

SALLY:

(laughs, then embraces him, mussing his hair.) You are to me. *(pauses)* So what did you write your paper about?

RORY:

Mostly just the reading, you know, a couple of things that stood out.

SALLY:

(a bit annoyed, sits at his desk) Yes, but what?

RORY:

(signs) I seem to have this conversation a lot. *(pauses)* Well I wrote about the one person I love the most in all the world.

SALLY:

Was that in the reading?

RORY:

No, but who could concentrate on the reading?

SALLY:

Is it Matt? *(laughs)*

RORY:

Though he may think it is, naturally I wrote about you darling.

SALLY:

(laughs) No you didn't... can I read it?

RORY:

(surprised) Of course not, *(long pause)*, such excessive flattery would go straight to your head.

SALLY:

(She jumps up and hugs him) Oh Rory, occasionally you can be genuinely sweet.

RORY:

Does that mean you'll take your pants back off?

SALLY:

But then you ruin it with questions like that. *(smiling)*

RORY:

How about later?

SALLY:

Of course *(gives him a little kiss)*, now come on, we should go.

(They open the door, and walk out into the hall. The lights come up on the hall, as soon as the door opens. As they step out, MATT is coming up the hall towards them.)

MATT:

I might have known. And here I was worrying that something might have happened to you.
(sarcastic)

RORY:

I forgot how concerned you are with my safety, but what have I told you about calling me when I'm... *(nods towards SALLY)* busy?

SALLY:

(elbows RORY) Morning Matt.

MATT:

Good morning Sally, you know I don't appreciate you keeping the little missus *(nodding towards RORY)* up all night, she wakes with the most frightful temper.

SALLY:

(laughs) Just be thankful you're not the one who wakes up with him.

MATT:

In fact I thank God every morning for that *(laughs)*. Well may I escort you young lovers to class?

RORY:

I gotta go the other way. Another meeting with his Lordship, Sire Banack.

MATT:

Well, then it would be my pleasure to accompany you, m'lady *(slight bow)*.

SALLY:

How wonderful Rory, *(mocking)* you charming personality seems to be rubbing off on your friend Matt here.

MATT:

Shall we then? *(he offers her his arm)*

SALLY:

(takes his arm) See you tonight Rory, g'luck with your meeting.

RORY:

Yeah, see you later.

SALLY:

(smiles) I love you too!

MATT:

(shaking his head) See ya.

(MATT and SALLY walk off stage arm in arm. RORY stand and watches them as they leave. As they walk away, the sound of SALLY laughing is heard. RORY clenches his fists, then heads off stage in the opposite direction. The lights go out on the entire stage as RORY walks off.)

Scene IV

(The lights come up on the hall and office as RORY appears at the other end of the hall, and walks towards the open office door. RORY knocks on the open door.)

BANACK:

Ah Rory, good to see you, please come in.

(RORY enters the office, closes the door behind him, and takes the seat opposite BANACK)

I must say, I was very impressed with your oral report, quite an improvement over your previous work.

RORY:

Thanks, we put a lot of time into it.

BANACK:

Yes, I could tell, very well done. Concise, too the point, with perfect textual support. There was just one small thing though...

RORY:

Really!? What, we tried to cover the entire argument...

BANACK:

No, no that was fine, I was more thinking if the way that you and Sally kept saying Categorical Imperative at one another... makes me wonder if there's a bit more than philosophy going on in your group. *(laughs)*

RORY:

(blushing) Well, you know... We get along pretty well. *(pauses)* Oh, I, uh, brought my paper.

BANACK:

Splendid, may I?

(BANACK takes the paper from RORY, and begins to read it. The paper is only a couple of pages long, when BANACK is done, he sets it down on his desk)

Very good, a few minor grammatical problems, but at least it seems you actually did the assigned reading. Looks like that girl is doing you some good, eh? Or should I attribute your sudden improvement to something else? Perhaps you've had a change of heart, and come to realize the error of your ways. *(smiling)*

RORY:

It's more than just the girl, she does help though...

BANACK:

Pretty girls come and go, Rory, but this *(gestures around)*, this room, this class, this college, these you must always carry around with you. You mustn't lose sight of what it is your really trying to achieve.

RORY:

I know, I'm trying, I just don't know what it is I want to achieve.

BANACK:

You want to pass this class, don't you?

RORY:

I have to, my scholarship...

BANACK:

And graduate?

RORY:

Of course.

BANACK:

Sounds like you want to achieve quite a lot, to me.

RORY:

Well, it's more that those are the things I have to do.

BANACK:

Obviously it's more than just that, we must dwell in the short-term, but always think of the long-term. You must concentrate on just this class, but also on all the others, and then what's to come afterwards.

RORY:

I'm not sure I can do that.

BANACK:

I know Rory, I know. Like I said, you remind me of myself. I could never think about the future, until I was confronted with it, and was forced to pull myself together. Don't let that happen to you Rory, when you wake up in the morning for class remember, you're not just going to hear a lecture, but you moving towards graduation, so you can get a job, and a house. So you can marry that girl, and start a family and so on.

RORY:

I don't think I'm the marrying type.

BANACK:

Everyone is the marrying type, Rory. And of course that seems crazy to you, and it should. For now you must concentrate on the tasks at hand, but leave yourself open to what you will want once this class is behind you.

RORY:

But see that's just it, I don't know what I want.

BANACK:

And you shouldn't, you're a young man, with your whole future open, if you're careful now.

RORY:

But what future should I pursue? I have to be so many different people. I have to be the boyfriend Rory, and the party'n Rory, and the student Rory, and the son Rory, and...

BANACK:

That's precisely it, we must all wear different hats throughout our lives, but you must keep in mind that you will not always be the boyfriend, or the student, or even the son. Think instead of Rory the man, of what you can be, and will become.

RORY:

I suppose, but I just can't imagine myself doing that. Like I'm not meant to.

BANACK:

Everyone is meant to Rory, it's called life.

RORY:

I just feel like this moment, every moment is the important one, but I can't see why. Like I'm missing something, something really important. I try to concentrate on classes, and school, even just drinking, but always it's there, nothing real, just a blank spot, a hole... something I'm lacking.

BANACK:

Oh Rory, your not missing anything, you just want life to be more than it is. But sometimes it just isn't. You want romance, but you get philosophy midterms. I feel the same way too sometimes. I expect great adventure, but then it takes me an hour and a half to drive home, cause of traffic.

RORY:

So that's it, there's nothing to it but traffic and tests?

BANACK:

No, but they are part of it too. An important part, the living part of life. What are you lacking? Experience. You're at college, everything is new and different at first, but that wears off no matter how much we want it not to, it does.

RORY:

I don't know if I ever really felt that way though, it is different here, but also the same, and still not enough...

BANACK:

Then make it enough. It isn't enough for you, because you just brush it off. This is important Rory, the here, the now. It is important for you, and all that you want to be. Stop trying to find some mystical cure-all, and work for what really matters, for yourself!

RORY:

I guess...

BANACK:

You gotta do more than just guess. Keep thinking about your future, and work in the now. Work for your girlfriend, and for your midterm, for what matters, ok?

RORY:

I suppose, but...

BANACK:

And don't disappoint me on next week's midterm, you need to do well. Remember what I said, it may suck now, but you're doing it for your future.

RORY:

Well, I'll try but...

BANACK:

Excellent, that's the spirit. Now you'll have to excuse me...

RORY:

(confused) Oh, alright, uh, thanks...

(BANACK nods, and turns back towards the ever growing pile of papers on his desk. As RORY gets up the lights in the hall slowly come up, and as usual there are several students with backpacks milling around. RORY leaves BANACK's office, and it quickly darkens, he walks down the hall and off the stage. The lights all darken.)

Scene V

(Lights come up on RORY sitting at his desk in his room, lights also up on the hall, where MATT and SALLY stand talking far down the hall from RORY's room)

(RORY looks at a clock, then picks up the phone and dials. He hold the phone, frowns, then hands up)

RORY:

Bah!

(RORY fidgets at his desk, for a few moments, then again picks up the phone, dials, waits the hangs up.)

Damn it!

(RORY stands, paces a bit in his room, sighs loudly, then opens the door and storms out. As he enters the hall, he notices MATT and SALLY talking, he walks up to them and addresses SALLY.)

RORY:

Oh hey, there you are, I was wondering what happened to you.

SALLY:

Hey Rory! I ran into Matt on my way over, and he let me in.

RORY:

Oh, cool...

SALLY:

Oh Rory... (*shakes her head*)

RORY:

Huh?

MATT:

So tomorrow at 11am?

SALLY:

Yup. (*to RORY*) I managed to convince Matt to come with us to the Art Museum tomorrow.

RORY:

Great, nothing like having a third wheel. (*joking*)

MATT:

Hey, I'm not trying to intrude...

RORY:

No, it's cool, I'm just joking. Besides, now there are two of us, that way we can spend a little extra time in the nude gallery.

SALLY:

There is no nude gallery, Rory.

RORY:

And they claim to be a museum... well they still have those coin-op booths, don't they?

SALLY:

Maybe I wasn't clear what 'Art' meant.

MATT:

Sure, they call it 'Art' so it's tasteful, right?

RORY:

Well, not too tasteful, remember the last 'museum' we went to.

MATT:

You would have loved it there Sally, you could get right up close to each exhibit, even have them brought to your table. But then Rory had to get us kicked out by trying to touch them. It was quite a scene. That boy just has no culture.

RORY:

Anyhow, wasn't I promised some dirty sex? *(looks to SALLY)*.

MATT:

Sorry, my night off, guess your up Sally.

SALLY:

Well, duty calls, come on Rory. *(herds RORY back towards his room)*

MATT:

Have fun, see you in the morning.

SALLY:

Yup, have a good night.

MATT:

You too... later Rory.

RORY:

Later.

(SALLY and RORY walk back towards his room, as MATT goes off stage. The lights On the Hall slowly go out as RORY and SALLY get in his room. As he closes the door, RORY grabs SALLY and kisses her.)

RORY:

Hey hun. I missed you.

SALLY:

(returning his embrace) I missed you too, did you have a good day?

RORY:

Pretty good, you know... just some dumb classes, and of course, the meeting with Banack.

SALLY:

Ugh, how did that go?

RORY:

Ok, he gave me another one of his trademark speeches, but it was bearable.

SALLY:

Did he like your paper?

RORY:

He said it was fine, though a bit too explicit when I referred to the parts of you I like best.

SALLY:

Rory! (*hits him lightly, pauses*) You know, I wish you wouldn't say things like that to Matt.

RORY:

Things like what, my love?

SALLY:

That we're going to go have dirty sex.

RORY:

Then what should I call it?

SALLY:

You shouldn't call it a damn thing. It's none of his business.

RORY:

Well, he hardly thinks we're debating philosophy in here, alone.

SALLY:

If your not careful, that's all we'll be doing!

RORY:

Sally, Matt obviously has some idea what's going on, he is my best friend.

SALLY:

That doesn't mean you have to tell him every little detail.

RORY:

I don't.

SALLY:

I know.

RORY:

Then why are you upset?

SALLY:

I'm upset because you're a jackass.

RORY:

Oh... *(pauses)*

SALLY:

Did you ever think, that just maybe it embarrasses me when you talk like that?

RORY:

We were just joking around, it's not a big deal.

SALLY:

It's a big deal to me Rory. Don't I mean anything to you other than free sex?

RORY:

Well, the free sex is nice...

SALLY:

And I love you too Rory, I just wish you weren't such an idiot.

RORY:

So do I... *(confused)*

SALLY:

Even Matt thinks you go too far sometimes...

RORY:

Oh he does, does he? *(pauses)* You sure have been spending a lot of time with Matt lately.

SALLY:

Well, he's your friend.

RORY:

Yes, but I'm not a pretty girl.

SALLY:

Which is precisely why I like you. *(softening)*

RORY:

(pauses) Why did you invite Matt to go along with us tomorrow?

SALLY:

Because I thought you'd have more fun if he was there.

RORY:

Not because you wanted him along?

SALLY:

Why would I want him along?

RORY:

I don't know. Maybe you'd rather be with him than me?

SALLY:

Then why would I be here now?

RORY:

The free sex?

SALLY:

Rory, I'm only trying to make friends with your friends. What did you think was going on?

RORY:

Nothing. I trust you.

SALLY:

Of course not. Why would you think something was going on?

RORY:

I don't! Now I'm not so sure though...

SALLY:

I'm very sure. Nothing is going on.

RORY:

Ok, you promise? *(trying to be sweet)*

SALLY:

I promise... Don't you trust me?

RORY:

Yes, I DO trust you! Though maybe I shouldn't trust that usurping bastard, Matt.

SALLY:

He's not a usurper or a bastard. You however are a paranoid jackass.

RORY:

That does seem to be the theme of the day. *(shaking his head)*

SALLY:

Do we have to keep fighting, Rory?

RORY:

I didn't know we were fighting. So what should we do this evening then?

SALLY:

Let me guess, something involving my pants. Specifically me taking them off?

RORY:

If that's what YOU want, I guess could make the sacrifice. *(sarcastically)*

SALLY:

How noble of you. Now get in bed, make-up sex time.

RORY:

Score!

(Lights go out quickly on the whole set.)

Scene VI

(Lights come slowly back up on the hall to reveal RORY, SALLY and MATT walking back towards RORY's room. RORY goes storming into his room, leaving SALLY and Matt behind. The lights come up on RORY's room as he enters. He goes over to his desk chair, and sits down, facing towards the door, head in his hands.)

MATT:

What was that all about?

SALLY:

I'm not sure. Let me go talk to him.

MATT:

Ok, I'll hang here in case you need me.

SALLY:

Thanks, Matt.

(SALLY goes into RORY's room, leaving MATT sitting in the hall.)

SALLY:

Hey Rory, what up?

Nothing.

RORY:

You seem pretty upset.

SALLY:

No I'm not, I'm fine.

RORY:

You don't sound fine.

SALLY:

No, really, I am, just forget it.

RORY:

Forget what?

SALLY:

Nothing, I am fine... *(pauses)* Come here.

(Sally goes over to RORY, and sits on his lap, holding him.)

SALLY:

What happened back there?

RORY:

What do you mean?

SALLY:

What happened back there, at the museum. You were all fine and good, then suddenly you got all mopsy and pissed.

RORY:

I'm sorry, really it's nothing.

SALLY:

What are you sorry about?

RORY:

What? Oh, I don't know. I didn't mean to ruin it for you.

SALLY:

You didn't Rory, but why did you get upset?

I didn't get upset.

RORY:

Yes you did.

SALLY:

NO, I didn't.

RORY:

Well, you are now.

SALLY:

Yes, I'm upset now!

RORY:

Is it something me or Matt did?

SALLY:

No, it's nothing. REALLY? *(pauses)* I'm just tired.

RORY:

Why won't you want to tell me?

SALLY:

Because there's nothing to tell. I'm not upset, I'm not angry.

(Sally gets up, and sits on the floor by RORY)

RORY:

Is it because I was paying more attention to Matt than to you?

SALLY:

No! *(pauses)* Why? Were you?

RORY:

No, do you think I was?

SALLY:

What? No, why did you bring that up?

RORY:

Because I don't want you to be mad at me.

SALLY:

RORY:

I'm not mad at you!

SALLY:

You sure sound mad.

RORY:

Ok, I am mad, is that what you want to hear?

SALLY:

No, Rory. Tell me what I did.

RORY:

You didn't do anything. *(pauses)* I just want to be alone.

SALLY:

You want me to take off?

RORY:

Yes! That's what alone means.

SALLY:

I'm sorry, I'm going...

(SALLY gets up, and heads towards the door)

RORY:

Sally, wait! I'm sorry, please come back.

(SALLY hesitates, then goes back, and sits again on his lap.)

I'm sorry Sally, I'm not mad at you. I just had a rough day. I just need some time alone, that's all.

SALLY:

You're really not mad at me?

RORY:

No, I love you, I just want to be alone for a bit.

SALLY:

Do you want me to come back tonight?

RORY:

Yes, of course I do. I just need a little time, that's all. Really.

SALLY:

*(getting up)*Ok, you'll call me?

RORY:

Of course, just a little time... I'll call you later...

SALLY:

Alright.

(She gets up, and heads out the door, leaving it slightly open, and addresses MATT who is still sitting in the hall.)

MATT:

That didn't sound too pleasant.

SALLY:

It wasn't.

MATT:

What's up?

SALLY:

I'm not sure, I think he may be pissed with us. You know how paranoid, he gets. I think he just misunderstood. Yeah, misunderstood... that's all.

MATT:

Do you think I should go talk to him?

SALLY:

Yeah, that'd prolly help. You know, just explain things. He gets so paranoid, and it's really nothing. Yeah, just talk to him a bit.

MATT:

Ok, I will. You'll be around later?

SALLY:

I think so. Let me know what happens?

MATT:

Of course.

SALLY:

Thanks, Matt.

(She hugs him tightly, then heads off stage. Matt approaches RORY's door, knocks quickly and enters, leaving the hall in darkness.)

MATT:

Hey bud. What's the good word?

RORY:

Get out!

MATT:

No fair, that's two words.... what's up? Sally thinks you're upset with her.

RORY:

(signs loudly) No! It has nothing to do with Sally. It's nothing.

MATT:

So what about Sally then? Are you mad at me? Cause I was sitting next to her at lunch, and we kept going off together?

RORY:

(confused) You were doing what? No, no it's. Nothing alright, I'm fine. I just need to lie down for a while.

MATT:

Look, Rory. Nothing's going on, ok? Ok? You have no right to get angry with me, I didn't do anything. You're just overreacting.

RORY:

(very confused) What are you talking about? No, I don't care, it's not that it's nothing. Nothing.

(The lights on the room slowly dim, as a spot comes up on RORY, leaving the rest of the stage in darkness, including the still talking MATT. As the lights begin to dim, RORY and MATT start to speak at once.)

MATT:

We weren't doing anything, nothing at all.

RORY:

No, it's fine, it's nothing. I'm fine really.

MATT:

We were just trying to have fun, you didn't even want to be there.

RORY:

No it's fine, just a long day. I'm just tired that's all. Just need to lay down for a bit.

MATT:

You shouldn't overreact like this. She's your girlfriend, man. I would never do anything. Ok, OK?

(MATT storms off in darkness, leaving RORY illuminated by the spot light, still talking mostly to himself)

RORY:

Just need some time to think. Nothing to do with you guys. Love Sally, it's not that. Know you're my friend. Just need some time. Just want to lay down, rest for a bit. Just need to rest.

(Curtain)

ACT II

Scene I

(Curtain, and lights up on the hall. RORY is sitting in the hall outside, BANACK's door, with the appearance of having been there a while. There is no one else in the hall. It is around 8am. RORY sits for a few moment, his head in his hands, then BANACK appears with a satchel at the back of the stage, and walks towards his office, taking out his keys as he goes.)

BANACK:

Rory? Is that you? What are you doing here so early?

RORY:

Good morning Professor Banack, I'm sorry to bother you. Do you have a couple of minutes?

BANACK:

Certainly, certainly Rory, Please come in.

(BANACK unlocks the door to his office, and RORY rushes in before him, and sits down in his accustomed seat. As they enter the lights come up on the office. BANACK sets down his satchel, removes his coat, and then sits opposite RORY at his desk.)

Now what can I do for you, my boy? Question about the paper?

RORY:

Paper? What? No I just need to talk to someone.

BANACK:

Problems with the girl?

RORY:

No, well I don't think so, maybe, but... *(confused, and apprehensive)*

BANACK:

You too didn't break up did you?

RORY:

No, but...

BANACK:

A fight then?

RORY:

No, well yes, but that's not...

BANACK:

Ah, so things are quite are wonderful as they were even a week ago? I told you before, Rory, the novelty always wears off, even when we don't want it to.

RORY:

No, it's not that. You see we were at the art museum and...

BANACK:

Why, that's a perfectly reasonable place to take a young lady. A nice romantic atmosphere, just the two of you. eh?

RORY:

No, well my friend Matt was there too, but...

BANACK:

Ah, I think I understand, your friend is moving in on your girlfriend? And you've all been fighting, eh?

RORY:

No, well maybe, but that's not what...

BANACK:

Really, Rory, you should trust your girlfriend, and above all your best friend. There's hardly cause to blame anyone. Like I said, pretty girls come and go, it's just nature.

RORY:

No, you don't understand. It was while I was at the museum, something happened...

BANACK:

Surely they weren't trying something, right under your nose, in such a public place?

RORY:

No, it has nothing to do with them...

BANACK:

But, it must Rory, don't you see? You have a new girlfriend, and old friend, each competing for attention, and you fighting for possession, eh? It's an age old tale.

RORY:

No, they didn't do anything, you're not listening. It wasn't them.

BANACK:

Ok, ok Rory. Calm down, tell me what happened.

RORY:

Alright, you see, Sally wanted to go to the museum, some exhibit or what not, I thought it would be nice to take her, so we went.

BANACK:

But you said your friend also came along too, who invited him?

RORY:

Well, she did, but...

BANACK:

Ah, so she invited him, interesting.

RORY:

Well, she said for me, so I'd have more fun, you know, if he was along.

BANACK:

(laughing) Of course, I'm sure she was thinking only of you.

RORY:

Huh, no... what?

BANACK:

I'm sorry, Rory, please continue.

RORY:

Well ok, so we were there, at the museum, and they just go around from exhibit to exhibit saying things like 'Oh, isn't this lovely', and 'this is beautiful', and 'What a wonderful painting', and so on and so on. *(pauses)*

BANACK:

And?

RORY:

And?

BANACK:

So what was the problem?

RORY:

That was!

BANACK:

What was?

RORY:

Me! I couldn't see it, I couldn't see it. (*despair*)

BANACK:

Couldn't see what? The paintings?

RORY:

No, I couldn't see anything else, nothing at all...

BANACK:

I'm not sure I understand...

RORY:

That's just it. Every painting, every statue they looked at, they made some little remark, 'of look how nice this is, and so forth. But I couldn't, I just couldn't. I'd look, and all I'd was a painting or a statue nothing else. I couldn't see more, not what they saw.

BANACK:

And what did they see? (*confused*)

RORY:

Beauty!

BANACK:

Beauty?

RORY:

Yes! It's like someone says, "What a beautiful sunset", but to me it's just a sunset, or a painting, or a statue. I can't see more, deeper. I can't see beauty. I don't know what it is. All I see is paint on canvas, carved stone, nothing else. It doesn't mean anything to me.

BANACK:

You mean, to say, you can't see beauty? (*laughing*)

RORY:

Yes! (*defiant*)

BANACK:

Oh Rory, you don't want beauty, you want drama!

RORY:

Drama!?

BANACK:

You should listen to yourself, 'I can't see beauty', 'I can't see beauty', of course you can Rory. You're just worried your girlfriend is cheating on you, and displacing your emotions. 'I can't see beauty'. Really Rory!

RORY:

No it's not, that. I'm not worried about my girlfriend...

BANACK:

But you just said, she's been spending more time with your friend, inviting him out on your dates etc. Sounds like you're pretty worried to me.

RORY:

No, she's not. Well I don't think she...

BANACK:

Rory, people always say those things. It's just what you say at an art museum, or about a sunset. There's nothing else to it. That's it. You're just upset in your relationship, and trying to create problems that don't exist to justify your fears.

RORY:

I am?

BANACK:

Yes Rory, it perfectly natural. I've done it myself. It can be hard to face the harshness of life, but we must. There no comfort to be had in the fantasy happy lands we create. Don't you see? You're just caught up, that's all. Talk to the girl, just talk to her. Work it all out, and you'll see. You'll see. Its nothing Rory, you're just upset that's all. Talk to her, tell her what's going on. Don't invent problems with no solutions. 'Can't see beauty', really Rory. Just talk to her.

RORY:

Ok, I guess...

BANACK:

That's it, concentrate on what matters. On what matters, not crazy delusions. We are nothing but what we earn in life Rory. DO you hear me? Nothing but what we work for, and earn. If you want to keep this girl, then talk to her. Work for it, don't run away into fantasies.

RORY:

Ok, I will...

BANACK:

But don't forget your class work. You've been working on your research paper, right? And studying for the midterm? I'm counting on you Rory, don't let me down. Think clearly, work for what counts.

RORY:

I'm trying...

BANACK:

I know you are my boy, don't worry. It'll be fine. Do your work, talk to the girl. Everything will be fine. Ok?

RORY:

Ok.

BANACK:

That's the spirit, now you'll have to excuse me, I must prepare for class.

RORY:

Oh, ok, thanks I guess... I'll, uh, see you in class...

BANACK:

Don't mention it, don't mention it. Someone has to help you kids, so much to handle so little direction. Come back anytime you need Rory, remember what I said. Concentrate on your future, you can get through this.

RORY:

Ok, thanks.

(RORY heads out of the office, and down the hall off stage, his head hung. The lights slowly dim on the whole stage. BANACK is heard muttering to himself alone in his office after RORY has left.)

BANACK:

Really, these kids, no little focus. No direction. Very sad. No different in my day though, no different for me. They gotta learn, we all gotta learn. So little matters, so much distraction. Have to concentrate, concentrate on what matters. Make something of ourselves....

(All lights out)

Scene II

(The lights come up on the bedroom, RORY sits in his desk chair. His phone rings, he answers it.)

RORY:

Ok, yeah...

(He hangs up the phone, exits his room, walks briefly off stage, and reappears with SALLY. They walk together back to his room, and RORY closes the door behind them. SALLY immediately embraces RORY.)

SALLY:

Hey.

RORY:

Hey.

(They kiss quickly)

SALLY:

I was worried when you didn't call me last night.

RORY:

Yeah, guess I just sorta passed out. I didn't really feel like seeing anyone.

SALLY:

That was the first night we haven't been together since we started dating.

RORY:

Yeah, I guess it was.

SALLY:

(pauses) Are you still mad at me?

RORY:

I was never mad at you.

SALLY:

You seemed pretty mad, even Matt said you snapped at him.

RORY:

I was just upset and tired. It was a tough day....

SALLY:

I talked to him last night, when you didn't call.

RORY:

Oh.

SALLY:

We're worried about you. You've been depressed for almost a week now.

RORY:

I'm not depressed.

SALLY:

Well you're certainly not brimming with joy.

RORY:

I know, I'm sorry. I know it's just been everything. That damn class, you and Matt...

SALLY:

Do you still think something is going on with me and Matt?

RORY:

Huh? No, well I don't know... is there?

SALLY:

So is that really all? You think I'm cheating on you?

RORY:

No, I never said that, it's not that at all.

SALLY:

So you wouldn't care if I was, is that it?

RORY:

What, no, I mean, yes I would. Why are you yelling?

SALLY:

Oh don't even Rory. Don't accuse me of cheating on you, then try to back out of a confrontation.

RORY:

A confrontation, what? No, I don't want to fight...

SALLY:

Sure, you don't want to fight, that's precisely why you STARTED a fight WITH ME!

RORY:

No, I was just, stop turning everything around!

SALLY:

Don't pretend like, like I'm the only one to blame. You keep making me and Matt spend time together, then get mad whenever we do.

RORY:

What, no I don't. Could you just stop using your bitch magic for one second, and just LISTEN TO ME!

SALLY:

Don't call me a bitch!

RORY:

I didn't! I mean, huh. What the hell is going on?

SALLY:

I'll tell you what's going on Rory, you're acting like a child, and upsetting all your friends, because you can't have your way all the time.

RORY:

Gwah!

(Exasperated, Rory flings himself into his chair. SALLY walks right up in front of him, and continues)

SALLY:

Rory, listen to me. This situation is completely your fault. You're being selfish, and alienating everyone with your tantrums. And then you have the gall to make accusations of ME! When I've done nothing but try to love you.

RORY:

Please don't be angry with me.

SALLY:

Don't be angry with you. Don't be angry! How can I not be? I love you Rory, I really love you, and look how you've treated me.

RORY:

What the hell have I done, I never be anything but kind to you.

SALLY:

Nothing but kind!? A second ago you called me a bitch, and then say you've only been kind to me!? You BASTARD!

RORY:

But I love you!

SALLY:

Oh, you love me, do you?

RORY:

Yes, with all my heart!

(RORY gets up, and tries to embrace her. She pushes him away, he falls back into the chair)

SALLY:

How dare you say that you love me? You don't even know a thing about me. Have you ever once met a single one of my friends, or taken any interest in my life? No! The only thing you ever ask me, is if I'll take my pants off, but YOU LOVE ME!?

RORY:

Yes!

SALLY:

I tried so hard Rory, I tried to be interested in your life, tried to be friends with your friends, but everything I did just made you angrier.

RORY:

What the hell is going on!?

SALLY:

(SALLY just shakes her head) I thought maybe if I was nice to your best friend, maybe it would make things easier, but then all you did was accuse me, and doubt me, and push me farther away.

RORY:

I never thought that you were doing anything with Matt.

SALLY:

Of course not, you're always stuck too deep in your own world to notice anything else, and so what if I am with Matt, like you'd really care.

RORY:

What! Are you?

SALLY:

Rory, I just can't take this crap any more. I need to get the hell out of here.

(She heads towards the door, RORY tries to embrace her again)

RORY:

Wait, come back. We don't need to fight like this. I LOVE you!

SALLY:

Rory, just leave me alone, I can't take anymore of your shit right now.

(She runs towards the door, and out into the hall. RORY falls back into his chair, and begins to sob softly.)

Scene III

(SALLY runs out into the hall, as MATT is coming on stage. She runs into his arms, and they embrace. He holds her for a few moments as she cries. MATT embraces her again. SALLY kisses him on the cheek, then begins to whisper to him. RORY still sits sobbing in his chair. SALLY whispers a bit more, then gets very upset, and runs off stage. MATT stomps towards RORY's room, and knocks loudly, looking very angry. RORY doesn't move, MATT knocks again louder, and eventually RORY gets up, and opens the door.)

RORY:

Oh, Matt, now's not really a good...

(MATT suddenly punches RORY in the stomach, RORY stumbles back in his room, and falls into his chair gasping.)

MATT:

You stuck-up son of a bitch, how dare you?

RORY:

Huh? *(gasping)*

MATT:

How could you do that to that poor girl?

RORY:

Do what?

MATT:

Don't even pretend Rory, I saw her as she was coming out. She told me what happened.

RORY:

What DID happen?

MATT:

Please, I don't need this crap.

RORY:

What are you even doing here? Why do you care what happened with me and Sally?

MATT:

I'm here, because I'm your friend, and because I'm hers too.

RORY:

You have a strange way of showing it.

MATT:

Shut the hell up and listen, or I'll give you another.

RORY:

Ok, ok, what is it?

MATT:

I can't believe you'd do that to an innocent girl. Really, I thought better of you.

RORY:

Do what? I don't know what your talking about.

MATT:

Oh , come on. You told her you didn't really love her, you were just using her for sex. And the names you called her, man, there are just some things you don't say to a girl, no matter what.

RORY:

Huh? None of that happened.

MATT:

Oh really? She tells quite a different story.

RORY:

Why are you even involved in this. It's none of your business?

MATT:

Oh I'm involved alright, I happen to care about Sally too.

RORY:

Oh, I see. Maybe I should be hitting you. And behind my back, while I was dating her.

MATT:

Gwah! You just don't get it, I can't believe your still insisting that she cheated on you.

RORY:

But isn't that what you just said?

MATT:

Is that what you want to her, that I'm doing her whenever your not looking. Will that fit your crazy fantasy? How can you be so selfish?

RORY:

Actually yes I would. I would like you to tell me what happened.

MATT:

Sorry Rory, it's not that simple. It could have been, but no. Why did you have to do that to her?

RORY:

Do what? She dumped me! I did nothing but apologize.

MATT:

You're damn right you should apologize, though I don't see how it would do any good.

RORY:

I'm sorry.

MATT:

I don't care if you think you were right. You really hurt that girl.

RORY:

What the hell are you talking about?

MATT:

I'm sick of this crap. I've dealt with our mood swings long enough. I'll see you later.

RORY:

Wait, tell me what the hell is going on.

MATT:

(Matt just shakes his head) Pathetic.

(Matt walks out of the room, and slams the door. RORY stands and makes like he is going to follow him, but then just begins pacing around his room.)

RORY:

What in the name of all that is Holy is going on? One minute everything is great, girlfriend, good grades, good friends. The next instant nothing. Girl goes insane, friend goes insane, professor is

insane. Yet, yet everyone blames me. What the hell did I do? I was just doing what they did, trying to find happiness, trying to make the most for myself, like Banack keeps saying. Where did I go wrong? What the hell happened? One minute everything, then next nothing. Worse than nothing. I can't even be sad anymore. It doesn't matter, none of it matters. The girl, the friend, the class, all just crap. But, why, why, WHY? If I could even just feel bad, if I could feel anything. I should be upset, I am upset, but not because of the girl or any of it. There should be some much more, but there's nothing, nothing at all. Never has been. How can they not see it? Why do they think I can't? What happened, what happened? It's gone now, but was it ever there? *(pause)* I don't think it was, but would I have known? I know it's gone, but what? What? What do I see that they don't? What do they see that I can't?

(RORY stands shaking his head for several moments, then falls to his knees by his bed.)

Oh merciful father, I do not speak to you often.... truly I do believe, please help my faithlessness. Oh you who are the completion of all things, help me to find it, help me to find what's lacking. I have looked everywhere, but I do not even know what it is I seek. I am just a stupid jackass, please help me. Have mercy on me, and help me.... Have mercy on me, and help me... *(long pause)* Our Father...

(As RORY begins the Lord's Prayer, the lights slowly go out on the entire set.)

Scene III

(The lights come slowly up on the hall, RORY is again sitting outside BANACK's office. No one else is in sight. It is very early again, after a few moments. BANACK appears at the back of the stage, and walks slowly towards his office stopping in front of Rory.)

BANACK:

Hello, Rory. Up early again, I see.

RORY:

The girl's gone.

BANACK:

I might've guessed. Would you like to come in, and talk?

RORY:

Sure, thanks.

(BANACK opens his office, and the both go in, taking their usual places, as the lights come up on the office, and darken on the hall.)

BANACK:

You get rid of her?

RORY:

Nope, She took off.

BANACK:

And your friend?

RORY:

Him too.

BANACK:

They go together?

RORY:

I think so, can't tell though.

BANACK:

How you taking it?

RORY:

Pretty well, they were both crazy. I'm not sure what happened. One second, everything is fine, the next... I don't know. It just blew up, and with me at the center. I didn't do a thing, but then: Bam! That's it, nothing left, nothing left. But all the same, it's done with. It's passed. I was upset, but even that seems like a brief memory. (*shakes his head*)

BANACK:

Well, naturally you'd be upset. Who wouldn't be, and you really loved this girl didn't you?

RORY:

Actually I don't think I did. It was more the idea of her, a distraction you know. Kinda like finding the missing piece to a puzzle, but then realizing the piece you found belongs to a puzzle you don't own.

BANACK:

Yes of course, your first true love always hurts the worst. I can still remember mine... the pain of it...

RORY:

You're just not listening to a damn thing I'm saying, are you?

BANACK:

Well, certainly I'll tell you about it. You see I was about your age, in college as well, and I met this beautiful girl, and it was just love at first sight you know?

RORY:

Nope, can't say I do. (*growing impatient*)

BANACK:

(*laughs*) Of course, of course. So we went together for a while, everything was just great. Really truly wonderful, much like you and Sally I gather?

RORY:

Actually I think I was just lying to myself, sure I cared about her, but what of it? That didn't justify our relationship, or our actions. It was fun, granted it was fun, but still, just a distraction.

BANACK:

Exactly, like we had been made for each other. But then things began to go awful. We fought all the time, rarely saw spent any time together, began to be separated by our friends and interests. Then one day it was just over. Completely done you know?

RORY:

That, at least I do understand. One day in, the next day out. No rhyme or reason to it.

BANACK:

Yeah, I suppose we weren't meant to be together. (*pauses*) She had her own path to follow and I had mine, I guess.

RORY:

What path? You just said you made your own future?

BANACK:

That's right, it does help to remind me, helps me stay on track. Keep the bigger picture in focus, you know?

RORY:

Nope.

BANACK:

That way I always keep in mind, that I am nothing but what I have accomplished with my life. Girls may come and go, happiness come and go, but at the end of the day, I'm still what I've worked my whole life to be. A successful man, yes a man of some station, accomplishment. Someone worthy of respect.

RORY:

You're an idiot, aren't you?

BANACK:

Oh, it's no trouble, my boy. You really do remind me a lot of myself. The same spirit, the same gumption. I just hope you can achieve what I did, earn all that I have.

RORY:

Fleeting worldly treasure, of no real value? *(mocking)*

BANACK:

Yes, yes that's it. Admiration and respect. Responsibility and dignity. They don't come easily though Rory, you must earn them. *(laughs)* Yes, but just listen to me, boy, and your whole future is open to you.

RORY:

(visibly upset) Can you not hear yourself? Am I the only one that sees?

BANACK:

Glad to hear it, the midterm is very important. But you just keep studying, and you'll do fine. Don't let that girl get in your way, concentrate on your future.

RORY:

I have no future, only that which is given me.

BANACK:

(laughs again) Oh, I don't think that would be fair to the other students. One hint though: an essay will come directly from the practice questions. Ok?

(RORY shakes his head, and gets up to leave, BANACK keeps talking as RORY leaves the office, and walks off stage, the lights slowly dim to follow him.)

Alright, well I have classes to prepare for, good to see you though. Stop in again, soon. It's good to talk to a kindred spirit. Two branches form the same tree, eh. *(laughs)* Your whole future open, if only you will grab it.

Scene IV

(Lights on the bedroom, RORY is again kneeling by his bed. He is muttering to himself, but nothing discernable can be heard. The phone rings four times, then stops, RORY does not move. The phone begins ringing again. RORY sighs, then gets up and answers it.)

RORY:

Hello? *(pause)* No, I'm busy. *(pause)* I said I was busy. *(pause)*

(RORY sighs, then hangs up the phone. He stands hesitantly for second, then leaves his room, and heads down the hall. He disappears, then quickly reappears with SALLY in tow. The two walk quickly back to RORY's room. RORY makes sure, not to close the door all the way. Instead of

sitting, RORY stands near the door, waiting to shove SALLY out at the earliest opportunity. SALLY however, addresses RORY's chair, as if he was sitting in it.)

SALLY:

It's good to see you Rory, how have you been?

RORY:

Do we really need to go through this whole pointless song and dance? I have stuff to do, what do you want?

SALLY:

Me? I've been pretty well, you know. As good as can be expected, I guess.

RORY:

Ah, I see, it's to be an x-girlfriend/boyfriend talk. How wonderfully awkward! Should I say something like, 'I miss you'?

SALLY:

I miss you too, Rory. I've been thinking about you a lot. Why haven't you been in Banack's class this last week? Tomorrow is the midterm, you know?

RORY:

A week you say, hmmm... How curious. It's been only minutes since I saw you last, but of course, of course. A week, yes.

SALLY:

I didn't mean to hurt you Rory, but you hurt me too. I don't know if we can get by that, no matter how sorry we both are.

RORY:

Sorry? What? I loved you with every part of myself, and you never saw me as anymore than a puppet. A sad puppet in your endless play. Jealousy? Betrayal? None of it was ever there!

SALLY:

I think I still love you, Rory, but there's still so much between us. Plus, there's Matt. You hurt him as well.

RORY:

Matt, eh? Just another pawn, a puppet. Why won't you look at me? Can't you see a damn thing as it is?

SALLY:

I can see you're still upset, I wish I could take that back, but we can't. We can't go back.

RORY:

Go back to what? To the lie, the dance? Why must I watch this, why can't I sit in that chair, and say what she wants me to say?

SALLY:

I don't think that's a good idea Rory, I'd like to stay, but I need to get to class. We both need to get to class. I hate to think that you're failing that class because of me.

RORY:

Of course, the class, and Professor Banack. How could I have forgotten. It was only a few minutes ago, wasn't it? A week you say, where did it go? Where did I go?

SALLY:

Yes, we should go. You should go. Have you forgotten that Professor Banack helped you? That he's your friend, just like I'm your friend.

RORY:

Help me? All he did was try to tie me to himself. To what he would have the world be.

SALLY:

Why can't I make you understand, Rory. You said it was easy to talk to him, that you two were alike.

RORY:

Is the seed similar to the tree!? Oh, why must I suffer them, why can they not hear. How can they not see. Sally look at me, I am right here. Right HERE! Please SEE me!

SALLY:

But what about your grade, Rory, the scholarship? Surely you haven't forgotten how important this is for you.

RORY:

Of course, the grade. I must see about the grade, I can't talk any longer. Forgotten!? Have I thought about anything else... A week! More than a week, and so little time left. But just minutes, minutes it seems. Yes, I have to get back. I must find out about the grade.

SALLY:

So then you'll come to class with me? We can even sit together, like we use to.

RORY:

(looking up suddenly) You're still here! Get Out! I have work to do, of course the grade, nothing else matters.

SALLY:

Ok, but you'll come tomorrow? I'm sure Professor Banack will understand. I already spoke to him, you see. Everything will be fine, Rory. We will be fine Rory.

RORY:

Tomorrow!? There is no tomorrow, I must find out now. It has been too long already. The grade, yes, I must get back to it. I've wasted enough time here. And there's hardly any time left.

(RORY walk away from SALLY back to his spot by the bend, and kneels again with his eyes closed).

SALLY:

Oh Rory, yes! Yes! I would like to come back later tonight, Matt would like to speak to you too. You see Rory, its all going to be fine. Don't you see Rory!

(SALLY runs up to the chair, and embraces nothing, then hurries towards the door.)

I'll see you tonight then, Rory! It's all going to be fine, just fine.

(SALLY rushes out the door, and disappears down the hall and off stage. The lights dim on the stage, but do not go out entirely on the bedroom or hall.)

Scene V

(BANACK appears at the end of the hall and walks towards RORY's room. He pauses outside, and knocks on the open door.)

BANACK:

Rory!

RORY!

(the lights suddenly come upon the bedroom. RORY looks up at BANACK, then rises and stands by him.)

RORY:

Professor? What do you want? I don't have time for this, can't you see?

BANACK:

I can see what a fool you are Rory! *(angry)*

RORY:

Fool? Am I a fool because I can see beyond these flimsy walls? Because I can see what you close your eyes to?

BANACK:

I don't care how upset you've been. Sally told me, you see, told me you were just sitting here for nearly a week!

RORY:

Have I been just sitting here? Ah, but where have you been? A week! A week of classes and meetings, dinners and lunches, whole days and nights! It's been just a few minutes though.

BANACK:

Yes, a whole week! Attendance is required you know! Not even an email, so much as an email, and you're just gone for a week.

RORY:

But I didn't go anywhere. It hasn't been a week!

BANACK:

I don't want to hear any of your excuses! Listen to me Rory, just listen!

RORY:

But it's you who can't hear!

BANACK:

Enough! I gave you a chance Rory, not many people would have done that! Even when you started to slide, I let you make it up. Such an important class for you, and such little mistakes! So I let it go, I let it go!

RORY:

You've let nothing go! You think your kindness gives you dominion over me. But can you even see me, do you see anything but what you want to see?

BANACK:

I'm going to tell you a story Rory, and you're going to listen. Do you see this crystal I wear around my neck Rory? I'll tell you how I got it.

RORY:

But I know, I know... such a price, such a price to pay...

BANACK:

As I told you before, once I got out of college I didn't know what to do. No money, no future. Nothing, just confusion. Then, at last I realized, it took a girl, a lost year, but I realized. We are nothing, but we can make ourselves something.

RORY:

(shaking his head) No, we are something, but instead we choose nothing, we choose what we create!

BANACK:

Quiet! Listen! After she left, I knew I had to do something, make myself something, so I studied and studied, and worked, and was able to earn a full scholarship to graduate school. Not a great school, but a start, a path back to my life.

RORY:

A path to where? Lies and illusions, and at such a price... How could you?

BANACK:

That day I was so happy, I had done something finally done something. Earned it entirely on my own, so I went to find her. To show her. "You'll never amount to anything", she said. So I drove there, it was late, I had had a few drinks to celebrate, nothing really, so I went to see her.

(pauses)

RORY:

(muttering) How could you? How could you?

BANACK:

She use to like to go running at night after work, she had a very important job you see. Running helped she said, helped calm her down. Keep things in focus. *(pauses)* She was out that night, out running. It was dark, I had had a few drinks, nothing you know. And there she was. I didn't see her, I was so happy, so happy. Then I heard her scream, heard the sounds, and saw her. There on the side of the road. *(pauses)*

RORY:

You left her, you just left her... *(shaking his head, crying now)*

BANACK:

What could I do? What could I do? Finally I had done something, made something of myself, and suddenly it was gone. A mistake, a tiny mistake, and it was all gone. So I left, I had to leave. No one was around, no one saw, so I left. I couldn't let them take it from me, not because of such a small thing.

RORY:

You killed her. You killed her...

BANACK:

So I went home, and hid. Watched the news. Poor girl in terrible accident, died from her injuries. No one suspected, and that was it. That night I had to clean my car, and I found this stuck to it. *(fingers his necklace)* You see Rory, just one little mistake, and it can all be gone. I wanted to spare you that, save you from that, but you just wouldn't let me.

RORY:

Wouldn't let you? You tried to force your world on my your life! Just one girl compared to your future, eh?

BANACK:

That's what it comes down to Rory. Us or them. You have to choose, then live with your choice. That's why I wear this necklace, to remind me that we must always concentrate on our futures, and let nothing, NOTHING prevent us from reaching them.

RORY:

But what future can we have if we choose death over life? The darkness over the light? You are not even alive anymore. You're just a character, a puppet that can't even see its strings. Strings you made yourself.

BANACK:

I'm telling you this, Rory, because now you too have a necklace to wear, a stigmata. I gave you a chance, I tried, but you left me with no choice, no choice. I have to fail you Rory, don't you see? For your own good. But that's not the end, let it be a beginning for you. Just one class, you can make it up, but you have to learn, as I did, can't you see that?

RORY:

There is NO class! Can't you see? You've spent your whole life worrying about this world, making something of yourself in this world, but I tell you it does not exist!

BANACK:

I'm afraid you can't change my mind, Rory. I'm doing this for you. For what you can become!

RORY:

How can nothing become something? Open your eyes! You said worry about the grade. And I now say the same thing to you. Not the grade you've earned in your paltry life, with your schools, and your degrees, and your mistakes, but the one that is forever out of your reach.

BANACK:

I'm sorry, Rory, it's final.

RORY:

You're right, it is, the final anything and everything. The one grade, the one decision that changes it all. None of this, (*gesturing around*), none of this matters. It is only what you want it to be, and not even that. You're trapped and you can't even see it.

BANACK:

There's no point to threatening me Rory, no one would believe. A depressed student, failing, suddenly trying to black mail his professor. This conversation never happened, you see.

RORY:

Of course it didn't happen, none of this really exists.

BANACK:

I'm glad you understand Rory. It's better for you this way, really it is. One day you'll thank me. You'll see.

RORY:

Enough of this, I've wasted too much time already. The vision of the blind has distracted me long enough.

(RORY walks away from BANACK and returns to his spot on the floor.)

BANACK:

It really is better Rory, you'll learn from this, and find your future you'll be fine.

(BANACK stands for a moment, looking not towards RORY, but to his desk. He waits a moment for a response, then shakes his head and walks out of the room, and down the hall. The lights slowly fade nearly out again.)

Scene V

(As RORY kneels, a spot light slowly comes up, leaving him in a bright circle of light. In the dim hall, MATT and SALLY appear, walking very slowly towards RORY's room. The door still remains open from earlier. They approach RORY's room, knock lightly on the door several times, then pushes the door open. Both go rushing in. Matt kneels by an empty spot on the floor, then freezes. SALLY remains by the door with her hands covering her face.)

(SALLY screams. RORY looks startled, then slowly rises.)

RORY:

So, that's it. It's all been decided then. Did I ever really have a chance, a life of my own? No, I was just a character to them, a role, nothing real. Here, and then gone. I'd almost convinced myself that I could escape it, that I could stop playing their game. But, too late, it's done with. I was fooled from the start, and worse, I let myself be fooled. I tried to be what they wanted me to be. I put the noose around my own neck, and now lament my fortune.

(SALLY screams a second time)

(RORY looks back towards them, suddenly remembering their presence.) And now, there's no time left. They used me up, I danced my dance, and now that I have no further use, I'm cast aside, so that they can go on.

(walks over, kneels down by MATT and looks him in the eye.)

What is it you see there on the floor, my friend? Do you see me? Do you see what you want to see, what you have to see? But there's nothing there, nothing at all.

(SALLY screams a third time)

But I won't play anymore, I can't. They may see my end, but I can't see it. I won't.

(RORY walks away from MATT and SALLY, and stands at the edge of the stage. He looks briefly back)

So, I guess that's it. They had their play, and I had mine. But who do you believe?

(The suddenly the lights come on in full on the bedroom.)

MATT:

Rory! RORY! RORY! *(shaking him the space on the floor)*

SALLY:

(at the same time) Oh God, oh God, Oh God. Somebody Help. Somebody please HELP US!

(Several other students appear on the stage rushing towards RORY's room.)

RORY:

Do you really think I'm the crazy one?

(Curtain)

Afterword:

On the surface this can easily be seen as a simple story about a kid who has a pretty easy life. He's going to college on some sort of scholarship, he's pretty smart, and has a couple of friends. Then, in a traditional after school special manner, he becomes lazy, and starts just screwing himself. What follows is a fatherly lecture by his professor, to help set him straight, and the introduction of an equally well off, attractive girl. So naturally the young lad sees the light, and reforms his ways under the loving guidance of his new girlfriend. And for a time, all is well in his carefully constructed world. Again things begin to go wrong. A relationship, that is questionable at best, develops between his best friend, and his girlfriend. This leads to depression and an eventual relationship-ending fight. The world that was so carefully made now lies in ruin. Gone is the girl, and the friend, and with them goes the will that maintained his hold on the world. The depression grows, and his grades recede. All that he had and was, is gone. In the thick of this, the girl returns, and there is hope for redemption and forgiveness, but that too is meek and ailing. And so again, everything is gone, and with a new certainty. With his world destroyed, the boy's depression grows as he loses touch with the external world, and eventually takes his own life in an act of despair.

But in this we see that though the events unfold rather smoothly, Rory's participation in them is not quite as clear. The tension between what the other characters are doing and Rory grows until they can no longer even converse. Rory is caught up by the promises of happiness that come with the other character's world, but finds that it is fleeting. The loss of this however does not increase his despair, but rather brings him to greater awareness of the traps that we live in. He discerns the roles that everyone but himself must play, and he refuses to go along with it. There is jealousy and betrayal in his relationship, though none really exists. He is not jealous of his friend, nor is he worried about his girlfriend, so instead they invent the drama to conform to their views of

reality, leaving Rory with nothing to hold onto. He is cut off as it were, from the rest of the world, and so retreats to one where he is not a slave to the dictums of others, and his actions are free. Yet in doing this, he puts himself in diametric opposition to the rest of the characters, even unto a death which everyone but himself believes in.

The question that remains then is, “who is actually right?” Does the rest of the cast, in the majority, have a monopoly on reality? Or does Rory see the hidden truths which no one else can grasp? It seems that Rory is insane, in his drastic separation from the expectations and confirmations of the world, and yet he alone behaves properly against the madness of the other characters who ruthlessly seek to proliferate their own views even to the destruction of others. Is the question of madness one of the majority, or of the length we would go to in seeking what is futile and false? Rory tries, through his experiences to surpass others, and through his journey comes to new life in moral cognizance, but it is a death to the rest of the world. That is, if you believe his account and not that of the other characters who reach out to him. To them he spirals into madness.

This question manifests itself in the gradual schism that appears between Rory and the rest of the characters, made clear in the dialogue. From the first act, we get small hints. Conversations that go a certain way, no matter what Rory says, till eventually the characters are not even really speaking to each other. This is his separation and his freedom. Only when he becomes completely excluded from the world, can he begin to see the hidden motives in it. What may seem to be his burgeoning insanity becomes clarity of vision that enables Rory to step outside of his prescribed role, and become truly alive in a moral sense. To arrive at this state, he must however have experienced and been victim to his own immorality and the strength of his passions. It is only when these leave him, that he can achieve any degree of morality. This morality is so contrary to the

world in which Rory exists, so as to make him appear total insane in his inability to communicate with his fellow characters. That is, if Rory's account of the events in the play are believable. That becomes the real question of the play: who is the crazy one, and who is sane?

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