

little switzerland

A Full-Length Play

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ACT I
Scene 1

AT RISE:

Lights come up on OLLIE, downstage. He has a warm face, wiry figure, early to mid-twenties. He is crouching in front of a little red wagon full of unassembled parts of an engine and various tools. In the midst of working on the engine, OLLIE looks up awkwardly from his work. He takes a moment before he addresses the audience.

OLLIE

Hi. I'm Ollie Harper. I have a twin sister, and then another younger one, and a brother. And a dog. Two dogs. Two dogs and two cats. And a dusty old farm that hasn't seen a soy bean in over ten years. Are you looking at my engine? It's not done yet. I just took it apart. You have to do that to clean it and make it new. Yeah. Lots of parts and things to remember.

(To audience member.)

Could you hand me that socket wrench over there? That one. No. That's a . . . It's okay.

(OLLIE gets the socket wrench himself and goes back to work. Again, he looks up at the crowd and takes a moment to adjust before he addresses everyone again.)

You can't get mad when someone doesn't know somethin' or do somethin' 'cause it's not civilized. Right? That's what our mom taught us, before she ran off with the plumber. But she's still right. I mean, people just don't know.

(To audience member.)

It's okay that you didn't get the socket wrench. You can't expect everyone to know everything. I don't know everything. Do you?

(Lights down on OLLIE and up on the kitchen table, where DAYLE, ZACK, and TOBI, are wearing party hats and gathered around a cake. OLLIE joins them. DAYLE is a natural beauty with a grounded soul. ZACK, the oldest brother by a few years, is a more flamboyant type. TOBI is the sharp and confident seventeen-year-old sister.)

EVERYBODY

Happy Birthday to you!
Happy Birthday to you!
Happy Birthday Dear Dayle and Ollie!
Happy Birthday to you!

(They both take a deep breath and blow all the candles out.)

ZACK

Tell me your wish!

TOBI

You can't tell it or it won't come true!

ZACK

Remember the year you turned thirteen--

DAYLE

(Cutting the cake.)

Oh, my God! That was the year we lit the tree house on fire!

TOBI

I don't remember . . .

DAYLE

Well, Zack was in charge of the house 'cause Dad was off on some month-long run and Mom was . . .

OLLIE

Who knows.

ZACK

A bunch of us crammed into that tiny little tree house over the brook out back.

OLLIE

Sturdy little tree house.

DAYLE

You built that thing!

ZACK

So, we're playing spin the bottle, not like any of us knew what to do with it once it landed on somebody.

TOBI

Dayle knew.

OLLIE

Look at her blushin' . . .

TOBI

I don't remember the party, but I do remember busting Dayle and Deaton out behind the barn, rolling in a patch of poison oak!

ZACK

Is that how--

DAYLE

Tobi!

DAYLE

I'll have you all know that I was a little bit older than thirteen when that happened.

TOBI

Yeah. Like fourteen.

(DAYLE smacks TOBI playfully in the arm.)

OLLIE

This cake is good. It's my favorite. Chocolate.

ZACK

Thank you. It's my own secret recipe, so don't ask how I made it.

TOBI

Don't have to. It's written right on the box sitting on top of the trash. And the reason the frosting's so good is because I made that. And you won't find the package to that anyplace.

OLLIE

'Cause she burned it.

TOBI

No! Because I made it from scratch, smart ass!

DAYLE

Anyway, Grady kept getting all pissed because Deaton had somehow fixed it so that the bottle always pointed to me.

OLLIE

I'm pourin' milk. Who wants?

DAYLE & TOBI & ZACK

Me!

DAYLE

She said something nasty--

ZACK

And Dayle goes for her throat, knocks over a candle and the whole tree house goes up in flames!

TOBI

No way!

OLLIE

No way is right. The tree house burned down because Zack--

ZACK

Don't you dare!

OLLIE

Zack finally got hair.

TOBI

Ew. I don't know if I want to hear about this.

DAYLE

Oh! I almost forgot!

ZACK

Drop it!

TOBI

So, how are Zack's pubes and anything flaming connected?

DAYLE

Well, still, we were playing spin the bottle--

OLLIE

We were always playing that game.

DAYLE

Zack spun it--

OLLIE

And it landed on Deaton.

(There's a pause.)

TOBI

Did you kiss?

ZACK

Of course not!

DAYLE

So, he jumps on Zack, tugging at his pants--

TOBI

Does he get in them!

DAYLE

No, but he lights the whole god-damned tree house on fire! We're all lucky we're even alive!

OLLIE

He was drunk.

DAYLE

Ollie . . .

ZACK

Who wants more cake?

TOBI

I gotta go to work. Let's do presents.

DAYLE

You can't go to work on our birthday party!

TOBI

Got to.

ZACK

Let's do presents anyway. Mine first!

(He hands DAYLE and OLLIE two identical packages.)

I bet Deaton would have bought you all new tools Ollie. He'd buy Dayle something really beautiful. Remember when he had six dozen roses delivered for your sixteenth birthday!

TOBI

I remember that!

DAYLE

That's all in the past.

(They all chuckle; the presents are finally opened. They are revealed to be the same small book of poetry.)

ZACK

Handmade expressly for you both.

DAYLE

Look . . . it's a book of poems.

ZACK

Best read at the early morning sunrise . . .

OLLIE

(Reading the cover.)

"The Complete Works of Zachary D.H. Lawrence."

(Slight pause.)

That ain't you.

ZACK

It's called a pseudonym.

OLLIE

It's called someone else's name.

TOBI

(She throws the presents down.)

Open them quick. I gotta go to work.

OLLIE

(Opens his first. It's a new socket wrench. He is genuinely thrilled.)

Thanks, Tobe.

(He gives her a hug.)

TOBI

Now you can finish your engine.

DAYLE

(Opens a bottle of Southern Comfort.)

Southern Comfort?

TOBI

Take the edge off.

ZACK

Let's light the cake again!

TOBI
I'm going to work.

ZACK
One more time, Tobi!

OLLIE
Please, Tobe. One last time.

TOBI
Okay. But we can't keep doing this forever.

ZACK
It's tradition!

TOBI
It's juvenile.

DAYLE
(Sticking candles back in the cake and lighting them.)
I don't see what's so juvenile about it.

TOBI
Let's just do it.

DAYLE
Okay. Ready. Everybody make a wish.

OLLIE
Ready everybody?

(They all take a deep breath and blow out the candles. Blackout.)

END OF SCENE 1

ACT I
Scene 2

AT RISE:

Later that evening. A small section of the cake, complete with candles, is still on the kitchen table. ZACK stands with his back to the audience, center. OLLIE is sitting on the couch in front of him, reading a comic book, not paying any attention to ZACK. ZACK is dressed in an obviously old zoot suit, complete with accessories. The color of the suit, a bit too small, is teal. ZACK speaks with great enthusiasm.

ZACK

So . . . What do you think?

(He stands eagerly. OLLIE has no response.)

Ollie! I'm talking to you!

(Pause. Still no response. He continues in a parental tone.)

Ollie.

OLLIE

Yeah?

ZACK

Will you pay attention, please?

OLLIE

I was readin'.

ZACK

How do you like my suit?

OLLIE

(Wanting to get back to his book, but responding with honesty.)

Neat color.

ZACK

I'm going to wear it to Yale's orientation.

OLLIE

Yale?

ZACK

Do you know what Yale is, Ollie?

OLLIE

Didn't we do this last year? Didn't you buy a suit or somethin'? Didn't you say you were gonna go somewhere?

ZACK

(Uncomfortable.)

Of course not.

OLLIE

(Innocently.)

You came downstairs . . . and I was sittin' in the same spot, too . . . And you said somethin' about goin' somewhere. Away somewhere.

ZACK

Stop.

OLLIE

Huh?

ZACK

Stop talking.

(ZACK loosens his collar.)

Somebody said once that I look like Errol Flynn. Do you think that's true?

OLLIE

(Takes a good look at ZACK.)

Who told you that?

ZACK

Ollie, didn't I ask you to stop talking.

OLLIE

Yeah, but--

ZACK

Did Dayle buy food?

OLLIE

Nope.

ZACK

(Hesitating to ask.)

Do you think I should?

OLLIE

You don't know what to buy. Dayle buys all the good stuff.

ZACK

(ZACK eyes the cake.)

Has that cake been sitting there all day?

OLLIE

Yup.

ZACK

You should throw it away.

OLLIE

Don't bother me none.

ZACK

It's bothering me!

OLLIE

Then you should throw it away.

ZACK

(Beat. ZACK opts to leave the cake alone.)

What did you have for lunch?

OLLIE

Sardines.

ZACK

(Sighs.)

Go back to your comic book.

(Long pause. OLLIE reads while ZACK sits nervously.)

ZACK

I'm writing a book, you know.

OLLIE

(Not looking up.)

Uh, huh.

(Long pause. OLLIE looks at ZACK.)

Why don't you . . . take off that suit.

ZACK

(As though he has a big secret.)

We may be having a visitor.

(ZACK smiles knowingly at OLLIE. OLLIE goes back to his comic.)

I say--

OLLIE

Heard you the first time.

ZACK

Well, you could respond.

OLLIE

Deaton.

ZACK

How did you know?

OLLIE

You act all funny when he comes around. Like a girl.

ZACK

Why do I talk to you! Why!

OLLIE

Because I'm your brother--

ZACK

But that doesn't solve anything. Does it?

OLLIE

And there's no one else around and you hate to be alone.

ZACK

Words of wisdom from one of America's great intellectuals. Go back to your funnies!

OLLIE

(Pause.)

Take off your suit. He won't be in 'til later.

ZACK

How do you know?

OLLIE

'Cause I picked up the other line when you and Tobi called him.

ZACK

But Dayle has no idea he's coming.

OLLIE

No.

ZACK

It was supposed to be a birthday surprise. He was supposed to be here for the party.

OLLIE

Well, I ain't surprised he missed it, that's for sure.

ZACK

He just got out of one of those fancy-schmancy rehabs for rich people.

OLLIE

Again?

ZACK

Did you know that Deaton lived in New York City for a little while?

OLLIE

That's where he started doin' the fancy drugs.

ZACK

Oh, you always have to be so morbid!

OLLIE

It's true.

ZACK

Stop talking.

(Pause.)

I think I'm going to leave with him.

OLLIE

Who?

ZACK

Deaton! Isn't that who we're talking about here? He's moving into his rich stepmother's house in Switzerland and he told me I can come and stay for as long as I want.

(OLLIE chuckles.)

What!

OLLIE

You'd hate it there.

ZACK

Well, I certainly don't belong here. I'm out of my element.

(Pause.)

How could you not want Deaton to visit?

OLLIE

'Cause. Grady doesn't want him here either.

ZACK

Well, that's because she's jealous.

OLLIE

She knows what he's like. Grady always says she loves him to death, but he's got the mentality of Howdy Doody.

ZACK

Grady said that?

OLLIE

Yup.

(Beat.)

He's a good guy, but . . .

(OLLIE shakes his head.)

We'll see.

ZACK

What do you think will happen?

OLLIE

He'll come and make everyone happy and then he'll take off and everyone will be miserable again. Same as always.

ZACK

No! I mean, with Dayle!

OLLIE

He doesn't ever finish anything. I doubt if he ever finished rehab.

ZACK

Deaton is a most accomplished individual!

OLLIE

Only 'cause he's got money.

ZACK

Well, I think you're wrong.

OLLIE

Okay.

ZACK

Besides, Dayle loves Deaton. He'd be great for her.

OLLIE

She'd be great for him, maybe.

ZACK

Oh, whatever. They'd be great for each other. We could fly to Spain on weekends!

OLLIE

He's not that rich--

ZACK

Did you see the letter Tobi got from England?

OLLIE

She showed me.

ZACK

She didn't show me. All I got to see was the envelope. What did it say?

OLLIE

I dunno. They were just talking about how smart she was.

ZACK

I did really well in high school too, you know. You don't believe me, but I did. I did so well, I got letters from schools who wanted to see me all the time.

(Beat.)

I did, you know.

(Beat.)

Deaton went to a boarding school in Connecticut. Can you imagine a life like that?

(Beat.)

What time is it?

OLLIE

(Looks at his watch.)

Almost 6:30.

ZACK

Oh, God. Tobi will be home any minute.

OLLIE
What are you so afraid of her?

ZACK
I'm not afraid!

OLLIE
You avoid her like she was poison oak.

ZACK
Fact is Ollie, Tobi is a nasty brute of a little girl.

OLLIE
She's not a little girl anymore.

ZACK
She's a complete child. And I'm not in the mood to play Daddy to her selfish, bratty ways.

OLLIE
Somebody's got to teach her.

ZACK
Well, Dad can do it. He's the father.

OLLIE
Dad's never here.

ZACK
Well, when he is here, he can teach her.

OLLIE
I think you should tell her what you don't like about her.

(Suddenly, TOBI's voice is heard coming up the drive. She is screaming for DAYLE. Hearing this, ZACK dives up the stairs to his room, just as TOBI enters.)

TOBI
(Frantic, digging through the scattered garbage in the room.)
Dayle! Dayle! Where is that stupid bitch! I'll wring her neck!

OLLIE
(Not noticing her panic, walks into the kitchen to retrieve a banana.)
Hey, Tobe.

TOBI

Ollie, have you seen Dayle?
(Slight pause.)
Ollie! Have you seen Dayle!

OLLIE

Uh . . . Why?

TOBI

Well, she was supposed to pick me up at two o'clock and drive me in town before I went away.

OLLIE

Where did you say you were goin'?

TOBI

Camping.

OLLIE

With who?

TOBI

Youth group.

OLLIE

Can I come?

TOBI

No!

(Softening.)

Maybe next time, Oll.

(A car horn beeps outside.)

Tell Dayle when she comes in that she has screwed up absolutely everything for me. I had things to take care of in town that needed to be done this afternoon. Not tomorrow. Not next week. This afternoon. I had a special appointment that I obviously had to miss because of her. Ollie, are you going to remember this?

(No response.)

Nevermind. I'm going to write it down.

(She snatches an envelope off the table, and looks around for a pen.)

I can never find a pen in this house! I can never find anything in this place!

(As she searches, OLLIE eats his banana and reads his comic. She has found a pen and writes the note furiously. Off, the horn beeps again, loudly. She puts the note in OLLIE's hand, grabs her over-night bag off the couch, and exits. OLLIE finishes

his banana, drops it on the floor, and sits back down on the couch. He continues reading. Moments later, DAYLE enters through the door covered head to toe in mud.)

DAYLE

Hey.

OLLIE

Hey.

(She sits next to OLLIE with a bottle of alcohol. She saturates a towel and tends to a cut on his hand.)

DAYLE

You been working on your engine?

OLLIE

Yeah.

DAYLE

How's it coming?

OLLIE

Okay. You been out back?

DAYLE

'Course.

OLLIE

How's it comin'?

DAYLE

Nothing's happening. Maybe I should accept that it's just like all the other dried up plots around here and give up.

OLLIE

Lots of people'll tell you your crazy. Don't believe 'em.

DAYLE

We'll see.

(She's done with his hand.)

OLLIE

Tobi's lookin' for you.

DAYLE
Why?

OLLIE
She said you were supposed to give her a ride.

DAYLE
Give her a ride . . . ? Oh! I completely forgot!

OLLIE
She went camping.
(He reflects.)
I like camping.

DAYLE
I can't believe I forgot. I never forget things like that.

OLLIE
(Still holding the note.)
I was supposed to give you this.

(He hands it to her.)

DAYLE
(Reading it to herself.)
What is her problem? You'd think I never did anything for her.

(Not looking up from his comic book, OLLIE shrugs.)

OLLIE
She really needed a passport.

DAYLE
(Excited.)
Did she get the scholarship?

OLLIE
I dunno.

DAYLE
Well, why would she need a passport, Ollie!

OLLIE
I think I'd like to go to England.

(ZACK appears at the bottom of the stairs, holding a thin book

of poetry. He has changed into an old smoking jacket.)

ZACK

Oh, Dayle . . . How many times have I told you that playing in the dirt not only makes you insane, but also most unsightly.

DAYLE

Zack . . . you wouldn't understand.

ZACK

I hate it when you call me that.

DAYLE

What?

ZACK

You know what. That name. Zack. You know I hate it. It sounds so . . . so not me.

(He sits down and opens his book. He doesn't really read it,
he just sits there, posed.)

DAYLE

Your name isn't Zachary. It's Zack.

ZACK

I refuse to partake in such inane conversation.

DAYLE

Nobody knew how to spell Zachary.

ZACK

Well, at least I wasn't born here.

DAYLE

Oh, please! Spare me the agony of your story telling!

ZACK

On the contrary, my darling sister, I was born in the deep woods of . . . Massachusetts.

DAYLE

Oh, yeah. Where were you born this time. Walden Pond or somethin'? Zack--

ZACK

The name! Please! I'm getting a migraine from all of this irrelevant speech.

DAYLE

Okay, ZACK!

ZACK

Why do you torture me? Why?

(He exits, tripping over the mess, holding his head in agony.
DAYLE begins to wander into the kitchen; she's creating a
strategy for cleaning and begins picking things up. She pulls a
plate out of the sink which probably hasn't been washed in a
very long time. There is a loud knock at the door.)

DAYLE

Ollie, will you get the door?

(OLLIE is reading, he does not hear her.)

Forget it.

(She opens the door to find DEATON standing there. He is
good looking, charismatic and very warm. He gives her a smooth
look.)

DEATON

Hey lady . . .

DAYLE

Oh, my God . . .

DEATON

Happy birthday.

(They hug.)

DAYLE

Where have you been?

DEATON

You look so different.

(DEATON touches her hair.)

DAYLE

Yeah, well it's been a while. Come in.

DEATON

Hey, Oll.

(They hug.)

DEATON

Happy birthday.

OLLIE

Want some cake?

(OLLIE motions to the cake on the table.)

DEATON

I'll pass, thanks.

DAYLE

(To DEATON.)

Sit down.

OLLIE

Dayle, can I talk to you--

DAYLE

Later, Oll.

(OLLIE wanders out.)

DAYLE

I didn't think you were still alive.

DEATON

I just got back.

DAYLE

Where have you been?

DEATON

All over the world. First I went to England. Then Italy, Spain, back to Italy for a while, Germany, Portugal, flew to Ireland, walked around there for a while, got bored, and went back to Italy. Then I flew here.

DAYLE

Who paid for that?

DEATON

My dad. He figured it was a good way to get me out of his life for a while.

DAYLE

Oh, that's right he re-married again.

DEATON

Yeah. Her name's Michelle. We can't stand each other so she's constantly sending me away. As far away as possible. But she's loaded, so you won't see my father complaining.

DAYLE

Why didn't you write me? I was worried sick about you.

DEATON

I can't write to you, Dayle.

DAYLE

Thanks.

DEATON

No, don't take it as an insult. I just can't write you. That's all.

DAYLE

Well, are you back for good?

DEATON

I don't know. Only if you marry me.

DAYLE

(Laughs.)

Okay.

DEATON

Actually, I'm thinking about doing some more traveling. But I'll be back for Christmas. Only to see you. No one else.

DAYLE

Oh, of course. Not like you'd stop in to see your mother.

DEATON

Nope! Every second would be devoted to you. And like-wise, I'd hope.

(Beat.)

I thought about you a lot.

(They stare at each other. DAYLE breaks away.)

DAYLE

I heard about rehab. I'm sorry about all of the trouble . . .

DEATON

You knew about that?

DAYLE

Yeah.

DEATON

How did you know?

DAYLE

Word of mouth. I figured that's why I didn't hear from you.

DEATON

Well, you heard right. I didn't exactly finish . . . But the good thing is I'm clean now. No. Actually, I got really drunk in Germany. Only once.

(He laughs.)

That's the minimum requirement of everyone who goes there.

DAYLE

(Goes to do the dishes.)

Is it?

DEATON

(Noticing her change in temperament.)

But . . . uh . . . I'm totally clean now. I swear.

DAYLE

Are you seeing anyone?

DEATON

Not really.

(Slight pause.)

You know, on my way over here, I stopped by Grady's house. Her boyfriend was there. What's his name . . . Nicki? Anyway, I guess they were having a fight so she told me she'd meet me here. She hasn't changed . . .

(Beat.)

Whenever I travel, I meet the most amazing people. I'm always reassured that not everybody's like my dad. Not everybody's selfish. People who hardly knew me were offering me a place to sleep.

DAYLE

That sounds pretty dangerous--

DEATON

Precisely my point! You still think that way! But it's not like that at all. And the things I saw! Colossal buildings that you can't even count the years on they're so old. And then there's little old me. And my stupid, little problems. And who cares? I wanted to scream to the Vatican, WHO CARES! DOES ANYBODY CARE? People do that all the time, I'm sure. It made me realize that my life is so irrelevant next to this ancient house of worship that it's not even worth the worry. I finally realized that things must be done now. The important stuff anyway.

DAYLE

(Pause.)

Will you talk to Grady for me.

DEATON

Let me guess . . . she's in trouble.

DAYLE

This is serious. I'm worried about her.

DEATON

You're always worried about her and she doesn't worry enough. You've always made such a great pair.

DAYLE

She's getting worse.

DEATON

She's probably just bored so she's creating some interesting drama for herself. I mean, who can blame her? This town is totally dead. It was dead when I left and it just keeps getting deader. All those overworked farms and deserted houses. Can you even get a job around here?

DAYLE

I wouldn't know. I haven't been to work in a while.

DEATON

What've you been doing?

DAYLE

Working the farm.

DEATON

What farm?

(He looks at her for a minute.)

I know you don't mean--

DAYLE

I know it sounds crazy, but--

DEATON

That farm has been a big pile of dust for . . . I don't know how long.

DAYLE

I know we can't get the whole thing back, but I've been working this small patch--

DEATON

Dayle, what for?

DAYLE

Because I think it's still good. I know it is. It's really been working actually--

DEATON

Dayle, that farm'll never be worth anything.

DAYLE

You don't know anything about it . . .

DEATON

Can I have an opinion?

DAYLE

I'm not asking for much, just to be able to make something happen out there.

DEATON

(Smiles at her.)

The whole town might be going to shit, but you'll have one good patch of farmland.
You're amazing.

(Pause.)

You know, I almost didn't recognize you when I first saw you.

DAYLE

Yeah, well I'm kind of dirty . . .

DEATON

No, I mean you've changed. It's like . . . you keep getting younger instead of older.

DAYLE

What's that supposed to mean?

DEATON

It's a compliment. Look at you. You look great. I think you had the same hair cut when you were twelve years old. You were a tomboy then, too.

DAYLE

You always did like dirty women.

(Suddenly, GRADY bursts through the door on roller skates.
She is in her twenties, very attractive.)

DAYLE

My god, Grady.

GRADY

Hey, there's a fire out there!

DAYLE

Where?

GRADY

'Bout a mile over the tracks. I ran into Jimmy Brown on the way over and he said they already dragged out the bodies of four little kids.

DAYLE

What happened?

GRADY

Don't know. But they haven't found any adults yet, that I know for sure. I'm gonna go check it out. Wanna come?

DAYLE

No.

GRADY

Dayle, you're no fun. Okay, me and Deat will tell you what happens.

DAYLE

I went with you on that sick trailer park expedition. Never again.

GRADY

And that was cool, right?

DAYLE

It was sick.

(To DEATON.)

A few weeks ago a woman was strangled by her boyfriend out in East Side Park. And who was the first to hear about it . . . ?

GRADY

My cousin Marty lived right next door, so she was one of the first to find out--

DAYLE

Too bad she didn't find out sooner.

GRADY

So she calls me and says, you won't believe what's going on, you gotta get over here. And so I call Dayle up and invite her over to Marty's and--

DAYLE

If I'd known what I was going for I never would've gone.

GRADY

Ingrate! The most exciting afternoon of your year and you know it!

(To DEATON.)

Those of us who can't travel the world, take what we can get. I hear you're new dad's new trophy wife's got some bucks, Deat. Even more than the last one.

DAYLE

Does anyone want something to drink?

GRADY

What d'ya say we christen that bottle of So Co over there.

DAYLE

Tobi gave me that for my birthday.

GRADY

Hey, happy birthday.

(She gives DAYLE a hug.)

Sorry I missed the party. No poison oak, I hope. Well, what d'ya know . . . Even a pristine little twat like Tobi knows the importance of good booze. Let's have a round in her name!

DAYLE

Grady, we've got a recovering alcoholic in the house.

GRADY

So? You've got one recovering alcoholic, and one non-recovering alcoholic. What difference does that make?

(Pause.)

Did that come out right?

DAYLE

I'm not opening that bottle now.

GRADY

(Standing.)

All right. I'll take a rain check. Well, we'd better go before this fire's yesterday's news. You comin', Dayle?

DAYLE

No.

GRADY

Okay. Let's go, Deat.

(DEATON stands to follow GRADY.)

DAYLE

Wait, where will you go after?

GRADY

Out. Wanna meet us?

DAYLE

Uh . . . Come back here after.

GRADY

Okay. Then we can all go out. And have a drink.

DAYLE

Grady--

GRADY

It'll be just like old times!

(DAYLE gives DEATON a look.)

DEATON

Don't worry, Dayle.

(GRADY skates out with DEATON behind her.)

DAYLE

Wait Grady, can I talk to you for just one minute?

GRADY

No time, baby. They said it was gonna rain. I wanna get there before it starts.

(Blackout.)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT I
Scene 3

AT RISE:

The sound of rain and thunder.
It's about three-thirty the following morning;
DAYLE is asleep on the couch. TOBI,
soaking wet, enters and flicks the light on.)

DAYLE

(Covering her face with a blanket.)

Shut the light out.

TOBI

Go to your room if you want to sleep.

DAYLE

Tobi? Oh, I thought you were Ollie. What are you doing here?

TOBI

We got rained out. What did you think? I was homesick?

DAYLE

It's raining?

TOBI

No, I just decided to turn the hose on myself before I came in the door.

DAYLE

Well take off those wet clothes. And shut off the light. You woke me up. What time is it?

TOBI

3:30.

(TOBI sniffs around the room.)

DAYLE

3:30?

TOBI

Deaton's been here.

DAYLE

How did you know?

TOBI

I smell cologne.

DAYLE

Yeah. He was here.

TOBI

What are you two scheming to do this time?

DAYLE

Scheming?

TOBI

You've been scheming together since you were kids. What is it this time?

DAYLE

Nothing. He's not going to be here long. He might be moving to Europe.

TOBI

Did you hear about the fire?

DAYLE

Yeah. Do you know what happened?

TOBI

We heard about it on the news coming back. Some woman left her kids alone to go to a bar. They think one of the older kids was playing with matches. There were nine of them.

DAYLE

Nine?

TOBI

I hope that woman fries.

(There is a long silence.)

I was looking for you earlier when you blew me off. Where were you?

DAYLE

Playing in the dirt.

TOBI

I looked for you. You weren't there.

DAYLE

I went over to Jack Greer's to borrow some tools and inside his shed there was a robin's nest, right over the door jam. And the eggs were hatching. So I stayed and watched. They were so tiny and skinny and hungry.

(TOBI's not all that interested. Pause. TOBI looks around the room.)

TOBI

I wish someone'd take a match to this place.

DAYLE

Don't even joke like that.

TOBI

I'm not joking. It's disgusting.

DAYLE

What the hell do you want me to do about it?

TOBI

Clean it!

DAYLE

You clean it.

TOBI

Why don't you get a job!

DAYLE

I've been looking for one.

TOBI

When? I don't see you looking.

DAYLE

Economy's bad.

TOBI

Dayle, we live in the sticks. You can always get a job shoveling shit or something.

DAYLE

You try and shovel shit.

TOBI

I am a full-time student and I work. You do nothing.

DAYLE

Mind your own business.

(ZACK enters in his pajamas and is wearing a frozen eye mask.)

ZACK

What is all the hubbub!

(TOBI and DAYLE do not answer.)

I was having the most glorious dream about Canada. Oh, how I miss it.

TOBI

You've never been to Canada, stupid.

ZACK

(Ignoring her.)

The glorious rolling hills, the ice tipped mountain tops, the hockey . . . The sensation of skiing in negative sixty degree weather . . .

TOBI

None of us even know how to ice skate.

ZACK

(Snapping out of it.)

What were you two wallowing about?

TOBI & DAYLE

Nothing.

ZACK

Well, now that I'm up will somebody please make me my tea?

TOBI

Make it yourself.

DAYLE

I was just going to make some anyway.

(She walks over to the stove and prepares a kettle. Disgusted, TOBI drops herself in a chair.)

TOBI

This sucks.

ZACK

What sucks?

TOBI

This. This whole life I have. The lives we have.

ZACK

I know what you mean, Tobi. Who would have thought that someone like me could have come from a hovel like this.

(To himself, sniffing.)

What's that glorious scent?

DAYLE

Shut up Zack or I'll kill you.

ZACK

Are you getting my tea?

DAYLE

Yes! So hush.

TOBI

(Pause.)

I'm not like all of you, you know.

ZACK

Well, I know you're not like me. None of you are actually. Especially you Dayle. You're always so dirty.

DAYLE

(Ignoring him.)

So, tell us Tobi. Why are you so different.

TOBI

I'm going to England.

DAYLE

(Quietly, happy.)

You got it.

ZACK

Did I hear someone talking about Europe? I love talking about Europe. It's so me.

DAYLE

You got the scholarship!

(DAYLE rushes to TOBI and hugs her. The two squeal with excitement.)

ZACK

Hold it! No one's getting anything unless I know about it!

TOBI

I got a scholarship to Trinity. I'm moving to London! And I can promise you all that once I leave, I'm never coming back.

(Harshly.)

I'm breaking the tradition of losers in this family.

DAYLE

Why are you so spiteful?

TOBI

Why am I so spiteful? Mom took off, Dad's never here and I'm living with a bunch of meatheads who have never done anything with their lives. Ollie and I are the only ones who work. What's wrong with you two? Do you enjoy being slugs?

DAYLE

(Calmly.)

Why don't you just--

TOBI

You used to have ambition. And then you dropped out of college, pretended you didn't care about anything anymore and started letting Grady bring you down--

DAYLE

That's it! Where the hell do you get off saying those things to me! Huh! I didn't drop out of college, I left because you--

(DAYLE stops herself. There is a long, awkward pause.)

ZACK

Is tea ready yet?

DAYLE

Almost.

TOBI

Let him do it!

DAYLE

(Through her teeth.)

Tobi, if you're leaving for good, as you say you are, then wouldn't it be nice to do so on a happy note?

(TOBI begins to talk back.)

DAYLE

Enough.

(TOBI makes an abrupt move to the other end of the room, keeping her back to the others. OLLIE enters from the garage, his hands and clothes are covered in grease.)

ZACK

What in the name of Walt Whitman have you been doing?

OLLIE

Fixin' the truck. Oh, hi Tobe--

DAYLE

It's 3:30 in the morning.

OLLIE

(Looks at his watch.)

3:46.

DAYLE

Whatever. It's late. There's no light and it's raining.

OLLIE

Not in the garage it's not. And there's light in there, too. What do you think I am? Stupid?

(Silence.)

Besides, I need to fix it for tomorrow 'cause I gotta go into town in the mornin'.

ZACK

Why?

TOBI

I'd still like to go tomorrow if that's okay.

OLLIE

Sure. We'll take off at about ten o'clock.

TOBI

Okay. I'll be ready.

OLLIE

Super.

(Beat.)

Hey, does everyone know about the fire?

ZACK

Our new mailman Norm told me all about it. Said there were nine kids in that house.

DAYLE

The woman was at a bar, is that what you said Tobi?

TOBI

Just your typical locale trash. I hope she dies a slow and painful death.

OLLIE

I just hope she can live with herself.

(Beat.)

Well, goodnight everyone.

(OLLIE exits up the stairs.)

ZACK

Wait a minute! Where is he going tomorrow?

(No response.)

Tobi, where are you going tomorrow and why.

TOBI

He told you weeks ago he got this job.

ZACK

Doing what?

TOBI

I'm not sure exactly. I know he'll be rebuilding transmissions and brakes and stuff.

(TOBI starts to exit up the stairs.)

ZACK

For whom?

TOBI

(Annoyed that he won't leave her alone.)

Foreign cars. Mercedes, I think . . .

(TOBI bolts up the stairs.)

ZACK

(Impressed.)

Well, that's okay then.

(Pause.)

He can do those kinds of things?

DAYLE

He's been working on cars since he was nine. Where have you been?

(There is a knock at the door.)

Who the hell is that?

(She opens the door. It's DEATON, drunk.)

ZACK

Deaton! I was just thinking about you!

(DEATON tries to focus n ZACK.)

DEATON

Tequila . . .

ZACK

Tequila! I should have known. You hablo that Espanol, si?

(DEATON passes out on the floor.)

DAYLE

Could you excuse us Zack?

ZACK

Oh, I can help--

(ZACK helps lift DEATON to the couch. He stands in front of him and lightly taps his face.)

ZACK

Wake up . . . Wake up . . .

DEATON

Zack?

ZACK

Hi.

DEATON
Where's Dayle?

ZACK
She's here.

DEATON
Can you . . . go away?

ZACK
Oh . . . well, we need to talk.

DEATON
Later.

ZACK
(Smiles at DEATON.)
Okay. Hasta amigo.

(ZACK exits.)

DAYLE
Were you planning on staying here tonight?

DEATON
I always knew I could count on you, Dayle.

DAYLE
Yeah. Good old me.

DEATON
You're a good person, Dayle.

DAYLE
I'm a sucker.

DEATON
You're disappointed. In me. You're disappointed.

DAYLE
Yes.
(Pause.)
Very.

DEATON

Me too.

(Pause.)

I'm depressed now.

DAYLE

Me too.

DEATON

You're such a good person. Dayle. I love you so much. You really care about me. You'll always care about me. I need someone to care about me. Always. Will you always care about me?

DAYLE

It's hard caring for someone that is always letting you down.

DEATON

Again!

DAYLE

Again.

DEATON

I am sober, though. Not right now. But most times. I'm better. Just don't tell Tobi, okay?

DAYLE

Tobi? Tobi doesn't care about anyone besides herself.

DEATON

Tobi cares a lot.

DAYLE

You don't know what you're talking about--

DEATON

She cares a lot 'bout you. She wants you to be happy--

DAYLE

(Cutting him off.)

You're drunk, Deaton. You don't know what you're saying.

DEATON

Okay.

(Pause.)

I'm so glad I'm here! Do you think we could stay up to watch the sunrise? It'd be just like old times!

(TOBI appears at the bottom of the stairs.)

TOBI

(Infuriated.)

I thought you were here.

DAYLE

Did we wake you--

TOBI

(Cutting her off.)

Deaton, I know you're drunk. So you might as well get right back on your plane and get the hell out--

DAYLE

Tobi, he didn't kill anybody, he's just--

TOBI

Yes. I realize that and I want you to get the fuck out, Deaton.

DEATON

Sorry, Tobi.

TOBI

Don't apologize to me!

DEATON

Sorry, Dayle.

DAYLE

What the hell is going on here!

TOBI

I'll tell you what's going on. This asshole is not coming back to this house ever again. Ever! Is that understood!

DEATON

I know, I know . . .

(He gets up to leave.)

Are you seriously leaving?

DAYLE

Yes!

TOBI

You know, Tobi . . . you aren't so holy--

DEATON

What?

DAYLE

That's just like you, Deaton! You come in here and create conflict! That's all you've ever done! I don't know why I thought you'd be different this time! You're still just a loser!

TOBI

Tobi!

DAYLE

Yeah, well you can't run from the truth Tobi--

DEATON

You're the one who's running! You're running all over the world!

TOBI

Look in the mirror, Tobi!

DEATON

SHUT UP!

DAYLE

Get out of here, Deaton.

TOBI

Stop it!

DAYLE

(To DEATON.)
Are you really going to go? I don't think you should leave like this.

It's just down the hill.

DEATON

You can stay, Deaton. It'd be better if you stayed.

DAYLE

(TOBI scoffs loudly.)

DEATON

I'll see you later.

(He kisses her on the cheek and exits.)

DAYLE

Tobi, would you mind explaining yourself!

TOBI

Yes. I would. I'm going to bed.

DAYLE

No you're not! You had no right to do what you just did! Why do you do things to spite me! Why!

TOBI

I don't think you'd ever understand--

DAYLE

Well you'd better start explaining because . . . To be quite honest, I'm really starting to hate you.

TOBI

(Beat.)

Good.

DAYLE

Good? Good! Do you know what good is, Tobi?

TOBI

Good is when Deaton is very far away!

DAYLE

And what is your obsession with Deaton?

TOBI

I'm not obsessed with Deaton. You are.

DAYLE

What?

TOBI

You are. He's knows it too. That's why I want you to keep away from him.

DAYLE

Who are you? My keeper?

TOBI

Deaton has always been trouble. He's always giving you false hope. I was hoping he was stronger now, but he's not. And so he has no place in your life. I'm sorry, but it's true. My best advice to you is to get some new clothes, get a plane ticket and get out. You could get a good job in a big city or something. I mean, you're smart Dayle. You can always do something with yourself.

(Beat.)

DAYLE

What's wrong with my clothes?

(Blackout.)

END OF SCENE 3

ACT I
Scene 4

AT RISE:

It is the next morning, around 9:30. TOBI adamantly stands center stage holding an envelope up to her face. As TOBI is calling to ZACK, DAYLE enters from outside. She is dressed in blue jeans, boots and a flannel shirt.

TOBI

Zack! Zack!

DAYLE

What?

TOBI

(Looking at the envelope.)

A letter just arrived for a Zachary F.F. Thoreau.

DAYLE

They must have the wrong house.

TOBI

No. They don't. Our pompus-assed brother changed his name again. I guess Hemingway just didn't work for him.

DAYLE

Well, who's it from?

TOBI

Yale.

DAYLE

Did he get anything else?

TOBI

Just about three dozen mail order catalogues.

(Beat.)

Zack! Your rejection letter has arrived!

DAYLE

Why do you always have to be so negative?

TOBI

Dayle, get real. Zack's been applying to the same ivy league college for ten years. I don't know when he's going to get it through his thick skull that they don't want him. Zack!

ZACK

(Prances down the stairs.)

I was meditating with a poem. You broke my concentration with your yelps, missy. You must speak softly, my sweet sister.

(TOBI stares at him with disgust, but he continues.)

ZACK

A poem! A poem for our great land of Canada!

(He recites the poem with great pride and seriousness.)

Oh sweet Ontario,
With the evergreens
and falling snow.
Sometimes it's even
FORTY BELOW
on the mountain tops
of Ontario.

Oh! Oh! Oh!
ON-TAR-IO!
I am so, so, so,
full of sorrow!

(He begins to weep. TOBI and DAYLE just stare at him.
After a moment, TOBI applauds.)

TOBI

Could you do that again?

ZACK

It was beautiful, I know. So in the moment . . .

TOBI

(To DAYLE.)

Kids could hire him for birthday parties instead of getting a clown. He's much more farcical.

DAYLE

Be gentle.

TOBI

Hey, Zack. There's a note from Yale here for you.

ZACK

(Wipes his eyes and takes the letter.)

Thank you.

(He opens it, quickly glances at the letter, and puts it back in the envelope.)

They want me.

TOBI

Oh, yeah? Let me see.

ZACK

(Holds up his hand.)

Hush, little sister. This is going to be hard for the whole family, I know. But I'm going to have to turn them down. Again.

TOBI

Oh. You really got accepted, huh?

ZACK

Of course.

DAYLE

Tobi--

TOBI

Let me see the letter.

ZACK

(Pause.)

Why?

TOBI

Because I've never seen an acceptance package that was so thin before. Let me see.

ZACK

Certainly not.

TOBI

(Moving towards him.)

Let me see it!

ZACK

(Running away.)

No!

TOBI
(Chasing him around the room.)
Let me see it! NOW!

ZACK
Go away!

TOBI
Gimme the letter!

ZACK
Leave me alone!

TOBI
Dr. Mr. F.F Thoreau! We are please to offer you acceptance into the program of
Freakdome!

DAYLE
Tobi!

ZACK
Stay away!

TOBI
We want Zack! We want Zack! We want Zack!

(TOBI is chanting and running after ZACK when DEATON
enters. They see him and stop in their tracks.)

DEATON
Hi.

(TOBI grabs ZACK's letter and runs out of the room.)

ZACK
No!

(ZACK runs after her. DAYLE and DEATON are alone.)

DAYLE
How're you doing?

DEATON
How are you doing?

DAYLE

I don't know. This place is really starting to get to me.

DEATON

(Pause.)

Come away with me.

DAYLE

(Laughs.)

Remember when we were little and my dad would drink and you'd tell me that you were going to take me away and marry me to save me?

(Pause.)

I loved you for that. The thought was just enough to make me happy.

DEATON

So let's do it.

DAYLE

Yeah, okay. Where do you want to go this time? Jupiter?

DEATON

I'm serious.

(Pause.)

I love you Dayle.

DAYLE

You told me that when we were six--

DEATON

No. You don't get it. I want you to be my wife. I came back here to convince you to marry me and move to Switzerland.

DAYLE

You sound so serious.

DEATON

I am. Look I have a plane leaving in four days. You have four days to make your decision.

(Beat.)

What are you thinking?

DAYLE

I think that this is the craziest thing I've ever heard.

DEATON

Take a chance with your life, Dayle. You only live once.

DAYLE

I couldn't leave--

DEATON

You couldn't leave what? Your family doesn't want you to sift through some extinct soy bean field for the rest of your life.

DAYLE

I just need some time to--

DEATON

There is no time. What are you going to do if you don't come with me? Get a job at the local mill or manage a supermarket? And where are your friends Dayle? All of them, besides Grady, hightailed it out of here as soon as they could. There's no one around. In ten years this town will bear absolutely no resemblance to the way it was when we were little. I'm offering you a ticket out. You would be insane not to take it. You'll have opportunities you've never had before. You can finish school. You can study anything you want. Learn different languages and meet lots of fascinating people. Your world will grow so incredibly big. You'll have more resources than you can ever imagine. Anything's better than a farm full of sand.

(Slight pause.)

DAYLE

When do we leave?

(They hug and kiss.)

DEATON

Are you sure this what you really want?

DAYLE

I'd be a fool not to.

DEATON

I just want you to be happy.

DAYLE

This is what's best. I know it. I can't stay in a place where there's nothing for me. I can't be farming dry land for the rest of my life. I got to get out while I can. And who else would I leave with but you, Deat. You're my oldest friend.

(Beat.)

DEATON

I've really got to go.

DAYLE

We've got to make plans.

DEATON

We will. I'll be back later. I promise.

(They kiss. DEATON exits. DAYLE reflects on the scene with a smile. TOBI and OLLIE enter, OLLIE with a suitcase.)

DAYLE

Where are you guys going?

TOBI

I'm dropping Ollie off.

DAYLE

Where?

TOBI

What? Oh, I mean we're going to . . . fix cars. Stop asking me questions. What are you smiling about? No one's allowed to enjoy themselves in this house. Especially if Deaton's doing the entertaining--

DAYLE

Don't start, Tobì.

(TOBI picks up OLLIE's bag and exits.)

OLLIE

Well, I guess this is goodbye.

DAYLE

Ollie, I'll see you later.

(He grabs DAYLE and hugs her, gives her a big kiss and exits. Fade to black.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II
Scene 1

AT RISE:

OLLIE sits in a spot with a pencil and paper.

OLLIE

Dear Family . . . I have joined the Navy. I am going to fix airplanes and fly in them too. Don't know when I'll see y'all 'cause I'm going over-seas.

(Beat.)

It's funny how people are. Remember when we had that giant mutt that used to chase leaves around? He wasn't the smartest of dogs. But it's what made him happy. Then we had the tom cat that used to run around the house in circles. And everyone thought he was so great 'cause he was always doing somethin', remember? Well, that cat was runnin' around so much he got hit by a truck. He never stopped. I think it was good that he got hit, though. 'Cause he never played with string or nothin'.

(Pause.)

But that dog. That dog lived for almost twenty years. And all he did was chase leaves around. And eat rocks.

(Pause.)

Tobi's a good kid, Dayle. We all are. But she's a little confusing sometimes. She's good. She means well, but she doesn't always know what she means. Ya know? And you're good, too. You're just older than her. Try not to blame her for being so young. There's so much she honestly does not understand.

(Pause.)

So look after everyone. Especially yourself. I'll write. Love, Ollie.

(Lights fade.)

END OF SCENE 1

ACT II
Scene 2

AT RISE:

It is 1:00 the next morning. ZACK is wearing his teal zoot suit, pacing nervously and steadily sipping a glass of red wine. When DEATON finally arrives with a knock at the door, ZACK hesitates to answer it. When he finally does, he is instantly filled with happy energy, DEATON immediately recognizes it as forced.

ZACK

Thanks for coming over so late, Deaton. We could always count on you.

(He moves busily around the room as to avoid eye contact.)

DEATON

Zack, you sounded so bad on the phone . . . Are you okay?

ZACK

Me? Oh, yeah! I just lost it for a minute. Can I offer you a glass of wine?

(DEATON wants the wine, but is trying to resist.)

DEATON

Uh . . .

ZACK

Oh! Sorry! Forgot you're on the wagon. Or is it off? Off, on . . .

(Raises his glass.)

Well, cheers to good times ahead.

DEATON

Are you drunk?

(Beat.)

Why don't you sit down. You're making me dizzy.

ZACK

Dizzy? You should try being me!

DEATON

C'mon. Sit down.

(ZACK sits. Pause.)

Okay . . . So, what's this about?

ZACK

(Clears his throat and pauses for a moment.)

Deaton . . . Who does your hair? I mean, you have great hair, but it's such a good cut too--

DEATON

Stop fuckin' with me.

(Flatly.)

What's up.

ZACK

(Finishes off his wine.)

Are you . . . Are you going to marry Dayle? Just wondering . . .

DEATON

Just wondering?

ZACK

I . . . I . . . I think you should. I . . . I think that you would make a good couple.

(ZACK looks at the floor. DEATON notices there's something ZACK isn't telling him.)

DEATON

Nice suit.

ZACK

You like it?

DEATON

Why did you really call me over?

(ZACK is a little uncomfortable, but he continues.)

ZACK

Do you ever think that you spend too much time thinking about yourself?

(Beat.)

I drive myself crazy. I really do, Deaton. I stay in this house all day long.

DEATON

Why don't you go out?

ZACK

I can't.

DEATON

Why not?

ZACK

(Pause.)

Do you think I look like Errol Flynn?

DEATON

Mmmmm . . .

ZACK

Wait. Before you answer honestly, just say that I do. No one says that I do, but you can say it, Deat.

DEATON

Say what? That you look like Errol Flynn?

ZACK

(Giggles.)

Don't I, though. People tell me that all the time.

DEATON

Exactly why did you get me out of bed!

ZACK

(Drinks.)

I think about all sorts of things. Everything. What I look like, what I'll wear tomorrow, what I'll wear a week from now. What I'll wear in a year. When I'll go to Yale. What I'll wear at Yale. What I'll wear at Yale's graduation. What I'll wear on my visits to Walden Pond . . . What I'll wear outside. And I think and think about it until I'm afraid to go out of the house. I'm afraid that the thoughts that I have in my room won't be as good as the stuff that happens outside.

DEATON

It's scary, huh?

ZACK

Yeah. Really scary.

DEATON

(Goes to ZACK and puts his arm around him.)

Things will work out.

ZACK

You're the only person I can talk to, Deaton.

DEATON

Well, I'm here Zack.

ZACK

You're like the brother I never had.

DEATON

What about Ollie?

ZACK

You're like the brother with a brain I never had.

(There is a pause.)

DEATON

So . . .

ZACK

So.

DEATON

What else do you think about?

ZACK

(Takes a deep breath.)

You.

(DEATON looks at him for a moment and then looks away. ZACK breaks out in nervous laughter, spilling wine all over himself. DEATON forces a chuckle, and then backs away.)

ZACK

(Laughing harder.)

Some people might consider it an obsession. Are you uncomfortable, Deaton?

DEATON

Did you just tell me you were attracted to me?

(DEATON looks at ZACK, shocked. After a moment, the two burst into hysterical laughter.)

ZACK

I bet you really want a drink now, huh?

DEATON

What a visit this has turned out to be.

ZACK

Maybe I shouldn't have called . . .

DEATON

No. I mean, coming back to this house . . .

(Slight pause.)

I have been all over the world, but there is nothing more confusing, exciting and frightful than this house.

ZACK

I know. Imagine if you were trapped in it like I am.

DEATON

It's enough to make a guy an alcoholic.

(DEATON realizes what he has said and his laughter fades.
ZACK shares this reaction.)

DEATON

(Looks shamefully at the ground.)

Dayle . . .

(TOBI comes down the stairs. ZACK does not see her.)

ZACK

Please take her, Deaton.

TOBI

(Startling ZACK.)

What are you philosophizing about now?

(ZACK looks at DEATON, horrified. He panics for a moment, and then runs up the stairs to his room.)

DEATON

Was that necessary.

TOBI

Who invited you?

DEATON

What did I do now?

TOBI

You're intrusive.

DEATON

You asked me to come here!

TOBI

I wanted you to come earlier for her birthday! I thought that somehow you could kick her back into gear--

DEATON

Oh, so now it's all my fault. You're the one who's so determined to make everybody angry.

TOBI

No, I'm not. They just don't understand me. You don't understand me either, so why don't you just mind your own business.

DEATON

Hey, you begged me to get involved in your business.

TOBI

No. I begged you to get involved in Dayle's business. I never invited you into mine.

DEATON

This isn't about Dayle and you know it--

TOBI

It most certainly is! This change that Dayle's going through, it all started right after you left last year.

DEATON

That's bullshit.

TOBI

It's true! You came here and you started hanging out, all lovey dovey and all that. And then, poof! Deaton's gone. Didn't leave a note or anything.

DEATON

I was in a bad way. I did her a favor.

TOBI

You made her crazy! She stayed in bed for a month crying over you. And then she started this thing with the farm. One day she stopped crying and went out to the farm and started working this little patch, trying to make something happen. It was really scary, Deaton, to see my sister farming a patch of land with no life in it. She actually planted, can you believe it? And she believed something was going to grow. Just like she always find a way to believe that you will some day turn around. It's pathetic.

DEATON

(Suddenly.)

Do you think she's really unhappy with her life?

TOBI

What does it matter? She's digging in dry dirt!

DEATON

When I got here, Dayle didn't give me the impression that there was anything wrong with her life. Is there something wrong with yours?

TOBI

Stop it! You are not going to come here and fill my head with insecurities just because you feel shitty about yourself.

DEATON

Well aren't you just the strong and independent one. I'm impressed.

TOBI

Don't patronize me.

DEATON

No, really. You are the only person I've ever met that can live her whole life all by herself. You have a great family. A little fucked up, but sincere.

(Pause.)

Especially Dayle.

TOBI

(Pause.)

She doesn't know what she is, you know? She can't be happy here.

DEATON

Well, she won't have to be. She's coming to Switzerland with me. We're getting married.

TOBI

(Pause.)

What?

DEATON

I asked her to marry me and she said yes.

TOBI

What is wrong with you? Do you ever grow up?

DEATON

What's wrong with you! I did what I thought was right!

TOBI

Face it, Deaton. You're a loser. I only thought you'd be worthy if you had your shit together. But you don't. You can come back when you do, but for now you're useless.

DEATON

Who are you to judge me--

TOBI

I actually thought you might've cleaned up. But you're nothing more than a worthless drunk, and God only knows what else. I don't want that shit anywhere near my sister.

DEATON

You didn't do such a good job of keeping away from it yourself, did you?

TOBI

I don't know what you're talking about--

DEATON

Do you really want me to tell you what I know--

TOBI

Shut up!

DEATON

You're not as pure as your halo--

TOBI

Shut up! I am not like you!

DEATON

You're not so different!

TOBI

I am not like you! I do not dump on other people!

DEATON

No. You just act so bitchy that no one likes you--

TOBI

But I don't dump on them. If you marry Dayle, you'll dump on her for the rest of her life.

(Slight pause.)

You've already ruined everything. You've already broken Dayle's heart. You'd just better patch things up and get the hell out of here.

DEATON

What's your problem?

TOBI

Just leave me alone.

DEATON

Talk to me.

TOBI

(Pause.)

You don't know what it's like to live here, Deaton. The air is so thick. Nothing happens. Do you know that I can't remember the last time Zack left the house? He's stuck. He's really sick, Deaton. I think he believes the crazy things he says.

DEATON

But that's no reason to be mean to him.

TOBI

I don't know how else to act. I can't be like Dayle.

DEATON

I think it's great that you're getting out of here.

TOBI

(Surprised.)

You do?

DEATON

Yeah. I don't think that anybody should be where they don't want to be.

TOBI

(Slight pause.)

It's . . . It's not that I don't want to be here. It's just . . .

DEATON

Wanna tell me how do you make your money, Tobi?

(TOBI turns to him.)

Don't bother answering. I already know.

TOBI

Whatever you've heard, it's not true.

(Pause.)

How do you know?

DEATON

I was looking to buy. And they mentioned you were dealing.

TOBI

I can't believe you were looking to buy.

DEATON

I can't believe you were dealing.

(TOBI doesn't know what to say. She just looks at DEATON in horror.)

TOBI

I'm not a dealer, I'm just working for a friend--

DEATON

Cut the shit. It's all the same.

(Slight pause.)

We don't need to talk about it. You did what you had to do.

TOBI

You remind me of my dad, Deaton. A real charmer. He charms people and then lets them down.

DEATON

How do I let people down?

TOBI

You promise things to everybody.

DEATON

So, now Dayle's everybody.

TOBI

It's not just Dayle--

DEATON

(Innocently.)

I didn't promise Zack anything.

TOBI

You didn't? He's been talking about you coming to take him away for weeks. Did you tell him that?

DEATON

Oh! That's kid's stuff!

TOBI

You're not a kid, Deaton. You can't play with people like that anymore.

DEATON

I don't play with people.

TOBI

You don't mean to, but you do. God, I wish I'd remembered all this before I'd asked you to come. I saw that Dayle was in a rut and I thought that you could get her out of it.

DEATON

You think she's stuck.

TOBI

Right.

DEATON

You think she's stuck here.

TOBI

Yes.

DEATON

And unhappy.

TOBI

Yeah.

DEATON

She didn't seem that way to me.

TOBI

She's making the best out of a situation she was forced into.

DEATON

By whom?

TOBI

Circumstances.

DEATON

Because of what? What?

TOBI

Because of me. Because she had to take care of me.

(TOBI is horrified by her own words.)

DEATON

Tobi--

(TOBI runs out of the house.)

DEATON

Dayle never felt that way about you.

(Blackout.)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT II
Scene 3

AT RISE:

It is four-thirty the same morning. GRADY is at the kitchen table, DAYLE is trying to put a steak on her black eye.

GRADY

Will you get that thing away from me!

DAYLE

You're swollen really bad.

GRADY

Who cares?

DAYLE

You gotta get rid of this guy.

GRADY

Don't give me shitty advice like that! I happen to be in love!

DAYLE

He beats you. He always has. He probably always will.

GRADY

So what. He's worth it.

DAYLE

I hate to see you like this.

GRADY

You're the one getting so worked up. I just came over here to tell you an exciting story, don't you wanna hear an exciting story?

(Excited.)

Have you ever had a menage a trois?

DAYLE

(Pause.)

No.

GRADY

I have.

DAYLE

Oh, Grady!

GRADY

See this was my exciting story! Wanna hear it! I came home from bar hoppin' with a bunch of gals from work and I was real tired see so I went in to my bedroom to go to bed, so I'm in bed and I notice that Nicki's not there. I gave him a key, see 'cause my mom's gone to Nevada for a couple of weeks. And then, I'm half asleep and I hear Nicki comin' in the front door, I think he was drunk 'cause he was makin' a lot of noise. So he has this girl, see, and he brings her into our bedroom--

DAYLE

Grady--

GRADY

No wait! I'm getting to the good part. So he comes into the room, I'm half asleep, and he lifts up my head, opens my mouth and sticks something on my tongue. You know what it was?

DAYLE

Arsenic.

GRADY

No! It was acid. I mean, we've done acid before but this was just so unexpected, ya know? So by the time I'm really tripping we're all stark naked in bed together and this girl . . . this girl wasn't really looking like a girl, she looked like . . . some sort of weird space creature. Like E.T. or somethin', all neat colors and really bug eyed. Have you ever touched an alien's breasts?

DAYLE

(Pause.)

No.

GRADY

Well, neither had I until last night, but it was weird, really weird. Invigorating, though. Like I had done something really risky, chancy. I mean, I never would have thought of doing anything like that before I knew Nicki. He's great for me isn't he?

(Pause.)

What's wrong with you?

DAYLE

So when did he beat you up?

GRADY

Oh. Well, after all was said and done and we had pretty much finished whatever it was that we were going to do with each other, the girl--you know, the alien--she bugged. I mean she totally weirded and ran out of the house. I was out of my mind at the time and didn't know what was going on. I just figured she was having a bad trip or somethin'. But Nicki told me it was because I had upset her. I'd done something wrong to make her leave. Do you think that's true Dayle? I mean, I did everything Nicki told me to.

(Pause.)

Geez, I hope he's not mad at me anymore. I'd really like to go home.

DAYLE

So, he kicked you out of your own house.

GRADY

Well, he's staying there too. Anyway, it's good for us to have these nice little chats.

DAYLE

At five o'clock in the morning?

GRADY

Well, at least we won't be wasting the day!

DAYLE

That's one way to look at it.

GRADY

Boy, am I glad Nicki didn't find out about me and Deaton.

DAYLE

What are you talking about?

GRADY

Well, Deat came over and . . .

DAYLE

And what?

(Slight pause. Then, horrified.)

You slept with him.

GRADY

Um . . .

DAYLE

You did. I know you, Grady. Oh, God . . .

GRADY
Jesus, Dayle--

DAYLE
Tell me the truth!

GRADY
Calm down.

DAYLE
You always were a talker, Grady.

GRADY
Never a liar, though.

DAYLE
Did you sleep with him or not?

GRADY
Well . . .

DAYLE
Tell me the truth!

GRADY
I am.

(Long pause.)

DAYLE
I should've known . . .

GRADY
All I'm going to say is that I'm glad he's leaving today. Nicki will bite his balls off.

DAYLE
What do you mean he's leaving?

GRADY
He's leaving for Switzerland today.

DAYLE
No, he's not.

GRADY

He used my phone to make his flight arrangements.

(Pause.)

What's wrong?

DAYLE

Are you sure?

GRADY

Dayle, I was there.

(Pause.)

DAYLE

He didn't tell me he was leaving.

GRADY

That's so Deaton isn't it! Just to take off and not tell anybody where he's going! Don't worry Dayle, he'll turn up in a year or two. Men come and go, darlin'. You'll have to learn to accept that sooner or later. I'm kind of glad to see him go, actually. I mean, look at what he's done! He's distracted me from my boyfriend. He's made me unfaithful. It's a good thing he's leaving when he is. Besides, he's always pumping your head full of those childish fantasies. I can tell that's what he's been doing. Always has, since we were little kids. Things'll go right back to normal once he's gone. You'll see.

(Beat; then, DAYLE paces furiously, desperately for a minute. GRADY-- who rarely sees this side of her--stares skeptically. Finally, DAYLE retreats to the top of the refrigerator where she'd kept the bottle of Southern Comfort TOBI had given her for her birthday; the bottle still has a bow on it. DAYLE takes it down.)

GRADY

Dayle . . . What're you doing?

DAYLE

(Finding the shot glass.)

What does it look like.

GRADY

Is that for me or you?

DAYLE

Me.

(DAYLE throws back a shot. Then, another.)

GRADY

Whoa. Slow down, girl.

DAYLE

I just should've known better.

(DAYLE does her third shot and within seconds is feeling the effects, which are visible in her facial expression.)

GRADY

It's the third one that hits you. Hand me down that bottle.

(DAYLE passes the bottle. GRADY drinks. There is a long pause.)

DAYLE

This is what I get . . .

GRADY

For what?

DAYLE

For acting like a kid.

GRADY

All you're gonna get is a nasty hangover. If you're lucky, you'll get sick.

(GRADY hands DAYLE the bottle. DAYLE drinks again. They continue to pass it back and forth as they quickly become drunk.)

DAYLE

I don't know what's wrong with me.

GRADY

Nothing's wrong with you.

DAYLE

Deaton makes me crazy. I let him make me crazy.

GRADY

You just want someone to love you. There's nothin' wrong with you. You're just like everyone else.

DAYLE

That's just the thing. I'm not like everyone else. Everyone else is leaving. Everyone else gave up. Everyone else is going really far away.

GRADY

Not me.

DAYLE

No wonder I'm confused.

(The two women share a familiar laugh.)

DAYLE

(Pause. Then, very serious.)

Grady . . . do you remember my mother?

GRADY

(Also very serious.)

Yeah. Some.

DAYLE

What do you remember about her?

GRADY

Just kid's stuff.

DAYLE

Tell me.

GRADY

I remember . . . She was really pretty. I admired her.

DAYLE

Me, too.

GRADY

I remember she smoked.

DAYLE

Long cigarettes.

GRADY

And had long, wavy hair. Like, way down her back.

DAYLE

Like mine used to be.

GRADY

Kinda like that.

DAYLE

What else.

GRADY

She liked to listen to Joni Mitchell . . . I don't know. We were so young.

DAYLE

Do I remind you of her?

GRADY

No, Dayle. Why on earth would you ever think that?

DAYLE

Sometimes I remind myself of her. Someone who can't keep it together.

GRADY

Funny how you weren't talkin' like this before Deaton showed up.

DAYLE

I planted . . . I . . . I planted a crop even though everyone told me I was crazy. What happens if everyone's right? Oh, God . . . everything's so jumbled . . . I can't make it out.

GRADY

Same thing happened last year, after he left. This time you can't cut your hair off 'cause you already did that.

DAYLE

I really thought this time would be different.

GRADY

I am so sick of seeing you like this. You live for this fairy tale, knight-in-shining-armor-thing Deaton does for you. And that's what it is, too. A fairy tale. Fairy tales are real short, Dayle. Look at . . . uh . . . Rapunzel. The prince climbs up her hair and saves her and that's the end. They don't let the story go on, 'cause he probably ends up leaving her with the clap and nine kids at the top of the God damned tower. And he takes her hair with him. Same fuckin' thing. Deaton leaves before he can make you hate him.

DAYLE

Do you really believe--

GRADY

Do I have to be any more plain about it? If you marry Deaton, you will have married your father. Is that what you want! Huh! Do you want the only man in your life to be a worthless drunk who doesn't really give a shit about you!

DAYLE

Shut up!

GRADY

Wake up and get over him!

DAYLE

You should talk! At least Deaton doesn't beat me!

GRADY

(Lowering her voice.)

Well, if he did at least you wouldn't be able to hide from the truth. 'Cause it'd be branded all over your fuckin' face.

DAYLE

(Begins to cry.)

Oh, God, Grady . . .

GRADY

At least I know the truth. I might pretend I don't know what's goin' on. But really . . . I do. You have no fuckin' clue.

DAYLE

(Sobbing.)

I'm sorry.

(They embrace.)

GRADY

You're not like your mother, Dayle. She never wanted to be anyone's mother. You always wanted to be everyone's mother.

DAYLE

I don't know what to do, Grady.

(Pause. Suddenly, DAYLE gets an idea and runs out the back of the house.)

GRADY

Dayle?

(TOBI enters through the front door. She and GRADY glare at one another.)

GRADY

Hello, little girl. Want some candy?

(Pause.)

TOBI

I saw your coked-up boyfriend on the way over. He's looking for you. He's going to kill you, you know.

GRADY

I'd better go find him then.

(GRADY gets up to exit.)

TOBI

You're pathetic.

GRADY

Just honest.

TOBI

Your boyfriend says that he found out you've been messing around. You're dead.

GRADY

Why don't you look after your sister!

TOBI

Look, Grady. I really don't think you have any right--

GRADY

(Cutting her off.)

I have every right! You forget things, Tobi. You wanted to be just like her. Don't you remember?

(TOBI starts to walk away, but GRADY grabs her by the arm.)

GRADY

Do you have any idea where you come from? Do you even know what your mother was? Your mother was the town whore--

TOBI

Stop it!

GRADY

And your dad was a drunk and no one cared about you kids. So you know who did? Your sister. She did everything for everybody and never asked for anything back.

TOBI

(Offended.)

So what are you trying to tell me? That I owe her? That I have to take care of her now?

GRADY

That's exactly what I'm telling you. You owe her respect, if nothing else.

TOBI

Grady, I have a lot going on right now--

GRADY

I don't give a shit! You've made everyone not give a fuck about you!

TOBI

Well, that means a lot coming from you. You epitomize this place. You're going nowhere but down.

GRADY

At least I know what loyalty is.

(Pause, gives TOBI an infuriated glare.)

How the hell could you let Deaton into this house.

TOBI

What are you talking about?

GRADY

That was your biggest mistake.

TOBI

I didn't know he was coming.

GRADY

Bullshit! Don't lie to me. You want to keep anyone away from her, it should be him.

TOBI

I don't know what you're talking about.

GRADY

Well then, you're dumber than I thought you were.

TOBI

Don't blame me if Dayle makes a stupid mistake.

GRADY

She's a good, strong person. What she needs is a little support, not some dodo who's going to fill her head with unreachable fantasies.

TOBI

It doesn't matter. He's leaving.

GRADY

I got him to leave. And he has no choice now.

(Pause. GRADY's method is inferred silently.)

TOBI

How unselfish of you.

GRADY

I'm probably going to get killed when I go home.

(Beat.)

TOBI

Did you know that woman . . . the one who torched those little kids?

(GRADY shakes her head "no".)

TOBI

Nobody knew them. In a town this size, nobody knew this woman or any one of her nine children. Just think about them, in that house, all alone and scared. And with no way out. They couldn't get out.

(Beat.)

How do you think that woman will live with herself?

(Beat.)

GRADY

Everybody makes mistakes.

(GRADY exits. DAYLE excitedly runs into the house.)

DAYLE

Tobi . . . Where's Ollie?

TOBI

Ollie . . .

(She takes out OLLIE's letter and places it on the table.)

I talked to my host family and they said I could come early.

DAYLE

What's early?

TOBI

I'm leaving today.

DAYLE

You tell me this now?

TOBI

What difference does it make?

DAYLE

It makes a big difference.

TOBI

Well, too late now.

DAYLE

Guess so.

TOBI

I'm never coming back, you know.

DAYLE

I won't ask you to.

(Pause.)

TOBI

I got him to come.

DAYLE

What?

TOBI

Deaton. I got him to come and see you.

DAYLE

Do you ever stop--

TOBI

Listen to me! I knew you were unhappy. I called Deaton and told him and he came. I thought he could do some good, but . . .

DAYLE

I don't believe you--

TOBI

Look, I know you're down about what happened with Deat and Grady. But she only did it for your own good.

DAYLE

Excuse me?

TOBI

She saw it too. It was all a mistake, Dayle. We all wanted to make up for it in some way--

DAYLE

Did it ever occur to you to mind your own business? Get out of here!

TOBI

I'm really sorry! I wanted Deaton to introduce you to new things . . . help you get on your way. I never wanted him to . . . marry you. That's the last thing I wanted. This place is no future--

DAYLE

Well, you're wrong.

TOBI

Why do you think nobody stays here?

DAYLE

(Pause.)

I don't know. And you won't either. So go.

(Pause.)

TOBI

Why don't you tell me to stay?

DAYLE

You make your own choices.

(TOBI crosses paths with ZACK on her way out.)

ZACK

"I was angry with my friend
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow."

(He stares at her for a moment. TOBI takes a beat before she slowly exits.)

DAYLE

Zack, you wouldn't believe--

(ZACK holds up an envelope in front of DAYLE.)

DAYLE

What's that?

ZACK

You tell me.

(He hands it to her. She opens it and reads.)

DAYLE

Dear Zack . . . On behalf of the Creative Writing Department of Eastern State University, we are pleased to offer you acceptance . . . Oh, Zack!

ZACK

Are you responsible for this?

DAYLE

Well . . .

ZACK

How could you do it without asking me?

DAYLE

Because I knew you'd say no. But you got in!

ZACK

Well, I'm not going.

DAYLE

Listen, I know you're scared, but--

ZACK

I'm not scared, I just don't want to. And I won't.

(ZACK tears the letter in half.)

DAYLE

You're so wrapped up in your fantasy world that you've lost sight of your life.

(ZACK attempts to exit.)

DAYLE

Don't you dare walk out on this conversation! I am sick and tired of everyone sweeping their shit under the rug! That is why we're all so miserable. It's not the damn small town. It'll be us whether one of us goes to England, or Switzerland or runs up to their god damned bedroom!

(Beat.)

I thought college might be a way for you to meet people and to use your mind. For real, not pretend. It's time. You know it is.

(Beat.)

Are you listening to me?

ZACK

(With his back to her.)

Yes.

DAYLE

Look at me then.

(ZACK does not turn to her.)

Zack? Are you okay?

ZACK

I . . .

DAYLE

What?

ZACK

I want you to know . . .

DAYLE

Yeah?

ZACK

I want you to know that . . . I have a few . . .

(Slight pause.)

I have a few problems.

DAYLE

Well, that's . . . That's a real news flash, Zack.

(Beat.)

You have a few problems. So what! We all have problems. I'll tell you what my problem is. Wanna hear it? I don't stick to my guns about what I really believe in. I thought about going away. But I love it here. There's nothing wrong with where we are. I'm tired of feeling like I should want something else. I don't want anything besides what I have.

ZACK

I tried to help you.

DAYLE

You tried to help me? When?

ZACK

Well, it's ruined now. I tried to help you, but it obviously wasn't the help you wanted.

DAYLE

Lots of people tried to help me. But nobody asked me what I needed.

(By this time ZACK is wiping tears from his face.)

DAYLE

Why are you crying?

ZACK

Because I hate this house.

DAYLE

For someone who hates it, you sure spend an awful lot of time in it.

ZACK

I know.

DAYLE

You know, all those people flying off to Europe have it easy. It's trying to deal with the everyday stuff that's hard.

(Beat.)

I'll help you. We'll work on it this summer.

ZACK

I can't believe I might be going to a state school.

(Beat.)

It seems so far away.

DAYLE

It's two hours away. You can come back and visit.

ZACK

Visit who?

DAYLE

Me.

ZACK

Does that mean that--

DAYLE

I'm not going.

ZACK

It'll be just you and Ollie, then.

DAYLE

Oh, Ollie left us a letter . . .

(She retrieves and opens the letter.)

ZACK

(Reads over her shoulder.)

Dear Family-- Ha! Look at the way he spelled family!

DAYLE

(Continues.)

I have joined the Navy. I am going to fix airplanes and fly in them too. Don't know when I'll see y'all 'cause I'm going over-seas . . .

(Pause.)

ZACK

You're going to be all alone.

(Beat.)

Think you can survive without us?

(DAYLE holds out her hand to show ZACK her prize.

He takes her hand to inspect. The two are quiet as OLLIE wheels in his engine, now completed, on a little red wagon and addresses the audience.)

OLLIE

I don't know any bad people really. Do you? I mean what's bad? It's hard to say . . . isn't it? I think so.

(Pause, motions to engine.)

Well, it's done. Looks good, huh? It's easy. All you have to do is sort it out and figure out what goes where . . . and there you are.

(He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small part.)

Except for this. I couldn't quite figure out where it goes. It's funny though. Cause it runs. It runs without this thing. Funny, huh? You kinda wonder why it was there in the first place. But then, I guess it's different for everybody. I mean, I'm not gonna do it the same way the first guy did. But, like I said, it runs. Might fall apart, but that's the chance you take. I'll hold on to this though.

(OLLIE puts the part back in his pocket. He glances over his shoulder at DAYLE and ZACK. Blackout.)

END OF PLAY

CHARACTERS

DAYLE	A young woman, early to mid-twenties. A natural, warm smile; Ivory Soap beautiful.
DEATON	A good-looking guy in his mid-twenties, irresistibly charming and likable.
TOBI	A girl of seventeen. Stern and neatly dressed.
ZACK	Twenty-eight. Has been rejected from Yale for ten years and is still applying.
GRADY	Early to mid-twenties. Hell bent on enjoying life.
OLLIE	DAYLE's twin brother. Seemingly slow and simple.

SETTING

The entire play takes place in the family's adjoining living room and kitchen; small town, America. The house is disheveled, messy, and makeshift, reflecting poverty and neglect. There are three doors, one to go outside and one with a staircase which leads to the unseen, upstairs bedrooms. The third door is used only by OLLIE; it goes out to the garage. The kitchen space has a round table with three mismatched chairs. The sink is always piled with dirty dishes; the refrigerator, near empty.

TIME

The present.