

EDEN PRAIRIE, 1971  
by Mat Smart

*About the play (from the playwright):*

On the night *Apollo 15* lands on the moon, a draft dodger steals home to Eden Prairie, Minnesota from Canada. He risks arrest to deliver a message to a young woman from his high school class. This beautifully etched play challenges notions of our own bravery and the true cost of freedom.

Please choose one of the following excerpts.

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*PETE—Male, 20s*

*About the scene:*

PETE is sneaking back to his hometown for the first time since dodging the draft. He has found his old classmate, RACHEL, to tell her the truth about a friend who died in Vietnam. Later, he remembers how it felt to see his number called for the draft.

1.

PETE

He was in love with you.

*(Beat)*

And I know you two didn't know each other that well, but when we were right at the border—when me and Nathaniel and Aaron were about to cross and abandon everything we'd ever known, Aaron stopped. He couldn't do it.

He said he had to go back.

He said, "If, one day, Rachel Thompson and I get married and have kids, I need to be able to look her in the eyes, right?"

I need to be able to say  
that when my country called me  
I answered."

[...]

You know what Aaron's favorite thing to say was?— "I don't know. Whatever you guys want to do."

I mean, Nathaniel doesn't walk down the street without a purpose. He has a thousand reasons why he refused to fight.

But Aaron? Aaron never made up his mind about anything. I loved him like a brother, but he never stood up for anything. The only thing he cared about was baseball and movies

And you.

But that night—when we were about to make the biggest decision of our lives—he finally found his backbone.

2.

PETE

First drawn was September 14<sup>th</sup>—that's Nathaniel.

My birthday was third—December 30<sup>th</sup>.

Aaron's was fifth. October 18<sup>th</sup>.

Out of 366 days pulled, how did the three of us end up in the first five draws?

How is that fair?

We all watched it together—in Nate’s basement—and it was like *The Twilight Zone*. Watching them pull birthdays out of a big glass jar. Putting them up on the board like—like—bingo.

We thought we must’ve heard wrong

But we didn’t.

We all passed our physicals. We all got our Order to Report for Induction on the same day. It was like Uncle Sam was daring us to leave.

And I knew things would be different in Canada, but there isn’t a single thing in my life that’s the same. No part of my day is the same. No one from here is there.

Nathaniel was only on the farm for a week before he said, “Fella, let’s get to Toronto. Let’s get somewhere we can protest.” We had this big fight and he called me a—

(*Beat*)

I haven’t heard from him.

And I haven’t written or called anyone because I don’t want the F.B.I. to have anything to go on.

I mean, all I do is shovel shit and feed the animals and shovel shit and dig post holes and cut wire. That’s all I do—ten hours a day.

[...]

over and over and over again, I—

Look at my hands

(*PETE holds out his hands*)

Look how wrecked my hands are.

I can’t make a fist. I can’t write a letter. I don’t know how much longer I can—

(*Beat*)

But there are two men—two Americans—standing on the moon right now. And there is one in orbit around it. Right now. And that is a good thing. That is something this country is doing that we can be proud of.

(*PETE looks up at the moon*)

They can look down at the Earth and cover it with their thumb.

[...]

Can you imagine being able to do that?

Can you imagine being somewhere where gravity doesn’t have as strong of a pull as here?