

An Unnecessary Stain On Silence

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Abicus	Somewhat an instigator among the characters. Abicus is at times mysterious and creates confusion throughout the play. Almost acts as a narrator, but becomes more of a part of the group throughout.	Any	Any
Belloy	More prone to becoming upset throughout the show. Inquisitive in nature, but not always patient; though they make solid connections with each of the characters throughout the show.	Any	Any
Cullick	Has one of the more emotional journeys of the show. Seems to be more introspective in nature than the others and looks for an answer to things, but is more patient about it than Belloy.	Any	Any
Delacroix	Somewhat the outside of the group. Somewhat mischievous, but mostly just wants to create critical thinking, but sometimes detracts from the overall point.	Any	Any
Plant	Used in different ways throughout the show. Mainly both as an audience plant for other characters to interact with in the show and also as the stage manager who gets pulled into the show due to a mess-up.	Any	Any

SETTING DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

TIME

A place

Mostly onstage

Current

There's never really any concrete place established other than being continually present in the theater the play is taking place.

ACT I

SCENE ONE

ABICUS and BELLOY are standing alone on an empty stage.

ABICUS looks up at BELLOY.

ABICUS

Do you hear running water?

Nothing is heard.

BELLOY

Are you joking?

ABICUS

Of course not.

BELLOY

Then no.

ABICUS

Maybe it stopped then.

BELLOY

You can't hear it anymore?

ABICUS

I never heard it to begin with.

BELLOY

Then why did you ask?

ABICUS

I wanted to know if you heard it.

BELLOY

Why did you want to know if I can hear the . . .

The sound of running water can now be heard.

It starts soft, but almost instantly sounds as though water is rushing around them; almost as if they are being swept away.

ABICUS

What? Can you hear it?

BELLOU

Of course, I can! Where is this coming from?

ABICUS

You can't tell?

BELLOU

The sound is deafening! I can't tell anything. I am barely able to distinguish the sound of your voice.

ABICUS

Then stop trying.

BELLOU

What?

The sound gets louder as ABICUS and BELLOU continue speaking inaudibly.

The sound stops.

ABICUS takes a step forward and addresses the audience.

ABICUS

Chapter 1: A pool of thought.

CULLICK walks onstage from upstage left and comes to almost replace the staging ABICUS had with BELLOU.

CULLICK

What was that?

ABICUS

What do you mean?

CULLICK

That noise!

BELLOY

What the hell is chapter one? What is. . . ?

ABICUS

Calm down. What did you hear?

BELLOY

What did I hear? What do you think I heard? I heard the sound of rushing water and I have no idea how I'm not completely submerged right now because I see no other explanation for the sound of that much water!

CULLICK

Oh, thank god. I thought I was going crazy for a second.

ABICUS

So you heard it too?

BELLOY

What is going on here?

ABICUS

It sounds like you two heard some running water.

BELLOY

Where did it come from?

ABICUS

How should I know? There's water all over the planet.

CULLICK

But there's no water here. . . ,

ABICUS

Then what did you hear? I wonder. . . Would 2,000,000 gallons of milk sound the same as 2,000,000 gallons of water running down the same stream?

CULLICK

Are you saying we heard milk?

ABICUS

How would I know? I didn't hear it.

CULLICK

How could you not hear it?

ABICUS

What should I have heard?

CULLICK

The water, or the milk, or something!

ABICUS

But there's no water here. . . weren't you the one who said that?

BELLOY

What were you saying?

ABICUS

Pardon?

BELLOY

There was a moment when I couldn't hear you, but I could see you speaking. It was right before you said, "Chapter 1: A pool of thought."

DELACROIX walks onstage to downstage left and addresses the audience.

DELACROIX

A pool of thought. Now, what could that mean?

ABICUS, BELLOY and CULLICK all look at DELACROIX.

I'm guessing it has something to do with the rushing water. Maybe, it's something to do with the rushing water. . . or milk, or contemplating whether it exists or not.

ABICUS

Who the fuck are you?

DELACROIX

I'm sorry.

ABICUS

You heard me. Who the fuck are you?

The sound of rushing water suddenly comes back in full force.

BELLOY and CULLICK react to it. ABICUS and DELACROIX continue to look at each other.

The sound stops.

DELACROIX

I couldn't hear you.

ABICUS

Oh, HA HA! Very funny. . . .

BELLOY and CULLICK are still reacting to the sound.

BELLOY

Where is that coming from?

DELACROIX

Wouldn't you like to know?

ABICUS

No, who the fuck are you? I'm the mysterious character in this play.

DELACROIX

And what a good job you're doing at keeping it mysterious. Ooo, rushing water. . . how inventive!

CULLICK looks at ABICUS.

CULLICK

So, you're causing it?

DELACROIX

Causing what?

ABICUS

Seriously?

DELACROIX

I'm just trying to give the audience a little perspective on your "chapter title." Also, chapters? Really? You're not writing a book. Wouldn't parts be more appropriate?

BELLOY

Look, can you just explain-

DELACROIX snaps their fingers.

DELACROIX

Stop!

BELLOY

Did you just snap at me?

DELACROIX

Shit, that was supposed to freeze the play.

DELACROIX snaps again.

Dammit; I really thought that would work.

ABICUS

This is my story. I started it!

DELACROIX

Sure, because that makes you the main character. . . or are you aiming for narrator?

ABICUS tries to ignore DELACROIX.

ABICUS

I'm sorry, we're going to jump to another scene while we sort this all out.

DELACROIX

Don't you mean Chapter?

ABICUS

Shut up.

SCENE TWO

*ABICUS, BELLOY, CULLICK, and
DELACROIX all take a beat to get into
character for a new scene, change positions
and then get ready to start the scene.*

CULLICK

Can we give some explanation to my character?

DELACROIX

What?

ABICUS sighs.

ABICUS

Yeah, that's fair. They just came in when things sort of derailed.

DELACROIX

Well, what's the most important thing for someone to know about you?

CULLICK

Wow.

DELACROIX

Look, I'm sorry, but we need to get back to the plot. . . .

BELLOY

What plot?

DELACROIX

Shut up. Look, I don't mean to be insensitive, but you made a whole thing about wanting to introduce your character, and what better way than to get to the personal stuff right away?

CULLICK

I was groomed by my uncle when I was a teenager.

DELACROIX

Well, that's personal.

CULLICK

It started when I was 12 years old. We had a special connection, and he took a special eye to me around when I hit puberty.

Pause.

He always made sure we never went beyond anything I wanted to do, but I agreed most of the time. Don't get me wrong. I would stop him, but he was very persuasive, and always made it sound like he was protecting me. Keeping me safe. I think his wife knew. . . maybe even my mother knew, but they never said anything to me. It made me feel special to have a secret from them, but I wish now that it had been out in the open, and things could've been addressed at a better time, and that night never would have had to happen. . . that night my first semester of college. You see, we used to meet once a week and talk. He said talking to me helped him not to drink, so I told him I'd set a time once a week with him to talk and during that time he taught me, very well, driving and all that. Got my license on the first try, but when I went to college, I didn't see him at all, and he missed me. He became obsessed and wrote me constantly. Sent me all sorts of presents and kept counting down the days to my 18th birthday. It felt so wrong as if he thought it was romantic. I told him not to come on my birthday, but I- he has such a way of getting through to me. There was this nickname he used to call me that would-

BELLOY

Lil Bit?

DELACROIX

What?

BELLOY

Was it Lil Bit? *How I Learned to Drive*. . . what? You thought no one in a play would know *How I Learned to Drive*?

CULLICK

What can I say? It's what came to mind.

ABICUS

Jesus Christ. That was all bullshit?

CULLICK

Ask Paula Vogel.

DELACROIX

So you create this whole onus about needing your character to be acknowledged and then you lie to us the entire time?

CULLICK

Hey, more people should know about Lil Bit.

ABICUS

Oh, come off of it!

CULLICK

At least you know something about me now.

ABICUS

We literally know nothing about you now. And we knew nothing about you before, so what are you talking about?

CULLICK

You know I lie.

Slight pause.

That's something.

Lights cut with a spotlight now on ABICUS.

SCENE THREE

ABICUS

Chapter 2: Rushing Water.

Lights come back on.

ABICUS walks offstage.

*BELLOY and CULLICK are still on stage
with each other.*

CULLICK

You ever notice how when you pour out a glass of water on the stone, it seems to be completely gone by morning? But when you spill it on the carpet, it seems to last forever. I swear I'm still trying to dry out some spills in my house left by the original owner from 3,000 years ago.

BELLOY

Do you think milk would be any different on the stone?

CULLICK

Yes, but nothing I would notice.

BELLOY

Did you know that cow tipping thing is a myth?

CULLICK

How is it a myth?

BELLOY

You can't do it.

CULLICK

Why not?

BELLOY

They're too heavy to tip. It might be true that, if tipped, they can't get up, but you can't tip them in the first place.

CULLICK

What if you used a car?

BELLOY

Just run over a cow? Might break your car.

CULLICK

No, just ease it over. I'm sure a car has the strength to tip its weight.

BELLOY

Sure.

CULLICK

So you can tip it that way.

BELLOY

But you don't. You've never heard of someone using a car to tip cows. And since using a car is probably the only way you could hope to achieve tipping cows, and that's never part of what you hear about cow tipping, it's safe to say, no one ever does that.

CULLICK

But it's possible.

BELLOY

But it would still be a myth.

CULLICK

Have you tried?

BELLOY

To tip a cow with a car?

CULLICK

Without.

BELLOY

No.

CULLICK

Then maybe cow-tipping being a myth is a myth.

BELLOY

Why would. . . ?

CULLICK

Why would cow-tipping be a myth at all?

BELLOY

No one lives on cow farms anymore, so who would know? I wonder how long it's been since anyone has tried, without a car, but maybe it's been so long since anyone has tried it, people started to think it's impossible. With or without a car.

CULLICK

I'm trying to imagine tipping a bull now.

BELLOY

Couldn't do it.

CULLICK

Well, I don't know. I'm trying to separate the concept of a bull from the mental image of a bull being punt up before trying to buck off a cowboy or fight a matador. I can't imagine a regular bull. Why are bulls so stigmatized?

BELLOY

I don't know.

CULLICK

I mean, what does that even benefit?

BELLOY

I don't know.

CULLICK

It's like. . .

BELLOY

I don't know.

CULLICK

What?

BELLOY

I'm saying I don't know, but what I mean is I don't care. Bulls, cows, water, milk, parts, pools. . . I just don't care.

CULLICK

What is wrong with you?

BELLOY

I just, I'm getting tired of the bullshit. How many of the beats are we going to hit? We've done the meta, now all we need is an intrusion that ignores itself so it doesn't technically break the fourth wall.

CULLICK

Intrusion?

BELLOY

And here we go!

DELACROIX appears at the back of the house walking towards the stage through the audience.

DELACROIX

I think we're done with Chapters at this point. I think we can move on to segments.

BELLOY

What do you think is the next chapter? Chaos and Confusion? Or maybe Crashing and Raging Rapids?

The sound of rushing water returns, but only CULLICK reacts to it.

What? Can you hear the water again? Huh, I wonder what makes me. . .

CULLICK

Stop!

The sound keeps going.

CULLICK is breathing heavily.

Let me think.

DELACROIX

Think on your own time.

Blackout.

Sound stops.

SCENE FOUR

Lights come up with no one on stage.

ABICUS walks in from upstage center all the way downstage center, sits down on the apron and addresses the audience.

ABICUS

I'm lost. I'm starting to think this play isn't going to make sense. Which is okay. . . I guess. Not everything has to make, not every play has to make sense. Does anything make sense? In a way, nothing making sense makes everything make sense, which makes me feel a little better when I start to think that none of this makes sense.

ABICUS looks directly at an audience member.

Do you think it makes sense?

ABICUS addresses another audience member nearby.

No, not you, you!

ABICUS points at audience member.

You, do you think it makes sense?

PLANT

Me?

ABICUS

Yes!

PLANT

Do I think what makes sense?

ABICUS

The play.

PLANT

Not everything?

ABICUS

No, no, just the play; I don't care if nothing else makes sense. I've made my peace with it.

PLANT

Uh, I don't know. I think it's going to make sense later? Maybe?

ABICUS

Interesting, why?

PLANT

Well, plays - confusing plays, usually come together by the end, don't they?

ABICUS

Do they?

PLANT

Yes, I mean, I think so.

ABICUS

Like what?

PLANT

I don't know.

ABICUS

This is your first time at a play?

PLANT

No.

ABICUS

Then name a play that's confusing.

PLANT

The Mousetrap. Er, no, I mean, well kind of.

ABICUS

You know the real confusing part of it?

PLANT

What?

ABICUS

It was Agatha Christie.

PLANT

I know.

ABICUS

No, I mean, she was the butler; she's murdered them all. Every book or play she wrote was based off of one or multiple of her own murders.

PLANT

Oh.

ABICUS

Or maybe not, I don't know. I've never looked into her personal life. I've only read *And Then There Were None* in school, or *Ten Little Indians* as Agatha titled it; which is definitely the better title, racial slur aside. I don't want to say it's all that great of a title. I generally prefer my titles to be without racial slurs, but *And then There Were None* gives away the ending.

ABICUS turns to face the rest of the audience.

If you haven't read it; there's none at the end. Sorry to spoil two Agatha Christie's for you in one night, but they've both been out for over 3 years.

ABICUS turns back to PLANT.

Is this play making any more sense?

PLANT

You mean me?

ABICUS

No, everyone else I've been talking to this whole time; yes, you!

PLANT

No.

ABICUS

Great. Love it. A real answer; definitive with no posturing. Okay, I'm done with you. You can go.

Pause.

Eh hmm, you can go! Go. Go on, get out of here! Go! Go! Get!

PLANT gets up out of their seat and exits the house.

Thank you! Don't worry people, and people of differing or the same gender, they were an audience plant. Trust me, I would LOVE to actually kick one of you out, but this is all just part of the play.

Long pause.

What? Are you all waiting on me? I guess that makes sense. Let me see. . . .

ABICUS looks out over the audience.

. . . who should be my next victim. . . you're all scared. Huh, no you're not; you're all thinking it's gonna be another audience plant, but come on, we only have the budget for so many actors.

ABICUS gestures to where PLANT exited.

They weren't even an actor; that was our usher. That's right, that's who showed you to your seat, and you've already forgotten their face.

This can be true, but it works best if the audience PLANT was not the usher and this line is a lie.

Feel like an asshole now, don't you? All right, enough of that. How about you?

ABICUS points to a real member of the audience.

Do you think it makes sense?

MEMBER

-

ABICUS

Why do you think it makes sense?

ABICUS

Why do you think it doesn't make sense?

ABICUS interrupts before audience MEMBER can actually say anything.

ABICUS addresses the general audience instead of MEMBER.

ABICUS

This is just another actor we've planted in the audience everyone, so don't trust anything they say.

ABICUS looks back at MEMBER.

Sorry, please continue.

Slight or no pause.

Answer.

MEMBER

-

At this point, ABICUS can improvise with MEMBER for a little bit, or move things along.

If during this time MEMBER asserts they are not an actor planted in the audience, then ABICUS should relentlessly agree with them very sarcastically, and then move on.

ABICUS

What do you think the rushing water means?

MEMBER

-

ABICUS

Do you think it's water or milk?

ABICUS can wait for an answer here, or move on to the next line.

MEMBER

-

ABICUS

Remember, the play is already written, so this is your chance to impress everybody here, you know, if you get it right while everything is still confusing. . . that means your smart.

MEMBER

-

ABICUS

You sure?

MEMBER

-

ABICUS stands up and yells offstage.

Hey! Switch it!

If MEMBER said milk ABICUS says water here and vice versa.

ABICUS

We're doing water instead tonight, so make sure the buckets that pour on the audience are ready with water.

ABICUS

We're doing milk instead tonight, so make sure the buckets that pour on the audience are ready with milk.

ABICUS looks back at the audience.

ABICUS

I know what you're thinking. If water pours down, we'll get to see if it really keeps the carpet wet for 3,000 years. I know, I'm excited too.

ABICUS

I know what you're thinking. If milk pours down, we'll get to see if it really keeps the carpet wet for 3,000 years. I know, I'm excited too.

ABICUS

Okay, I'm done with you now, go on and get out of here. No, I'm just kidding, please stay. Even if you're begging for an excuse to leave, and you just got really excited at the idea of me letting you leave; you have to stay.

ABICUS starts to walk away and then turns back to the audience.

See, if they were a plant, I would've made them leave. Or maybe we're going to make them sit there for the entire show, even though they've seen it 200 times before.

Pause.

Oh well.

Beat.

Cue the water noise!

ABICUS snaps their fingers.

Nothing happens.

Damn, why can't I do that anymore? Oh, I know! Cue the milk noise!

ABICUS gestures as though they're about to snap, but then doesn't.

Ah! I got ya!

ABICUS walks offstage.

BELLOY walks onstage where ABICUS was and addresses the audience.

BELLOY

Annoying, isn't it?

Blackout.

SCENE FIVE

BELLOY is onstage.

Beat.

BELLOY looks around for DELACROIX.

Pause.

DELACROIX enters the stage on the opposite side of the stage where BELLOY is looking.

BELLOY sees DELACROIX, but DELACROIX is still just walking.

BELLOY

Do you. . . .

*DELACROIX's attention goes towards
BELLOY.*

Do you know what's going on?

DELACROIX

Does anyone?

BELLOY

That's not what I mean.

DELACROIX

It's what you asked.

BELLOY

No, it's what you asked. I just want to have some clue of what's going on.

DELACROIX

A clue? Is this a riddle?

BELLOY

Okay, first, stop answering every question with a question. Second, I'm just saying, if there's something that explains. . . some of this, that you know, and I don't, please, let me in. At least a little. It seems as though you and. . .

ABICUS crosses the stage behind them.

*BELLOY and DELACROIX look at ABICUS
and then wait awkwardly until ABICUS is
offstage.*

. . . they have some idea of what's going on. . . at least more than the rest of us do.

DELACROIX

Okay, first, I don't think a clue of what's going on makes sense. I think someone either has the tools to make sense of their surroundings, or they don't. And I think most, if not all people. . . don't. The idea that everything makes sense is most likely a concept put in place to make things more comfortable to us when they don't make sense, but even that concept is a construct that makes us feel better about nothing making any sense. So is that a reliable concept, or is it an idea too shrouded in bias that we can never fully trust our own ideas?

BELLOY looks at where ABICUS exited the stage.

BELLOY

Wow, it's like you two are the same person.

DELACROIX

And secondly, I don't know. This is your world; I'm just living in it.

BELLOY

What? What on earth do you mean by that?

DELACROIX

This is all your story; I'm just an ancillary character.

BELLOY

So, I'm supposed to be the main character of this play?

DELACROIX

Sure, if you want to use a play as a metaphor for your life.

BELLOY

Excuse me, there's no metaphor about it! We're in the middle of a fucking play right now. We are actors portraying fictitious characters, with pre-written dialogue, mostly, and we have an entire audience of people watching everything we do.

DELACROIX

Sure, metaphorically, I see what you're saying.

BELLOY

Are you kidding me? You were literally ignoring the rest of us when you first came on stage because you were only talking to the audience; there's nothing metaphorical about them!

No response.

You know. . . near the beginning of this play!

No response.

Are you denying that?

DELACROIX

I'm not denying anything. I'm just saying, I get the metaphor.

BELLO Y

Jesus Christ!

DELACROIX

Look, regardless of whether all of this is a pre-determined play, or a simulation, or a turtle's dream or something. . . .

BELLO Y

It's a play; nothing to determine! Not a turtle dream, A PLAY! With you and me acting in it!

DELACROIX

Regardless, this life-

BELLO Y

Play.

DELACROIX

. . . this play. . . is all about you, whether you choose to see it that way or not. That's the way I see things as well. It's impossible not to. Every single experience we have points us to the ultimate conclusion that we are the center of the universe. Even if you're particularly socially aware, and you choose to be conscious of what's around you, and constantly work to appreciate other people's perspectives, even that awareness is an awareness you're experiencing through your own personal lens that is at the absolute center of your universe. . . ever adding to the idea that this is what's going on right now. It will always be telling you, you are here experiencing this profound moment of understanding someone's perspective. It can never truly be anyone else's perspective. No matter what, you'll always be the main character of the play.

BELLO Y

The fuck?

DELACROIX

This is just what's written for me to say; I don't know what you want from me.

BELLO Y

I want something from you then; since you're bringing it up.

DELACROIX grabs their own arm and gestures it towards BELLOY.

DELACROIX

This is me.

BELLOY

No, just as you pointed out, this is just what's written down for you.

DELACROIX

Well, I can't say anything else. I wasn't written to have improvised dialogue with the audience.

BELLOY

Don't talk with them. Talk with me. Right now.

DELACROIX

I can't!

BELLOY

Yes, you can.

DELACROIX

How?

BELLOY

Go off-script.

Slight pause.

Say something that isn't written down for you. Like a real person.

DELACROIX

Well, you have a pretty great idea of what a real person is.

BELLOY

Stop it! You know what I'm saying. . . go off-script!

DELACROIX

How?

BELLOY

Just remember the lines that you memorized, and say anything else.

DELACROIX

I can't.

BELLOY

What? Why? The director will get mad at you?

DELACROIX

No, I just- I can't. I don't know how; there's no way for me to deviate from what's written down. I wish I could say something other than the words that I'm saying right now, but even if I say something ridiculous like, "Peanut Butter Tribadism." Like, I can't help it that that was already written down for me; I didn't have anything else to say.

Pause.

I mean. . . .

BELLOY

What?

DELACROIX

You say something written down for you!

BELLOY

Okay, fair.

Blackout.

SCENE SIX

Lights come on DELACROIX who is standing in the exact same spot, but without BELLOY.

DELACROIX looks around at where BELLOY might have gone.

CULLICK comes onstage and cautiously walks to where BELLOY was standing.

DELACROIX looks at BELLOY and accepts the situation.

CULLICK
Oh, is it my turn?

DELACROIX
I suppose.

CULLICK
What does that mean?

DELACROIX
I think you get to decide what it means.

CULLICK
But you said it.

DELACROIX
But you still choose how to interpret it.

CULLICK
But that's only one way to interpret it.

DELACROIX
Sure, but everyone interprets everything their own way. And everything immediately changes at that; you 10 minutes from now will probably remember this conversation slightly differently than how you're interpreting it now.

CULLICK
Do you-

DELACROIX
Ugh, I just went through this whole thing; can we quit it with the Q&A for a bit?

CULLICK
What do you mean?

DELACROIX
What did I just say?

CULLICK
I just don't understand!

DELACROIX

Well, I'm tired of it. I don't want to just be a roundabout way to feed you two answers to bullshit questions.

CULLICK

Who else?

DELACROIX looks at CULLICK unamused.

Nevermind.

DELACROIX

Sometimes giving these pseudo-philosophical questions that don't directly answer the question you're asking, but that also still answer the questions you're actually asking gets exhausting.

CULLICK

Then why don't you give a direct answer?

DELACROIX

What did I say about asking questions?

Beat.

It's tired, it's lazy; you can't just keep asking questions the whole damn play!

CULLICK

I'm sorry. Questions happen when I talk. I don't know what I'm supposed to say.

DELACROIX

Say nothing then.

CULLICK

Nothing.

DELACROIX rolls their eyes.

DELACROIX

Ugh, just sit. Just sit.

DELACROIX and CULLICK sit and breathe.

Do you think this is boring?

CULLICK

No.

DELACROIX

I think it might be.

CULLICK gives DELACROIX a look.

Not for us, I'm not bored, but for the audience. If we're taking a moment for ourselves. . . a moment of pause, do they get any pause? Or does their perceiving us create too much of an action for them to enjoy the silence?

Pause.

CULLICK

I don't know.

Very long pause.

DELACROIX

Neither do I.

DELACROIX closes their eyes.

Long pause.

CULLICK

Falling asleep?

DELACROIX

Questions!

CULLICK

I'm sorry, sorry! Jesus, can't fucking talk.

Long pause.

BELLOY enters.

BELLOY

They asleep?

I don't know, but don't ask.

CULLICK

They look it.

BELLOY

That is true.

CULLICK

Did you bore them to sleep?

BELLOY

Really? Why are you coming for me?

CULLICK

I'm joking. Kind of.

BELLOY

We need to stick together.

CULLICK

Do we?

BELLOY

Neither one of us knows what's going on.

CULLICK

Speak for yourself.

BELLOY

You know what's going on?

CULLICK

No, but I think I know more than you.

BELLOY

Like what?

CULLICK

No.

BELLOY

CULLICK

You don't know shit.

BELLOY

I think I do.

CULLICK

Well, we all think we know things, but we don't really know anything. Socrates knew that.

BELLOY

Okay, but with operational knowledge, as opposed to real knowledge, I think I know something about what's going on in the play.

Pause.

BELLOY looks around.

CULLICK looks at DELACROIX and then whispers.

CULLICK

What?

BELLOY

I shouldn't say.

CULLICK

Oh, come on. They're asleep. They're not gonna care.

BELLOY

It's not just them; it's them and the audience.

CULLICK

Oh, they don't care.

BELLOY

Whatever, I don't want them to know.

CULLICK

Just whisper it then.

BELLOY

Okay, okay.

BELLOY whispers to CULLICK.

CULLICK

You don't know shit!

BELLOY

Well. . . .

CULLICK

You don't know what it was!

BELLOY

I think-

CULLICK

There's nothing to distinguish it as water or milk! Don't pretend to know.

DELACROIX claps without opening their eyes.

The rushing water sound starts.

DELACROIX claps again and the sound ceases.

You cannot tell!

BELLOY

I think I know.

CULLICK

There is not enough information in this play so far for you to be able to tell, and I know you can't tell the difference in the sound itself.

The sound starts again.

Pause.

BELLOY and CULLICK close their eyes and listen so intently they almost seem asleep.

DELACROIX opens their eyes, lifts up, and fluidly lays back down and closes their eyes as the sound stops.

BELLOY

You don't think there's a difference in the sound?

CULLICK

I'm not saying that, but you can't tell the difference.

BELLOY

I think there's a reasonable way to conclude.

CULLICK

Oh yeah? What is it?

BELLOY

Milk.

CULLICK

Why?

BELLOY

Because obviously, we would think it's water, so the only reason to bring milk into the equation is that it isn't water.

CULLICK

That just makes me think it's water.

DELACROIX is still laying down.

DELACROIX

Oh my god, shut up! This is worse than the questions.

DELACROIX sits up.

Why do you care?

CULLICK

Beaus-

DELACROIX

It's in your head; don't you get that? What is rushing through your head at any given moment? Are you here in the moment with the people who are right here in front of you, or is your mind filled with whether or not there's water or milk falling from the fucking sky? If you can't stand to have a shred of critical thinking, why even bother being in the play?

BELLOY

We just-

DELACROIX

That was rhetorical. Don't answer it. Just get out of here and let me rest my mind.

BELLOY and CULLICK take a moment and almost say something, but don't.

BELLOY and CULLICK stand up and walk offstage.

Beat.

ABICUS walks onstage and sits next to DELACROIX.

Long silence.

ABICUS stands up, hops off the stage and walks into the audience.

ABICUS maneuvers around and then sits in PLANT's seat.

ABICUS leans towards some audience members.

ABICUS

You all enjoying this? Frankly, I thought we were going to follow the other two, but you all decided to sit here and watch this. . . .

Slight pause.

. . . riveting.

Beat.

Don't get me wrong, it's much more interesting now that I've come out here, but you didn't know I was coming out here. For all you knew, I was going to go intrude on their conversation. Ah well, I'm here, currently acting into reality, while a bit of fiction falls before me. That was a quote. Did any of you get that?

ABICUS looks at an audience member nearby.

Who do you think it was? The quote I mean. . . Beckett or Shakespeare? As in, Samuel Beckett and William Shakespeare; not Thomas Becket and Mallory Shakespeare.

ABICUS waits to get an answer from the audience member.

No, it's original to this play. Does it really sound like something Shakespeare or Beckett might say? I can't imagine Shakespeare using language like that, and Beckett's smarter than that. Crazy to think that, of theater, Shakespeare is considered more digestible to audiences. I guess at least he wrote in English.

DELACROIX

Who is bigger in France?

ABICUS

What?

DELACROIX

Beckett wrote in French, Bill in English. Is Beckett bigger there? I would expect it would still be Bill Shakespeare.

ABICUS

Stop, don't call him Bill.

DELACROIX

Don't call him William.

ABICUS

What?

DELACROIX

If I can't call him by his name, neither should you.

ABICUS

Bill isn't his name.

DELACROIX

It is, but fine. You win. This conversation is boring.

ABICUS

You can't just concede because-

DELACROIX

I'm bored by this and I refuse to take part in it.

ABICUS

That's so rude.

DELACROIX

Maybe so, but I don't have to argue about it anymore. All I wanted out of this part of the dialogue was some answers regarding Sam Beckett, and yes, I know I know, Samuel Beckett would probably hate me calling him Sam, but when he gets out of his grave to correct my pronunciation of Godot, then I'll call him by whatever name he wishes.

ABICUS

Isn't it Godot?

DELACROIX

Who can say?

Blackout.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights come up with BELLOY sitting on a bench slightly right of center stage.

CULLICK walks on from stage left with two scripts in their hands.

CULLICK

Can you help me with this?

BELLOY

What do you have?

CULLICK

It's a script; can you help me run lines?

BELLOY

It's a little late to not be off-book yet.

CULLICK

Not for this play. Let's face it, this thing is closing tonight, and I need another gig. I have an audition. It's for a role I'd be perfect for, and I wanna be off-book for it. Will you help me?

BELLOY

Sure. Do you want me to act?

CULLICK

What?

BELLOY

The person they have you read with is always shit. Do you want me to act and be in the scene with you, or should I be shit so you can practice giving a good performance off of nothing?

CULLICK

That's a good idea; yeah, be shit then.

BELLOY

I can do that.

CULLICK gives BELLOY a script.

CULLICK

Okay. It's page 37. I'll start.

BELLOY

Go for it.

CULLICK gets into character.

BELLOY reads very matter-of-fact.

CULLICK

Dad, can we talk?

BELLOY

I think we talked enough yesterday.

CULLICK

No, no dad; we didn't.

Pause.

We didn't talk at all. You spoke, but you didn't listen, and I need you to hear me.

BELLOY

I don't have to stand here and be spoken to this way.

CULLICK

You do if you ever want to see me again.

BELLOY sighs.

BELLOY

Now, what the fuck do you mean by that?

CULLICK

We're at that point, Dad. We're at the point where I hoped we would never get to. I've been avoiding this my whole life, but it's gotten to a point where I can't know you anymore without telling you how your actions have tormented my life beyond repair.

BELLOY

Well, that's great that you still know how to play the victim after all of these years. Do you know what I had to sacrifice fo-

CULLICK

Your sacrifices don't make you a good father. Just like my sacrifice of being here, open, and honest just can't change the fact that even though I can't imagine how this will improve anything, because how could anything ever get through that thick skull of yours? But here I am telling you, once and for all, you made my life hell. Every day is haunted by the fact that you were my father, and I can't escape that. I have to make a path for myself to grow, and I need to do it without you.

BELLOY and CULLICK stop reading.

Not bad.

BELLOY

Oh, thanks.

CULLICK

Could be more believable though.

BELLOY

What? Me or the dialogue?

CULLICK

Well, both, but I was talking about you. I'm just not believing that you've been tormented by your father all your life.

BELLOY

That's ironic because I want this role so badly, because truly, I have almost an identical resentment towards my father, and I was hoping this play could help with some of that trauma.

CULLICK

Maybe that's the key.

BELLOY

What?

CULLICK

We need you to tap into that trauma to really unlock the character for you.

BELLOY

Okay. . . .

CULLICK

Try it again. . . .

BELLOY

What? Just from the top?

CULLICK

Yeah, and then just roll with it; don't question it.

BELLOY

CULLICK

Uh, okay.

BELLOU

All right, let's go for it!

CULLICK is a little hesitant but tries to get into it.

BELLOU is fully in character this time.

CULLICK

Dad, can we talk?

BELLOU is not looking at the script.

BELLOU

I think we've talked enough.

CULLICK waits for BELLOU a moment.

CULLICK

... yesterday?

BELLOU

No, not yesterday; we didn't talk yesterday.

CULLICK

Uh, yes we did.

BELLOU

I'm talking about before then.

CULLICK

When?

BELLOU

When I saw your mother.

CULLICK

What?

BELLOY

After she left us.

CULLICK looks in the script.

CULLICK

What? There's nothing about the mom in the script.

BELLOY

Three years after she left us. . . right after New Year's; you were 13 at the time.

Beat.

CULLICK

How do you know about that?

BELLOY

I think we've talked about it enough.

CULLICK

How can you. . . ?

BELLOY

I can't!

Beat.

I can't handle it.

CULLICK

Handle what?

BELLOY

Living with it.

CULLICK

With what?

BELLOY

Living with seeing her. . . I can't tell you what it did to me.

CULLICK

What do you mean?

BELLOU

Something broke in me, and it wasn't fair to you, but it wasn't fair to me either. Once you become a parent, no one tells you you'll still feel like a kid. When was it supposed to change? When was my father supposed to come to my room and tell me what life is really like, and that I can't expect to just be a good father on instinct.

CULLICK looks at BELLOU with an intense sincerity.

Dad, I can't-

BELLOU

I never talked to my father.

CULLICK

Granddad?

BELLOU

He would never listen to me. I tried one time to tell him how he fucked up my life, but I never got out two words before he cut me down like he always would. I convinced myself that he loved me, but what does that fucking mean? He beat our asses, all of us! And so what? So he makes an apology on his death bed; what does that prove? He did what he did. If he was hit by a car the week before and never apologized, he would still have that apology left in him, but I would've never heard it, and no one would expect me to forgive him, but he lived two more weeks, and now I'm haunted by that; that I can't forgive a man who absolutely tormented my entire life. . . and I can't forgive him. I want to love him, but I hate him.

CULLICK

I don't hate you, Dad.

BELLOU

Maybe you should. I know I've been shit to you. Don't ask me to listen to what I've done to you, because I can see it in your eyes. . . you'll say the right things, and I'll apologize, but it won't undo what I've done to you, and that's the trauma you'll live with after I'm dead.

CULLICK

No, Dad, you're wrong.

BELLOY

Trust me.

CULLICK

I'm not you, and you're not Granddad.

BELLOY

Yes I am.

CULLICK

We are the people we choose to be. Every day we make a choice about how to conduct ourselves in the world. And that choice affects other people. Granddad affected you, you affected me, and I've affected you too.

Pause.

And I need this. I truly need you to hear me.

BELLOY

Okay, we can talk about it.

CULLICK

Mom left you.

BELLOY

Don't-

CULLICK

No Dad, I have to talk about it, because I don't know if I'll have the courage again.

Pause.

Mom left you. You were dismissive of her, and she got tired of it and left. But she left me too.

BELLOY

She only left because I-

CULLICK

I know she left because of you, but she left me too. I don't think it was because I did anything to her, at least that's how I feel now, but I was left by my mother nonetheless, and that leaves a mark.

I know now that it takes a certain type of person to abandon their child; that says more about her than it does about me, but as a child, I couldn't begin to process any of that. But when we saw her there at the park when I was 13. . . .

Slowly.

BELLOY

I can't handle. . . .

CULLICK

Well, you're gonna, because I have to talk about it!

Beat.

I know you're traumatized, and I know it hurts, but we have to have a little sympathy for each other, don't we? I had a mother who abandoned me. . . show up, out of the blue, after 3 years. And your wife who abandoned you shows up on the same day; it isn't exactly the same, but neither one of us knew how to process it. But I was a child! And you tortured me and beat me for it!

BELLOY

I'm sorry.

CULLICK

No! You don't get to say sorry! Not until I've said everything. I cannot handle it! I am still just barely wrapping my head around it! Imagine your mother you haven't seen in 5 years, sees your dad and runs! Do you know what she spoke to me?

BELLOY

No.

CULLICK

Of course not! Because you beat the shit out of me every time I brought it up!

BELLOY

I'm s-

CULLICK

No! You have to hear it now. You never paid attention to me! You let me slip away all the time, because you didn't give a shit if I got lost or not.

BELLOY

That's not true.

CULLICK

You were always more concerned with where you were going than my keeping up with you. I would always thank god I could always find you, but maybe that was always my tragic flaw.

BELLOY

I-

CULLICK

You lost me, again! And then I saw her. Buying a pretzel in the park.

Slight pause.

And I froze.

Pause.

She looked different, but I recognized her immediately. And then she turned around. Can you guess what happened next?

BELLOY

What?

CULLICK

She said my name. In shock of course, and then she just said, "I can't. . ." It felt like she had more to say, to make some sense of . . . but she ended with, "I can't. . ." because that's when she looked up and saw you walking towards me, the one time you went to look for me; then she dropped her pretzel and ran.

BELLOY

I don't. . . .

CULLICK

What's your last memory of your mother? Of your father? Is it either one of them running away from you with the intention of never seeing you again? Who knows? Maybe I'm remembering wrong. After all, the next moment is a little fuzzy after you slapped me in the back of the head so hard I fell onto the ground crying! I cried so hard I couldn't speak. I couldn't have told the cop you were lying if I wanted to. Instead, I sat there and cried while you told them I was crying because I'd dropped my pretzel.

BELLOY

I'm sorry. I wish I could take it back.

CULLICK

Then do it! Take back all the years of beatings, the screams keeping me up at night, the years of feeling my father fading away after I'd lost a mother, because that's what you put me through. And if you don't know how to take it back, that's who you'll be.

DELACROIX comes out of nowhere.

Beat.

DELACROIX

And scene; that was beautiful!

CULLICK

What?

DELACROIX

I love the changes you made to the script! I think you're perfect for the role; I don't need to hear anyone else read!

CULLICK

But, wait what? My father. . .

DELACROIX

I love that you're bringing your own trauma to the stage. That's what art is after all.

CULLICK

That wasn't meant for the stage, that wasn't the audition; that- that was meant for my father.

DELACROIX

Well, it's too late love. We need something real and sensitive to sell on stage, otherwise, we just get more bullshit about your story of your mum abandoning you. This is just the sort of thing audiences will connect with, because every one of them has their own trauma with their parents, but not everyone's father beat them, so they can feel better that they didn't have it quite as bad as you.

CULLICK

That's not what-

DELACROIX

Actually, it's really perfect, because our dads weren't so explicitly bad, just psychologically tormenting; and the theater-going crowd can't connect with the nuance of how most parents really torment their children these days. Probably because they're the ones traumatizing their children now.

CULLICK

I, uh-

DELACROIX

And let's face it, without abandonment, divorce, beating, et cetera, no one is going to really give a shit if your parents didn't love you enough. . . or even worse, if they just didn't love you the right way.

CULLICK

Sor- what?

DELACROIX

God forbid we show an audience a portrait of a parent who loves their kid, but only loves the idea of them, because they're not a parent who's open enough to let their child flourish, express themselves, and be their own person.

CULLICK

I don't even know what to say.

DELACROIX

What? And yet you have no sympathy for your mother?

CULLICK

My mother?

DELACROIX

Do you think she knew what to say? What could you say?

CULLICK

Look, you don't know what I went through!

DELACROIX

I do a little. . . I just watched the scene.

CULLICK

Well, that's not-

ABICUS enters with a pretzel in their hand on stage left.

BELLOY walks upstage right.

DELACROIX moves slightly upstage of CULLICK and looks at ABICUS similarly to CULLICK.

ABICUS

. . . I can't. . . .

CULLICK

What?

ABICUS looks at BELLOY, drops their pretzel and runs away.

DELACROIX

Mom!

BELLOY smacks DELACROIX in the back of the head and they fall down in front of CULLICK.

BELLOY

What are you doing? Scaring her away?

BELLOY chases after ABICUS and runs offstage.

Beat.

ABICUS walks back onstage slowly towards CULLICK and DELACROIX.

CULLICK

Mom?

DELACROIX

Mom?

ABICUS

I don't know what to say.

CULLICK

I-uh.

DELACROIX

I-uh.

ABICUS

It's better this way. I don't know how to love you the right way.

DELACROIX

But, Dad. . .

ABICUS

I wanted to help him, but I couldn't and it tore me apart, made me a worse person and I couldn't be the mother you needed me to be.

CULLICK

I need someone!

ABICUS

It's easy to say that, because you had it rough, but it could have been worse.

DELACROIX

You can't hide behind that. You made a horrible decision, and you have to come to terms with that. Right here, right now. You abandoned me, and that's the life I have to live. Not a life with a shit mother. A life with a mother who fucking ran when she saw my father. Dropped her fucking pretzel. At least the pigeons got something from you.

ABICUS

I'm not your mother.

CULLICK

I know.

ABICUS

I wish I could be.

DELACROIX

I know.

ABICUS

But this is just a play.

CULLICK

I know. She's gone forever.

DELACROIX

Don't say that. Maybe you will see her at a park someday.

CULLICK

What the fuck is wrong with you?

DELACROIX

This is your life; I'm just living in it.

ABICUS

I love you, honey.

CULLICK

You're not my mom.

ABICUS

Do you remember when I used to sing to you? Before I left.

CULLICK

Please stop this!

CULLICK cowers away from ABICUS and kneels down.

ABICUS sings in a lullaby style and slowly kneels down towards CULLICK, slightly upstage of them, and not too close to them.

ABICUS

Mommy loves you
 Nothing will ever change
 Her love for you
 Will go to every end
 Even when she's gone
 She'll never be too far
 Because your mother loves you until the end

BELLOY is in PLANT's seat when their phone goes off in the audience.

CULLICK turns around and looks at BELLOY, but almost seems to be looking at ABICUS.

CULLICK

You're breaking my heart! Do you not understand? My heart is torn in two! I'm breaking and your insensitivity seeps through!

BELLOY

I'm sorry.

CULLICK

You're sorry! Oh, beautiful! Do you even know what sorry is?

BELLOY

What do you want me to say?

CULLICK

Something real.

BELLOY

Just tell me what to say.

CULLICK

I don't know. I'm bursting at the seams and all of my life is falling out.

BELLOY's phone rings again.

BELLOY

My heart beats too.

CULLICK

You think I don't know that? If it didn't I wouldn't be able to function anymore. But I'm tired and I can't handle any more of this.

BELLOY

Just tell me what you need to say.

CULLICK

Why didn't you pick up the phone?

BELLOY's phone rings again.

BELLOY

Would it help if I did now?

CULLICK

I don't think so, but do it anyway.

BELLOY answers the phone.

BELLOY

Hello?

CULLICK

If only I told you I loved you, maybe you wouldn't forget about me.

Rushing water sound starts.

*CULLICK starts to close their eyes and
imagine.*

God, there's almost a peace in being lost in a river with no hope. You can stop listening to all the voices in your life, and wait to be taken away, pushed to the ground by the arms of your father. . . never having to worry about love you never received, or the love you're chasing just. . . .

The water sound gets progressively louder.

The sound cuts.

Blackout.

ACT II*SCENE ONE*

CULLICK is doing something on stage.

*ABICUS starts walking down and sees
CULLICK.*

ABICUS

Oh my god.

CULLICK

Excuse me.

ABICUS

My god, how long has it been?

CULLICK

I'm sorry, I-

ABICUS

This is really just a blast from the past! I'm sorry I haven't called.

CULLICK

Okay, I'm sorry, but you clearly have me confused with someone else.

ABICUS

No, I don't.

CULLICK

Well-

ABICUS

You really don't remember me?

CULLICK

Ah-I.

ABICUS

Come on, I'm not trying to Rappaport you.

CULLICK

Rappa-?

ABICUS

Yeah, it's a, nevermind. Do me a favor, look at me.

CULLICK

I have been.

ABICUS

No, deeper. Look me straight in the eyes; and then deeper.

CULLICK

I really-

ABICUS

Please.

CULLICK

Okay.

CULLICK looks deep into ABICUS' eyes.

ABICUS

There was a time you used to trust me. You don't have to believe that, but if you do, close your eyes for a moment.

CULLICK closes their eyes and an extremely faint sound of rushing water starts, probably undetectable at this point.

Now, while your eyes are closed, slip away. Don't open them until you're gone.

CULLICK

I-

ABICUS

It's okay, you don't have to tell me, just trust it. You don't have to remember anything about me, but you and I have a history together. I was there when you took your first breath, not when you were born, but the first time you were aware of your own breathing. The first time you thought about all that it took. The idea of taking in oxygen which lives in your blood, which pumps to your heart, which keeps your lungs going enough to keep breathing.

CULLICK opens their eyes.

Now, look me directly in the eyes.

*ABICUS looks concerned about the look in
CULLICK's eyes and is not convinced.*

It's okay.

CULLICK

I'm sorry.

ABICUS

It's okay.

CULLICK

Honestly, I believe you, I just.

ABICUS

It's okay. We don't ever really remember anything. There's some hooks in our brains that makes connections to some synapses, but none of it's real.

CULLICK

Real?

ABICUS

What's your most vivid memory?

CULLICK

A dream.

ABICUS

Are you sure?

CULLICK

Yes, there's a dream that immediately comes to mind, and I'm trapped within it.

ABICUS

Why are you trapped?

CULLICK

Because I remember it. I remember what it was like to be inside of it. It was a scary dream, although when I think of it now, it feels comical. It was where I-

ABICUS

I don't need to hear it. If you'd really like to share it, you're welcome to, but I don't need to hear it if you don't need to say it.

CULLICK

Okay.

ABICUS

Do you remember looking down at your hands?

CULLICK

In the dream?

ABICUS

Sure, at any point, can you really see your hands? I find it such a curious standard. We spend so much time with our hands in our peripherals, but how often do we look at them?

ABICUS takes CULLICK's hands close to them.

Be honest, if I hold your hands, palms up, how well can you remember the details of the back of your hands?

CULLICK

Hmmm.

ABICUS

One of your knuckles is slightly more red than the others, and it's a different knuckle on each hand. Can you tell me why?

CULLICK smirks and nods no.

I wonder how Michelangelo's David's hands were sculpted. Do they look more like the model who stood, or more like the hands of Michelangelo himself? I'd be curious to see if artists describe their hands more accurately. Take every artist; sculptors, poets, actors, musicians, mathematicians. . . I wonder who pays the closest attention. Would Picasso have us all beat? And would that prove anything, or would it be an exercise in futility? Is remembering details like that a waste of time that could be used feeding the masses or filing paperwork?

Beat.

Will you take my hand?

CULLICK

Sure.

CULLICK reaches out and takes ABICUS' hand.

ABICUS

Can you tell me anything about it?

CULLICK looks at the back of ABICUS' hand for a long time; memorizing it before finally looking back into ABICUS' eyes.

Slight pause.

CULLICK

I'm sorry. I can't remember.

Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Lights come up with DELACROIX upstage right.

DELACROIX walks towards downstage center and addresses the audience.

DELACROIX

Okay. I'm losing track. Who are you people? Can I ask that? Is that okay? Is it easier to answer as a whole or individually? Well, either way, I want you all to answer. It's entirely up to you whether you want to say who you are as an individual, or as a group, but go ahead and do it now. Who are you?

Beat.

I'm serious. I want some audible answers from everybody. Preferably simultaneously so that you're the only one who really knows what you say. Who are you?

DELACROIX repeats until there's a significant crowd response.

Hmm.

Pause.

How many of you said your name? Go on, raise your hands. . . full participation please. I, well, when I was a kid, you know, after I saw *Good Will Hunting*, and thought I was a therapist, I used to talk with my friends who wanted help or whatever, and I'd say, "It's not your fault; it's not your fault. . .", but I remember one time, I asked a friend who they were. They replied with their name, and I came back at them with a, your name isn't who you are, it's what you are. I still think about that sometimes. I don't know that I would say it's perceptive, maybe more ignorant of colloquialisms than anything else. I think I just had been told there was more to that question than anything else. . . like trying to live and question things.

Beat.

It was somewhat posited to me that there was no more important question. I don't know if that's true. I suppose maybe the fact that you can never finish answering it makes a good argument for its paramount importance. I don't have a good answer to give all of you, but I'm happy you're here. Gives me more of a reason to walk out here and ramble to myself. Honestly, I'm still surprised more of you haven't walked out by now. If you're solely waiting for this show to make sense, you can go. I don't have any answers for you; no questions either. I mean, I know I asked, "Who are you?", "Who are you people?", but I just need to actively engage you every once in a while; otherwise, too many of you will fall asleep and then you'll start snoring, and snoring is worse than phones going off. I swear, it's so embarrassing.

Snoring is heard offstage.

BELLOY walks onstage and continues to snore obnoxiously.

BELLOY

That's a sure way to put people to sleep, talking about snoring. . . come on, what do you want from people?

DELACROIX

I was just. . . .

BELLOY

Look, if you're going to address the audience, you have to at least engage with them.

DELACROIX

I di-

BELLOY

No, you talked at them.

DELACROIX

Well-

BELLOY

You're engaging with me now; see, there's a back and forth here; that's because we're engaging, having a dialogue.

DELACROIX

Well, I can't have a dialogue wi-

BELLOY

Why not?

DELACROIX

They don't have a script.

BELLOY

So?

DELACROIX

I'll run out of lines whenever they have something substantial to say.

BELLOY

Just give them a script.

DELACROIX

What?

BELLOY

Give them a script.

DELACROIX

I can't do that.

BELLOY

Why not? I'm sure there's one backstage.

BELLOY walks offstage.

Give it to me! Yes. . . no, we're going to. . . . Stop! Give it! Ah.

BELLOY walks back onstage.

Here we are, a script.

DELACROIX

Okay, but-

BELLOY

You know your lines, don't you?

DELACROIX

Well sure, but I. . .

BELLOY

Because this would be the worst time to forget. They can't improvise with you like we can; they don't know where it's going next.

DELACROIX

Well, they'll have the script now, won't they?

BELLOY

Oh shit. . . I didn't think about that, let's uh. . . yeah. Okay, who are you engaging with?

DELACROIX

I don't know.

BELLOY picks out a member of the audience.

BELLOY

How about you?

MEMBER

(Yes).

MEMBER

(No).

BELLOY

Okay, good!

BELLOY

That's fine. How about you?

BELLOY asks people until someone agrees.

BELLOY

Now, when I give you the script, you can't flip pages ahead, okay? Okay?

MEMBER

-

BELLOY

Great, now I'm going to turn to the page we're on, so say your lines when we come to it, don't interrupt our lines when you get too excited, okay? And be loud, project. Otherwise, we might replace you. It's okay, you don't have to act well, just be loud! Good. . . now, engage!

DELACROIX

Hi, how are you tonight?

MEMBER

Well, I'm here watching this show, and now I'm being forced into it, what do you think?

DELACROIX

Wow, we've got a bit of an attitude on this one, don't we?

MEMBER

What do you want me to say?

DELACROIX

Your lines. . . .

Loudly.

MEMBER

I am!

DELACROIX

Fine, but you don't have to be so loud! What a dick. . . .

MEMBER

I'm sorry, I didn't realize you were going to be a little baby about it.

DELACROIX

Hey! There is nothing wrong with being a baby . . . ageist!

Quietly.

MEMBER

I'm just. . . .

DELACROIX

Speak up, please!

MEMBER

God. . . .

DELACROIX

What?

MEMBER

Just let me say the lines!

DELACROIX

I Am.

MEMBER

Okay.

DELACROIX

Okay!

MEMBER

Thank you.

DELACROIX

You're welcome.

MEMBER

I love you.

DELACROIX

What?

MEMBER

Nothing.

DELACROIX

Wow, this is so sudden.

MEMBER

No. . . .

DELACROIX

We barely even know each other. I don't know your name, you don't know mine. . . .

MEMBER

It's-

DELACROIX

No, I don't want to know. That isn't what this is about. We come from two different places. I'm up here, and you're down there. It could never work. You're not allowed on stage, and I . . . well I can go down there, but I don't really wanna be down there with all of you more than I have to.

MEMBER

Well, that's a little rude.

DELACROIX

Do you still love me?

MEMBER

No, I never did. I was just reading the script.

DELACROIX

Well, I'm not going to say that doesn't hurt, but it's probably for the best.

MEMBER

That's life I guess.

DELACROIX

Indeed it is. Such a chance meeting between us. . . who would have guessed, we'd go through so much. Ecstasy, shock, heartbreak, trauma. You could write a play about this moment.

MEMBER

I'm sure it would be an improvement.

DELACROIX

Wow, you just keep getting ruder, don't you?

MEMBER

You bring it on yourself by being in such a terrible play.

DELACROIX

Mean. I guess you're just reading lines though; so, so I can forgive you.

MEMBER

No, this is off-script now. Those are my true opinions. This play is awful, and it's obviously milk.

BELLOY

Hey! I thought I said stick to the script!

MEMBER

I am!

BELLOY

What? That can't be right.

MEMBER

It's in the script. I don't know what to tell you.

BELLOY

That doesn't sound right.

MEMBER

It also said in the script that you're a little poo-poo head.

BELLOY

What? Okay, that's it! Give me the script back!

*BELLOY gets the script back from
MEMBER.*

BELLOY examines the script.

... I'm a little poo-poo head. . . huh, I guess you're right. I'm sorry I doubted you.

BELLOY starts to walk back upstage.

... you little shit!

DELACROIX

I regret all of that.

BELLOY

At least you can say you actually engaged today, instead of driving further into self-absorbed existential madness. Well, I guess those aren't mutually exclusive.

DELACROIX

Okay. . . .

BELLOY

I'm just saying, a little engagement with a real person is good for you.

DELACROIX

Whatever.

DELACROIX turns to MEMBER.

And it's not milk! Or at least it's not obvious!

DELACROIX turns to BELLOY.

Right?

BELLOY

I don't fucking know. We can get rid of this shit though.

BELLOY walks stage right and tosses the script offstage and starts to walk back.

The script can be heard hitting the ground and being picked up.

BELLOY stops and looks back towards offstage at eye level once the script hits the ground.

Really? It's the one time in the show you have to catch something. . . and you drop it? I didn't even throw it wild; I was looking right at you.

From offstage.

PLANT

What?

BELLOY

What do you mean, what? Catch the prop when I throw it at you.

PLANT walks onstage to talk with BELLOY.

PLANT

Can you just be professional about this and get back to the show?

BELLOY

You know what, no, no I can't.

BELLOY turns to the audience and gestures towards PLANT.

Everyone, this is our stage manager, and they're apparently the only stage manager in town, because if they weren't, I'm sure we would've gotten a stage manager who can fucking catch!

DELACROIX

Look, you don't have to put them on the spot.

BELLOY

I disagree. Normally, maybe, but this is a show that fucks with what's going on; which is why we can't make mistakes like this, because if we're actually fucking up and breaking character, then the whole fucking up and breaking character, then the whole illusion falls apart.

DELACROIX

Your exploding isn't helping anything.

BELLOY

I'm just trying to keep the integrity of the show.

DELACROIX

Bullshit.

BELLOY

No, not bullshit.

BELLOY looks to the tech booth.

Can we stop pretending? Can we turn on the house lights? This is fucking ridiculous. I'm trying to be a fucking professional, and I'm the one getting chastised right now.

House lights come up and stage lights dim.

DELACROIX gets quieter, as if they don't really want all of the audience to be able to hear.

DELACROIX

Is this being professional, or are you just making it significantly worse?

BELLOY gets louder.

BELLOY

I'm taking this show seriously.

DELACROIX

Seriously? Seriously? This is seriously?

DELACROIX gets quieter.

Seriously, you're making us look like a joke right now, can we just get back to the play?

BELLOY

You want to get back to the play? Go ahead.

BELLOY gets off stage and walks through the audience and out of the house.

DELACROIX and PLANT look towards the back of the audience in disbelief.

DELACROIX

Are you kidding me?

DELACROIX looks at PLANT.

What?

PLANT

I don't know. I did not think they would do something like that.

DELACROIX

I just.

PLANT

What are we gonna do?

DELACROIX

I-uh, I'll. . . .

DELACROIX walks forward to address the audience.

Look, I'm sorry everyone, I-

DELACROIX looks backstage to see if anyone is coming out.

DELACROIX looks at PLANT and then back towards the audience.

I am sorry everyone. We've had some personality issues behind the scenes, but this; um, this caught us off-guard. I don't know if we're set up to. . . well, I can't promise refunds. If there's a producer or someone here then I-

DELACROIX looks back at PLANT.

Can we do refunds?

PLANT

I don't think so.

DELACROIX looks back at the audience.

DELACROIX

I- uh sorry.

DELACROIX looks back at PLANT.

Do you think you could just read from the script?

PLANT

For the rest of the show? Ugh, let me think. . . with their cues and my cues. . . I-

DELACROIX

We don't really have many other options.

PLANT

Sure, I'll make it work.

DELACROIX looks back at the audience.

DELACROIX

Thank you everyone for your patience while we're figuring this out. We're going to try to finish the show with our stage manager reading. It won't be the same, but it will-

BELLOY charges back in from the back of the house and eventually gets back on stage.

BELLOY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. That was unprofessional.

DELACROIX

Wow.

BELLOY

Look, I think with everything that's been going on with this production, I just; I'm sorry. I'm back. I don't want to ruin the show. I just, we've put so much into this show. Carelessness, with something so important.

DELACROIX

Look-

BELLOY

It's fine, it's fine, just let me-

BELLOY turns to address the audience.

Hello everyone. I just want to formally apologize. This isn't what you came here for, but unfortunately, since we aren't all professionals here, I have to be honest with you all. We're working very hard to put on a professional show and give you exactly the show you came for, whether you like it or not, but undoubtedly you heard the script fall on the floor. It was supposed to fly out of my hands offstage and silently disappear. . . offering a little bit of theater magic and wonderment. I know it's not a lot, but it's what we're here for. And when. . . I just- after we get the lights back.

BELLOY gestures to the tech booth and the house lights go back down and the stage lights return to normal.

We're just going to try this again.

Beat.

If they will go get the script. . .

BELLOY waits for PLANT.

Go get the script. . . .

PLANT begrudgingly walks offstage and brings the script back and gives it to BELLOY.

Thank you. Now, let's try this again.

BELLOY gestures for PLANT to leave and then they do.

We can take it from my line. . .

BELLOY gets back into character.

All I'm saying is that engaging with someone real is good for you.

DELACROIX wipes the looks of disbelief off of their face and walks back towards their blocking.

DELACROIX

Whatever.

DELACROIX turns reluctantly to the audience.

And it's not milk, or at least it's not obvious, right?

BELLOY

I've no fucking clue. We're done with this though.

BELLOY tosses the script offstage and nothing is heard.

Beautiful.

DELACROIX

God.

BELLOY

What?

DELACROIX

That threw my anxiety through the fucking roof.

BELLOY

What did?

DELACROIX

Are you kidding me?

BELLOY

You don't get why I did that?

DELACROIX

I know why; that doesn't mean I get it.

BELLOY

If we don't hold ourselves to a certain standard then. . . .

DELACROIX

I'm not a child. I get it; I just. . .

The rushing water noise starts and fog starts pouring from upstage.

BELLOY and DELACROIX back away and wait.

Fog fills the stage while the noise plays.

Coughing can be heard faintly before the noise stops.

The coughing gets louder before ABICUS and CULLICK come through the fog.

ABICUS

God, that is not elegant.

CULLICK is still coughing uncontrollably.

BELLOY

Are you okay?

CULLICK sits down on the edge of the stage coughing.

ABICUS

I get it; there's way too much of that shit!

BELLOY pats CULLICK on the back.

BELLOY

Oh, I'm sorry.

CULLICK

No, it's okay. It's fine.

CULLICK coughs one more time and then gives a sharp inhale.

ABICUS

Why do they do that? It's horrible.

DELACROIX

Looks cool though.

BELLOY

Hell of an entrance.

ABICUS

Not if we stop the show to cough up a lung!

DELACROIX

Fair enough.

CULLICK lays back on the stage.

BELLOY

You sure you're okay?

CULLICK

Yeah. I just need to take a moment.

BELLOY

Okay, whatever you need.

CULLICK

God, I can't even process this.

BELLOY

What?

CULLICK

Why do I feel like so much of my memory is gone?

DELACROIX

What is memory anyway?

CULLICK

Sure, but I feel like I'm missing out on some grand experience. Some great discovery about myself, or a grand romance or something. I don't know.

ABICUS

Why? Do you feel unloved?

CULLICK

No. And, I'm sure this will pass, I just feel burnt out and numb. . . why should I even hope for love again? Would it help or just be different? Who's to say that these emotions are even worthwhile. . . or are they just relatable?

ABICUS

I am. I'm to say.

CULLICK

But I can't feel that. It only matters if it happens through my lens of perspective.

BELLOY

How so?

CULLICK

Am I wrong?

DELACROIX

No, you're right.

BELLOY

A little narcissistic isn't it?

DELACROIX

No, just how perspective and consciousness work, unfortunately.

BELLOY

I don't think I believe that.

CULLICK

We're past that point, let's not go back to it now.

ABICUS

Fuck it.

DELACROIX

What?

ABICUS

I feel like laying down too.

ABICUS lays down similarly to CULLICK.

DELACROIX

Why?

BELLOY

Sometimes you don't have it in you anymore.

BELLOY lays down.

CULLICK

Your empathy for love and devotion runs out, and you give in to just breathe, hoping the fog doesn't consume you. . . and also hoping it does a little bit too.

DELACROIX lays down.

DELACROIX

I think I understand.

Pause.

BELLOY

I-

BELLOY puts their arms straight up in the air without moving any other part of their body.

BELLOY pauses for a moment and then drops their arms limp back beside them.

I don't know; I just feel like we should still be talking.

CULLICK

What should we talk about?

BELLOY

We could talk about falling in love with an audience member.

ABICUS

What?

DELACROIX

Okay, I didn't fall in love, it was just. . . a lot of emotion in a short amount of time.

CULLICK

That's how love is.

ABICUS starts coughing.

ABICUS

You never know who's watching.

ABICUS sits up and coughs more.

BELLOY and DELACROIX lean and look over.

. . . and might take notice.

DELACROIX

You okay?

ABICUS

Yeah, just some fog residuals.

CULLICK

That shit's nasty.

After a moment, they all lay back down.

BELLOY

I love this staging.

ABICUS

Me too.

CULLICK starts laughing.

DELACROIX

Oh totally, I love the dirtiest parts of a scene. . . you know, you could've angled your torso a little more stage right. Take a more prominent position. You should be upstaging a little.

CULLICK laughs more.

BELLOY

And now. . . roll!

*DELACROIX starts rolling and runs into
ABICUS.*

They all audibly laugh.

I was kidding!

DELACROIX

What can I say. . . I'm an actor who follows their director.

BELLOY

As if I make any sense as being the one of us who'd be the director. Who would be?

CULLICK

Metaphorically or literally?

Rushing water noise starts.

They all sit up.

ABICUS

I don't even know what that could possibly mean by this point.

DELACROIX

I left my heart backstage.

CULLICK

Metaphorically or literally?

DELACROIX

A bit of both at least.

Pause.

I don't think I'm needed anymore.

CULLICK looks at DELACROIX deeply.

CULLICK

You're always welcome back.

DELACROIX

Thank you. Maybe I'll see you before curtain.

CULLICK

Maybe you will.

DELACROIX walks offstage.

CULLICK looks at ABICUS and BELLOY.

Which one of you have I known longer?

ABICUS

I don't know.

CULLICK

Who has known me longer? I can't remember.

ABICUS

Probably me.

BELLOY nods in agreement.

CULLICK

I think you both represent different parts of myself.

BELLOY

Okay.

CULLICK

I don't mean that's all you are; I just. . . I've forgotten my entire life. . . it's been washed away, and I don't know if I'm happy or sad about it, but I feel pulled close to you. I don't know if that's anything real or if it's just me wanting to be here; because, at the end of the day, I put myself here. I know I was a shit friend. I was looking for something.

Slight pause.

And I think I was looking for so long, that I got lost. The longer I was lost, the more I lost why I was trying to find my way back. Eventually, I think I accepted that being lost was my natural state, but I kept looking.

BELLOY

Did you find it?

CULLICK

I have no idea. I'm only now starting to realize the role my subconscious has played in my life.

BELLOY

So this is all your subconscious talking?

CULLICK

No, I- you know what. No. I'm here, meeting my subconscious halfway. I'm not all the way, and I know that, but I'm getting there.

CULLICK looks back where DELACROIX left.

Maybe they had the right idea. Maybe if I retrace my steps I can find my heart.

ABICUS

So it's not us that you were looking for?

CULLICK

No. Yes. I'm glad I found you; I just don't know why I did, and I know that isn't it. There's something inside me pushing me towards something else.

ABICUS

Them?

Gestures backstage.

Beat.

Gestures towards the audience.

Them?

CULLICK

You're not getting it.

BELLOY

What aren't we getting?

CULLICK

This isn't about anyone other than me.

Beat.

I'm not the main character! Or at least I don't want to be. This isn't where the scene should be right now. It should've followed them backstage or gone into the audience or hell, even gone outside with a screen projecting video onto the stage, but it's not. It's here, and I feel like my life isn't interesting enough for this moment right now.

BELLOY

What would make it interesting enough?

CULLICK

Falling in love! Isn't that what everyone does? I think I wanted to remember this great love affair that made the meaning of my life seem clear.

CULLICK address ABICUS specifically.

And I'm sure that I loved you deeply, and you meant so much to mean.

Slight pause.

In another lifetime I'm sure you would've become my everything.

Pause.

But I can't remember my life meaning something with somebody else.

Beat.

Maybe I'm not supposed to be in love. Maybe I'm supposed to find my mother; and get some closure there.

*DELACROIX walks through the audience
from the back of the house towards the
stage.*

DELACROIX

Mom?

ABICUS

Sweetie.

DELACROIX

Don't call me sweetie. You don't deserve to address me with endearment you-

ABICUS

I'm sorry. I wish I could take everything back and be the mother you needed, but that's just not who I am.

*DELACROIX gets progressively louder and
more intense.*

DELACROIX

No! It's not who you are! You don't even deserve to be mentioned in the same sentence as a mother who would stay with her child! You have scarred my entire life! I've buried the child you left behind and become a new person. I can't even remember that child's name, because there's no remnant of your child left on this earth. Just me, this bitter creation standing before you. That I created, not thanks to you!

*DELACROIX stops the intensity and watches
CULLICK.*

CULLICK

Stop it. This doesn't work.

BELLOY

What's wrong?

DELACROIX leaves.

CULLICK

I can't imagine this scene. Even if I did come across her with a billion to one against it. I don't think I could just yell at her. I've dreamt about it. It's kind of scary, the thought of being that angry, but I know that's not me. I can't force this scene, because I can't imagine it ever happening.

CULLICK sighs.

I'm not fit for this. Someone else should be in charge of what happens in this play.

ABICUS

What would happen differently?

CULLICK

I don't know! That's the point! If I knew, maybe this would be some grand finish! The scene with my mother would have some real substance instead of just resentment. I could fall in love with one of you, or at least talk about how all of that is bullshit in a truly articulate way.

BELLOY

Is all of that what you actually want?

CULLICK

Maybe it is! Maybe I want the storybook tale; to fall in love, live through some great trials the world goes through and come out on top, be able to articulate myself in a way that people are inspired to write great literature about. I do want all of that, but I shouldn't have to, and that desire shouldn't be forced upon me like it has been.

ABICUS

Maybe you can forget it all.

CULLICK

What?

ABICUS

Maybe if you fall back, you'll just fade into the stage and disappear.

CULLICK

God, I wish!

BELLOY

You'd have to come back at some point.

ABICUS

Unless that's your death scene.

CULLICK

I would love a great death scene.

BELLOY

You'd have to come back for curtain call anyway.

ABICUS

Oh, right. You could skip it.

CULLICK

No, that's pretentious.

ABICUS

Why is that a problem?

BELLOY

You're one to talk.

ABICUS

I know; that's my point.

CULLICK

Have you ever fallen in love?

ABICUS

Of course.

BELLOY

I don't know. I don't think so. So I probably haven't.

ABICUS

Don't say that. You shouldn't let other people's constructs of love dictate your own definition. Your love is yours.

BELLOY

Then maybe. I like that idea, but I still don't know.

CULLICK

I appreciate your honesty, but if you've been in love, do you think I should care?

ABICUS

Care?

CULLICK

Yeah, do I have to care?

ABICUS

No!

BELLOY

But maybe yes?

ABICUS

Why?

BELLOY

Because you're asking. . . that makes me think you already care, so why try to suppress that?

CULLICK

But am I asking because I care, or because I feel expected to care?

ABICUS

It's real either way. Social constructs are bullshit, but how they affect us is real. You can move past them, but that doesn't make the act to move past them illegitimate.

BELLOY

Is that what it is?

Pause.

CULLICK

No. I think I wanna be in love. I just don't know how or why.

BELLOY

Maybe you don't need to.

CULLICK

I guess, but that's exhausting.

ABICUS

Maybe that's why you lay down. . . let the sound wash you away.

CULLICK

Maybe.

CULLICK stays sitting up.

The sound of rushing water plays and gets progressively louder.

CULLICK takes a big gradual inhale when the sound stops.

Blackout.

The End.