NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Scotch: Un Operachi Romantico

A Thesis Submitted to the
University Honors Program
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With University Honors

Department of
Communication

By
Donald Hoffman
DeKalb, Illinois
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Scotch: Un Operachi Romantico is a musical comedy in three acts. The musical was written to explore the existential crisis of a romantically spurned musician dealing with a crisis of faith while exploring his personal relationships and pasts while spending his evening drinking alone in his bathroom over the course of a single night. The work deals with exploration of such themes as unrequited love, alcoholism, broken families, friendship, and depression. The work was created as an exploration of writing for live theater, as well as the process involved in conceptualizing settings, use of the stage, structure, and writing for live actors.
University Honors Program

Capstone Approval Page

Capstone Title: (print or type):

Scotch: Un Operachi Romanticoo

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Communication

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May 9, 2011
Scotch
Un Operachi Romantico

A Musical Comedy

Music, Lyrics, and Play By
Donald Hoffman

1. unless otherwise noted
For Saint Sipovic,

The man who told me that spending the whole night alone while drinking on the toilet made me a “king amongst peasants,”

Thank you for performing the most loyal act that any man has ever committed on my behalf.

I will never forget it.

“That’s important.”
Cast of Characters

GREG: Severely depressed musician, 28 years old.
LIZ: Greg's ex-girlfriend and lifelong friend, late 20s.
JEAN: Barista, Greg's newest friend and fan, early 30s.
ANDY: Film buff, sweet, loyal, late 20s.
ROB: Musician, caustic, and sarcastic, early 30s.
ANDY: Liz's egotistical, quick tempered boyfriend, upper class snob, Mid 30s
MIKE: Waiter, slow, early 20s.
NICK: Greg's best friend, funny, lives on the east coast, late 20s
LISA: Nick's wife, quiet, kind, pretty, late 20s
ROGER: Greg's father, alcoholic, compulsive liar, mid 50s.
MOLLY: Greg's first girlfriend, self involved bohemian artist.
BARTENDER: Roger's bartender, quiet and intimidating, late 40s.

Time and Place

The action of the play takes place in western Illinois, in the Illinois Valley in modern times. The area is marred by economic depression, and a culture that treats alcohol as an end all cure for all emotional problems and unhappiness. The citizens are world weary and sarcastic, and many friendships tend to be based off of surface interests, leaving many people feeling distant and alone.

Act one takes place on Greg's 28th birthday at his celebration dinner, after an unsuccessful recording session. Act two takes place in Greg's bathroom.
List of Songs

Act Two

“Born in the U.S.A.” by Bruce Springsteen
“No Kissing on the Lips” by Donald Hoffman
“Que Sera Sera” by Donald Hoffman
“Jive-Ass Honkey Mother Fuckers” by Donald Hoffman
“Nasty Boys Parade” by Donald Hoffman
“Holly Martins Finally Repents” by Donald Hoffman
“Now Anna’s Song” by Donald Hoffman
“Stand-Up Comedians are not my Friends” by Donald Hoffman
“On the Day” by Donald Hoffman
“Get Happy!” by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler
“Give Molly a Kiss for Me” by Donald Hoffman
“Storybook Romance” by Donald Hoffman

Act Three

“Why we Love the Valley” by Donald Hoffman
“It’s so good to learn that right outside your window
There’s only friendly fields and open roads
You’ll sleep better when you think
You’ve stepped back from the brink
And found some peace inside yourself
Lay down your heavy load
It gets alright to dream at night
Believe in sunlight skies and slate blue earth below
But when you see him?
You’ll know”
- John Darnielle
From “Never Quite Free”, 2011

“Sometimes, a man just needs to take a piss in the sink”
- Charles Bukowski
Act One

You at the Head of the Heavenly Choir

Scene 1

There is a lone spotlight on a darkened stage illuminating a wooden stool. Next to the stool is a free standing ashtray, lying inside of the ashtray is a worn Zippo lighter and a silver plated cigarette case.

From off stage Greg enters and takes a seat. He's wearing a pair of black dress slacks, a black tie, a white dress shirt, a pair of Doc Martin shoes, and a black leather jacket. It's an outfit he wears well, but also insincerely. In these clothes, he feels like he's playing to other's expectations, but he doesn't exactly reject the vanity of looking presentable. One step worse, in an anticipating of the evening, this is as formal as he's capable of being. It is rather obvious from his demeanor that he doesn't own a blazer or a pair of dress shoes.

As he takes a seat on the stool, he immediately opens up the cigarette case to pull out an unfiltered cigarette. Then he packs the cigarette by tapping it meticulously on the case. He puts it to his lips and lights it up. As he sets the cigarette case and lighter in his breast pocket he finally acknowledges the audience in the midst of taking his first real drag.

Greg: I always considered myself a good man.

(He ashes the cigarette and keeps it in his left hand near the ashtray)

However, I suppose everyone in the right light considers themselves a good man, or woman. I suppose I should draw some sort of gender neutral distinction.

(He stares pensively towards the ceiling)

But, then you get older. You realize, objectively, of course, that you are wiser and more intelligent then you ever were in your youth.

(He makes takes another drag and makes eye contact with the audience)

So you get older, you get meaner, because you stop expecting to get anything that you
want out of life. If you’re a good man, like I consider myself to be, you bottle it up. You don’t get angry at others, you don’t lash out at them for their minor disappointments. You just bottle all that shit up. I’m from the midwest, ya know? We have manners and protocols for such things.

(He takes a very long drag. For a second, he forgets his train of thought)

When you do that, it’s not like anything is fixed or resolved. I had this horrible habit where I would reduce everything to a sarcastic joke instead of trusting the people around me that they would be there for me if I sincerely attempted to open up to them and ask for help or meaningful advice. Maybe with good reason, maybe not. But either way, that’s precisely what I did.

(He stares regretful at the floor with another drag of his cigarette)

People aren’t made out of titanium. We’re not vacuum-sealed. You bottle that much shit up and put it under that much pressure, we’re eventually going to explode.

(He makes eye contact, once again)

Then you really have to question at that point how good of a man you really are. Then, once the damage is done, you have to figure out if being a good man is actually as big a point of pride as you always considered it to be.

(He snuffs out his cigarette and stands up)

Either way, you’ll eventually realize that you have to say, ‘fuck it’ to something.

Greg looks in both directions before deciding to exit the stage from the direction from which he entered.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

The stage illuminates to show the interior of a fine Italian restaurant. There are adornments on the wall that indicate that the establishment has a bit of history. We see family portraits aged back to the nineteenth century, authentic Italian relics, and pillars in the corner. It’s actually a newer location for the family that owns it, but it’s a business that has been there in that family for at least a few generations. It’s a level of authenticity that they are well aware that their patrons appreciate.
The dining hall is at about half capacity, with patrons enjoying their company in a muted silence. However, at the center table we see five people sitting patiently with one empty seat. That table consists of Alex, Rob and Jean, Greg’s three best friends. Also seated are Liz and Andy. Liz is a little hesitant to be there with Andrew, who she recently started dating not long after her break-up with Greg, and her pensiveness is evident throughout. Greg’s constant reassurance that he is fine with the situation and is excited to meet him is the only reason she agreed to bring him. Everyone at the table is dressed appropriately for the environment, far more so than Greg was in the previous scene.

Appetizers are already present at the table, as is the wine.

Alex: I can’t believe he’s late to his own birthday party.

Rob: You’re surprised?

Alex: Aren’t you?

Rob: Not really. He’s actually been doing something today.

Jean: Yeah, lighten up. It’s a big day for him.

Alex: I’m just saying, if he’s going to pick the time for his birthday, the least that he could do is stick to it.

Liz: What was he doing today?

Rob: He didn’t tell you?

Liz: No...

(She looks down at the table, feeling a twinge of regret that their communication has deteriorated to this point.)

We haven’t been talking as much, lately.

Alex: Why is that?

(Alex looks at Andrew, Liz notices this and glares at Alex)

Liz: We’ve both been busy.

(pause)

What is he doing?
Rob: He’s actually at the studio, recording some new songs.

(Andy looks up from his food)

Andy: This dude is a musician?

Liz: I told you that.

Andy: No, you didn’t. You just told me he was an old friend.

(Rob, Jean, and Alex eye Liz accusingly)

Liz: We used to be very close.

Andy: How close?

Liz: Umm...

From off stage Greg enters to the table in a rush. He’s actually panicked, and he gesticulates wildly back towards the door. Before saying a word to all of his friends, who are reacting, he grabs the water from in front of his chair and downs the entire glass.

Greg: Fucking traffic.

Alex: That’s the excuse you’re going with?

Greg: The traffic is the reason I’m frustrated. There’s a myriad of reasons why I’m late. We’ll get into this later.

(Greg looks around and sets the empty glass down on the table, and looks around.)

Hey, everybody!

All except for Greg: Hey.

Greg: What? No happy birthday?

All except for Greg: Happy birthday!

Greg: That’s better.
(Greg looks around and smiles. He then makes eye contact with Andy, then he makes eye contact with Liz.)

Greg: Is this the guy?

Liz: Yes. This is the guy.

(Greg extends his hand to Andy.)

Greg: I'm Greg. Nice to meet you, dude.

(Andy extends his hand out to meet Greg's. The two exchange a firm handshake.)

Andy: Nice to meet you, too. Quite a grip.

Greg: Don't worry. I don't always try to shake someone's hand this hard. It's only old school alpha male dominance pissing contest bullshit.

(Andy retracts his hand, and looks slightly puzzled)

Greg: I see appetizers, and vino!

Rob: Yeah. I see a sober asshole with road rage. You should fix that.

Greg: Should I?

(Rob slides Greg's wine glass towards him as Greg takes a seat.)

Greg: Bah!

(Greg slaps away the wine glass.)

Remove this pussy chalice from my sight, good sir! It displeases me!

(Greg grabs the wine bottle and fills up his empty water glass to the rim. The others, except for Liz and Andy laugh hysterically at the sight of Greg slamming that drink as well, and slamming it down on the table. He proceeds to fill it up to the brim again)

Jean: Salut!

Rob: Huzzah!

Alex: Well, done.
Greg: What do you think, Liz? Is that the vintage Greg kinda shit you’ve grown to miss, or what?

Liz: That, I haven’t missed.

Andy: Alright, alright, alright. What’s going on here?

Jean: They used to date.

Liz: I told you we had a history.

Andy: Yes. You said you had a history, whatever the hell that means. You didn’t say that you used to date.

Liz: That’s what history means.

Andy: History is a vague euphemism. Saying that you used to date means that you used to date. That’s why they have a specific word for it. It removes the vagueness.

Greg: Relax, Jake LaMatta. It was a long time ago. Besides, you’re new. You’ll discover she keeps secrets and isn’t honest with anyone at first. Between you and me, the fact that she felt the need to hide it and feels bad about it with you? It’s a good sign. Trust me.

(Andy looks sternly over at Liz, who is slumped in her chair. Greg tries to salvage the situation even further.)

Look. We’re getting off on the wrong foot. She’s called and talked about you non stop, and trust me. She’s a good woman, one of the best. Let this one slide. It’ll be worth it, trust me.

Liz: Thanks.

Andy: It’s fine.

Greg: Good.

Liz: Rob said you were recording. How did it go?

Greg: Frustrating.

Alex: How so?

Greg: I got nothing useable.
Rob: How is that possible?

Jean: Yeah. You rehearsed those songs for about two months straight. You blew me off repeatedly to get some practice in. Not only that, you’ve been sounding great. What happened?

Greg: Everything.

Rob: Care to elaborate, or do you feel the need to lure us into asking all these leading questions, birthday boy?

(Greg takes another sizable drink of wine.)

Greg: I was off. The recording studio was glitchy. The engineer was an idiot. The sessions monkeys wouldn’t do what I wanted.

Liz: Being a perfectionist, again?

Greg: Look at our former relationship. When was I ever a perfectionist?

Jean: Zing!

Greg: Thank you, Jean Genie. So, Andy, tell me about myself.

(Andy straightens himself up in the chair)

Andy: Tell you about yourself?

(Greg chuckles and looks down at his wine)

Greg: Sorry. I guess the wine is already kicking in. Tell me about you.

Andy: What do you want to know?

Greg: The basics. What do you do? What do you want to do? Ya know, the kinda stuff you tell a stranger whenever you just want to chew the shit.

Andy: Chew the shit?

Alex: It’s a Gregism. You’ll have to get a grip of those real fast.

Andy: Ah.
(Andy takes a sip of his wine.)

I'm a graphic designer.

Greg: A graphic designer. What kind of stuff do you graphic design?

Andy: Typical things.

Greg: What's typical. Pretend I'm an idiot.

Andy: Pretend?

(Greg eyes him and takes another sip.)

Greg: Careful. It is my birthday.

Andy: And a very happy birthday to you, Greg.

Greg: Thank you.

Liz: He works for an agency. They design menus, logos, ads for restaurant chains.

Greg: Well, that sounds interesting.

Andy: Meh. It pays for my condo and my Audi.

Rob: You have an Audi?

Andy: I have an Audi.

Rob: Does it have seat warmers?

Andy: Only one.

(Andy leans over and hugs Liz, and gives her a big passionate kiss. As he breaks away, he takes a look at Greg to check for his reaction. Greg just stares blankly.)

So, you're a musician. How well does that pay?

Greg: It doesn't pay for shit. I do reinforce the starving artist stereotype.

Andy: I'm sorry to hear that.
Greg: It’s quite okay, sir. For me, the fact that I actually act on my passions instead of going for a steady paycheck allows me to sleep pretty well at night.

Andy: That must be wonderful. Usually I have a hard time falling asleep since I’m usually preoccupied with all the responsibilities I have on a daily basis. It must be wonderful to slack around and be able to just sit back and really focus on yourself.

Liz: Do you both want to whip it out right now? I mean, I’ve seen both. Do you really want me to declare a winner right now?

Jean: Huh?

Rob: It’s a dick measuring joke, sweetie.

Jean: Oh!

(Greg looks over at his friends.)

Greg: Isn’t he witty? Seriously, is anyone coming to my defense?

Alex: I would, dude. But we’re all finding this pretty fucking entertaining.

Andy: I’m not an idiot.

Greg: I can see that. I’m kinda liking you.

Andy: Yeah, you’re not too bad yourself.

(They both smile)

Greg: So, did you get to know everyone?

Andy: Yeah, before you kept everyone waiting, but not too well.

Alex: Oh, we can talk now?

Greg: Yeah, if you can string more than a couple of words together.

Alex: Do I need to kick your ass?

Greg: Only if you want to make it the most romantic birthday ever.

Alex: Really? We’re going down this road already?
Greg: Yes we are, big boy.

Alex: Oh, sweet alcohol. Blurring the line between gay and straight since men in robes locked themselves up alone with other men in the mountains to brew it.

Greg: God bless those lovable monks. Alcohol and religion. Two end-all solutions to every single problem life can ever throw at you.

_The table returns to drinking while Mike the waiter comes in from off stage. He approaches Greg and opens up his pad._

Mike: Hello, there. My name is Mike, and I’ll be waiting on you. I hear that it’s your birthday today.

Greg: Yes, it is. There’s a huge tip in it if you don’t bring out a cake or make a scene out of us in any way, okay?

Mike: Sure. Can I tell you about our specials today?

Greg: No. I just want the porterhouse with a mashed potato.

Mike: And to drink?

Greg: A bottle of scotch.

Mike: Do you have a preference?

Greg: J&B, single malt, if you have it.

Mike: Right away. Enjoy your meal. Does anybody else need anything?

_Everyone at the table shakes their heads_

Mike: Alright. I’ll put the order in and be back out with your scotch, soon.

_Mike exits the stage._

Greg: You guys already ordered?

Jean: Yeah, right before you got here.

Greg: Ah. So, Jean. How have you been?
Jean: Good enough to show up here, obviously.

Greg: Wait. You’re not still mad at me, are you?

Jean: Why would I be mad at you?

(Rob inserts himself wryly into the conversation)

Rob: Yeah, why would Jean be mad at you, Greg?

Greg: Probably because I haven’t called her?

Rob: Why didn’t you call her? I mean, why would that present a problem? Did you forget to call her after a specific event, or something?

Greg: Shut up, Rob.

Rob: I mean, honestly, what possible scenarios warrants a call these days? I mean, I usually think of someone calling you to tell you that someone died usually warrants a call back. I also think that desperate calls of help usually warrant a phone call.

Alex: If you’ve borrowed a large sum of money, and the lender is calling you to tell you that it’s time to pay them back, that would warrant a call.

Rob: That is a good one! I’m forgetting one.

Alex: Really? What could it be?

Greg: Come on, assholes.

Rob and Alex: I got it!

(Rob and Alex look at each other)

Rob: You go ahead, sir.

(Rob gestures towards Alex and bows)

Alex: Oh no, sir, I insist.

(Rob gestures back, and bows)

Rob: You sure?
Alex: Absolutely.

Rob: Alright. Apparently, if you sleep with someone, Greg, and you don’t call them back for a week afterwards? It kinda makes you an asshole.

(Rob looks at Jean, then at Greg)

Just sayin’

Greg: Fuck all you guys.

Andy: Why didn’t you call, Greg? That is kinda a douchebag move.

(Rob nods his head in agreement)

Rob: I concur.

Alex: He still didn’t answer the question.

Jean: Leave him alone.

(Liz leans forwards)

Liz: Wait, even I’m curious. You’re a good looking gal.

Greg: That’s a private conversation between me and her, not a bunch of asses sitting around begging to be an audience.

Andy: Perhaps that kind of reckless behavior has cost you relationships in the past?

Greg: And look who’s back to toeing the line.

Andy: Just an observation.

Greg: Isn’t there some kinda protocol for attending somebody’s birthday party that you don’t know?

(Liz slams her hand on the table)

Liz: Stop it, both of you.

(Andy kisses Liz on the cheek)
Andy: I’m sorry, sweetie.

Jean: Andy, where are you from?

Andy: Me? I’m from L.A.

Alex: That explains the haircut.

    (Andy laughs)

Andy: I’ve only cut my hair like this since I moved here.

Rob: Trying to stay true to your coastal roots?

Andy: I suppose.

Rob: Did it come with the car?

Andy: No, the work paid for it that way.

Jean: You know what time it is?

Alex: Smoke break?

Jean: Smoke break.

    (Jean stands up, Andy, Alex, and Rob follow suit. Jean turns to Liz and Greg.)

    You coming?

Greg: No, I just had one before I came in.

Liz: I still don’t smoke.

Andy: You want me to stay?

Liz: No, you go ahead.

Andy: Alright.

    Andy, Jean, Alex, and Rob all walk off stage.
Liz: So, what do you think?

(Greg pauses and takes finishes his entire glass of wine. Then he proceeds to reach into his pocket and pull out a wad of various wrappers, crumpled up receipts, and other small rubbish, and proceeds to throw it down right in front of Liz on the table. She pauses, confused.)

Greg: Do you want to shove that up your pussy?

(Liz is confused, but also horribly offended)

Liz: What the fuck?

Greg: I mean, you obvious have a penchant for letting trash up there, I just wanted to know if it is purely a symbolic expression, or a literal one.

(Greg grabs the bottle and proceeds to poor himself another glass of wine.)

Liz: I can't believe you just said that.

(Greg finishes, and angrily slams the bottle back down on the table.)

Greg: Really? I would assume that was just up your alley.

Liz: What the hell is wrong with you?

Greg: I'm pissed off, that's why.

Liz: What do you have to be mad about?

Greg: You left me.

(Liz remains silent.)

You have nothing to say to that?

Liz: I'm thinking!

Greg: Think faster. I'm getting drunk as shit, and I'm still running circles around you.

Liz: Well, what exactly do you want to know?

Greg: Why did you leave me?
Liz: Your insecurity.

*(Greg doesn't respond)*

Confidence is sexier, regardless of if its real or not.

Greg: You know what?

Liz: What?

Greg: That's utter bullshit.

Liz: How is that bullshit?

Greg: Because we were twenty-two years old when we were together, and we'd been friends for years. Show me any twenty-two year old with any amount of confidence in himself, this world, his life, his family, anything, and I'll show you a fucking moron.

*(Greg takes a drink.)*

The fact that, with what we had, you left me for those reasons makes you look like nothing but a pathetic, scared little girl. You wanted to live in a fucking fantasy world, where men have this flawed sense of masculinity. I was just intelligent, insightful. I saw the world for what it was, and was desperately trying to carve out my own place in it. You wanted to live in a fairytale.

Liz: How dare you judge me for that. I was just scared and trying to figure things out, too. Being with you was nothing but those questions, your depression, your melodramatic bullshit. I wanted to be young, to have fun. You wanted to be a forty year old man.

Greg: I'm not getting to far from that point now.

Liz: No, you're not. You're still stuck where you were when we were twenty-two. You're here telling me to shove trash up my pussy, and being bitter about the fact that I have someone new.

Greg: He's a fucking scumbag, and you know it.

Liz: I like him.

Greg: More than you liked me?

Liz: Absolutely.
Greg: That’s utter bullshit.

Liz: How do you figure?

Greg: You said you loved me.

Liz: I did. But, I was also too young to know what I wanted.

Greg: You still don’t know what you want.

Liz: You’re wrong.

Greg: Do you want him?

Liz: Right now, yes. In the future? I’m not sure.

Greg: At least that’s honest.

Liz: I’m sorry you’re lonely, and miserable, and bitter, but you can’t take it out on me, not if you want to be friends.

Greg: You know what, Liz?

Liz: What?

Greg: Fuck you.

Liz: You know what, Greg?

Greg: What?

Liz: Fuck you, too.

Andy, Alex, Rob, and Jean reappear from off stage. They return to their respective seats.

Rob: Our food still isn’t here? Jesus Christ!

Greg: You’re telling me. They haven’t even brought my god damned Scotch yet.

Liz: Like that’s such a big loss.

Jean: Andy was telling me outside that you guys were in Europe last year.
Liz: Oh yeah, we were. It was fantastic.

Greg: I bet you had the time of your life.

(Liz ignores Greg’s hostility, everyone else gets progressively more uncomfortable about it.)

Jean: Where did you guys end up going?

Greg: Probably a grand ol’ working tour of all of the finest red-light districts in Holland and Germany.

Liz: We started off in London, then to France, Spain, Italy, and then back home.

Greg: Bully for you.

(Liz is finally snaps at Greg’s sarcastic comments. Everyone else, including Andy, dies down as their tone and spite increases.)

Liz: Have you ever been to Paris, Greg?

Greg: No, you know that I haven’t.

Liz: Well, let me ask you a question: Are you currently in love?

Greg: Again, you know the answer.

Liz: Okay, well let me ask you this: Is anyone currently in love with you?

Greg: No, no one is.

Liz: Then wait until someone finally loves you, it’d be a waste otherwise.

(Greg starts spewing vitriolic.)

Greg: How’s your family Liz?

Liz: Don’t.

Greg: Specifically, how’s your dad? Have you been talking to him again?

Liz: I said don’t.
Greg: How often do you think about him? Do you visit home, and start getting cold sweats whenever you hear footsteps down the hall? I mean, he seemed to be ever present when we were together. I mean, the nightmares and everything. See, I just kinda assumed that you go from guy to guy, lying there, letting them fuck you, never really getting into it.

Alex: Dude, you’re drunk. You need to stop.

Greg: Or has that changed. I mean, have you actually started enjoying sex? When you get to that point where you think you might actually want to get off, do you think of your dad and pretend that you’re little again? Is that what it takes to actually get you off?

_Liz launches up, runs over to Greg, and punches him in the face with enough force that it knocks his chair over and he lands on the floor, blood trickling out of his nose. She screams at him while tears roll down her face._

Liz: You mother fucker. I never want to fucking see you again. I hope you fucking die.

_She storms off stage as Greg rises to his face, he screams back at her._

Greg: You’re leaving!?

_(He motions to all of his friends)_

Is it something they said!? 

_Andy marches up as well, and attempts to punch Greg in the face. Alex and Jean jump up. Rob just sits, watches intently, and continues to drink. Greg dodges the punch, punches Andy in the stomach, wrestles Andy’s arm behind his back, and pins him down on the table._

Greg: She gets to hit me, Asshole. Not you? Got it?

_Greg shoves Andy away, Andy looks back, scoffs, and walks off stage. Greg looks at his friends._

Greg: What? She went nuclear far before I did. “Does anybody love you?”

Alex: Greg?

Greg: Yeah?

Alex: I love ya, man. But you were a fucking asshole.

Greg: Pft. Isn’t it time to sing Happy Birthday?
Jean: Greg, seriously, I think you need to go home and sober up.


Mike returns from off stage with a bottle of Scotch. He is completely oblivious to the preceding events. He is, however, confused that everyone except for Rob is still standing and that Liz and Andy are gone.

Mike: I am truly sorry about the wait. Here you are.

(Greg swipes the bottle from him.)

Greg: It took you long enough.

Mike: I am truly sorry, sir.

Greg: Goodbye, everybody. Thanks for the fucking party!

Greg walks off stage with the bottle of Scotch. Alex turns to Mike.

Alex: I am sorry about that. His mother is sick.

Mike: Oh no! I hope she’s okay.

Alex: Yeah, she’ll be fine. Can you give us a minute?

Mike: Of course!

Mike exits the stage. Alex turns to Rob.

Alex: You just fucking sit there the whole time!?

Rob: Of course I did.

Jean: Why?

Rob: Dinner and a show!

(blackout.)
Act Two

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If you Believe in your Heart, and Confess with your Lips
Surely, you will be saved one day

Scene 1

The stage is set up into two parts. On the right, we see a curtain, blocking off half of the stage to the audience. On the left, we see a dank bathroom. The walls are slate gray and concrete. It is dimly lit, and conjures up the image of a prison cell. On the far left, there is the toilet, also attached to the left wall is a sink.

Through the door Greg enters, wearing the same clothes. However, his tie is loosened, he is not wearing his jacket, and his dress shirt is unbuttoned and untucked. His undershirt is a white t-shirt featuring the cover art from the Rolling Stones album ‘Some Girls.’

In his hand he carries a pint glass filled with ice and the bottle of Scotch. He sets it down on the sink and exits the door.

He reenters a few moments later with an acoustic guitar and a guitar stand, which he sets down next to the sink. From his pocket, he sets down his cellphone. He then proceeds to pull down his pants and underwear, with his profile to the audience, and takes a seat on the toilet and buries his head in his hands. After a brief pause, he starts beating his foot on the ground repeatedly to a beat, and starts drunkenly singing.

Greg: Born down in a dead man's town
First kick I took was when I hit the ground
End up like a dog that's been kicked too much
Till you spend half your life just to cover him up

(He begins belting out the song at a louder volume and pumping his fists)

Born in the U.S.A., I was
Born in the U.S.A., I was
Born in the U.S.A.
Born in the U.S.A.
Ugh!
(He pauses for a second, strains himself, and we hear the sound effect of a tiny splash in the bowl.)

Well, that was unfulfilling.

(He looks at the plunger to flush the toilet and swipes at it. However, he misses, his movements slurred by the alcohol. After two more failed attempts, he starts swiping at it wildly, missing each time, until he gives up frustrated.)

Fuck it. Let it stink.

(He briefly pauses and grabs his cellphone off of the sink. He searches through his number, finds one, and presses the send button. He then puts his phone to his ear)

The other half the stage pulls back the curtain to reveal Nick and Lisa in their bed. The lights are out, and they're both wearing oversized Ramones shirts as pajamas. The phone begins to ring on Nick's night stand. The ringtone is the chorus to Kanye West's "Runaway." Nick and Lisa both begin to stir.

Lisa: Who's calling this late?

Nick: It's fucking Greg.

(Lisa sits up and looks towards the clock on the nightstand)

Lisa: It's two in the morning!

(Nick grabs the phone and answers it.)

Nick: Hello?

(Greg perks up excited)

Greg: Hey, Bro Derrick!

Nick: Do you have any idea what time it is?


Nick: It's two o'clock in the morning.

Greg: Where are you at?
Nick: In bed, with my wife.

Greg: Lisa’s there?

Nick: Yes.

Greg: Let me talk to her.

Nick: No.

Greg: It’s my birthday, let me fucking talk to her.

(Nick sits upright quickly, horrified that he forgot his friend’s birthday. He puts his hand over the phone and looks over at Lisa)

Nick: Shit. We forgot his birthday!

Lisa: Oh god, we did.

Nick: He wants to talk to you.

(Lisa reaches for the phone.)

Lisa: Hey, birthday boy!

Greg: Lisa!

Lisa: How did your party go, I’m sorry we couldn’t make it.

Greg: Oh, it’s all right. You didn’t miss much.

Lisa: Well, next time we make it in to town, we’ll buy you dinner or something.

Greg: That sounds wonderful.

Lisa: You want to talk to Nick?

Greg: Sure.

(Lisa hands the phone back to Nick.)

Nick: The party went good?
Greg: Liz brought her new boyfriend.

Nick: Uh oh. How did that go?

Greg: She ended up punching me in the face, and I ended up kicking his ass.

Nick: You’re joking?

Greg: Nope.

Nick: That’s fucking hysterical.

Greg: Thank you! At least one person sees it my way.

Nick: What did Alex do?

Greg: He just stood there.

Nick: Figures.

(pause.)

You okay?

Greg: Yes, I’m fine.

Nick: Are you drunk?

Greg: Very.

Nick: That’s important.

(Greg laughs.)

What are you doing now?

Greg: Well, right now I’m on the toilet.

Nick: Naturally.

Greg: I just finished taking a wicked Billy Joel

(Nick laughs.)
I'm here with a glass full of ice, a bottle of Scotch I took from the restaurant, and an acoustic guitar.

Nick: How long are you going to be doing that for?

Greg: I suppose until I drink myself sober or pass out.

Nick: I think that's a good plan. I'm proud of you.

(pause.)

Weren't you recording today?

Greg: Yes, I did.

Nick: How did that go?

Greg: Terrible.

Nick: What happened?

Greg: I got into a fight with the producer, too.

Nick: Fisticuffs?


Nick: What about the songs?

Greg: You want to hear one?

Nick: How?

Greg: I can play you one into the phone.

Nick: Yeah, sure.

Greg: What about Lisa, does she want to hear?

(Nick looks over at Lisa. She's already half asleep again.)

Nick: I think she's passed out again. She's kinda cute when she's sleeping.
Greg: If she’s naked, you should send me a picture.

Nick: She’s not.

Greg: Never mind, then.

(pause.)

Okay, hold on.

(Greg puts the phone on speaker and sets it on the sink. He then picks up the acoustic guitar, gives it a couple of strums to check the tuning.)

This is the radio hit. Ya know, if it wasn’t far too offensive to play on the radio.

Nick: Of course.

Greg: Can you hear me okay?

Nick: Yeah, I can hear you fine.

(Greg begins tapping his foot rhythmically.)

Greg: One, two, tres, quatro.

(Greg begins playing the guitar)

I enjoy being bored
It motivates me to put my knuckles to the door
And invite myself into your apartment

I help myself to the fridge
Is this really the way you live?
It makes my life look a whole lot better

You said you needed cash, and I asked:
What are you willing to do for it?
But you were already taking off your pants

You said no kissing on the lips
But I could fuck you in the ass
I mean, what an epic way to break the ice
(Greg starts tapping his foot and breaking the rhythm for the chorus.)

Hey babe, you made v.d. sexy
Hey babe, you made v.d. sexy
Only if I was thinking with my brain
Nothing would have ended up like this

(Greg returns to strumming, Nick laughs at the other end of the phone.)

You kept saying:
“Harder, harder, harder, harder”
You kept saying:
“Faster, faster, faster, faster, faster, faster,
faster, faster, faster.”

What else could I say to you?
What else could I say to you?
I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry
Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry

(Greg starts playing pretty little melodic pattern.)

I know nothing could every make up for this
But
I’m sorry.
I’m sorry.

(Greg returns to hard strumming for the chorus.)

Hey babe, you made v.d. sexy
Hey babe, you made v.d. sexy
Hey babe, you made v.d. sexy
Hey babe, you made it work!

Sorry, I’m sorry, sorry, I’m sorry
Sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry
Sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so fucking sorry
How am I gonna explain this to my wife?

(Nick laughs hysterically while Greg sets the guitar back down on the stand. Lisa rolls over
and glares at Nick for waking her)

Nick: Dude, that was fucking hysterical.
Greg: Thank you.

Nick: Your single?

Greg: It could be.

Nick: What’s it called?

Greg: It’s called “No Kissing On The Lips.”

Nick: Catchy.

Greg: Yeah, I wrote it in five minutes after watching Pretty Woman alone in the dark at six a.m. while drinking Gin Rickys.

Nick: That’s important.

Greg: I wanted to write a pop song dealing with the realistic events of prostitution, not the optimistic fairytale that people seem to think it is.

Nick: Well, not to disagree with you on your birthday, but I don’t think many people view that situation as optimistic.

Greg: No, but it is honest.

Nick: How do you figure?

Greg: Think about it. It’s like a therapist.

      (Greg grabs the bottle of Scotch off of the sink and unscrews the cap. He then begins to fill up his glass of ice.)

      You’re exchanging money for affection, for intimacy.

Nick: Sure. However, you can get that for free when you have a girlfriend... or a boyfriend, if you’re so inclined.

Greg: True, but you can never trust it.

Nick: How the hell do you figure that?

Greg: Think about it. Girlfriends lie, they cheat, the emotionally abandon you. You constantly have to figure if they really love you or not.
Nick: Not when you’ve found the right one.

Greg: Especially when you’ve found the right one! They dominate your insecurities, especially since they’re most often the reason for having them. When you pay a hooker for sex, you’re exchanging money for a service. You can trust the sincerity of the exchange. Tit for tat, pun intended.

Nick: Well, I have to hand it to you.

Greg: What?

Nick: I got some friendly late night conversation, a song, and an interesting conversation about prostitution until we segue, all through subtext of course, until we started getting around to the topic of Liz.

Greg: We’re not talking about Liz.

Nick: The fuck we’re not!

Greg: Liz is just a stupid girl that I used to date. She led me on. Things were great, and she just left when she suddenly changed her mind. No fight, no wind down. Just gone. Why should I fixate on the fact that she’s with someone else?

(Greg takes a long drink, and sets the glass back on the sink.)

Besides, it’s not just her. It’s everyone. It’s my parents, it’s my friends, you excluded, of course, and all the other women that screwed me over.

Nick: So, maybe that’s what you should do?

Greg: What’s that?

Nick: Call them.

Greg: Who?

Nick: All of them. Call your parents, your friends, your exes, and either find out why they screwed you over, and if they don’t have a satisfying answer, then just tell them off.

Greg: You’re joking, right?

Nick: Fuck no. You’re drunk, it’s your birthday, you’re finally following through with recording your first album. Think about it, it’d be fucking epic!
Greg: Wow.

Nick: Wow what?

Greg: You are completely right.

Nick: I know I am.

Greg: It’d be fucking epic!

Nick: Damn straight. Be brutal.

Greg: More brutal than a Gwar concert.

Nick: That’s a dated reference, but I like where you’re going with it.

Greg: Nathan Explosion brutal?

(pause.)

Nick: Yeah, before the commercial, rehearse what you want to say. I really think those kind of slip ups are gonna make you look kinda pathetic.

Greg: Oh, screw you.

Nick: It’s you, you’re a sarcastic asshole.

Greg: Is that how people see me?

Nick: As a sarcastic asshole?

Greg: Yeah.

Nick: Greg, you ARE a sarcastic asshole. That’s why I love you.

Greg: I love you, too, Nick.

Nick: Easy there, Brokeback.

(Greg laughs, and then there's a pause.)

Alright. You should get on that. I need to go back to bed.
Greg: Alright. Thanks, man.

Nick: Goodnight. Happy birthday.

Greg: Thanks.

(Nick hangs up the phone and rolls over and kisses Lisa on the cheek.)

Lisa: What was that about?

Nick: Just making sure that I get an even better phone call from him tomorrow.

The right side of the stage blacks out. The curtain draws on the right side, and Greg leans back against the toilet bowl.

Greg: Well, that is a plan.

(Greg searches through his phone, plaintively stares at the screen for a bit, and hits send. There is a series of rings.)

Greg: Yeah, of course, they don’t answer when I call them late at night.

Voicemail (V.O.): Hi, you’ve reached Linda and Erik Morgan. We’re unable to come to the phone right now. If you’re leave your name, your number, and a brief message, we will call you back at our earliest convenience.

(Beep.)

Greg: Hey mom. It’s Greg. It was my birthday today. I’m sure you just forgot. Anyways, I was also in the studio today. I wrote you a song, I thought you’d enjoy it.

(Greg picks up the guitar, and starts strumming slow, jazzy chords.)

When I was married to my first wife
I used to get home from work late, and each night
I’d passively-aggressively torture her
Until she spent the weekend at her mother’s house

But I swear to god that I thought
Oh, that’s what marriage is all about

(He over emphasizes the next line.)
Thanks mom and dad

I’m keeping out of eyesight from those Mexicans
That roughed me up last night
And I’m making my way down to my friend’s house
The number one crack-den in town
She’s got this que sera sera attitude
That prevents her from locking the door
So we do some shots, and run our mouths

Until we admit
We can’t stand to be alone

Thanks mom and dad

(Greg plays a pretty instrumental break)

When I wake, I make my way to the pay phone
Where I try to call my ex-wife
And before I can try to apologize
She tells me to never call her again
So I’m bringing bagels back to the house when I realize
That that whore is my best friend
And she says that last night was just fucking great
But we probably shouldn’t do it again

Oh, que
Sera sera!

(Greg dramatically emphasizes the last line)

Thanks mom and dad

(Greg sets down the guitar on the stand.)

Yeah, if you want to call me back some time, feel free. Otherwise, I’ll talk to you next year when you forget my birthday again.

(Greg grabs the phone and hits end.)

I can’t fucking believe that shit.
(pause.)

My god, I feel fucking great after that.

(Greg scrolls through his phone.)

Oh, here’s a fun one.

(He reaches into the dress pocket of his dress shirt and pulls out a pack of American Spirit Blacks and a tarnished gold Zippo. He puts a cigarette up to his lips and lights it. After he inhales deeply, he grabs his glass of Scotch, and takes a long drink. After he finishes, he sets it back down on the table, then he exhales the smoke. He presses send on the phone.)

The right side of the stage lights up, and the curtain draws to reveal a barroom. The bar is a small dive with very poor lighting. The jukebox has been turned off for the night. There is a bartender washing glasses, and Roger is sitting alone at the bar. It’s after closing time. Roger is wearing a denim jacket, a pair of jeans, and a Harley Davidson t-shirt. He’s an unemployed alcoholic in his late 50s. He is nursing a beer. Upon hearing his cellphone go off on the table, he picks it up.

Roger: Hello?

Greg: Hey.

Roger: Who is this?

Greg: It’s Greg.

Roger: Who?

(Greg yells into the phone.)

Greg: It’s Greg!

(Roger connects the two.)

Roger: Diddles!

Greg: Hey dad. How are you?

Roger: Just sitting at the bar. Is everything okay? You never call me.

Greg: Everything is fine, dad.
Roger: Why did you call?

Greg: It’s my birthday. I thought of you, figured I’d give a call.

Roger: It’s your birthday?

Greg: Yes, it is.

Roger: Shit, I’m sorry, I totally fucking forgot. How old are you now, Diddles?

Greg: Nobody calls me Diddles anymore, dad.

Roger: Oh fuck that. You know that you’ll always be diddles to me.

Greg: Thanks.

Roger: I can’t believe that I forgot it.

Greg: Don’t feel bad. Mom did, too.

Roger: Your mother is a fucking bitch.

Greg: Yes, she is. I know that.

Roger: Yeah. I’m kinda an asshole.

Greg: Yeah, you two were kinda made for each other.

Roger: How’s that douchebag she’s fucking?

Greg: He’s still a douchebag, and still fucking her.

Roger: That sounds like your mother.

Greg: Yup.

(pause.)

Are you drunk, dad?

Roger: Yeah. Are you?

Greg: Yes.
Roger: Have a drink with me on the phone?

Greg: I can do that.

(Roger gestures to the bartender for another beer, and the bartender complies. Greg starts refilling his glass of Scotch.)

Roger: So how old are you now?

Greg: Twenty-eight.

(The bartender hands Roger his beer, and he takes a sip.)

Roger: Wow. Twenty-eight years old.

Greg: Yeah. It’s been a long time.

Roger: Has it? It hasn’t been that long.

Greg: It’s been four years since I’ve seen you at all.

Roger: It hasn’t been that long since we’ve seen each other, has it?

Greg: Four years ago today, as a matter of fact.

(Greg takes a sip of Scotch, quite bitterly.)

Roger: We should get together soon!

Greg: Yeah, you always say that. I’m kinda surprised that you answered the phone.

Roger: Don’t be a little shit. I’m trying to make an effort here.

Greg: You’re not making an effort. You’re talking out your ass and you’re going to forget all about even talking to me by the time that you wake up.

Roger: Want me to hang up?

Greg: You know what the fucked up thing is?

Roger: What’s that?

Greg: I still consider you the good parent.
Roger: Well, I’m not an immature little psycho bitch.

Greg: Just an abusive alcoholic.

Roger: That makes me sound worse.

Greg: At least you cared enough to knock me around a little bit as a kid. Mom never even seemed to acknowledge the fact that I existed.

Roger: Want me to tell you something to make you feel better?

Greg: What’s that?

Roger: You were a big baby.

Greg: So?

Roger: So, you fucking ruined her down there!

   *(Roger bursts out laughing, as does Greg.)*

Greg: You wanna know what’s fucked up about that?

Roger: What?

Greg: The fact that that actually makes me feel a little bit better.

   *(They both laugh again.)*

Roger: Good. Happy birthday.

   *(Pause.)*

   Twenty-eight years old. Wow.

Greg: Yup.

Roger: You were born when I was twenty-eight.

Greg: I know.
Roger: Your mom was pretty hot back then. I know you can’t tell now, probably, but her tits were just fucking fantastic. And she was as tight as a jar of jelly crusted over.

(*Greg recoils in disgust.*)

Greg: Dad!

Roger: What?

Greg: Can you not talk about mom’s tits or how tight she was?

Roger: Oh, I didn’t know you were such a pansy. Should I get you a dainty little pink dress and send it to you in the mail, you fucking queer?

Greg: No. Just don’t mention my mother that way.

(*pause.*)

So, what have you been up to?

Roger: Same old, same old.

Greg: What the hell is that? I haven’t seen you in four years. Hell, I don’t even know where you’re living now.

Roger: I’m still in Ohio.

Greg: You weren’t in Ohio the last time I talked to you.

Roger: Really?

Greg: Yeah, in fact, I don’t remember you ever being in Ohio.

Roger: Oh. Shit, it must’ve been a long time since we spoke.

(*Greg responds bitterly. Roger takes another drink.*)

Greg: Yup. Still four years.

Roger: Oh. Well, I’m in Ohio. I work at a car part factory in the loading dock. I got married again.

Greg: You got married... again?
Roger: Yeah, to this thirty-five year old bangtail with huge fake tits.

Greg: I have a new stepmom, and you didn’t tell me?

Roger: That’s not all.

Greg: What else?

Roger: You have a half brother, too.

(Greg kicks his legs out in shock.)

Greg: You have got to be fucking kidding me.

Roger: Nope. What, you’re not going to congratulate me?

Greg: You got married, and you had a kid, and you didn’t fucking tell me?

Roger: We haven’t talked in four years. That was on you.

Greg: How the fuck was it on me?

Roger: Because you punched me out.

Greg: I punched you out because you were trying to fuck my ex-girlfriend at the time.

Roger: Did I?

(Greg responds exasperatedly.)

Greg: Yes.

Roger: I don’t remember that at all.

Greg: I know you don’t, dad. You never remember.

Roger: What was her name?

Greg: Liz.

Roger: Really cute, really sweet?

Greg: Yeah.
Roger: Whatever happened to her?

Greg: I don’t want to talk about her.

Roger: Why not?

Greg: It’s a sore topic, dad.

Roger: Okay.

(pause.)

You got a new girl, yet?

Greg: No, I don’t.

Roger: Really?

Greg: Really.

Roger: Why the fuck not? You queer?

Greg: No dad, not queer. I’m not just not great with women.

Roger: Why not?

Greg: Maybe because I didn’t have a sober dad around to help me learn how to do such things?

Roger: First off, sobriety does not help in getting girls.

(Roger pauses to take another drink.)

Second off, my father never taught me how to pick up girls, I had to figure that out on my own. My father’s father never taught him how to pick up girls, and my great grandfather never did either. I may be drinking a bit, but I’m not going to sit here and pretend that I believe that I’m the reason you can’t get laid. That’s on you, kid.

Greg: I’m not blaming you, dad. I just wish you were around when I was little instead of leaving me with that Margot Kidder level psycho.

Roger: Who’s Margot Kidder?

Greg: Lois Lane?
Roger: From Superman?

Greg: Yeah.

Roger: How the fuck do you remember that name?

Greg: It was the last movie you took me to in the theater, remember?

(Roger finishes his beer, and stares mournfully at the empty glass.)

Roger: Yeah, that I remember.


Roger: I gotta get home, and fuck the wife. You should call me more. You should come and visit!

Greg: I'll think about it, dad.

Roger: I'm sorry I missed your birthday.


Roger: Yeah.

(pause.)

Bye, Diddles.

Greg: Bye, dad.

Roger presses end on the phone call, and blackout. The curtain closes on the right side of the stage.

Greg: Hey, dad, I love you.

(pause.)

Dad?

(Greg looks at his phone and sees that the phone call is over.)

Well, that one was unexpected.
(Greg drinks some more Scotch. After a brief pause, he searches through his phone to find a new phone call. He hits send, and sets it down on the sink. He gets picks up his guitar.)

Voicemail (V.O.): Hey you. It’s Liz. I’m either away from my phone, in bed, or out at the Boy and Girls Club trying to do something positive in this world. Leave me a message, I’ll call you back. Ya know, all that jazz.

(Beep.)

Greg: Hey, Liz. It’s me. I know you’re probably not going to talk to me for a while, but I just talked to my dad, and I thought you’d get a kick out of the fact that he doesn’t even remember hitting on you.

(He picks up his guitar.)

I actually wrote a song about how miserable I was about him, especially when I was back in the hospital. Here, I’ll play it for you.

(He starts strumming his guitar.)

You know how painful those slow recoveries are
You know how painful those slow recoveries are
And I don’t care how much you say you hate life
But the moment you need a remote
Just to position yourself
In front of the television set
You’ll know what feeling shitty is all about
You’ll know what feeling shitty is all about
Oh yes you will
Oh yes you will
Oh yes you will, you will, you will

(He starts strumming out staccato chords menacingly.)

Sometimes you wonder what it’d be like
To jerk that wheel towards a cornfield
But sipping burgers through a straw
We quickly put it all
Into
Perspective
(Greg returns to uptempo strumming.)

You know how painful those slow recoveries are
You know how painful those slow recoveries are

Like your dad waking up
And charging down the hall
To beat his belief into you that
You ruined his life

You can’t help but examine your life
To find out just how lucky you are
Oh yes you are!
Oh yes you are!
Oh yes you are! You are! You are! You are! You are! You are!

(Greg sets down his guitar on the stand.)

So yeah, anyways, I thought that would bring back some memories.

(Greg ends the call, and immediately makes another.)

The right side of the stage illuminates and the curtain is drawn to reveal Alex sitting in a recliner watching television. The room is cluttered with pictures on the wall of movies, and on the screen is the film Dog Day Afternoon. As the phone rings, he checks to see who it is, and turns down the volume. He answers the phone call eagerly.

Alex: Greg! Dude, I was worried about you.

Greg: Hey man, how are you?

Alex: Good, good. How are YOU?

Greg: Decent, considering.

Alex: Yeah, that’s to be expected.

Greg: How bad was it?

(pause.)

Alex?
Alex: I'm here. I'm not going to lie, it was really bad.

Greg: Have you talked to anyone after dinner?

Alex: I spent about an hour on the phone with Liz not that long after you left.

Greg: What did she say?

Alex: Well, she's pissed.

Greg: How pissed?

Alex: To the point that I wouldn't turn your back on her if she's anywhere near a sharp object. That is, of course, if she ever talks to you again.

Greg: We'll talk again.

Alex: I'm not so sure. You guys have fought before, but this was bad, dude. What the hell was going through your head?

Greg: I was mad.

Alex: No shit.

Greg: I think I was just bottling up all the frustrations with her over the years, and it just got to the point where I couldn't contain it anymore.

Alex: You mocked her for being abused. In front of everyone.

Greg: Yeah, I remember.

Alex: Do you really think that is something she's going to forgive?

Greg: No, I don't.

Alex: That's why it's different. I think it's about a step worse than murdering her cat.

Greg: I agree.

(pause.)

That's us, though.
Alex: What do you mean?

Greg: That’s the way that me and Liz have always been.

Alex: That is true.

Greg: We constantly fight like this. It’s brutal, it’s ugly, and we always make up.

Alex: It’s never been this bad, though.

Greg: What about back when I was in the hospital?

Alex: What do you mean?

Greg: She never told you about that fight?

Alex: No, she didn’t.

Greg: Oh, shit, sorry about this, but I have to go off on a tangent.

Alex: Okay.

Greg: So I talked to Nick a while ago...

Alex: This is going to get good.

Greg: He told me to drunk dial everyone and air all of my crap.

Alex: That does sound like a very Nick suggestion.

Greg: I know. However, I made a couple of interesting phone calls so far.

Alex: To whom?

Greg: My parents.

(Alex sits up, intensely interested.)

Alex: How did THAT go?

Greg: Well, I left a bitter song on my mom’s voicemail.

Alex: That’s entirely too predictable.
Greg: My dad actually answered.

Alex: You’re shitting me.

Greg: Nope.

Alex: How the hell is Roger?

Greg: He was drunk.

Alex: Like father, like son.

Greg: Fuck off.

Alex: Sorry, go on.

Greg: He said he’s married, has a new kid.

Alex: Roger reproduced, again? Nothing good can come from that.

Greg: Yeah.

Alex: How long has it been since you talked to him?

Greg: Four years today.

(pause.)

Alex: That’s not true.

Greg: What do you mean?

Alex: What about when you were in the hospital?

Greg: What do you mean?

Alex: He stayed with you when you were in the hospital.

Greg: Bullshit!

Alex: Not bullshit, when we were visiting you, he was always there. I mean, sure he was constantly pouring shots of bourbon into his cheap hospital coffee, but he was there holding your hand.
Greg: How come nobody told me this?

Alex: I don’t know the details. Him and Liz had a blowout a couple of days when you were starting to wake up.

Greg: You don’t know any other details? How come this is the first I’m hearing about this shit?

Alex: Well, you never want to talk about him or any of the details.

Greg: Still, this sounds like a big thing.

Alex: Liz made us promise we wouldn’t. She said you’d be better off.

Greg: Where the fuck does she get off deciding whether or not I get to know something like that? It’s not like she was my fucking girlfriend at the time.

Alex: She might as well have been.

Greg: What do you mean by that?

Alex: She’s always there when you need her.

(Greg begins to get overly agitated)

Greg: Where is she now, then, huh?

Alex: Probably having passionate sex with a guy whose ass you kicked and enjoying their newfound mutual hatred of you?

Greg: That’s great.

Alex: Hey man, you asked.

(pause.)

I’m just saying that she has always been there when you needed her. I’ve dated women who weren’t nearly as good to me during the relationship as she was to you after your relationship failed. That’s a rare quality in a friend.

Greg: I have plenty of other friends.

Alex: You’re going to have a lot less if you end up treating us the way that you treated her tonight.
Greg: That’s a fair point.

(pause.)

What should I do?

Alex: Give her time to cool off, and then apologize.

Greg: She was pushing my buttons.

Alex: That’s not why you were mad.

Greg: Sure it is.

Alex: No, it isn’t.

Greg: Then what?

Alex: You’re mad because in your mind, you two are still going to end up together. She has moved on, but she still really cares about you. You’re going to have to accept that fact and get on with your life.

Greg: What, with that asshole?

Alex: With any asshole. See, that’s part of the problem. You get this way whenever she dates anyone. You judge them like it’s a reflection on you.

Greg: Isn’t it?

Alex: No, it’s not like that at all. I can see only two possibilities as to why you get so jealous and defensive when it comes to her. One is slightly understandable, the other is incredibly petty.

Greg: I’m listening.

Alex: The petty one is that you’re jealous that she’s the first one to move on. That would make me think less of you as a person. The second one that makes you look slightly better is that you truly want her to do better. Andy is kinda a prick, I’m not that big of a fan. But keep in mind that she’s got to figure things out for herself as well, and expecting her to get it absolutely right immediately off the bat is just naive. It’s unfair to her.

Greg: You’re actually taking her side?
Alex: I'm not taking anyone's side. You're both friends. I'm just saying, tonight, on this, you were completely in the wrong.

(pause.)

Greg, man, I love you. I do. But how long can you expect us to keep making excuses for you if you're going to keep treating people this way?

(Greg grabs his drink, and stares at it plaintively.)

You still there, man?

Greg: Yes, I am. I'm still listening. I just don't know what to say to that.

Alex: You haven't been yourself in a longtime. I'm not saying that to chide ya. I'm saying that because I'm worried.

Greg: You don't have to worry about me, Alex.

Alex: Like hell I don't. What about tonight?

Greg: I was just blowing off steam.

Alex: You've been blowing off steam for a long, long time. What you don't seem to be getting is that there's a seemingly endless supply inside of you. It's not about blowing off steam anymore, god damn it. It's about trying to find a way to get that machine to produce less and less steam.

Greg: Maybe you're right.

Alex: Why are you so angry all of the time?

(There is a long pause.)

You still there?

Greg: Yes, I'm still here. Jesus christ, why do you keep asking me that?

Alex: Sorry, it keeps sounding like your phone dies whenever you get quiet.

Greg: Should I start making popping noises with my mouth just so that you know I'm still here?

Alex: You're deflecting.
Greg: Yes I am.

Alex: Greg.

Greg: Yes.

Alex: Why are you so angry? Why do you hate yourself so much?

Greg: I don’t hate myself.

Alex: Then what?

Greg: I hate my place in this world. I hate the fact that nothing ever turns out the way that I want it to.

Alex: That’s not the world. That’s the way you’re reacting to it.

Greg: You just have all the answers, don’t you?

Alex: I’m kinda on fire tonight.

(They both laugh a bit, then there is a long pause.)

Greg: Hey, Alex?

Alex: Yes?

Greg: I know I don’t say this enough, but, I want you to know that I appreciate you.

Alex: I appreciate you, too.

Greg: No, listen. You’re like family to me. Like a real brother. I don’t tell you this enough, but I love ya.

Alex: You’re drunk.

Greg: I love ya, man.

(Alex chuckles.)

Alex: I love you, too.
Greg: I need to get to other phone calls.

Alex: Sure. Just do me a favor?

Greg: What?

Alex: Don’t call Liz, and definitely don’t tell her that I told you anything. I don’t want her pissed at me, and I don’t want to be in the middle of this shit.

Greg: I won’t.

Alex: Fucking promise me, alright?

Greg: I promise.

Alex: Okay, dude. You take care. Go to bed and sober up.

Greg: I will, eventually. Goodnight.

Alex: Goodnight.

(Alex hangs up the phone, and turns the volume back up on the TV.)

The right side of the stage blacks out and the curtain draws.

(Greg immediately launches into another phone call. While its ringing he starts shifting around on the toilet. He lights up another cigarette.)

Voicemail: Hey you. It’s Liz. I’m either away from my phone, in bed, or out at the Boy and Girls Club trying to do something positive in this world. Leave me a message, I’ll call you back. Ya know, all that jazz.

Greg: Liz. It’s me again. I just got off the phone with Alex. He told me how pissed you were, and we talked a bit. I wanted to say that I was sorry. I know I was an asshole, tonight. He made some good points.

(He inhales another drag of smoke.)

I wanted to let you know that I talked to my dad a little bit ago, tonight. Alex also told me that you kept him away from me in the hospital. He said you two had a fight. I want you to call me back and tell me what the hell all of that was about. I know you’re mad at me, you have a right to be, but I want to figure some things out.
(pause.)

He has a new wife, Liz, and a kid. I have a stepmom and a half-brother. I know that’s got a little to do with you. Hell, I don’t even know if its true or not. He could be drunk and lying through his teeth to make himself look better. It wouldn’t be the first time. I just want to figure these things out. So yes, I’m drunk still, yes I’m an ass, but please, just give me a call back. Speaking of ass, I’ve been on this toilet so long that I think my ass is falling permanently asleep.

(pause.)

Oh. And I’m still sorry. Goodbye.

(Greg leans back on the toilet. With the cigarette finishes, he spreads his legs and drops it into the bowl. There is a slight hiss as the water puts it out. He picks up and looks at the bottle of Scotch.)

Wise old friend, you seem to be letting me down tonight. Misters Justerini and Brooks, why can’t you be clutch players? Salut!

(He takes a massive swig directly from the bottle, ignoring the fact that he’s still got a healthy amount cooled in a glass. He shudders as he swallows.)

Ugh. That’s rough.

(Greg grabs the phone yet again, and as it dials, he is already picking up his guitar.)

The right side of the stage illuminates and the curtain reveals a brick wall. Leaning up against the wall is Rob, wearing a leather jacket, smoking a cigarette. The wall is outside of a venue in downtown Chicago. The ringtone is “The Weekenders” by The Hold Steady. Upon noticing it, Rob smiles and answers it.

Rob: Well, I was wondering when you’d call, Denis Leary.

Greg: Denis Leary, really?

Rob: That was some grade A fireworks earlier.

Greg: I’m sorry about that.

Rob: Don’t be. It was quite epic.

Greg: It’s nothing I should be proud of.
Rob: You don’t have to be proud of you, but I am.

Greg: Why?

Rob: You cut the cord!

Greg: I never had a cord.

Rob: You sure as shit did, and you had one of the most glorious insults I have ever heard, and that’s me telling you that.

Greg: You are a bad influence.

Rob: Yes, but you love me for it.

Greg: Who couldn’t love you?

Rob: Fair point.

Greg: Where are you at?

Rob: Behind the Shubbas?

Greg: Who did you see?

Rob: I told you, the Old 97's.

Greg: How were they?

Rob: I couldn’t tell you.

Greg: What, you couldn’t get in?

Rob: No, but I was too close. I think I got lost in Rhett Miller’s eyes.

Greg: He is a handsome man.

Rob: God damn right he is. I think it moved the moment he played Time bomb.

Greg: I bet.

(pause)
So listen, I got a new song for ya.

Rob: Okay.

Greg: I wrote it about the old days.

Rob: Then it better be full of debauchery and regrettable decisions.

Greg: Is it ever!

Rob: Go!

(Greg begins strumming an uptempo rock song.)

Greg: You sticking around after the movie?  
Because if you are  
Maybe we should stop  
By the liquor store.

We'll load up on peach vodka,  
peach schnapps, o.j. and SoCo.

Then we'll drink those Steve Perrys like there's no tomorrow.

(Rob laughs)

Rob: Wonderful reference.

(Greg launches into the second verse with more gusto.)

Greg: We'll make out and we'll make our way  
Right up the stairs  
Then I'll drop my keys while  
Blindly fumbling for the lock

We'll spend the next twenty minutes  
Just killing the mood

Then we'll be using our cellphones as flashlights  
While searching through the grass

Rob: Altogether specific.
Greg: We’ll be back at it soon enough then I’ll
Flip on the receiver
And I’ll impress you with my original pressing of
Slanted, oh, Slanted and Enchanted

Trust me baby, I’ll make you laugh
While you’re taking a seat on my kitchen counter

And make it oh so obvious you’re not wearing panties
Under your skirt

Rob: Is this about that time you brought home that redhead?

*(Greg is trying to hold back his laughter at Rob’s comments throughout.)*

Greg: There’s MTV ads on the FM band
But we’re listening to TV on the Radio
And yeah, I didn’t like their last two
But that debut was pretty fucking great

And what the hell am I thinking?
Listing my indie rock credentials?

When there’s a perfectly good bed
In the other room

Rob: NERD!

Greg: When I’ve got you in the mood,
When I’ve got you pinned down
I’m going to tell you that I love you
That I need you, that I want you to stay

Then I’m going to make it rough
Until you say it back

It’s what gets me off, baby
Pretending that I’m loved

Rob: Only a matter of time until it gets creepy, I suppose.

*(Greg continues strumming, but responds.)*
Greg: Oh, shut the hell up and let me finish.

Rob: Fine.

*(Greg over dramatizes the last lyrics.)*

Greg: You don’t like it, fine!
I’m just gonna cum
Then you can be on your
Merry way

I guess this is really a bad time
To ask for a second date.

*(He ends the song with a pretty passage.)*

Rob: That was utterly disturbing. What’s it called?

Greg: Nasty Boys Parade.

Rob: Appropriate.

Greg: So?

Rob: Are you that desperate for praise?

Greg: No, but a response or criticism would be appreciated.

Rob: It’s good. Great lyrics, like usual. Utterly disturbing. And yes, it did remind me of the old days.

Greg: But?

Rob: You’re drunk, on an acoustic, and singing to me on the phone.

Greg: But it’s good?

Rob: Yes, from what I could decipher.

*(pause.)*

How did it sound in the studio?
Greg: That was the song we had the blow up over.

Rob: Why?

Greg: So I figured I wanted an easy production on it. Really simple. Two guitars, bass, drums. Simple, right?

Rob: Yes.

Greg: And...

(pause.)

I kept fucking it up.

Rob: What? Really?

Greg: Yes. Hearing it played back to me, I just froze. I hated it.

Rob: What about it?

Greg: My voice, and my guitar.

Rob: That never stopped you before.

Greg: Belting things out live, I have no reservations. In the studio, everything feels so permanent.

Rob: That's because it is.

Greg: Oh, that makes me feel better.

Rob: I'm not trying to make you nervous, but I'm kinda not getting where you're coming from.

Greg: It's just, I've been building up to do this for years, and I want it to be perfect.

Rob: Oh! That problem. I get you now.

Greg: How did you handle it?

Rob: Me? Well, when I was working on the first album with the guys, I thought it was total shit by the end of it.
Greg: Same here.

Rob: And it was.

Greg: That’s not helping.

Rob: I wasn’t saying it to help you. I was just being honest with you.

Greg: What happened, then?

Rob: It was shit. However, a few people liked it. People started coming to our shows, and our next album was much better.

Greg: I’ve built this up in my mind and took so much time that I just want it to be perfect.

Rob: Look, you want a dead honest observation?

Greg: Yes.

Rob: You write great songs, however, you’re an average performer. That’s what a recording is going to show.

*(Rob takes a deep drag in the midst of a pause.)*

You should just release it, flaws and all. Sometimes, it’s charming. All of your songs have a rough edge to them. There are things that can be improved, but that’s because you can be improved. Think of it as a document to where you are at this point in your life, not some act of perfection that’s going to have you immortalized.

*(pause.)*

If you aim for the first, sometimes you get the second, ya know?

Greg: That’s a good point.

Rob: Alright. Cool. Listening, I’m going to head inside and grab a drink at the after bar with Rhett.

Greg: Aren’t you just a cool mother fucker.

Rob: You don’t need to write a song about me to document that.

*(They both laugh)*
Later, dude. Happy birthday.

Greg: Thanks.

(Rob looks off stage.)

Rob: Ooo! Hot chick. Gotta go.

(Greg laughs, Rob hangs up, and walks off stage.)

Blackout on the right side of the stage, and the curtain closes.

(Greg makes another quick phone call, he takes a quick drink of Scotch, and keeps his guitar in his lap.)

Voicemail: Hey you. It's Liz. I'm either away from my phone, in bed, or out at the Boy and Girls Club trying to do something positive in this world. Leave me a message, I'll call you back. Ya know, all that jazz.

(beep.)

Greg: Me again. I'm sure you're screening the calls, and really pissed, but honestly...

(pause.)

I was thinking of a couple of songs I wrote for you. I hope you'll take them as a sincere apology.

(Greg misses the first note.)

Sorry. I'm getting really blotto at this point.

(He begins playing the arpeggiated chords.)

Dear, dear Ian
Sing me something useful
No sad laments

By the time I die
I hope to find
Monuments to your kindness

(He lowers his head.)
Manics pop their xanex
Reporters waste their time
And ours

Filling empty lives
With advertisements
For Old Navy winter fleece

Rain soaks you to the bone
Leaving nothing to the imagination

You have plenty of reasons
To feel embarrassed
But this certainly shouldn’t be one of them

Such a pathetic disappointment
Like watching the wind
Blow your favorite blanket
Off of the clothesline
And into the mud

*(Greg starts whispers and speaks over the instrumental.)*

Sorry, there’s a little instrumental organ part here that’s really pretty.

*(Greg continues singing.)*

With puffy eyes
And your throats
So dry
You could’ve just said
That you didn’t want to talk about it
Instead of
Building a flimsy excuse

You see, it’s so obvious
That you’ve been crying
And there’s no use in trying
In trying to deny it.

Sometimes you just have to thank the lord
For giving you the opportunity
To feel this lonely.
(Greg ends the song and takes another sip of Scotch.)

I wrote that after your mom died. I called it Holly Martin Finally Repents. Remember when we watched the Third Man together for the first time? I made that comment about how I thought, in the end, Holly was wrong to rat out his friend, no matter what he did? There was something about loyalty in the face of all that. I thought that it should have been there. Even then. That’s me.

(pause.)

Remember when I drove all night to Omaha when you called, just so that you didn’t have to be alone for that? I’m not trying to emotionally blackmail you or anything, it’s just...

(pause.)

There is history. There is friendship. I love you, hun. Contrary to tonight. Hell, even when I try to be bitter upon reflection, it doesn’t come out that way. Here, this one I wrote about losing you.

(Greg begins strumming some simple chords.)

I don’t trust good
I just trust bad
Because it’s the only thing
That ever lasts

And I don’t know
How this will go
But I’m gonna try to figure it out

So where are you?
You took the car
I know you have a cellphone, babe
So why didn’t you call?

I don’t know what you want
And I don’t know what you’ve got
But what you’ve got is staring at me

I don’t know what you want
And I don’t know what you’ve got
But what you’ve got is staring at me
Yeah, what you’ve got is staring at me
What you’ve got is staring at me.

Let’s talk about
Would you tell me if
All the other men tell you
You’d be happier with them?

I don’t know what you want
And I don’t know what you’ve got
But I know what you had was me

I know what you want
And I don’t know what you’ve got
But I know what you had was me

Yeah, I know what you had was me
I know what you had was me.

(Greg lowers his head, sniffs a little, and holds back crying, and speaks into the phone.)

Wow. Sorry. I’m actually fucking crying over you. I do feel guilty.

(pause.)

Just call me back.

(Greg sets the phone down, and starts look down around the room. There is a long pause.)

This one is just for me, I guess.

(He starts strumming softly.)

I got my sense of humor
From Bill Hicks L.P.s
When it comes to my sense of romance
That’s pure Bukowski

(He picks up the pace and the dynamics.)

And when it comes to why you’re not around
Baby that’s all on me
Because I spent my days getting fatter
And watching the T.V.

It's all I need
It's all I need
It's all I need

I got my perfect body
From gas station candy
When it comes to my personality
I stole it from Denis Leary

And when I get perfect strangers to laugh
It doesn't mean a god damned thing
Because I know
That I'll go home alone

To all that shit I don't need
To all that shit I don't need
To all that shit I don't need

So I'll pour myself a pint
Of fine Irish whiskey
Then I'll sit and I'll try to write
Another song you'll never hear

And then I'll strum a few chords
And I'll start to get bored
Or maybe I'll just be drunk

So then I'll play a song
That's by the Boss
But it always comes out wrong
Because it's really by
Elvis Costello

They're both guys I need
They're both guys I need
Not to mention Lou Reed

(He continues strumming ferociously by the end of the song, at which point, his phone begins
to ring with the ringtone "Jean Genie" by David Bowie. He stops, sets the guitar on the
stand, checks the caller I.D., and answers the phone.)
The curtain opens up on the right side of the stage to show Jean sitting on her bed in her room. She's in her pajamas. Her room is rather bland, very few decoration on the wall.

Greg: Hello?

Jean: Hey.

Greg: Oh. Hey, how are you?

Jean: That was very unenthusiastic.

Greg: Sorry. I’m just tired.

(pause)

And drunk. And pissed. And depressed.

Jean: It was rather a rough night for you.

Greg: Liz isn’t answering her phone.

Jean: I don’t think she will. You were out of control.

Greg: So I’ve been told.

(pause.)

Jean: Alex and Rob both called me. They said they talked to you.

Greg: Yeah, I called them.

Jean: Why haven’t you called me?

Greg: What?

Jean: Why haven’t you called me? Were you going to?

Greg: I’m sure I would have eventually?

Jean: Eventually?

(pause.)
Are you serious?

*(Greg responds confused. Jean starts getting fired up.)*

Greg: What are you talking about?

Jean: Look, I don’t want to pile it on or anything, but who’s been there for you more than I have?

*(pause.)*

Greg: No one.

Jean: Exactly. So why am I the last person that you always call?

*(pause.)*

Greg: I don’t know.

Jean: I’m not trying to pile it on. I don’t want to make this about me, but I do really have to ask how do you think that makes me feel?

Greg: It probably makes you feel shitty.

Jean: Yeah. Shitty. Exactly the word I’m looking for. Who’s there every time you’re too drunk to drive home?

Greg: You.

Jean: Who’s there every time you have a gig, and never cancels on you no matter what?

Greg: You.

Jean: Who’s been making free merchandise for you for years? Designing logos, helping out with web pages?

Greg: You.

Jean: And who is there every time you want to whine about some piece of shit girl who only shows up in your life every once in a while, and lets you pine over that same said girl every time you feel like you still love her?

Greg: It’s always you. I know that.
Jean: I know things have been hard on you. Things have been hard on me, too. However, I am there for you. Once in a while, it’d be great to feel like I’m important in your life.

Greg: Jean?

*(Jean calms down from her rant.)*

Jean: Yes?

Greg: I don’t know why I act this way. I know that’s no excuse. Every time something like this happens, the first thing I do is go back to people who were important to me in my past. You’re new. You weren’t in my life yet.

Jean: Do you even remember the first time we met?

Greg: Out at coffee?

Jean: No. See, I knew you wouldn’t remember.

Greg: Where, then?

Jean: It was at one of your shows.

Greg: I thought it was coffee.

Jean: Nope. You were drunk on stage. You played about four songs before you were booed off stage. I liked your songs.

Greg: I don’t remember that.

Jean: I know. I cut my hair the next day.

Greg: Did we actually talk?

Jean: Yes. We had a cigarette together.

Greg: What did we talk about? Do you remember?

Jean: Yes. I was complaining about my recent ex-boyfriend.

Greg: Which one?

Jean: Max.
Greg: Okay, go on.

Jean: You just listened, nodded, and went on a philosophical rants about relationships that I remember really well.

Greg: What did I say?

Jean: You said that every single relationship will fail, except for one if you’re lucky. Then you told me that every relationship fails for one reason alone.

Greg: Which was what?

Jean: You said that at some point one point at least one member just doesn’t feel it anymore. If it’s just one party, sometimes they get petty and fight to keep it alive, or jealous. Sometimes they deny it to themselves, and sometimes they just keep going at it blindly, hoping it’ll change, and that the bitterness takes them over until they accept the simple fact that they just weren’t right for each other.

Greg: I honestly don’t remember ever saying that.

Jean: I know. Hence tonight.

Greg: Ouch. Point goes to the Jean Genie.

Jean: Count it.

(pause.)

Why have you been closing me out?

Greg: You want to know the real reason?

(Greg lights up another cigarette.)

Jean: Yes.

Greg: It’s because of all those reasons you mentioned. You are there for me throughout everything. I adore you for it, truly. However, because you were there. You get associated with all of those bad times. You remind me of them. I know it’s cruel and self centered, when I should be eternally grateful.

Jean: Yeah, it does make you sound like an asshole.
Greg: But.

(pause.)

It’s also because of embarrassment.

Jean: What exactly are you embarrassed about?

Greg: Because I feel that our friendship is lopsided. You’re always there for me, and I have very little to offer you in return. I’m constantly depressed, I’m constantly dumping on you, and I don’t see an ending for me feeling this way anytime soon.

(Jean shifts her head, but remains silent.)

When I was younger, this happened before. It happened with Molly, it happened with Liz. I came to rely on them to help me with the one thing that drove them away in the end. On some level, I’m afraid that will happen with you. And, I don’t want it to.

(pause.)

I wanted to force some space in between us so that you wouldn’t abandon me, too.

Jean: Yeah, that all makes sense, but I really think that you could have been far more sensitive than to do it right after we started sleeping together.

Greg: I will grant you that.

Jean: I mean, you have all those quirky little problems, but I think common sense and the majority of those surveyed would say that getting distanced after sex is a far more common problem.

Greg: I agree.

Jean: I’m a friend, I’m there for you, and it hurts when you pull away for no reason.

Greg: I’m sorry.

Jean: It means something to me.

Greg: What?

Jean: The fact that we slept together.
Greg: It meant something to me.

Jean: Did it?

Greg: Yes.

Jean: Then why didn’t you tell me that?

Greg: Because I was scared.

(pause.)

Look. You’ve known me long enough to know I’m a neurotic, dysfunctional fuck up. You witnessed me doing something horrific tonight to someone that cares about me, and you know that I’m not on any kind of upswing. Most days I’m struggling to get by. I will make a better effort of including you in my life. I can promise you that. However, right now, I just want to bang my head against the wall. I want to punch out a mirror. I want to focus on your frustrations, but all I can think about is me and how worthless I feel. That’s the precise reason I do push people away far more than I ever did in my youth.

(pause.)

There are times I wish I knew you instead of Liz. There are times I wish I could have known you instead of Molly. However, this is the situation that we’re in.

Jean: Well, that means a lot to me.

(pause.)

How much will you give me if I can guess what you’re doing right now?

Greg: Ten bucks?

Jean: Okay. I’m gonna guess you’re sitting on your toilet, with a guitar, getting drunk on Scotch.

(pause.)

Greg: How the hell can you tell that?

Jean: Nick called me.

Greg: You cheated?
Jean: I bet on a sure thing.

Greg: Well done.

(pause.)

Jean: So I don’t even get a fucking song?

(Greg laughs.)

Greg: You want one? You’ll get a sad one.

Jean: That’s fine.

(Greg picks up the guitar yet again, and plays an arpeggiated pattern. He sings in a soft, mournful tone.)

Greg: On the day
I finally put a bullet in my brain
Nothing will change

It’ll probably take the neighbors
A good five or six days to complain about the smell
Coming from my place

And there will still be
Fatherless black kids playing outside
And there will still be
The sounds of gunshots in the night

Even thought it shouldn’t be
The thought is comforting to me

Baby, it’s not your fault
I gotta figure some things out

On the day
My ulcer finally perforates
I’ll be afraid

I’ll be on the couch when the panic strikes and
I’ll be out in a matter of minutes
And you'll probably
Be out with your friends
Or you'll probably
Be out with him

Even though you shouldn't be
You'll probably feel guilty

Baby, it's not your fault
I gotta figure some things out

Baby, it's not your fault
I gotta figure some things out

(After Greg finishes the song, there is a long pause. He is almost ready to pass out sitting right then.)

Jean: That is the most depressing shit I've ever heard.

Greg: It's the bummer song, yes.

Jean: Jesus christ, that is just ridiculous.

Greg: Thank you?

Jean: Did Nick Drake and Camus just do a collaboration?

(Greg laughs.)

Greg: That may be the greatest compliment that I've ever received.

Jean: Are you going to be okay?

Greg: If I'm not, you'll just get a phone call in a couple of days.

Jean: Don't even joke about that.

Greg: I'm sorry. Look, I should get going. I just want you to know that I adore you very, very much.

Jean: Don't be cryptic.

Greg: I'm not! I'm expressing affection!
Jean: Right.

Greg: I should go, though.

Jean: Good night.

Greg: Good night.

(Greg hangs up the phone. Jean sits on her bed for a while staring at her phone.)

Jean: God damn it.

(She stands up from her bed.)

The curtain shuts on the right side of the stage, and blacks out.

Greg: Well.

(Greg finishes off what's left in his glass.)

At least you don't bitch as much.

(He pours himself another glass, emptying out the bottle.)

You don't need anything from me, do you Scotch? You're there. You don't talk back, you just allow me to talk myself out. You're like a little liquid Maury Povich.

(He takes another big gulp, and sets his guitar down. Then he starts singing to himself.)

Forget you troubles, come on, get happy
Toss all your cares away
The sun is shining, come on, get happy
We're waiting on the judgment day!

(He reaches for his phone and makes another call.)

The curtain opens on the right side of the stage, and we see Molly sitting at a computer in a small bedroom. The curtains are closed, and a TV is on in the background playing footage of The Clash. Molly reaches for the phone, surprised that someone is calling her this late, and she doesn't recognize the number.

Molly: Hello?
Greg: Hey, Molls

Molly: Who is this?

Greg: Really?

Molly: Greg?

Greg: Yes!

(She turns away from the computer, surprised.)

Molly: Wow. This is a surprise. How are you?

Greg: Managing. It's my birthday.

Molly: You're right, it is. Or, it was yesterday. Are you drunk?

Greg: Extremely.

Molly: Great.

Greg: I wrote you a song.

Molly: Did you now?

Greg: Yes.

Molly: You want to play it to me over the phone, don't you?

Greg: Doesn't that just make you nostalgic?

Molly: Yes, actually.

(Greg grabs his guitar.)

Greg: So I should preface this one.

(Molly responds hesitantly.)

Molly: ...okay?

Greg: I am not nearly as bitter as this song is going to make me sound.
Molly: Are you sure about that?

(They both chuckle.)

Greg: No. I'm not.

(They laugh again. Greg then begins playing the opening chords.)

Give Molly a kiss for me
Tell her when I'm thinking of her
That the sex that I have when I'm by myself
Is better than any of the sex I've ever had
With anyone else

Molly: Oh god.

Greg: Give Molly a kiss for me
Now that she's your's and not mine
I think about her all the time
And I'm starting to love her in spite of what she is
And not because of it.

Give Molly a kiss for me
Now that she won't return my calls
Tell her I don't know what I did wrong
Each message I leave
On her machine
Makes me feel like less of a man
But that's only because I am

Give Molly a kiss for me
Tell her when I'm thinking of her
That the sex that I have when I'm by myself
Is better any of the sex I've ever had
With anyone else

(Greg suddenly changes the rhythm to chugging palm muted chords.)

If Molly asks
If she's that oblivious
If she pretends to not know
What happened
If Molly asks
You tell her
You tell her she can kiss my ass
Tell she can kiss
My fucking ass

(Molly claps over the phone.)

Molly: I like it. You’re getting all vitriolic in your old age.

Greg: Thank you.

Molly: We never had sex, though.

Greg: I didn’t claim that we did. I claimed that masturbating to you was more emotionally fulfilling that any actual sex I had with someone else.

Molly: Is that true?

Greg: It was when I wrote it.

Molly: Interesting. So what have you been up to?

Greg: Well, how long has it been?

Molly: Since we last talked?

Greg: Yes.

Molly: About a year.

Greg: What did you ask?

Molly: What have you been up to?

(brief pause.)

You are drunk, aren’t you?

Greg: Yes. I can barely keep it together.

(Molly sighs.)
Molly: Is it going to be THAT phone call again?

Greg: What do you mean?

Molly: The one where you call me drunk and then ask me why I left you?

Greg: ...maybe.

Molly: Can I half ass it tonight? I’m really tired.

Greg: Be my guest.

Molly: We were teenagers. Blah blah blah. We only dated for a few months. More blah blah blah. We weren’t a good fit. Even more blah blah blah. You need to get over it. Blah blah blah.

(Greg laughs.)

Should we move on to the advice part?

Greg: Only if you do it in the same half assed manner.

Molly: There’s plenty more fish in the sea. Better to have loved and lost. You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you get what you need.

(Greg laughs hysterically.)

Greg: You are a funny one.

Molly: So I’ve been told.

Greg: It makes me miss you more.

Molly: Don’t go there. I will hang up.

Greg: Fine, fine.

Molly: Is there something you actually need to talk about, or are you doing that thing where you keep me on the phone just so that you don’t have to be alone.

Greg: The latter, to be honest.

Molly: Okay. Can we raincheck that, then? I mean, you’re not planning on killing yourself or anything, are you?
Greg: I wasn’t.

Molly: Dandy. In that case, call me tomorrow or something?

Greg: Alright.

Molly: Good night.

(Molly quickly hangs up the phone, and turns back towards the computer.)

Black out on the right side of the stage, and the curtain closes.

(Greg takes a long pause, and shifts on the toilet seat. His legs are asleep and his groaning as he tries to shift too a more comfortable position. He is fuming with frustration.)

Greg: That one sucked. My ass is asleep.

(pause.)

They all sucked.

(He stands up, his pants still around his ankles, and starts walking towards the mirror. He proceeds to trip, and hit his head on the sink.)

Mother fucker!

(He prompts himself back up on the sink, and struggles to get his pants off from around his ankles. This nearly causes him to trip again. When he finally gets his leg free, he throws a tantrum and kicks his pants across the room. He then proceeds to scream at his pants.)

Piece of shit, asshole dick heads. You think you’re better than me?

(He gives the pants the finger, and then turns around and looks at himself in the mirror)

And fuck you, too!

(He gives the finger to himself in the mirror. There is a long pause.)

You do this shit to yourself, ya know? You got lazy. It was easier when you were young, wasn’t it? Everyone was so impressed by how well you were doing in spite of everything that happened to you.

(pause.)
It’s not that way anymore, is it? No one thinks that you’re anything except for a god damned train wreck. And you know what?

(He points at himself in the mirror in an accusatory way, almost as if he expects to hear a proper response.)

That’s because you are. To everyone, you’re just a fucking joke.

(pause.)

You really fucking are.

(He stares stone faced for a few seconds, and then he erupts into tears. When he does, he falls down to his knees, and curls up on the floor. He sobs uncontrollably on the floor for a minute, until he finally calms down.)

Shit. I don’t need this.

(He climbs back on to the toilet.)

At least my ass isn’t asleep anymore.

(He reaches for the phone, misses several times, and finally grabs it to dial a number.)

The curtain rises on the right side of the screen and we return to Lisa and Nick, still asleep in their bed. Kanye West’s “Runaway” is still the ringtone. Nick grabs for the phone, and answers it in an annoyed haze.

Nick: If Lisa doesn’t kill you for this, I fucking will.

(pause.)

Hello?

(Greg whispers into the phone.)

Greg: Hey.

Nick: You okay?

Greg: No.

Nick: Why?
Greg: I took your advice.

(Nick sits up in his bed, and looks over at Lisa who is still asleep.)

Nick: What advice?

Greg: I called everyone.

(Nick pauses for a second, and then remembers the previous conversation. He then starts laughing.)

Nick: You actually fucking did that?

(Nick laughs hysterically, then stifles himself when he sees Lisa is still sleeping.)

Greg: Yes, I did.

Nick: Well, how did it go?

Greg: Shitty.

Nick: There's a shock.

(pause.)

Who did you call?

Greg: My mom, my dad, Molly.

(He pauses a second to think.)

Tried calling Liz. I got a hold of Rob and Alex.

(pause.)

Oh, and Liz called me.

Nick: Did your mom answer?

Greg: Of course not.

Nick: Then what happened?
Greg: I sang her a song about how much she fucked me up.

(Nick laughs again.)

Nick: That's perfect!

(pause.)

How about your dad?

Greg: He was getting hammered at some dive in Ohio. We had a drink together over the phone.

(Greg takes out and lights another cigarette.)

He said he was married and I now have a half brother.

Nick: I call bullshit on that one.

Greg: Maybe. I dunno.

(Nick pulls out his nightstand drawer, and grabs his cigarettes and his lighter. He lights up a cigarette.)

Nick: Well, how did that make you feel?

Greg: I dunno. For the first time, I started to feel like I was turning out just like him.

Nick: That's because you are.

Greg: Thanks a lot, you dick.

Nick: I'm just saying. You both are aimless. You both are problem drinkers...

(Greg interrupts him.)

Greg: Wait a minute! I don't have a drinking problem, except when I can't get a drink.

Nick: Yeah, I have that Tom Waits album, too.

Greg: Couldn't let me have that one, could ya?

Nick: Of course not.
Anyways. You two are a lot a like. However!

Greg: Yes?

Nick: You’re also just as passionate, somewhat charming, clever, talented, all of that shit.

Greg: I still don’t want to end up that way.

Nick: Then don’t. What do you want me to tell you?


Nick: You’re still hung up on that one? It was high school, and you guys dated for like five minutes.

Greg: It’s not just that.

Nick: Then what is it? I never got this one. Explain it to me?

Greg: She was my first love, that’s all.

Nick: I get that.

Greg: The way I loved her, I ended up carrying into every other relationship, including Liz.

She is still that standard.

Nick: Alright, let me ask you something.

Greg: Knock yourself out.

Nick: Who did you love more, Liz or Molly?

(long pause.)
Greg: It’s apples and oranges.

Nick: Bullshit.

Greg: No, listen. Molly was an ideal. Liz was a reality. It’s easier to love the ideal more than it is to love a reality. With the ideal, you never had the fights. You never had the flaws. The little couple annoyances that drag people apart.

(pause.)

If you never had the opportunity to see someone flip out and throw a tantrum over the shit tickets being hung the wrong way in the bathroom, it’s harder to imagine flaws.

Nick: I think...

(Greg cuts him off)

Greg: I’m not finished!

Nick: Go ahead.

Greg: Liz was a reality. I put up with her crazy moments. Her temper tantrums, here unreliable little ways. However, once in a while, she would show me some depth that would keep both of us sticking around for a little while longer. I remember she used to get me so mad. I never really got jealous before her.

(pause.)

I’ve always wanted that ideal without the fights, without the drama. I wanted a relationship to be some place, actually, for it to be the one place in my life where I feel stable and secure. It was never that way with Liz. I never had the chance to find out one way or another with Molly. Now she acts like she barely remembers me.

(long pause.)

Hello?

Nick: I can talk now?

Greg: Sorry, go ahead.

(Nick takes a long drag of his cigarette. Lisa wakes up and sits upright, Nick doesn’t notice her yet.)
Nick: Okay. First off, that ideal? It doesn’t exist. There is no such thing as a perfect being that’s going to make you feel safe and secure. At least, not all the time. You think I have an easy time with Lisa?

Greg: Don’t you?

Nick: A lot of the time it’s great. Sometimes, it’s not. However, why we work so well as a couple is the fact that we are always willing to work through those problems, be there for each other, and always be willing to listen. I mean, this isn’t rocket science.

(Lisa surprises Nick by wrapping her arms around him and giving him a hug from behind, and a kiss on the cheek. He turns his head back to kiss her, and while they kiss, she reaches forward and grabs the cigarette from his hand, takes a drag, and sits back. Nick looks right back at her.)

Bitch!

Greg: What did you call me?

(Nick talks back into the phone.)

Nick: Sorry, something happened. Where was I?

Greg: Something about it not being rocket science why you two work.

Nick: Right. You know why your relationships failed?

Greg: Because I’m a selfish, dull, jaded, abusive, dysfunctional, egotistical, neurotic fuck up?

Nick: Well, besides that.

Greg: If that’s not why, I don’t know.

Nick: It doesn’t matter how screwed up you are, you dope. It matters how much someone is willing to stick with you during those hard times. Molly was never willing to do that. Liz gave it a shot, and she didn’t want to do it.

(pause.)

I’m going to say something because I love ya, okay?

Greg: Okay.
Nick: The fact that it didn’t work isn’t your fault. The only thing that is your fault is the fact that you just refuse to move on.

(pause.)

Greg: That’s much better advice than drunk dialing everyone.

Nick: Meh, I thought I’d lob in an easy one for you.

(Lisa starts kissing the back of Nick’s neck.)

Hey, Greg?

Greg: Yes?

Nick: I really need to go.

Greg: Oh yeah, sure. I’m sorry for waking you.

(Nick looks back at Lisa, knowing what is about to happen next)

Nick: I don’t think I’m going to be too mad about it. Goodnight.

Greg: Goodnight.

(Nick hangs up the phone and drops it, he then leans back to kiss Lisa.)

Lisa: Is Greg okay?

Nick: He’s Greg.

(pause.)

Hey Lisa?

Lisa: Yes?

Nick: You are the ideal, and the reality.

(They kiss, and fall down together on the bed.)

The screen closes on the right side of the stage, and the light blacks out.
Greg: Fun stuff.

(He finishes up the last of the Scotch, in one big chug. Once he clears his throat, he swerves for a second, as if he’s about to throw up, but regains his composure. When he does, he grabs his guitar, sets it on his lap, and then grabs the phone, where he stares at it contemplatively.)

Fuck it.

(Greg hits send. Instead of ringing, this time, the phone goes straight to voicemail.)

Voicemail: Hey you. It’s Liz. I’m either away from my phone, in bed, or out at the Boy and Girls Club trying to do something positive in this world. Leave me a message, I’ll call you back. Ya know, all that jazz.

(beep.)

Greg: Me. Again. Last time.

(Greg is slurring so badly at this point that his sentences come out like fracture gibberish.)

I won’t call you again. After this. Just, I want you to know. I’m gonna let you go. Be happy. At least happier than you were... me.

(pause)

I wrote this... while ago. About you.

And so it begins

(He begins strumming rhythmically)

With John Hiatt
Or more precisely
At a party
That’s hip enough to have
A host who knows about
John Hiatt

And I’m not off to a good start
Because it’s the first verse
And I’m already off topic.
(He begins strumming faster.)

We had our first real fight
Earlier that day
So she went out to clear her head
Promising she’d be back at our apartment
In time to catch the rebroadcast
Of the Daily Show

But then the devil himself
Walked right into the room

(He picks up the speed even faster.)

Surrounded by the smoke that followed him up from the basement
He sat down next to her
Forgoing the smalltalk
And launching into thoughts about sex
Stories about childhood
And a discussion about fate and love
Ending with, ending with

(He strums very rhythmically and belts out the chorus.)

If your boyfriend really loved you
He’d be here right now
If your boyfriend really loved you
He’d be here right now
If your boyfriend really loved you
He’d be here right now
If your boyfriend really loved you he’d be here

(He cuts back on the tempo.)

So she fell victim to the con
Or maybe it’s just what she wanted
He kept feeding her drinks, she kept drinking them
It was her decision

So passing the blame went out the window
The moment she arched her back
Then she played with her hair
She didn’t think twice when he asked if she wanted to get out of there
She sucked his cock in the parking lot
And it was the last night I found Jon Stewart funny

She fucked his brains out in the back seat
Of my ninety-two Corsica
And a week, to the day, later
Was the last time I went for a drive in it

She spent the night at his place
And asked me to sublet out apartment to him
About two months later

Two months later
She returned to me all my shirts
The ones she used to sleep in every time she wanted to feel
Close to me, close to me

The closest she ever gets to me now
Is when she finds something she wants to give me back
Like a letter, or a picture, or a piece of music
Something I scribbled down about her
And she threatens to throw it out
If I don't rush over and get it that second

And when its something worth getting
She's always up stairs
And I have to get it from him

And the way he smiles that fucking smile
That fucking smile just kills me

And I keep thinking she left me for him?
And I keep thinking she left ME for him?
I keep thinking she left ME for HIM?

And I never saw her again
They just sent me an invitation to the wedding
Which I got two days after they got back from their honeymoon

I guess it's for the best
I would have made a scene if I went
Let's be honest:
Who'd have wanted that?
A friend told me their wedding song was
“Have a little faith in me”
A friend told me their wedding song was
“Have a little faith in me”

And I ended up getting drunk because of it
Anyways

(He finishes the song, and rests for a couple of seconds, he puts the guitar back on the stand and picks up the phone.)

Seeya around, I guess, maybe, I don’t know.

(He sets the phone down on the sink, looks at the Scotch glass, which is empty save for some melted ice, and accidentally knocks it into the sink.)

Fuck.

(He leans back on the seat, and closes his eyes.)

(blackout.)
Act Three

The Most Remarkable Thing About You Standing in the Doorway
Is That it's You, and That You're Standing in the Doorway

Scene 1

The curtain rises on the bathroom several hours later. From the window, we see the first rays of sunlight pouring into the bathroom. Greg is lying face-down passed out on the floor, his pants still off. By his face is a pile of vomit. The toilet still isn't flushed. From off stage, we hear Jean yelling.

Jean: Greg?

(pause)

GREG! Where the hell are you?

Their is a knock on the bathroom door and then there is a brief pause. A second later, Jean opens the door and peaks inside.

Jean: Greg?

(She scans around the room, but is hit by the overwhelming stench of both feces and the vomit. She yells out disgusted.)

Oh, this is fucking gross.

(She notices Greg on the ground.)

Greg!

(She runs down and kneels next to him. She looks closely and checks his pulse to see if he is still breathing. She breathes a sigh of relief once she realizes that he is okay. She then looks over to the sink, sees the glass, and stands up. She walks over to the glass, turns on the tap, and fills the glass with cold water. She brings the glass over to Greg, and splashes his face.)
Wakeup!

(Greg starts writhing around almost instantly and sits up quickly. He grabs his head, and is obviously agitated.)

Greg: What the fuck!

(He looks up and at Jean, confused.)

What are you doing here?

(Jean adopts and even more agitated tone, and crosses arms as she rises to her feet.)

Jean: You quit answering your phone. Everyone was worried about you, you prick.

Greg: Why?

Jean: What’s the last thing you remember?

Greg: Umm...

(He rubs his head.)

Sorry, my head is killing me.

(pause)

The last thing I remember is leaving Liz a message. Right after I got off the phone with Nick.

Jean: You don’t remember anything else?

(She begins filling up the glass of water again.)

Greg: No.

(pause.)

Jean: I believe you.

(She throws the second glass of water in Greg’s face. He leaps up to his feet.)

Greg: What the hell?
Jean: That was dual purpose. One, because I am fucking livid with you, and two, because you had vomit crusted to the side of your face. Clean yourself up.

*(She scans him up and down.)*

And put on some god damned pants!

Greg: I don’t know where they are.

*(Jean looks around, finds the pants, and tosses them at Greg. He proceeds to put them on.)*

Jean: The easy is problem fixed.

*(Greg finishes putting his pants on, then puts the lid of the toilet down, and takes a seat. He then looks at her, getting ever agitated.)*

Greg: Okay, obviously I don’t remember what I did.

Jean: Well, let’s see, how about calling Alex, Me, Rob, and Nick repeatedly, leaving messages on our phones telling us “goodbye” and that you were a loser, and everyone would be better off without you, blah blah blah.

Greg: I really don’t remember that.

Jean: Do you want me to play you the voicemails?

Greg: No, I believe you.

*(pause)*

Jean: Greg?

Greg: Yes?

*(Jean gets right in his face and screams)*

Jean: Will you flush the fucking toilet already?

*(Greg leans back and grabs at the handle, but then pauses. He turns back to Jean.)*

Greg: No.

Jean: What?
Greg: No. I don’t deserve to.

Jean: What the hell are you talking about?

Greg: I’m serious. I deserve to be down here in the stink.

Jean: You know, for the record: you can sit here and feel sorry for yourself without exposing yourself to what must be toxic levels of methane gas. And me, for that matter.

Greg: That’s the best part of me, in there.

*(Jean leans up against the sink, and just stares at him.)*

Jean: Okay, I’ll bite.

Greg: My entire life has been spent just sitting on the fucking toilet. Shoving in every little scrap of food into my mouth, and shitting out whatever my body has used up. In fact, it gets even more cyclical. I am just like that shit. Life, friends, work, relationships, everything, and I mean everything has just chewed me up.

*(pause)*

Who I am? What I am? Today? I am just the shit that’s left over from what once could have been a pretty promising person.

*(pause)*

That’s what I am to everyone in my life.

*(Greg looks up at Jean, she stands there blinking.)*

Jean: Wow.

Greg: See my point?

Jean: No. I’m just in awe. That was some of the most eloquent bullshit that I’ve ever heard you come up with before.

*(pause)*

And believe me, even just counting tonight, there has been some amazingly competent contenders for that crowd.
Greg: How am I wrong?

Jean: How are you wrong? Seriously?

Greg: You're stalling.

Jean: I am not stalling.

Greg: Then tell me.

Jean: Fine. I think you simply can't handle your life.

    (pause)

Jean: Greg, you know I really care about you, right?

    (Greg sits there motionlessly)

Jean: Right?

Greg: Right.

Jean: You're going through a difficult time, and you don't know how to cope with things. You aren't completely off, I can see why you feel like shit, but take now for example. You have a choice. You can hold on to your shit out of sentimental attachments, or a longing for the days when it was something better, or you can just flush and let it go.

Greg: That's easy for you to say.

Jean: Oh, for Christ's sakes. You are sitting here, consciously refusing to flush your stinky shit down the toilet. Normal, happy, healthy people don't do that.

Greg: I'll grant you that.

Jean: You spent what must have been three hours tonight, sitting on the toilet, getting drunk by yourself, drunk dialing everyone that you can think of, and playing your god damned guitar in this dank little bathroom.

    (pause)

Jean: How can you possibly not take that as a bad sign?

Greg: That's the choice that you were talking about.
Jean: Yeah, and you made the shit choice.

(pause)

Pun not intended.

Greg: Funny. I know you don’t understand.

Jean: I do, actually. Everything in your life isn’t going the way you want it to, so you’re clinging to any possible action that you can control. I’m not above melodramatic gestures myself when things aren’t going well in my life, but seriously, could you have come up with something a little less disgusting?

Greg: Life is disgusting.

Jean: Now you’re just being contrary.

Greg: No, I’m not.

Jean: Yes, you are.

Greg: No, I’m not.

Jean: Yes—wait, I’m not doing this!

(Greg chuckles a little bit. Jean is not amused.)

You know what the one thing you haven’t tried is?

Greg: What?

Jean: How about you try talking honestly, openly with your friends.

(pause)

God forbid you actually try to do that.

Greg: I do.

Jean: No, you don’t. Take tonight. All you did was call up people, whine for their attention, get it, receive decent advice, and then you just went on to the next person because your real intention was just to call as many people as would talk to you.
(Greg lowers his head.)

We all love you. Me, Rob, Alex, and maybe even to a lesser extent after this evening, Liz. If you keep this up, eventually, we’re going to stop answering the phone.

Greg: Yeah.

(pause)

I know.

Jean: We won’t do it because we stopped loving you, but pretty soon, you’re going to cross that threshold between depending on your friends for help and simply calling them so that they can enable your self destructive behavior.

(pause)

So, for once, and I mean, just for once, how about you try just telling me what is exactly going on your mind without humor, without sarcasm, without metaphor. Just try talking to me once like a real human being.

Greg: You give me too much credit.

Jean: I really don’t. I just care about you.

Greg: Why?

Jean: Because deep down, you are a good person. It’s obvious you want to be better, however, you have no idea how to do it. All of your instincts are wrong.

Greg: So you think I should just do the opposite of whatever I feel?

Jean: No, this isn’t a cheesy sitcom. It’s your life.

(pause)

You, at your best, have been there for me when you were barely able to keep your own life together. Now I’m trying to be there for you. I got up in the middle of the night, got dressed, drove to your house, let myself in through the front door, which, by the way, you are incredibly lucky that no one came in and stole shit because you left it wide open.

(pause)
Greg: I feel bad that I hurt Liz.

Jean: That’s a start. You should.

Greg: I didn’t mean to let it get that far.

Jean: She knows that, too.

Greg: You’ve talked to her?

Jean: No. However, since she’s known you even longer than I have, and I would be able to tell that you were lashing out in a way that wasn’t how you truly felt, I’d forgive you, eventually.

Greg: And if she doesn’t?

Jean: Then she never really knew you.

Greg: She was there for me when I was in the hospital, even after we split up.

Jean: I never heard this story.

Greg: Which part?

Jean: Why you were even in the hospital.

(pause)

Greg: I was there because I got into a car crash.

Jean: I knew you were out for about a week.

Greg: Yeah. I was on the phone with her when it happened.

Jean: Really?

Greg: Yes. We were having a fight. It was getting about as bad as it got tonight. I ended up screaming at her over the phone and ended up losing control of the car. When I woke up, she was there.

Jean: Hm.

(Greg looks at her curiously.)
Greg: What’s that noise?

Jean: Don’t worry about it.

Greg: No, tell me.

Jean: You sure?

Greg: Yes.

Jean: Well, have you ever thought that maybe you two should have cut off contact back then?

Greg: We’ve been decent friends since then.

Jean: I’m just wondering if you think the only reason you two keep hanging around over the years is because she feels guilty.

Greg: For what?

Jean: Well, maybe she feels like she was the reason you got hurt?

(pause)

Maybe she doesn’t care for you to the extent that you did, but she doesn’t feel like she’s got a real chance to walk away.

(Greg looks down, and remains silent for a very long time.)

Do you really want her in your life if the only reason that she’s sticking around is because she feels guilty?

Greg: You have a point.

Jean: I’m not trying to make you feel bad.

Greg: I know that.

Jean: She isn’t even the real problem, Greg.

Greg: What do you mean?

Jean: Even if she weren’t in your life, you’d still be doing this, you’d still be here. In fact, it’s kinda a testament to how little she’s truly impacted your life. She’s just a scapegoat.
Greg: I know you’re right.

(pause)

Don’t we all blame our parents sooner or later, though?

Jean: What?

Greg: You’re saying it’s my parents fault?

Jean: Um---no.

Greg: It’s all my fault, then?

Jean: I’m not saying that either.

Greg: Serious, I’m going to just stay here with the pukey-shitty smell for the rest of my life until you tell me what the hell you’re talking about.

Jean: Wait.

Greg: What?

Jean: How long have you been in here now?

Greg: I dunno, 5 hours I’m guessing?

Jean: And how early in the night did you take that shit?

Greg: First thing.

Jean: Did you even wipe?

Greg: Huh?

Jean: Your ass. Did you wipe your ass?

Greg: Honestly?

(Jean grimaces)

Jean: Yes, honestly.
Greg: It really doesn’t feel like it.

Jean: I cannot believe I ever had sex with you.

(Greg smile wryly)

Greg: Multiple times.

(pause)

Wait, hold on, go back, so who’s fault is it?

Jean: It’s no one’s fault.

(pause)

Greg: Doesn’t it have to be?

Jean: Greg, you’re depressed. That’s obvious. It’s most likely a chemical imbalance in your brain.

Greg: Where did you learn to diagnose that? Did you need a psyche degree in order to be a barista?

Jean: Yeah. They also taught me personal hygiene.

Greg: Real hands on course? What was the final?

Jean: Your mom was the final.

(They both burst out laughing)

Greg: Did you just bust out a “your mom” joke?

Jean: I believe I did.

Greg: Classic.

(pause)

So what if you’re right? You think everything just goes back to being fixed and my life is automatically going to be better.
Jean: No. Don’t be intentionally dense. You work at it. You see shrink, you see a therapist, you talk to your friends. You drop the sarcasm as a defense mechanism, you stop throwing yourself into failed relationships. You stop drinking.

(Greg stares at her, and responds sarcastically)

Greg: Should I find God, as well?

Jean: They may make you if you find A.A.

Greg: At least I can cash in my chips at the 13th Step pub.

Jean: Clever.

(pause)

I’m just asking you to look deep inside yourself, realize that getting better is going to take work, and that if you want it, I can at least promise that I’ll be here for you as support, whenever you need it.

Greg: Why are you so good to me?

Jean: Because you are a good man, even if you can be an unbelievable asshole sometimes.

Greg: I am quite good at that.

(Greg looks down, and starts to sniffle)

I’m just really scared that I’m going to be stuck like this for the rest of my life, until it kills me.

(He starts crying, and Jean puts her hand on his shoulder.)

Jean: It will be okay.

(She hugs him slightly, trying to keep a distance because she’s so offended by the smell and how filthy he is.)

Shhh. Just let it out.

(He continues on for a few moments more, than dies down.)

Feel better?
(Greg wipes the tears from his eyes.)

Greg: A little.

Jean: See. Little moments like that. Helps to let that out, doesn’t it?

Greg: Yeah.

Jean: Baby steps. Actually, can I give you some really wise advice right now? It’s something that my dad always used to say in these situations.

Greg: What’s that?

(Jean smirks)

Jean: Either shit, or get off the pot.

(They both laugh hysterically.)

Greg: Very appropriate.

Jean: Thank you.

(pause)

Greg: What time is it?

Jean: I’m not sure.

Greg: Hold on.

(Greg looks around for his phone, then he grabs it from the sink. When he looks at it, he pauses for a second, stunned. Jean looks at him curiously.)

Jean: What?

Greg: I have four missed calls and messages.

Jean: From who?

Greg: Liz.

(Jean looks at him disapprovingly, as he continues to stare at his phone.)
Jean: You going to call her back?

(Greg puts the phone into his pants pocket.)

Greg: Nope.

(Jean looks at him surprised.)

Jean: You going to at least check the messages?

Greg: Maybe later.

(Greg smiles at her)

"Baby steps"

(Greg reaches past her to grab his guitar. Jean notices him.)

Jean: No. Seriously, flush the toilet and let’s get out o this stink hole.

Greg: After a song. Come on. It’s a big night, let me end it with a song.

(Jean just shakes her head.)

Jean: You really love going for melodrama, don’t you?

Greg: No. I said baby steps, not a complete change overnight.

(Jean just crosses her arms.)

Jean: Are you going to depress the hell out of me again?

Greg: No. I think this song is going to make you smile.

Jean: Why?

Greg: It’s about what’s here, and what’s important.

Jean: I seriously doubt that.

Greg: Will you just let me do this?

Jean: As long as you promise to flush the toilet.
Greg: Deal.

Jean: Fine, go. Make it fast.

(Greg smirks, and starts playing the beautiful chords freely)

Greg: Tonight
   All I really want to do
   Is raise a glass of wine
   To toast against
   The TV set
   But I can’t
   Doctor’s orders

So I guess
I’m just gonna have to
Resign myself
To being
Not so secretly in love with you

Because it makes me feel decent
Selfless, and good
Although
I don’t think it should

(The tempo slows to a stop, and then he starts playing heavily rhythmic chords in a new key.)

I see you’re back on the east coast
Now that you’ve made San Francisco your bitch
You’ll come back to the midwest once
You’ve used up all of your friends

I’ll keep you around
At least until the Aleksys get back to town

There’s gonna be a party
The likes of which this town has never seen
And D.J. Sexy Leksy is gonna dedicate
Beast of Burden to me, again

And I’ll walk you outside
And I’ll wait around until you get a ride
This is the Valley where
The mantra’s still Bros before Hoes
This is the Valley, babe, where
The mantra’s still Bros before Hoes
And everybody knows
Unless your Higgins
It’s still Bros before Hoes

There’s gonna be a party
The likes of which this town has never seen
And D.J. Sexy Leksy’s gonna
Dedicate Beast of Burden to me, I hope
Bros before Hoes
Bros before Hoes
Bros before Hoes
Bros before Hoes
Bros before Hoes

(Greg looks up at Jean, who is looking at him confused.)

Jean: I like it. Is there a reason you played that to me?

Greg: You’re my bro.

Jean: That’s---actually kind of touching.

(Greg sets the guitar down, and stands up, where he almost stumbles over.)

Greg: Everything is so god damned asleep. My taint is even tingling.

Jean: Lovely image.

(Greg opens his arms, and moves towards her.)

Greg: Give me a hug.

(Jean pulls back, screaming.)

Jean: No! You’re fucking disgusting right now. You smell like a homeless hobos ass crack.

Greg: C’mon! We’re having a moment.

Jean: No.
Greg: I’ll start drinking again if you don’t.

Jean: That is so not fair.

Greg: Hug! Now!

*(Jean sighs, and opens her arms. Greg gives her a big, long hug.)*

Jean: Let me go!

Greg: Nope.

*(Jean screams)*

Jean: Greg!

*(Greg pulls away.)*

You smell like a god damned bus station.

*(She walks towards the door.)*

Meet me upstairs after you clean up in here and take, like, forty showers.

Greg: Deal.

*(She begins to walk out the door.)*

Hey, Jean.

*(Jean stops and looks back.)*

Thank you. I just want you to know... I appreciate you being here.

Jean: I know.

*(She smiles.)*

Just don’t forget it.

Greg: I won’t.
Jean walks off stage through the bathroom door. Greg turns around and looks over the toilet and opens up the lid.

Greg: You, my friend, aren’t going to drag me down anymore.

(He looks closely at the bowl.)

Oh my god, that’s fucking disgusting. It looks like I ate afterbirth.

(Greg reaches for the toilet, pulls the handle, and then salutes the bowl as it flushes)

The toilet swirls and then ends without the sound of the toilet flushing.

Greg: Oh you’ve got to be shitting me.

(He kicks the bowl, then yells in a frustrated manner.)

Mother fucker!

(Jean yells from offstage)

Jean: What?

(Greg yells back.)

Greg: The toilet clogged!

(Jean cackles hysterically from off stage.)

Jean: I always knew you were full of shit!

(Greg laughs hysterically, then he looks next to the sink at the plunger and picks it up, turns back to the toilet and pauses. He makes a meaningful glance at the toilet, then to the toilet, and then back to the plunger.)

Greg: Ya know what?

(pause.)

Fuck it.

Greg walks over to the sink and sets the plunger back down to the sink. He looks around the bathroom, looks at himself in the mirror, and then turns his back to stare at the sunlight coming
out of the window. He cracks a slow smile, shakes his head in disbelief, and smiles. Then he walks to the door, pauses, looks back one final time, and then opens the door. He exits, but leaves the door open, as if he knows he'll soon be back.

(blackout.)