

IN THE ROOM

By Lawrence Dial

lawrencedial.com
271 Sackett St. #1
Brooklyn NY 11231
917-331-1418
lawrencedial@gmail.com

*In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.*

*I said, "Is it good, friend?"
It is bitter—bitter," he answered;
"But I like it
Because it is bitter
And because it is my heart."*

—Stephen Crane

For
Suzanne, Scott, Julian, Dan, Brooke, Winter, Padraic
and Andy Paternoster

CHARACTERS

SEYMOUR — in his mid 30's

RAINER — in her mid 30's

LYDIA — in her late 20's

HERMAN — in his early 40's

JESSIE — in his late 20's

CLEMENTINE — in her early 70's

Oh yeah and

SCOTT — in his to her early 20's

PLACE

A bare room in Manhattan. One of those rehearsal spaces you've probably been to.

TIME

Either last winter, this winter or next.

IN THE DARKNESS

...the sound of a play rehearsing.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The passage of time should be implied through weekly changes in attire, not projections etc.

All dialogue within parenthesis (like this) is implied and not spoken.

Text in smaller font (like this) is spoken at a private or semi-private volume.

Line breaks indicate a shift in thought, and don't (necessarily) demand a pause or dictate rhythm.

An intermission is possible (if desired) following the **3rd Monday, Scene 4**, before the **4th Monday, Scene 1**.

New York is a diverse city, and casting should represent that diversity.

ACT I

1st MONDAY, Scene 1.

What are they saying? What play is this? It's hard to hear, coming through the walls, muted, indecipherable...

SEYMOUR flicks on the overhead fluorescents, revealing HERMAN, CLEMENTINE, LYDIA, JESSIE, and SCOTT, sitting in folding chairs around two polyurethane tables set together, in a small rehearsal space.

The décor is bare minimum: there's the obligatory upright piano that's lived through good times but seen better, and a dry-erase board, on which is written:

(IMAGINATION + STRUCTURE = ART)

(EVERYONE is writing. One chair is empty. Someone is late.)

SEYMOUR

What is it that haunts you?

HERMAN

...

LYDIA

...

JESSIE

...

CLEMENTINE

...

SCOTT

...

SEYMOUR

What is it that keeps you up in the middle of the night?

In the dark

When you can't sleep

That wakes you in a cold sweat

What is this *thing* you think about
in your head

over and over again

CLEMENTINE

(Audibly, to herself.)

Huh

(SCOTT raises his hand.)

SCOTT

What's unresolvable?

SEYMOUR

Unresolved issue.

And please if anyone
if you have a question or if you want more info or
I've written a lot of these
These unresolved issue letters
But this is the first time I've ever *taught* it so
if I suck at it

(EVERYONE chuckles uneasily.)

No okay so

Unresolved issue.

This is an issue you have with someone important in your life
Possibly from your past
It's something you've never been able to resolve. Almost like a secret

SCOTT

Like what

SEYMOUR

Well—

HERMAN

Like if your uncle touched you or something when you were little.

LYDIA

/Great

SEYMOUR

You don't have to be the victim that's. Molestation is
It's completely fine if that *is* your issue
if you're writing to your now dead uncle who / when you were little

SCOTT

So it's unresolvable because my uncle's dead?

SEYMOUR

It doesn't have to be literal.
In the next step when I let you go off on your own
after that
we're gonna write *another* letter
not from ourselves
but from the person you're writing to now
In response *to* your first letter

Does that...?

(But SCOTT looks overwhelmed.)

Okay hold on (Everyone)

(EVERYONE stops writing. SEYMOUR thinks... He looks to
the closed door with the observational window.)

SEYMOUR

So long ago
Let's say long ago I had to break off a relationship with a girl

JESSIE

This for real?

SEYMOUR

Uh—No but let's say
as an example
I had to end this relationship
I really liked this girl—I loved her; she was a good friend
But let's say I had to end it because
she was *also* dating my best friend.

HERMAN

So this is behind his back

SEYMOUR

Yes
So my unresolved issue could be:
There was this girl I loved. I enjoyed her friendship
but
I had to end our relationship *and* friendship
in order to preserve my *other* friendship with my guy friend

Why
 LYDIA

That's a really good—
 SEYMOUR

Lydia
 LYDIA

Question Lydia
 and the answer to that *Why*?
 That's what I'm writing about in the letter
 Why did I choose my guy friend over her?
 Maybe I never explained it
 Maybe it was something that went *unsaid* /
 SEYMOUR

LYDIA
 Maybe it's what you felt the most comfortable with doing

SEYMOUR
 sure
 But for whatever reason
 this issue between me and this theoretical girl I loved
 and my guy friend
 it remains
Unresolved.

(Do they get it?)

Gotch ya.
 JESSIE

Coolio
 HERMAN

(But...)

...um
 SCOTT

(A face becomes vertically letterboxed in the small observational window of the door. It searches and finds SEYMOUR, and to his baffled expression, smiles at him...)

(RAINER enters.)

RAINER

Hey

(She sits in the empty chair, takes off her jacket, and opens her notebook. SEYMOUR's nonplussed.)

(SCOTT's hand rises again, pulling SEYMOUR out it.)

SEYMOUR

(To SCOTT.)

Okay uh—*here's an easier one:*

When I was in sixth grade egged on by some classmates of mine
I punched this bully in the face.

JESSIE

This is true?

SEYMOUR

This one's true yeah
I could write a letter to this bully
I could explain my remorse now as an adult
I could ask for his forgiveness.
And then in the next step
he could write a letter *back to me*
saying...

RAINER

(Smiling broadly.)

He'd forgive you.

SEYMOUR

Hopefully not.
Hopefully he's had *major* issues with this ever since
and he wants to meet up
to discuss these issues some place
unfamiliar and possibly dangerous.
Hopefully this issue is not easily *resolvable* between us
and will lead to lots of pages of dialogue of conflict drama
some comedy if I'm lucky

—Everyone this is Rainer. Rainer everyone

RAINER

I'm so sorry I'm late you guys!

CLEMENTINE

That's okay I was early!

SEYMOUR

We'll catch you up
 First though tell the class
 we all did this
 Your name where you're from (etc)
 and then one thing you hate about this ridiculous terrible winter.

(EVERYONE looks to RAINER.)

(BLACKOUT.)

1st MONDAY, Scene 2.

Break.

The door is propped open. Everyone out of the room except LYDIA, who is writing, *quietly*.

(HERMAN enters, standing in the doorway. He watches LYDIA.
 She becomes uncomfortable.)

HERMAN

Same thing?

LYDIA

Huh

HERMAN

The one from last class?
 Pregnant women who start the punk band

LYDIA

(. . .)

I finished that. Wrote another one after it actually
 This is uh
 A new thing

HERMAN

...Any luck?

LYDIA

What? Some
 Couple women's experimental groups

HERMAN
Which ones?

LYDIA
Uh (doesn't matter)
(Then:)
But this one in Pittsburgh placed me as a finalist?

HERMAN
For production?

LYDIA
(No) Extended workshop reading. I didn't get it

HERMAN
Fuckers
(. . .)

LYDIA
What about (you)?

HERMAN
Same thing.

LYDIA
You were also a finalist for a women's experimental group in Pittsburgh?

HERMAN
No same thing from the last class we took together

LYDIA
About the
Video gamers playing the?

HERMAN
End of the world zombie apocalypse game yeah

LYDIA
Did you finish the/
The draft yet or

HERMAN
Yeah oh yeah
Mostly
It's completely it's like *so* different now. It's this completely different

Um *thing?* and
I sent it off to The Glacial National Park Conference?

LYDIA

Me too. *Always* /
They'll never take me though

HERMAN

Yeah
Me either
And then the Appalachian Writer's Refuge? Did you submit

LYDIA

Yup

HERMAN

And uh
The Kentucky Marmoset Project?

LYDIA

What's that?

HERMAN

Kidding
I love all the stupid names. Everything's so regionally mid-west

(SCOTT enters pausing in the threshold. He looks at them; they look at him... He moves off to the window.)

LYDIA

Well good luck

HERMAN

You yeah too uh

(HERMAN cringes, and LYDIA goes back to writing. Not sure what to do, he takes out his phone and begins playing a video game.)

SCOTT

I don't think I'll ever be used to buildings this high
Largest building in my town was like four stories
(Looking out.)

Crazy

(HERMAN's phone buzzes. He answers it.)

HERMAN

Yo it's like two thousand sixteen homie—*Text me*
If you're online tonight or not

(HERMAN turns his back.)

No I got the expansion pack—why do you think we're even talking?

SCOTT

I just moved here. To the city

LYDIA

(Is he talking to me?)

Uh cool

SCOTT

Last week

LYDIA

(Whoa) okay

SCOTT

I'm in Astoria.
It's way cooler down here though

LYDIA

Great that's
I hear that's

(JESSIE and RAINER enter. Followed shortly by SEYMOUR,
zombie-walking, checking his phone.)

JESSIE

You saw the

RAINER

When it was yeah. They had it up here
Nine ten years ago? It fit better
To have it on Broadway now is stupid
I did the reading for it
I played the little girl /
Read for the little girl.

JESSIE

You played? *No way*
And they didn't let you take over the part?

RAINER

I got pregnant.

JESSIE

Oh bummer...

(RAINER smiles. JESSIE clears his throat.)

(SEYMOUR looks up from his phone.)

SEYMOUR

Ready? Okay we're back

(EVERYONE opens their notebooks. JESSIE looks around.)

JESSIE

I think we're (missing someone)

SEYMOUR

Who are we missing?

(BLACKOUT.)

1st Monday, Scene 3

EVERYONE's around the table. CLEMENTINE has her notebook open, reading out loud.

CLEMENTINE

Dear Martin

I do not know why you insist on pretending to our families that you and I are still an emotionally involved married couple. We are not. Nor have we been in some time since you decided to move back to Montana with your friend Richard.

(Is HERMAN checking his phone under the table?)

I understand life in the city was never your cup of tea. Though you certainly drank a lot of it!

You have always harbored a deep seeded resentment for your life with me in the West Village apartment we made and called home for thirty-five years Especially the first twenty beautiful years when Mark was there.

(SCOTT, rapt: *Who's Mark?*)

Mark's our son. He lives in Vancouver

But. This does not mean I will continue to present myself as a contented married woman.

(RAINER's nodding, *of course not.*)

Since your departure I have formed many many
lasting and meaningful friendships
I go to the movies I enjoy brunch I am still going about things
as things are prone to be gone about

I will always love you Martin
wherever you are
but honestly Martin

(She takes a pen and marks something out.)

I don't mean to be a pain but
Enough is enough.

I hope this correspondence finds you well, and in good spirits.
I have been soul cycling
which is the new thing here. Because there's always a new thing in the city
What's not to love?

To new things question mark
You know who

(CLEMENTINE looks up. SCOTT claps, then stops.)

Do you want me to read Martin's/ response?

SEYMOUR

No that's okay

RAINER

That was *so* beautiful Clementine

JESSIE

Yeah really (dope)

RAINER

I think I'm crying!

SEYMOUR

Yes thank you for sharing
Is there anyone else who would like to read?
I know the letters that they're very
Or should be. Personal

(HERMAN raises his hand.)

Go right ahead Herman

HERMAN

No I have a question

CLEMENTINE

Sure

SEYMOUR

No questions actually. These are just to hear be witness to

HERMAN

No it's not that

I was wondering when are we uh bringing pages in? To read
Online the class description was kind of *broad*
but I figured it'd be formatted like other classes I've taken here

SEYMOUR

I was going to play it by ear? See what the class is most interested in—

HERMAN

I'm definitely interested in pages
Hearing my stuff out loud—That's my two cents

I like the exercises they're very um
Enlightening
But my vote is for pages

SEYMOUR

I'll keep that in mind

(BLACKOUT.)

1st MONDAY, Scene 4.

After class.

RAINER and SEYMOUR are neutralizing the space, folding the tables and chairs, and setting them against the wall.

SEYMOUR

So they just chopped it?
And converted it into these

rehearsal spaces?

RAINER

MaryAnne she said they had to
They're making more money now on the classes than the productions
That if she wants to *keep* producing shows
It's *cheaper* to actually
To rent somewhere else?
then to run this space year round
just for new plays

SEYMOUR

Huh

(SEYMOUR folds a chair and sets it against the wall.)

RAINER

How long had it been since you'd been here?

SEYMOUR

I didn't know it'd gotten this bad
When I came in
I couldn't figure out like
Where this room was?
or where back then
Where the theatre was? is
now?

RAINER

yeah

SEYMOUR

then I realized
Oh shit
This is the theatre. This room

RAINER

Sucks huh?

(*It does suck.*)

SEYMOUR

(Dismayed.)
...you know and even the stuff Central Stages has been producing lately (is crap)

RAINER

I liked that one?
 The Albanian grandmother with the Serbian stamp collector?
 The *Philatelist*?

(SEYMOUR did not like *The Philatelist*.)

No see that's the problem—everyone's so
 No one likes anything anymore
You never like anything

SEYMOUR

I like *things*

RAINER

Not even back—listen how defensive you are!

SEYMOUR

I'm not defensive! I do like things just...

RAINER

You never used to like things and still don't

SEYMOUR

I didn't like that one

RAINER

(Playfully challenging.)

Why
 I loved it; I was *bawling*
 The little Serbian boy in the fallout shelter
 Disarming the landmines
 What's not to like?

SEYMOUR

(An itch that needs scratching.)

I can't believe MaryAnne didn't tell me you were taking this.

RAINER

Oh uh
well
 that's because I sort of

(How does she say it?)

I asked her *not* to tell you?

SEYMOUR

...

RAINER

I wasn't sure I'd be able to commit every Monday and I didn't want to say I was doing it
and then *not* do it and
I'm sorry/ if

SEYMOUR

No that's okay! It's fine I just didn't / I wasn't—

RAINER

I was going to call you—I meant to call you and then
I chickened out

SEYMOUR

What why?

RAINER

. . . (I don't know)

SEYMOUR

I mean look it's great uh
really it's
I'm actually I'm glad you're taking it

RAINER

(Brightening.)

You are?

SEYMOUR

(Yeah)
And it was super good timing that MaryAnne asked me
(Slightly embarrassed.)
Her and I have the same issue I think

RAINER

What's that?

SEYMOUR

Rent?

(Explaining.)

If our apartment was big enough Cindy and I'd chop it up and sublet it too
We're methodically being priced-out

RAINER

Oh no! I love your neighborhood

SEYMOUR

Well see that's the problem; So does everyone

RAINER

I've been trying to get Pat to buy something but he can't decide
There or California it's...

(RAINER's immediately embarrassed by this.)

Which is a stupid thing to complain about...

SEYMOUR

How is he? How is Pat

RAINER

Oh he's *fine* in LA now—He says hi actually
(As Pat.)

Hey

SEYMOUR

Hey Pat

(Bringing up Pat has created an obvious vacuum in the room...)

(Then the door opens slightly; someone is standing with their back to the room before entering. *Are they coming in?* There's some discussion outside of the room; SEYMOUR checks his watch. Then the figure exits, shutting the door behind him/her.)

RAINER

Hey I'm glad you're doing this
That I'm doing it too
That we're doing it *together*
I always wanted to write something!

SEYMOUR

That's great
and now you're going to

(There's a momentary, panicked flash where this dawns on RAINER: *I'm going to write a play. Aagh!* SEYMOUR moves the last table/chair to the wall.)

(BLACKOUT.)

2nd MONDAY, Scene 1

Everyone is writing silently in their notebooks. SCOTT is struggling hard.
The dry-erase board now reads: *FAIL AGAIN; FAIL BETTER*

(After a minute, JESSIE gets stuck and looks to CLEMENTINE, who smiles. He gets an idea and begins to write.)

(Another minute, and LYDIA pauses. She looks at HERMAN, she watches him, she gets an idea. She goes back to writing a half-second before HERMAN pauses and looks at her, missing one another.)

(Another minute, RAINER pauses, and then beams at SEYMOUR, giving him a *thumbs up*; he blushes and looks away.)

(SCOTT continues to struggle alone...)

(SEYMOUR checks the time on his phone:)

SEYMOUR

So now

This character you've been writing they have something to say

*There is something about me you don't know
something important
And I need to tell it to you. This secret that I have
and I am GOing to tell it to you
Starting...*

Now

(Another long silence as they write.)

(Then, the sounds of martial arts practice can be heard from outside the room. Spontaneous booming *Kiai*'s and guttural *Humphs* become impossible to ignore.)

(Investigating, SEYMOUR exits the room.)

CLEMENTINE

What is that?

RAINER

Sounds like a kung-fu movie

Yeah

JESSIE

It's not Chinese

HERMAN
(Without breaking from his writing.)

She didn't say it was Chinese

LYDIA

Kung Fu is Chinese
That's Savate. It's a *French* Martial Art

HERMAN

The *French* have a martial art?

LYDIA

Oui

HERMAN

(SEYMOUR comes back and shuts the door behind him, the sounds continuing. EVERYONE goes back to writing.)

(CLEMENTINE writes...)

(JESSIE writes...)

(LYDIA writes...)

(RAINER writes...)

(HERMAN writes...)

(And SCOTT struggles hard...)

(BLACKOUT.)

2nd MONDAY, Scene 2

Break. CLEMENTINE is alone in the room, sitting on the piano bench, holding an orange.

(JESSIE enters with a soda and his skateboard. He stops when he sees CLEMENTINE.)

(CLEMENTINE smiles. JESSIE clears his throat, *pops* the soda.)

CLEMENTINE

You really ride that thing?

JESSIE

What?

Uh yeah you know. I get around

CLEMENTINE

You do the
The jump *tricks* or

JESSIE

Ha ha um *no* I'm a little too
Old for that

(JESSIE clears his throat, then smiles, *cheesing*.)

(CLEMENTINE tosses JESSIE the orange; he fumbles it.)

JESSIE

Sorry

Wasn't prepared to have things / (thrown at me)

CLEMENTINE

Help me out with the first bit. My fingers

JESSIE

Oh sure sure

(JESSIE gets to work peeling the orange; clears his throat.)

CLEMENTINE

Sounds like you're getting a cold

JESSIE

What

CLEMENTINE

Sounds Like You're Getting A Cold

JESSIE

Oh no that's. I clear my whenever
Just this *fun* thing I do

(He clears his throat again. *See?* CLEMENTINE takes a good look at him. JESSIE squirms.)

I liked your
Uh what you read last week. That was (brave)
Is that what you're writing? To Martin?

CLEMENTINE

No Martin died from Aids related complications years ago

JESSIE

Oh god / I'm so

CLEMENTINE

He said we could write about something from the past

(JESSIE focuses intensely on the orange.)

What I like about it?
I have my side my letter. And now I have his side *too*
His perspective /
It was challenging

JESSIE

Yeah uh huh

It's funny though

(Shaking his head.)

Yeah

CLEMENTINE

What is?

JESSIE

What

CLEMENTINE

Funny

JESSIE

(Lost.)

What's

CLEMENTINE

You said it was funny though?

JESSIE

Oh! (Nothing)
 I don't know my letters didn't argue?
 I wrote him
 And he wrote back to me you know
 He wrote *back* and

But I didn't know what he'd say?
 Or what he'd say about what I said in the first letter?
 So I just ended up talking *a lot*
 To him

What's wrong with talking? CLEMENTINE

Nothing! JESSIE
 It'd be boring don't you think?

Are you bored now? CLEMENTINE

No! But that's not how I think it'd go down JESSIE
 if I said what I said to him in the letter

(CLEMENTINE nods. JESSIE's done peeling the orange.)

Welp. Here you go JESSIE

Masterful job CLEMENTINE

(CLEMENTINE offers half the orange.)

Nah I'm straight—thank you JESSIE

You did the work. CLEMENTINE

(JESSIE takes it and they both eat.)

Fuuuck this is (good) JESSIE

CLEMENTINE

Mm hmm

(They look around the bare space.)

JESSIE

It's my dad who I wrote to
He's a plumber (now) ever since I was born
But he used to write plays

(CLEMENTINE nods. They eat.)

CLEMENTINE

Can you get me some marijuana?

JESSIE

(Uhhhhhh)

CLEMENTINE

Or pot
You smell like it right now and I thought maybe

(They look at each other. JESSIE clears his throat.)

JESSIE

Sure
I can do that.

CLEMENTINE

That would be *wonder-ful*

JESSIE

Word

(They both eat a piece of orange. JESSIE relaxes.)

I can olli?
That's when you like the board
you make the board jump?

CLEMENTINE

A jump trick?

JESSIE

It's like
Thee jump trick but (Hold on)

(JESSIE puts his board down and steps onto it. Mouth full of orange, he bends his knees, looks at where he's positioned...)

(HERMAN and SCOTT enter with vending machine snacks.)

SCOTT
How long you been there?

JESSIE
So what you do like

HERMAN
Like *nine* years?
I'm basically like this *glorified* like this
Lowly menial secretary

You put this foot here

This other foot here at this end like

SCOTT
My mother's a secretary

(HERMAN takes notice of JESSIE.)

HERMAN
What's uh (going on)

JESSIE
Pay attention you got next

CLEMENTINE
Not likely!

(LYDIA and SEYMOUR enter, followed by RAINER checking her cell phone.)

LYDIA
It was amazing
All the actors were each they represented the
different Chakras?
The whole thing was this meditation on um
Chakras

JESSIE
And you're gonna
You're gonna kick this foot down while
simultaneously
You're jumping you're

SEYMOUR
Wish I'd seen it

CLEMENTINE
uh uh

LYDIA
You would've loved it

JESSIE
You're bringing this foot up and you're
Jumping and

(They notice JESSIE.)

(RAINER is dismayed by a text.)

RAINER

fuck

(She ducks out of the room.)

CLEMENTINE

(To EVERYONE.)

Jessie's doing a jump trick

SEYMOUR

Doing? Is it safe or

JESSIE

Yeah it's been a minute (since the last time I did this)
I'll prolly break my neck

(JESSIE winks at CLEMENTINE, bends his knees, swivels on his toes. He's motionless... Then he kicks and jumps simultaneously. The board takes flight.)

(BLACKOUT.)

2nd MONDAY, Scene 3

During class. Almost over. Everyone is sitting at the tables. RAINER is mid-explanation

RAINER

She's at this turning point in her life I think?
Like her husband he's like this
Promising *politician*? Or something public
Like he's

SEYMOUR

He's finding success

RAINER

Right
And then she's you know with the kids all day
and uh

SEYMOUR

She's sublimated

RAINER
(Growing self-conscious.)

Well no she's like
It was a *choice* to be with her kids?
She wanted to do it
But now
they're starting school next year and
Her husband he's gone all the time and

(BEEP.)

(BEEP.)

(RAINER's phone. Without looking, she puts it away. She takes a deep breathe.)

She doesn't know what to do with her life anymore.

SEYMOUR

What did she used to do? Before kids

RAINER

Before um?
I think she used to be this like
or maybe always *wanted* to be this

(RAINER focuses. She reaches painfully, deeply—she commits.)

She was a long distance marathon runner
But since the kids her body now is (wrecked)
And she's just hasn't had the time to...

SEYMOUR

She's made sacrifices

RAINER

Yes
And she's questioning *everything* now
About her life who she is her family
And then one day
she goes out running and
She doesn't stop
She just keeps going

SEYMOUR

Good

Forrest Gump
HERMAN

/What?
RAINER

/Herman
SEYMOUR

And then what happens?
LYDIA
(Spellbound.)

Uh
I don't know
what happens after that
RAINER

It's a good start
SEYMOUR

(. . .)

Maybe she
Maybe she sees
I was thinking
Like an advertisement? for like
A class? or
Maybe a scuba diving class?
RAINER
(Looking at SEYMOUR.)

That's so great!
LYDIA

Really?
RAINER
(Laughing.)

Oh my gawd yes!
LYDIA

I like that a lot
JESSIE

She's on a journey
CLEMENTINE

Literally
HERMAN

Uh
I don't know I guess maybe
RAINER
(To SEYMOUR.)

What do you think?

It's yeah
Worth exploring
SEYMOUR
(A touch uncomfortable.)

Okay...
RAINER
(Excited.)

Yay!
Now all I have to do is write it

(EVERYONE chuckles except for SCOTT. RAINER's a tough act to follow.)

Alright Scott the best for last
SEYMOUR

(A few giggles, SCOTT included, uneasily.)

Where are you at; what are you writing about?

Um
I don't have anything like *that*?
Everyone's ideas they all sound so
And I'm uh
SCOTT

(All eyes on SCOTT.)

Maybe I'm more like Lydia? Still processing?

SEYMOUR
(Not convinced.)

Okay

SCOTT

I don't know!

SEYMOUR

Was there anything that came to mind while you were writing today? Or last week

(*Uh...*)

An image
A thought

(*Um...*)

A word?

(SCOTT struggles. SEYMOUR allows a long, *painful* pause.)

Okay / well look—

SCOTT

I'm so sorry everyone! I just

SEYMOUR

No listen that's—

SCOTT

I can't decide on anything!
I don't even know why I'm (doing this)!

SEYMOUR

No look I—
I ask myself that question
All the time

Why am I doing this?

(To EVERYONE, after figuring out the right thing to say.)

What's the big difference between writers and everyone else?
Writers start from *Nothing*
And they're asked to turn that nothing into something
And that's a very intimidating place to begin

(SEYMOUR looks around the room at each of them.)

Conflict is predicated on desire
 It emerges from what your characters want
 Something in those letters I had you write
 There's an honest desire in there
 Based on something unresolved in your life

So ask yourselves
 What do you want?
 Each of you

SCOTT

...

CLEMENTINE

...

JESSIE

...

HERMAN

...

LYDIA

...

RAINER

...

(Searching his pockets, SEYMOUR finds a box of matches.)

SEYMOUR

Before we go
 One last thing
 This teacher of mine did this once
 It's a little (goofy) but
I've always liked it

Rainer? Can you (get the lights?)

(RAINER nods and waits for SEYMOUR's signal.)

I'm going to light a match
 And as it's burning I want you to...

(Then, not wanting to be proscriptive.)

Well just see what it tells you

(SEYMOUR signals, and RAINER hits the lights.)

(In the dark SEYMOUR lights a match. Or tries to, having difficulty getting it lit.)

(Sparks.)

(Sparks.)

(A few giggles.)

See? Even if I tried I couldn't *not* create some sort of conflict

(Sparks.)

Out of my desire to (light this fucking match)

(Sparks.)

(Sparks.)

Well (maybe it's not gonna—)

(The match ignites! It softly illuminates the room.)

(EVERYONE huddles in as the match burns. It's somehow captivating in its intensity, seeming to last forever, burning dangerously closer to SEYMOUR's fingertips...)

RAINER & LYDIA

Fingers...!

(The girls giggle together, and finally the match burns out. In the dark:)

SEYMOUR

See everyone next week
With your pages.

(BLACKOUT.)

2nd MONDAY, Scene 4

After class. HERMAN is alone, waiting, jacket on, ready to go. An unlit cigarette dangles from his lips cowboy-style.

(LYDIA enters drying her hands with a brown paper towel.)

HERMAN

Yo

LYDIA

(Startled, not expecting to see him.)

You didn't have to wait

(HERMAN shrugs. As LYDIA moves past him he takes the brown paper towel from her and puts it to his face and smells.)

HERMAN

What are you smelling? What's emerging from your mind's eye—Does it make you hungry? And if so hungry for what?

LYDIA

(Not amused.)

You're pathological

HERMAN

I'm just like *dude* let's read some pages!

LYDIA

I like the exercises

HERMAN

The match?

LYDIA

It was cool.

HERMAN

He lit *UH MATCH*

LYDIA

It was about structure
Beginning middle end?

(. . .)

HERMAN

Whatever I mean the exercises were *o-kay*
I just wish there was like an advanced class here you know?

LYDIA

Advanced like you?

HERMAN

And *you*

I'm serious—*Scott*?

How many Scotts have we taken classes with?

LYDIA

Everyone has to—

HERMAN

He's doomed and you know it

And why's there always some geriatric *Hobby-writing* in every one of these we take

Have you noticed this?

What'd she say her play was about?

LYDIA

Stardust

HERMAN

Wonder-ful

LYDIA

You don't know/

HERMAN

Oh and mother Rainer—don't even get me started

LYDIA

Her play sounds awesome

HERMAN

Awesomely autobiographical

She's a disillusioned housewife writing about being a housewife.

LYDIA

You're a cynical video game nerd writing about video games.

(Stung, HERMAN looks away, down at his hands... He smells the paper towel again.)

just saying

HERMAN

It does smell like something... Like grade school?

(HERMAN offers the paper towel to LYDIA. *Nope*, she's good.)

Anyway—*Do you want to get a beer?*
 Just one a quickie? As they say
 No like um

(With mild panicky laughter.)

I don't know—*Just a beer?*

LYDIA

Uh
 I kinda got this thing /
 early in the morning?

HERMAN

Just a beer—*one* beer
 We'll go to that Irish place right there
 In and out twenty minutes tops

LYDIA

I really I don't—

HERMAN

Come on

(. . .)

LYDIA

I don't think so Herman.

(. . .)

HERMAN

Oh-kay yeah alright

(LYDIA grabs her things and begins leave.)

LYDIA

See you next week

(HERMAN steps in front of her blocking her exit.)

HERMAN

Wait look um—I'm only
 Please it's just one beer
 On me I'll buy

(LYDIA's shaking her head.)

Come on it'll be good for you seriously

LYDIA

Excuse me?

HERMAN

No I mean oh my god—you're all like tense and
I just it's not healthy to
work work work all the time and
you know?

LYDIA

Yeah well (see you)

(LYDIA tries to circumnavigate HERMAN, once, then twice, but
he stays in front of her, grinning.)

do you mind?

HERMAN

(Thinking he's cute.)

No

LYDIA

No you don't mind? Or No you're (not going to move?)

HERMAN

I'm not going to move
until you you have a beer with me

LYDIA

...

HERMAN

One beer Lydia
please
we'll talk about our plays
I could use some advice; I'm really stuck here
Honest to god
Your notes are actually pretty spot on most the time
Better than anyone else's in class
it'd be like a total favor to me
Ten minutes
tops

(HERMAN looks at LYDIA until she looks away.)

LYDIA

I'm not tense...

(She looks back at him.)

(BLACKOUT.)

3rd MONDAY, Scene 1

Everyone around the table with pages in front of them, looking out through an unnerving silence that they have been asked to fill. Butts shifting seats, eyes avoiding contact...

On the dry-erase board: *WE ARE STRANGERS TO OURSELVES*

(Then, bravely bursting forward to break the silence:)

JESSIE

The moon

(Relieved, CLEMENTINE smiles and writes this down.)

(...)

RAINER

An eclipse

(Pleased, CLEMENTINE writes this down too.)

(...)

LYDIA

Atoms. One hundred trillion

HERMAN

In every cell of every eye

(A slow rhythm develops, and CLEMENTINE writes it all down.)

JESSIE

The universe experiencing itself

SEYMOUR

(A gentle interjection.)

Right. But specifically

You are the universe experiencing itself

Good (Keep it going)

(. . .)

HERMAN

Stardust

RAINER

Making up ninety percent of our body?
Which is so (fascinating)

HERMAN

Oh yeah that but
Isn't the spaceship? It's called *Stardust* too (right?)

CLEMENTINE

Is that confusing? Because / I can change it

SEYMOUR

Try to just
Hear
What everyone's saying no questions
Just listen

(. . .)

(. . .)

LYDIA

The center of the galaxy

SCOTT

Tastes like raspberries and smells like rum
Like how can they even (know that?)

SEYMOUR

Doesn't matter. In the world of this play
the center of the galaxy *does* taste and smell like (that)

CLEMENTINE

It's a scientific fact
I don't know how they know it but somehow
I should figure that out

(. . .)

I like the
The two timelines are um

SCOTT

Let's talk about that
There's the present time—

SEYMOUR

Nineteen ninety nine

(Correcting.)

JESSIE

Which is *like* the present
Compared to Cassini's time in (1680)
These two disparate time lines
With parallel plots—what do we think about that?

SEYMOUR

(. . .)

It's cool
It'll be um
Like how they
To see them (come together?)

JESSIE

Combine to tell a cohesive story yeah
Where they intersect where they diverge how one timeline informs the other

SEYMOUR

(CLEMENTINE writes all this down.)

What else?

...

HERMAN

...

LYDIA

...

SCOTT

/I like—

JESSIE

RAINER

Is she sick? The scientist?
Not Cassini but the woman in the present? The things she says to her assistant the boy

(RAINER is searching through her pages. *Where is it?*
CLEMENTINE looks up, stops taking notes.)

She won't let him in that room?

SEYMOUR

(Attempting to avoid where this is heading.)

Lots of ephemeral images in these first couple pages right?
Everything has this
Everything in this world feels fleeting?
The sense of time is very present

JESSIE

Yeah I was gonna / say that—

RAINER

I think she's dying.

(EVERYONE looks at RAINER, then CLEMENTINE.)

I think that's what that room with the locked door is
like how sick people—*Oh my god*

(To SEYMOUR.)

Remember my mother? Hospice set up *that room*?

(To CLEMENTINE.)

I don't know if this is what you had in mind but

(Back to SEYMOUR, RE: her mother.)

Remember my mother kept trying get the photo albums in order?

(Back to CLEMENTINE.)

To me this is like her last big
Or her final chance at

LYDIA

A scientific discovery.

RAINER

/Yes!

SEYMOUR

Well okay / Rainer

RAINER

The last thing she's trying to accomplish before
And even though like she's older and mostly unqualified

LYDIA

And maybe suffering from dementia?

SEYMOUR

/Rainer Lydia

RAINER

That's why this Stardust mission is so important to her
She thinks it's her last chance—

SEYMOUR

(Taking over, a bit too sharply.)

Rainer.

And uh

Everyone?

The reason we start with only our observations on *things we like?*

RAINER

I shouldn't analyze—

SEYMOUR

Or

Want to know more about?

(It's because)

Our writing can be influenced for better or for worse

RAINER

But I'd want to know if someone—

SEYMOUR

And as *consumers* we're

(used to)

dealing with mostly finished products

Art that has been / (fully realized)

RAINER

But if someone had a good idea or—

Rainer—you need to be *careful* SEYMOUR

(Careful?) RAINER

Careful not to imprint your um SEYMOUR
We all need to be respectful and not be prescriptive in our notes
 To not project our personal selves or opinions
 Onto someone else's work

Is that what I'm doing? RAINER

We want to help Clementine write the play that only *she* can write. SEYMOUR
 Uninfluenced by what we think she *should* write
 Or is possibly *maybe* writing

Make sense?

(. . .)

Word JESSIE

Sure SCOTT

Got it coach. LYDIA

(HERMAN audibly *yawns*, and then RAINER, obsequiously:)

Sorry Clementine RAINER

(CLEMENTINE nods.)

(BLACKOUT.)

3rd MONDAY, Scene 2

Break. RAINER's alone in the room on her phone, pacing, on the verge of an emotional breakdown.

RAINER

I don't want the girls flying out I want them *home* for Christmas
I don't want to come to *California*

I don't understand that
I understand you're not sure because they're not sure
That they're

Why does your voice sound funny?

I don't know it sounds
It doesn't sound like (you)

In *character*? You're

You can't just like
have a conversation with me
Not in character?

(SEYMOUR enters followed by SCOTT.)

SCOTT

I went to the Drama Bookstore last week—have you ever (been there)

(SEYMOUR makes eye contact with RAINER who turns away.)

RAINER

/Just tell me you're coming home okay?

SCOTT

I could like *live* there—!

(Concerned she might cry or *lose it*, RAINER exits.)

SEYMOUR

...It is pretty uh (awesome)

SCOTT

I was like looking around you know
not for like anything *specific*
but just like (looking)
And then I thought
Wonder if Seymour has any plays here?

SEYMOUR

Think I'm out of print actually

SCOTT

They told me that yeah

(SCOTT pulls out an actor's edition of SEYMOUR's play.)

But they were able order it for me!

SEYMOUR

Ah

SCOTT

I haven't read it yet
I thought maybe I'd wait until class was over
Like what if I hate it?

SEYMOUR

Good idea

SCOTT

No I'm sure it's
I bet it's like *uh-mazing*
Um

(SCOTT looks to the door where RAINER just exited.)

And I'm not sure?
I mean I'm *pretty* sure but

(SCOTT flips to the beginning of the play—*Here it comes.*)

(HERMAN enters with LYDIA both with beverages: Coffee for HERMAN; Kombucha for LYDIA.)

HERMAN

I'm just saying it smells like throw-up
That's all

SEYMOUR

Um Scott

LYDIA

Well thank you for that Herman

SCOTT

That's *her* right?

Rainer?

(LYDIA perks up.)

SEYMOUR

Yup

That's uh *Her*

LYDIA

Who's Rainer?

SCOTT

Wow
okay um and then

(Showing SEYMOUR.)

This *other* guy? I'm sorry but
Next to her?

Is that really

SEYMOUR

. . . *Pat Shelby*?

(SCOTT's brain explodes.)

SCOTT

Ohmygawd you call him *Pat*?

LYDIA

What are guy talking about?

SCOTT

(Composing himself.)

Obviously that is him because that's his name right there *Patrick Shelby* but
(Freaking again.)

He's just like kinda one of my favorite actors of all time and
I mean I've seen him in *every* movie every TV thing he's ever done um

(LYDIA takes the play from SCOTT and looks for herself.
CLEMENTINE and JESSIE enter giggling, a secret between
them.)

But I didn't know he did *theater* until / (I saw this)

LYDIA

(Looking up from the play, To SEYMOUR.)

Wait—Rainer was in one of your plays?

SCOTT

With *Patrick Shelby*!

HERMAN

Do what?

LYDIA
(Squinting at the photo.)
That's Patrick Shelby?

CLEMENTINE
Who's Patrick Shelby?

SCOTT
And get this:
They're *married*.

JESSIE
He's an actor; he's pretty okay
You've seen him in stuff

LYDIA
Who

CLEMENTINE
I've seen him in stuff?

HERMAN
Seymour and Rainer?

JESSIE
Probably
(JESSIE and CLEMENTINE laugh.)

SCOTT
No! Rainer and Patrick Shelby! They have kids together
If you google Rainer's name and Seymour's play *and* Patrick Shelby together—

(RAINER reenters just then, catching the tail-end, her eyes raw.
Everyone turns and looks at her.)

SEYMOUR
Guys we should start up

LYDIA
(To RAINER, holding SEYMOUR's play.)
Is this really... You?

SCOTT
No—are you married to Patrick Shelby?

(RAINER takes the play from LYDIA, so looks at it and smiles.)

RAINER
Well (yeah)
I mean it's not a secret or anything—

SCOTT
Oh My God!

LYDIA
Yeah he's only a *movie star* (no big deal)

(SCOTT escorts RAINER to a chair and positions himself in such a way that's ready to receive juicy information.)

SEYMOUR

(Having lost the room.)

I'm gonna get a drink of water?/
If anyone else needs to now's the uh (time)

SCOTT

You have to tell us *all about it*

RAINER

(Giggling at the sudden attention.)

Like well
what do you want to know?

(*EVERYTHING!*)

LYDIA

Tell us about the play

SCOTT

Start there

(SEYMOUR looks back at RAINER, then exits.)

RAINER

Okay...

(Holding the play, looking at it now, she lets go, far away from being alone crying in a hallway.)

Seymour wrote it
Uh Pat helped me
We all produced it together
with money my mom had left me after...

JESSIE

This is when your mom (passed)?

(RAINER nods...)

JESSIE

Sorry

HERMAN

(Chiming in.)

I love how like every celebrity
 It's always the short name
Mike or *Phil* or *Pat*
 Have you noticed this?

SCOTT

Hush!

LYDIA

What are you even talking about?

HERMAN

If you pay attention it's true! /

LYDIA

Anyway

SCOTT

Yeah anyway (back to Rainer)

RAINER

(Lost for a moment, with the play.)

yeah I don't know guys—This was like fifteen years ago

SCOTT

Was it any good?

RAINER

There was talk we might transfer for a while uh
 But then Pat he got this offer for this movie and

HERMAN

Pat!

SCOTT

I've seen that movie! It's not very good
 I mean it's good because *he's* in it
 and everything he does is good
 but other than that it's not really good

LYDIA

Was Seymour's play any good though?

RAINER

Uh it was really good
 It was um

It was him; he put his whole heart into it
I loved it

(She hands the play back to SCOTT.)

SCOTT

I can't wait to read this now!

LYDIA

Me too

(SEYMOUR reenters the room.)

RAINER

...It was a fun time.

SCOTT

...And then what happened?

(BLACKOUT.)

3rd MONDAY, Scene 3

During class. Everyone around the table. HERMAN's mood has gone dark; LYDIA is all business; CLEMENTINE is *totes-ridic* savoring a package of vending-machine Oreos; JESSIE is doodling.

SCOTT

(Beginning to adopt the class rhetoric.)

I'm curious
About the way that music? How it—

(CLEMENTINE audibly relishes, louder than usual.)

I'm *intrigued* about the role music plays? In the world of this—the play's world

SEYMOUR

Music is almost a character itself here
Music from the other dorm rooms? Rainer's cell phone

SCOTT

The record player?

SEYMOUR

What else

(CLEMENTINE *relishes* again, and JESSIE notices everyone is staring at her now.)

JESSIE

It seemed it was really like the pressure that
That Herman? The pressure he was putting on Rainer?

HERMAN

My character.

JESSIE

Rainer's character? To sleep with him? That was

SEYMOUR

What did we think about this?
What did we not necessarily *enjoy* but
What do we want to know more about?

(. . .)

CLEMENTINE

I found their names very lovely
Adam and Lil. Lilla Lil—I can't say it! *Tongue tied!*

(CLEMENTINE laughs.)

JESSIE

Lilith

CLEMENTINE

Thank you Martin

(*Martin?* EVERYONE is now *really* looking at CLEMENTINE.)

JESSIE

I like the names too um
Lilith and Adam. Kinda what? *Bible-ish?*

CLEMENTINE

But no they're gorgeous don't you think? Mythological even!
Back when everything rhymed and you could remember it
Characters could be donkeys they could be rocks or rivers or trees
back then when there were happy endings to love stories

(LYDIA makes a *WTF* face, which RAINER picks up on.)

RAINER

Uh *love* story?

(To LYDIA.)

Is that what you—

(SEYMOUR clears his throat, and RAINER catches herself.)

Sorry. I should shut up

SCOTT

I'm with Rainer it didn't seem to me like—

SEYMOUR

(Getting ahead of it this time.)

How many people

How many of you thought this was a love story?

Between Herman and Rainer

HERMAN

Our characters.

(CLEMENTINE raises her hand. Then HERMAN too.)

RAINER

I don't think that at all—*sorry*. / I think the play very clearly—

HERMAN

It's unclear what the play is—

SEYMOUR

(Reiterating.)

Try to remember to keep our observations to

Things we enjoyed and want to know more about.

(RAINER looks to HERMAN, who defers.)

RAINER

Well I *enjoyed*

the relationship dynamic between Adam and Lilith? I enjoyed the

that the initial denial of sex? From Lilith? That Herman continues to pressure—

HERMAN

Adam

RAINER

Adam continues to pressure Lilith until she relents and

We don't see exactly what happens but

I guess I would like to know more about the subtle suggestion of

(Looking to LYDIA.)

Or *not so subtle* suggestion
Of rape?

(HERMAN sighs deeply.)

(*Beep Beep Beep...* An alarm on SEYMOUR's phone.)

SEYMOUR

Herman Clementine
You two came away with a *different* understanding...

HERMAN

I think if Lydia wants to imply that Adam—

SEYMOUR

And we're actually not going to talk about that directly...?
I get that that's frustrating but I think illuminating to Lydia that
A strong portion of her audience—

LYDIA

That was deliberate

HERMAN

You deliberately want half of your audience to be confused of your intentions?

LYDIA

There's a lot of gray area
Confused intentions one could say
When it comes to sexual assault

HERMAN

I disagree I completely—

SEYMOUR

Herman Lydia that's time for us?
We're a little behind today because of uh (Rainer)
Our long break—

(HERMAN looks to a clock on the wall. Or his phone etc.)

HERMAN

We have five minutes I—Can I say what I found interesting and enjoyed?

SEYMOUR

I have an exercise for the class

(EVERYONE takes out their notebooks and pens with mixed enthusiasm etc. HERMAN follows reluctantly.)

Five questions is all
the point of which is to answer quickly
first thing that comes to you
Write that down

Try not to think too much. Just write

Ready?

CLEMENTINE

Ready Freddy

(...?)

SEYMOUR

First question: My play is about

Blank

Fill that in. Quickly

(EVERYONE writes except HERMAN, who outwardly simmers.)

My play is about blank

(A silence for around a quarter minute.)

(During which, like a small tickle that blossoms, CLEMENTINE begins to giggle to herself...)

SEYMOUR

My play is about *Blank*

(The next question:)

My play *Starts* when—

RAINER
Slow down!

JESSIE
Hold on hold on
We have to think
dude!

LYDIA
Ermygawd! No!

SCOTT
Waitwaitwait...

SEYMOUR

. . . *Blank.*

(EVERYONE writes again, except for HERMAN.
CLEMENTINE's tickle giggle grows . . .)

My play *starts* when—

CLEMENTINE

JESSIE

*blank**blank**blank**blank**blank**blank* (etc.)*Clem**shhh**you're so giggly shhh*

(EVERYONE except for HERMAN is now looking at
CLEMENTINE, who is giggling in her own world—)

HERMAN

I just don't think rape is a gray area
Rape is either something that *has happened*
Or it *has not*
There's no uncertainty really
So in your play I don't know if Adam you know
If he did that
Or not

SEYMOUR

(Uh...)

(From this CLEMENTINE giggles harder, her hand covering her
mouth, which is making everyone else smile like her, albeit
uncomfortably, shifting gazes from HERMAN to CLEMENTINE ,
and then back to HERMAN, unsure *what's so funny.*)

LYDIA

I was uncertain.

LYDIA

Uh
I won't ask
but I think if I did
Other women in this class
might have also come away from
past sexual experiences
feeling

Possibly uncertain?

CLEMENTINE
(To herself.)

Last chance...

Unqualified...

Dementia! Ha!

HERMAN

I guess I just
(Realizing he can't win this.)
I don't get that
Sorry

JESSIE
(To CLEMENTINE)

Hey

(Rising.)

Let's get you some water...

LYDIA

No need to be sorry
I'm actually not concerned really with (men)
people not *understanding* my play
Which is—actually kind of what
My whole play is really about?

SEYMOUR

(To JESSIE and CLEMENTINE.)

Are you guys (okay)?

LYDIA

People
Men in particular
Not understanding?
I don't think the situation needs to be clear because
I don't think it entirely is

(At the door, JESSIE gives SEYMOUR a *thumbs up*, and escorts CLEMENTINE out the exit.)

What was so funny?

(BLACKOUT.)

3rd MONDAY Scene 4

After class. JESSIE and CLEMENTINE have already left. HERMAN is placing folding chairs against the wall. RAINER and LYDIA are in the process of collapsing the two polyurethane folding tables, discussing something quietly. SEYMOUR is instructing SCOTT:

SEYMOUR

You're in a vast room. Humungous
and you look around and
all you see is *doors*
Millions of doors
More than that even
So many you could never open all of them if you had your entire life to do it

SCOTT

(With closed eyes, seeing it.)

Okay...

SEYMOUR

And somehow you know
and what you need to understand (is that)
You have implicit permission to open any of these doors Scott
As many as you want
Or as few—because sometimes *not* opening a door is also a choice

SCOTT

Do they have windows?

SEYMOUR

The (doors?)

SCOTT

So I can see into them? Where I'm going

SEYMOUR

You won't know until you open it.
Point is
Let's open some doors now okay? See where they take you
If you don't like where you go
you can always go back
Shut that door
try another one.

(SCOTT opens his eyes.)

I want pages next time alright?

SCOTT

(Backing away, trance-like, nodding, on his way out.)

Sure...

Bye Rainer. Tell Patrick—*Pat*
I said Hi

Will do. Bye Scotty

RAINER

(SCOTT exits.)

(Aware of HERMAN nearby, RAINER whispers something to LYDIA, who shakes her head. HERMAN, watching, turns away.)

RAINER

Herman
Do you want to come get a beer with us?

HERMAN
(Quietly without looking.)

No thank you

RAINER

Sure?

(SEYMOUR intercepts HERMAN on his way out.)

SEYMOUR

Over Christmas break
Try to think about—

HERMAN

I'm Jewish

SEYMOUR

Holiday break—try to think about what is it
Your two characters the guy and the girl
that they can't get in the real world?
so they turn to video games to find
And then what in the video games *can't* they find—

HERMAN

So they have to look back into the real world for?

(SEYMOUR nods and HERMAN sighs discouraged.)

So obvious...

(He exits. RAINER and LYDIA are on their way out too.)

RAINER
(To LYDIA.)

Meet you down there.

LYDIA
(Nineteen fifties reporter.)

Hope to see more of you *Seymour*.

SEYMOUR

Nice work tonight

LYDIA

Eh it can be better

(LYDIA looks once more at RAINER, then exits.)

(*And now they're alone...*)

(An awkward beat between them.)

RAINER

—Did you like my pages?

SEYMOUR

Oh they were good I thought they uh

RAINER

(Really?)

SEYMOUR

You've established this um
There's a general sense of malaise between them? The married couple
She's unhappy; she runs and then doesn't stop
and then enrolls in the scuba diving class
Meets the instructor...

RAINER

Yeah

SEYMOUR

It's good

RAINER

It's a lot of fun
Actually

SEYMOUR

That's great

RAINER

I didn't think writing would be this much fun
Maybe it's you?

(Doubtful of this, SEYMOUR starts dressing for Antarctica.)

(After a moment of thinking.)

They're falling in love I think

(He stops.)

Maria and the diving instructor?
They have to.

SEYMOUR

okay

RAINER

Well it's like I know that? But I don't want to write it yet
It scares me

SEYMOUR

That's a good place to be

(*Scared?*)

The idea being
You're uncovering something honest?
that people will relate to that authenticity

RAINER

What are you scared of?

SEYMOUR

(. . .)

I like the idea of these scuba lessons. The class? I can see them all underwater

RAINER

I didn't even (think about) Hold on that's—

(RAINER takes out her green notebook and begins to write.)

Keep going!

SEYMOUR

It's quiet underwater? You can't talk

We can see everyone moving we can see their gesticulations so

(RAINER writes and SEYMOUR watches her.)

What can each of them tell us without talking?

(*right...*)

And then what can we see them *trying* to achieve?

RAINER

trying

SEYMOUR

(Because) whether they do or don't achieve it that's not what's important

(RAINER nods and writes this down. Stops.)

RAINER

What is?

SEYMOUR

The choices they each make
And then why they make them

(RAINER writes this down. Then stops. She puts down her pen,
overshadowed by a dark thought.)

But I thought your pages were good

RAINER

I'm so sorry about Pat.

(. . .)

SEYMOUR

You must've known that he'd come up

RAINER

He *always* comes up—You have no idea
I'm out and I'm having this nice conversation with someone
And then I'll hear his name and
the whole exchange was
orchestrated
Just to bring him up

That's tough... SEYMOUR

...He's still in L.A. RAINER
(Vulnerably.)

...he's coming home for Christmas right? SEYMOUR

(RAINER tenses. SEYMOUR begins to grasp the bigger picture.)

Shit

(But she shakes out of it, coming back with a forced smile.)

God—Forget it! RAINER
How're your boys? How's Cindy?

Upstate at her parent's place SEYMOUR
I'm meeting them tomorrow...
How are your girls?

they're lucky to have you... RAINER

(. . .)

Are you gonna be— (okay) SEYMOUR

Do you want to have a drink with me? RAINER
With Lydia too? that Irish place on the corner?

(Almost, then:)

Nah you guys SEYMOUR
I have to ride the train early? and
I don't want to miss it—

I've been thinking about you RAINER

(*You have?*)

How are you?
Have you been writing?

SEYMOUR

Sometimes

RAINER

You used to send me when we first moved here
Letters and plays and
All the time—I loved them
I still have some I think

SEYMOUR

Do me a favor? Don't let me read them.

(Then trying, but it's a subject of anxiety for him.)

No it's uh
It's harder now?
Cindy she's working more than ever and
Somehow I'm always *cleaning*

(*Kids...*)

I gave something to MaryAnne?

RAINER

You did?

SEYMOUR

I don't know this *thing*—I think it's pretty good—she might like it
I don't know if it's as good as *the Philatelist* but

Are you
What what about you?
You ever audition for anything?

RAINER

Sometimes

SEYMOUR

You should ask her to put you in something

(RAINER shakes her head.)

I think you're my favorite actor of all time you know

RAINER

Shut up

SEYMOUR

I mean it—I used to watch you on stage
Those college shows?

RAINER

Oh jeez...!

SEYMOUR

I did the spotlight freshman year for your / first one

RAINER

I remember—*Ah Wilderness!*

SEYMOUR

I still (remember) like this
Image of you? from below me
Standing in light
I can still see you
Very clearly

(And through the lens of nostalgia SEYMOUR sees RAINER, and she holds his gaze.)

RAINER

...

SEYMOUR

...

(The door to the room opens, again with someone about to enter. SEYMOUR checks his watch.) (To the door:)

WE'RE LEAVING THANK YOU—SORRY

(The door shuts.)

(RAINER gives him a kiss on the cheek, and then goes to exit, but stops, turning, like the movie star she could have been.)

RAINER

Hey you never answered my question.

SEYMOUR

...?

RAINER

What scares you Seymour?

(He looks away, speechless, and she exits, the door shutting behind her. When he looks back she's already gone.)

(Her green notebook is still there.)

(SEYMOUR picks it up. He almost opens it, considers reading it.)

(He looks to the closed door—to RAINER, to the bar...)

(He exits after her with the notebook.)

(Fade to BLACKOUT.)

4th Monday, Scene 1

Two weeks later. During class. EVERYONE around the table with pages in front of them. CLEMENTINE's seat is empty. RAINER is taking notes in her green notebook. SEYMOUR is stony, quiet. HERMAN's appearance has deteriorated; unshaven, ruffled, sloppy clothing—*he's a mess.*

Dry erase board:

FICTION IS FACT DISTILLED INTO TRUTH

(...)

JESSIE

How many pages have you written?

RAINER

...uh like sixty?

SCOTT

whoa (that's a lot)

LYDIA

That's awesome Rainer

RAINER

(Thanks) I had a lot of time um
over break

(RAINER looks to SEYMOUR, who's concentrating on the center
of the table.)

SEYMOUR

...

SCOTT

Well I *loved* the kiss.

JESSIE

Me too

(RAINER smiles and writes this note down. SEYMOUR shifts
uncomfortably.)

SCOTT

But I'm unsure what it means?
Like if she'll remember it? She drank a lot at the bar

LYDIA

I think she'll remember it

JESSIE

(Indicating LYDIA.)

Even if Maria doesn't remember kissing Samuel

(Indicating SCOTT.)

Piper saw them at the bar when she came back from the bathroom
so *she* knows they kissed

SCOTT

I like Piper a lot.

RAINER

Okay

(RAINER writes all this down...)

JESSIE

Do they go home together? after this the kiss

RAINER

uh I don't know
I haven't

(RAINER looks to SEYMOUR.)

this is as much as I've written
could write

SEYMOUR

...

SCOTT

(Filling the silence.)

uh I also *love*?
that they know each other now
in this rewrite
Maria and Samuel.

LYDIA

Yeah me too
it gives some nice subtext to their relationship

JESSIE

Is that a change from last time?

RAINER

yeah

(Stopping.)

Wait did you guys didn't get that?

SCOTT

No I got it

LYDIA

Me too

JESSIE

Oh I got it I just

(He didn't get it.)

Two weeks off it's hard to remember everything

RAINER

Uh huh...

(Unsure, turning to SEYMOUR.)

what do you think?

SEYMOUR

(Equivocally.)

Well
it's new information?
Before they were strangers
Maria left her husband and always *wanted* to scuba dive
she saw the opportunity when she *met* Samuel

RAINER

(But) do you *like* that or—

SEYMOUR

Now Samuel and Maria they know each other from their past so

RAINER

(yeah...?)

SEYMOUR

What does this change about the play? This rewrite
And what does this change about their relationship?

(RAINER writes these questions down; SEYMOUR checks his watch, then cuing the class to move on to the next writer, he sets his pages in the pile in the center of the table.)

Who's next?

RAINER

(Unsatisfied.)

Wait just um
(hold on)
I've been struggling
a little bit? With like

(A moment to articulate.)

I haven't been able to figure out
I know this *thing happened*
Between them?
From before
That they didn't end up together.
When maybe they should've
and
I've been thinking that maybe
Maria's husband the Senator
And Samuel

Do they maybe know each other?
 Or *used* to know each other?
 Because if they *did* know each other then—

SEYMOUR

Do *we* need to know that information?
 From the past
 About what happened to them?

(To the class.)

Or is seeing their relationship in the present
 Without specifically knowing what happened with them in the past
 Is that enough for the story?

(EVERYONE looks around; no one's sure...)

LYDIA

What Maria needs to do

(To RAINER.)

She needs to forget about both of them
 her husband *and* Samuel
 She needs to start defining her life
 not based on the attraction and attention of men
 but for *herself*

RAINER

Whoa okay...

HERMAN

She should just ignore love then?

LYDIA

(Slightly thrown.)

Not ignore it but
 I'm not sure another man is what she needs

HERMAN

That sounds insanely fucking lonely.

LYDIA

...

(RAINER looks lost now...)

SEYMOUR

Either way
 Whether you write about what happened with them or not

we're approaching a choice that needs to be made:
Does Maria eventually return home to her husband and family?
Or does she keep running?

(Conclusively, SEYMOUR indicates it's time to move on to the
next writer, which is HERMAN.)

LYDIA

It's really good Rainer—keep going

JESSIE

Yeah

SCOTT

I'm in *love* with this play

RAINER

(Discouraged though...)

Thanks guys...

RAINER

(To SEYMOUR.)

Do *you* like the changes? That they know each other?

SEYMOUR

We have to move on
I don't want to get too far behind on time

SCOTT

I think Pat should play Samuel.

(This embarrasses everyone. Except SCOTT.)

Don't you?
I can't stop seeing Pat Shelby as Samuel now!

(SCOTT erupts with nervous laughter.)

SEYMOUR

Herman (You're up)

HERMAN

I don't have anything this week.
...Is that *okay*?

SEYMOUR

Sure

But before we—(move on)

HERMAN

I was feeling over break
I was feeling uh
Disconnected?
Not feeling it I guess anymore

SEYMOUR

...Why do you think you were feeling
Or not feeling

HERMAN

I was rewriting and I couldn't...

(It takes him a moment to articulate this loss.)

I like all the the *stuff* in it?
Like the video game stuff the avatars the weapons like the chainsaw machine gun—

JESSIE

The dynamite nunchucks were the best yo

RAINER

Oh Herman I *loved* your zombie apocalyptic end of the world play

SCOTT

Me too!

HERMAN

(Surprised.)

...*Really?*

(*YES!* From EVERYONE.)

But it was stupid

(*No!*)

I'd been writing it for so long
I hadn't written anything new in years
I realized
I *hate* it now I guess and
Like it feels like *bullshit*
like I've been bullshitting myself for (years)
thinking it's this great thing and it's not

SEYMOUR

A lot of famous stories have taken *years* to write. That's not uncommon
 And I definitely know the feeling of *everything I write is bullshit*
 Which I don't think is true in your case

(This tiny amount of validation, though it's hard to recognize
 through all of HERMAN's various defenses, moves him.)

I wouldn't give up on it

(But then HERMAN *remembers*, and puts his head in his hands.)

For me

What I felt you were writing about what I enjoyed
 what the play does a good job of illustrating
 Is the disconnect between two people?

You were writing about the loneliness and simultaneous comradery / of competition—

HERMAN

I deleted it
 I deleted the whole thing so you can just (stop)
 Every version of it

(Seeing their eyes.)

No because I knew
 I knew if I didn't if I didn't do that?
 I'd never write anything new again

(A collective inaudible shifting of disappointment, followed by a
 miserable silence.)

JESSIE

Good for you man

(To EVERYONE, unsure now.)

that's good right?

(BLACKOUT.)

4th MONDAY, Scene 2

Break.

No one in the room except HERMAN sitting at the table reading pages. LYDIA enters cautiously, stopping near the entry. She watches him.

LYDIA

You can always rewrite it. From memory
It's hard but I've done it before. It can make it better actually

(HERMAN chortles, and then reads out loud:)

HERMAN

After class Adam and Lilith:

ADAM: *Alright whatever—Do you want to get a drink?*

LILITH: *I don't think so Adam.*

LYDIA

...Are / those my (pages?)

HERMAN

Adam steps in front of Lilith

LYDIA

Those are mine /
You have no right to—

HERMAN

ADAM smiling: *I'm not going to move until you say you'll have a drink with me, Lilith*

(HERMAN shakes his head in disbelief.)

LYDIA

I can write I want
give them back/

HERMAN

I mean I'm just sorta like
Did she plan this? Was she doing research with me?

LYDIA

Sadly I don't have to do research for this
(Her hand out for the pages.)

Please

HERMAN

I didn't pressure you.

LYDIA

Um yes you did

HERMAN

You invited me up—*You invited me*
 You asked *me* to have sex with *you*
 And we did
 And then right in the middle of it
 I asked *are you okay?*
 I asked you
 Right?
 And you said you were
 You were okay
 so/
 How is that me pressuring you?

LYDIA

Look
 It was more than just that
 I know from your perspective—

HERMAN

Maybe in your mind it was more than that
 maybe up here it was

LYDIA

Oh god this is *exactly* what I'm writing about
 this gas lighting that men—

HERMAN

Except that I didn't pressure you like Adam pressures / Lilith

LYDIA

This questioning of what I remember / at discrediting my

HERMAN

Do you really think what Adam does to Lilith in your play is what I did to you?

LYDIA

Your persuading your your—

HERMAN

IS WHAT ADAM DID TO LILITH WHAT I DID TO YOU?

LYDIA

...You're sorta doing it now.

(HERMAN goes to the window, still holding LYDIA's pages.)

HERMAN

God I called you
The next day just to see
See how
I knew something was off I *knew*—

LYDIA

I was processing

HERMAN

(Processing?) You couldn't of texted me? You couldn't have said / you had to (write it)

LYDIA

Like what?
I mean do you know how hard it is to say something like this?

HERMAN

But it's easy to write?

LYDIA

I didn't know any of this until I *started* writing!

HERMAN

What does—I don't even know what that means seriously!

LYDIA

Like I said—

HERMAN

How can you not know?
I stopped; I asked if you were okay
because you looked
You looked—

LYDIA

Uncertain?

HERMAN

You looked scared.

(. . .)

LYDIA

I didn't

(Growing emotional.)

I didn't understand at first
 What the feeling was that (I was feeling)
 it wasn't until the next day you know that
 uh when and I started thinking about it
 Really thinking about it and—

HERMAN

I didn't pressure you
 please
 That's not
 If you had asked me to stop and I would've stopped

LYDIA

I know

HERMAN

I mean you believe that right?

LYDIA

I think so...

HERMAN

You *think* so?

(SCOTT enters the room.)

SCOTT

Hey...

(He sits, unwraps a sandwich...)

You guys see that new play *The Library Criminals*?
 The whole thing takes place in this abandoned library in Haiti?
 And all the furniture is made out of books—the *set* is made out of books
 Even like the costumes sort of look like—

HERMAN

Why didn't you tell me to stop?
 When I asked if you were okay

LYDIA

I don't know...

SCOTT

pretty cool I guess...

HERMAN

I mean
What did you think I'd do?

Did you think that I'd
That I *wouldn't*?

LYDIA

I don't know.
You asked me if I was sure and I
I said I was

HERMAN

why

LYDIA

You actually
You asked me again
You asked me twice

SCOTT

...Sure of what

LYDIA

But I didn't really know then
if I was sure or not anymore
So I shook my head *Yes*
because *you* seemed sure
You seemed sure it was what *you* wanted
And I just—

HERMAN

I didn't want any of this.

LYDIA

And I just wanted it
over with

HERMAN

...

(SEYMOUR and JESSIE enter talking, not taking notice, followed by RAINER, checking her phone. HERMAN exits the room. LYDIA retrieves her pages.)

SEYMOUR

I emailed her over the break but (didn't hear from her)
I thought maybe you'd

JESSIE

Uhhh no I

(Clearing his throat.)

Uh meant to?

I got busy taking care of

(His throat again.)

something

SEYMOUR

I wanted to check in and see how she's
How her writing was going? I felt like last class...

JESSIE

yeah not sure what that was about but
not my business but

(Something unspoken passes between them, and JESSIE's smile
fades away.)

SCOTT

(To LYDIA.)

Are you okay?

(Shaken, LYDIA nods to SCOTT.)

SEYMOUR

Well if you talk to her Jessie

(SEYMOUR and JESSIE sit down, joining EVERYONE else.)

Alright:

Who's next?

(Realizing.)

Where's Herman?

SCOTT

He went to the
Said his stomach something he
Said to start without him?

(LYDIA is smoothing out her pages, trying to decide...)

SEYMOUR

Lydia?

(She looks to the door where HERMAN exited...)

LYDIA

I don't have anything this week.

(BLACKOUT.)

4th MONDAY Scene 3

During.

HERMAN's chair is still empty. Rehearsal for an angry, strident *unknown* play can be heard rehearsing through the wall. Mid-discussion, having reached an impasse:

SEYMOUR

Because we're always doing something with an objective in mind
Even if we're unaware of it
Otherwise we have no reason to do anything or be anywhere

(SEYMOUR looks at JESSIE.)

JESSIE

...

(Strident rehearsal sounds, *LOUD*, off stage.)

LYDIA

(Cutting the tension.)

What play are they rehearsing? My *gawd*

(For a moment, spellbound, EVERYONE listens...)

RAINER

...

SEYMOUR

...

LYDIA

...

SCOTT

...

JESSIE

—But not always

I don't always feel
 Sometimes I feel like
 I got no *objective* or
 I don't want anything
 I'm just *There*
 enjoying the company
 or
 like all that stuff on the news constantly?

(Then, embarrassed by this thought, JESSIE clears his throat.)

Most the time *I'm Out* you know I'm
 I try to stay out of things

SEYMOUR

Okay
 But you can have a character that's
 a character who's *Out*
 Or *says* he's out
Tries to stay out of things?
 Who separates himself from
 what's going on with the world around him

JESSIE

...

SEYMOUR

But then see?
 that's *still* his objective Jessie. That separation

SCOTT

Even if he's unaware of it?

SEYMOUR

There's a reason for that
 What psychologically has made the son

(SEYMOUR points at JESSIE.)

Made *him* this way?
 Why is he trying to stay out of things? Why is he
 avoiding something

running from something
 Is he trying to protect himself?
 And if so from what?

(Again, JESSIE clears his throat.)

(An uncomfortable silence.)

LYDIA
 I really enjoy the setting of this play

SCOTT
 Me too!

LYDIA
 The brownstone and
 How parts of the house are dilapidated and

RAINER
 It felt symbolic of their relationship
 The father and son

SCOTT
 Like there were things they could talk about
 And then things that

RAINER
 There was a lot of unspoken stuff
 between them
 I'm interested in that
 How do you talk about things people don't talk about?

LYDIA
 Or are even aware of

(SEYMOUR has an idea.)

SEYMOUR
 The dad has something he wants to say to Jude
 and he's not saying it.
 There's something that's not being said
 and I think you know what it is

JESSIE
 I do?

(SEYMOUR nods. JESSIE looks at CLEMENTINE's empty seat.)

Uh if you know what it is
could you please tell me because

SEYMOUR

...

JESSIE

No I have like
No idea man
Seriously
anything about him
what he wants or
(Nothing)

SEYMOUR

(Not convinced.)

Well why don't you ask him?

JESSIE

Ask him?

SEYMOUR

Sit Jude down and have him ask

(*How?*)

Dad
What do you want?

(JESSIE nods, clears his throat.)

Dad
Is there something you want to say to me?

(JESSIE clears his throat again.)

SEYMOUR

Dad
Please don't just sit there
Please
Talk to me
Dad—

RAINER

Seymour—

JESSIE

Alright—I *gotch* you
(Stop)

I got it

(A long uncomfortable silence as everyone watches as JESSIE and SEYMOUR stare at one another—a showdown.)

SEYMOUR

...

JESSIE

...

RAINER

I think what Seymour's trying to say—

JESSIE

And then he tells Jude
He tells him to go *fuck himself*
Get outta here
Then what?
Just because I ask the old man don't mean he'll tell me anything

SEYMOUR

then you would have an objective
Jude wants to know what his dad wants—and asks him
and then his dad wants him to get out of there

Leave me alone
Fuck off

Then you have conflict opposing desires
Two people trying to get what they want

Does that...?

(JESSIE's disengaged now; SEYMOUR knows he's pushed him too far.)

(Another harsh silence.)

SCOTT

(To JESSIE.)

I liked the orange
He said his fingers hurt?
I was wondering what that meant

(But JESSIE's not hearing it. He's gone, *out.*)

(BLACKOUT.)

4th MONDAY, Scene 4

After. SEYMOUR is breaking down the room when RAINER enters drying her hands from the bathroom. There's one last table to fold. SEYMOUR struggles with it; RAINER watches.

RAINER

don't forget the—

SEYMOUR

It's stuck; I remember the lock

(SEYMOUR struggles.)

shit...!

(SEYMOUR pauses, frustrated.)

RAINER

You didn't like my rewrites.
You think I'm screwing it up
Which is what it feels like so

SEYMOUR

One no-show and three writers without pages
I think I'm the one *screwing it up*

(RAINER moves to him, and in an intimate gesture, puts her hands on his shoulders. He absorbs it for a moment, then brushes it off.)

SEYMOUR

(Something bothering him from class.)

uh
Please don't interrupt me?
You don't need to *quell* or *cushion*
something you think is
or that I'm doing *wrong*?
This is my class Rainer

RAINER

(Thrown, then catching up.)

With *Jessie*?

You were being way *way* harsh on him/
And I wasn't the only one who noticed

SEYMOUR

I'm the teacher—I don't care what everyone thinks

RAINER

And then with me too you were like (*blah!*)

SEYMOUR

I know what's useful
what will help them—

RAINER

Like you were helping me?

SEYMOUR

...

RAINER

(Pleading.)

I'm I'm stuck okay?
After you left
I wrote *every* day all break
Like it just *came* out of me like

but then now I'm
(*Stuck*)

Like I'm trying to put together this puzzle with missing pieces and
What do you really think?

SEYMOUR

I don't know what I think

RAINER

Then then tell me what's wrong with—

SEYMOUR

It's not right or wrong it's

RAINER

What?

SEYMOUR

(Genuinely.)

I don't know how you to give you notes
on what you've written—okay?

RAINER

...

SEYMOUR

I'm sorry I just
I don't know how to help you Rainer

(RAINER takes this in, then disappointed, begins to exit.)

RAINER

You're the one who kissed me.

(She's gone. SEYMOUR looks at the table that won't fold.)

(BLACKOUT.)

5th MONDAY Scene 1

During. EVERYONE is at the table, including CLEMENTINE; this time JESSIE's seat is empty. HERMAN is passing pages around the table.

On the dry-erase board: *LOVE ART IN YOURSELF, NOT YOURSELF IN ART*

SCOTT

(To CLEMENTINE.)

It's like six or seven months?
February to August

CLEMENTINE

Wonder-ful!

HERMAN

Rainer will you read Melissa?
Scott will you read Leslie Jr.?

SCOTT

I'll be reading scripts assisting the
dramaturg—things like that

RAINER

Who's Melissa?

They pay me forty bucks a day which is (not
great)
but I'll be able to keep my waiter job so
(yay!)

HERMAN

...She's a mom?

RAINER

I got that...

(RAINER scans through the first couple pages in preparation.)

CLEMENTINE

It's one of my favorite theaters in the / whole city

HERMAN

Clementine will you

SCOTT

Me too! They're very accepting there

HERMAN

(To CLEMENTINE.)

Um will you read

(Not ecstatic about his casting options.)

Dale? I guess—Or actually

Scott you read Dale? Clementine will you read Leslie Jr?

He's the little boy

CLEMENTINE

I'd love to

HERMAN

...And Seymour?

Will you read stage directions?

SEYMOUR

Sure but

have Lydia read them so I can concentrate on your notes

LYDIA

No problem

(Hesitantly HERMAN gives LYDIA her pages.)

SEYMOUR

Okay where in the play does this take place and anything we should know?

HERMAN

Nothing to know; this is the beginning

It's a new play

(HERMAN takes a deep breath. SEYMOUR sets an alarm on his phone. LYDIA gets visual confirmation:)

LYDIA

Act one scene one

The living room kitchen combo of a two bedroom, double-wide trailer home
in Allentown Pennsylvania

(BLACKOUT.)

5th MONDAY Scene 2

Break. LYDIA and SEYMOUR are in the room. SCOTT is stretching his back, yoga poses.

SEYMOUR

You don't want to go into debt

LYDIA

I owe a *ton* from undergrad so (yeah)

SCOTT

It'll be etched on my tombstone:

Here Lies Scott
He Still Owes A Quarter Million
For A Useless B.A. In Musical Theater

(SCOTT exits to the hallways with an empty Nalgene.)

SEYMOUR

Well it's not a problem
I can have it for you by—

LYDIA

Do you think I'm good enough?

SEYMOUR

For the program?

LYDIA

Or just *at all*?
I should probably ask first if you're gonna write one of my letters
(Before he can answer.)

I was so anti-grad school when I moved here
 All I wanted to do was *write*
 live a garret life; put up my own productions
 Now I'm almost too old for grad school

SEYMOUR

You're not too old
 I think they'd be lucky to have you Lydia

LYDIA

(Growing smaller...)

I got my email rejection from Glacial National Park today...
 I didn't even make it to semi-finalist

SEYMOUR

That doesn't / (mean anything)

LYDIA

I know—I mean who cares I keep picturing some like
 Straight middle-aged cis-gendered white male
 getting assigned my play to read—Like *no wonder*
 It's all *politics*

SEYMOUR

You can never really tell

LYDIA

...Did you ever have one (accepted?)

SEYMOUR

At Glacial National? *No* but I came close once

LYDIA

Did you apply this year?

SEYMOUR

I mostly stopped applying to things like that

LYDIA

Like what?

SEYMOUR

I don't know—I realized that stuff was getting in the way of
 The pressure of it?
 The writing the actual act of *doing* it was always...

When I was a kid I was
 Inside a lot?
 So the writing saved me I think

LYDIA

What do you do with them? the plays you write

SEYMOUR

A locked safe under the bed?

LYDIA

Really?!

SEYMOUR

No uh

(But he's not entirely kidding.)

I guess I'm sort of taking a break?
 I still write but
 I don't apply for much these days (anymore)

LYDIA

But they're *plays*—They should be heard
 They *need* other people
 It's like the line in your play

SEYMOUR

You read it?

LYDIA

The kid Reginald
 says about the wind chimes
 He *needs* them
 They bear *witness* to his existence

(RAINER enters the room and grabs her phone.)

RAINER

Do I have time?

(SEYMOUR nods. RAINER exits. SEYMOUR watches her go...
 When he looks back, LYDIA is looking at him. Revealed, he
 looks away.)

SEYMOUR

Well we don't always get what we want
 Even when we work hard for it

(HERMAN enters with a self-loathing snack and sits.)

Monday alright for the letter?

(LYDIA nods and SEYMOUR exits. LYDIA looks to HERMAN who seems to shrivel under her gaze.)

LYDIA

...get your rejection yet?

HERMAN

You'll have to be more specific

(Even LYDIA smiles at this.)

LYDIA

Glacial National?

HERMAN

No

(Occurring to him mid-bite.)

You?

(LYDIA nods.)

(Genuinely.)

Sorry

LYDIA

I don't even know anymore...

Do you ever feel like that? Like

How can I be so wrong? About (my writing)

What I *think* is good?

What's worse than that?

(HERMAN offers her half his self-loathing snack. She takes it. Has a bite. Gives it back.)

HERMAN

I'm not trying to convince you of anything or

Or that—

like it doesn't change anything—I *know* that

LYDIA

'kay...

HERMAN

I was thinking about it and
 Even if regardless of everything
 Either way
 Whether I did or didn't
 um
 um

(A deep breath.)

mean to pressure you?

I'm sorry that I did.
 That to you.
 I made you feel like that.
 (I'm sorry)

LYDIA

I appreciate that Herman
 ...But I'm not sure if that's good enough

(They sit there with that for a moment.)

I liked your pages

HERMAN

(thanks...)

(BLACKOUT.)

5th MONDAY, Scene 3

During. EVERYONE is at the table writing in silence; JESSIE's seat is still empty.

(SEYMOUR checks out the scene:)

(CLEMENTINE is writing at a slow, delicate pace, stopping occasionally to rub the soreness out of her hands.)

(SCOTT is hunched over, as if attempting to contain a deep secret.)

(HERMAN is chewing gum, breezing along...)

(LYDIA is typing on a laptop, but that's okay, whatever floats your boat...)

(And when SEYMOUR gets to RAINER, sensing, she stops and looks up at him. They hold the look. Until:)

SCOTT

Oh—!

(Sitting up, finding something in his writing.)

Oh...

(EVERYONE looks at SCOTT, and they *get it*. Especially SEYMOUR. SCOTT grins to himself and starts writing.)

(BLACKOUT.)

5th MONDAY Scene 4.

After class. Putting the finishing touches on the space breakdown.

SEYMOUR

you can invite friends family
we'll fit as many as we can in here
I'll supply pizza and sodas—bring beer if you can control yourself
How's that sound?

(Some general not-too-crazy enthusiastic responses, then:)

RAINER

Pat wants to come.

(EVERYONE perks up—*what?*)

He wanted me—if his shooting schedule works out—it might not
But he wanted me to ask to make sure he doesn't make anyone feel (uncomfortable)

(To SEYMOUR.)

Is that okay...?

SEYMOUR

...

RAINER

Does anyone mind if—

LYDIA

/Of course not!

/OH MY GOD—*Yes!*

SCOTT

/Whateves

HERMAN

/I don't mind

CLEMENTINE

RAINER
 (To SEYMOUR.)
 ...It's okay? If Pat comes to the presentations?
 (...What else can he say?)

SEYMOUR
 okay

SCOTT
Ohmygod—I have to bring something in now for sure!

CLEMENTINE
Jessie
 (JESSIE is standing in the doorway, sweating, holding his skateboard, which is in two pieces, split in half. One of his elbows is skinned, along with other minor injuries.)

JESSIE
 Uh hi everyone sorry I missed—

LYDIA
 Are you okay?

JESSIE
 Yeah no I'm
 my board got out from under me
 got hit by a cab

SCOTT
 You got hit by a cab?!

JESSIE
 My board got hit; I'm fine

SCOTT

You're bleeding your / elbow

(JESSIE's singularly focused on CLEMENTINE, which registers.)

JESSIE

Clem can I talk
Can we

CLEMENTINE

(Come here) I have band-aids

SEYMOUR

I'll get some paper towels

RAINER

I'll help you

(SEYMOUR and RAINER exits.)

HERMAN

You okay dude?

CLEMENTINE

Tell me what happened.

(LYDIA nudges HERMAN—he gets the picture, and they, along with SCOTT exit.)

JESSIE

I don't know I uh
I got home and I was gonna
I was getting ready to come here and
He's doing *bad*
He's doing really really bad

(CLEMENTINE puts a band-aid on JESSIE's elbow.)

He's just
He's talking crazy
Like nothing he's (saying) is making sense
I've been trying to get him to eat for like three days
he's eating nothing he won't listen to me
So I got out
I had to go out—I had to get out of there
Every time I try to get him to do anything

HE WON'T DO ANYTHING

He wouldn't allow hospice to even
 —and his medication is *EVERYWHERE*
 I come home and I call for him
 I call his name
 he doesn't answer me
 Whatever he's ignoring
 I take a shower I go upstairs I'm about to come here

Then I see his door
It's shut
 His door is never shut
 In like my entire life his door has never...

I open it and
 He's on the ground—he's
 He's I can't get him back in bed—I can't um
 Will you uh will you—

CLEMENTINE

Let's go

(They both rise and make it halfway to the door, before JESSIE's overtaken...)

JESSIE

Just um (give me a second)
 oh fuckoh fuckoh fuckoh fuck...

(CLEMENTINE hugs him.)

(SEYMOUR and RAINER enter during this.)

RAINER

But you said—!

(They stop cold, seeing JESSIE.)

CLEMENTINE

Okay (Let's go.)

(JESSIE and CLEMENTINE leave. SEYMOUR picks up the broken pieces of JESSIE's skateboard.)

RAINER

You said it was okay.

SEYMOUR

You put me on the spot.

RAINER

He's my husband I want him there. I deserve that as much as anyone

SEYMOUR

You only want him there Rainer
so he'll hear your play
and hear all the things you can't say to him.

RAINER

(Stunned.)

I can't believe you're like
You're protecting him

SEYMOUR

No I'm thinking about what's appropriate for—

RAINER

Fifteen years later you're still choosing his friendship over mine.

(This is the first mention of this, something mutually known, but never spoken of between them. It hangs around for a few breaths.)

SEYMOUR

I'm not choosing any friendship
I'm actually
I'm thinking of you?

RAINER

you know he's in L.A. right now
with someone else?

SEYMOUR

. . . are you

RAINER

Pretty sure

(Saying this somehow confirms it for her.)

fuck

(Suddenly misplaced, she sits in the middle of the room.)

you don't wanna (deal with this)
 you can (go) that's okay

SEYMOUR

No I'll stay

(He sits with her.)

I'm sorry

(They listen to the play being rehearsed through the walls.)

(. . .they think)

(. . .they remember)

We used to all hang out here remember? After the show
 because it was bigger than our apartment
 Because this space was *ours*...

RAINER

Setting: This room. Fifteen years ago

SEYMOUR

Except back then
 it was actually a theater

RAINER

It was your play.

(They look around the space...)

SEYMOUR

Half of it.

(Then, SEYMOUR notices.)

This was Reginald's bathroom
 Toilet was here? Right?

(RAINER stands and takes out a chair and places it for the toilet.
 SEYMOUR laughs.)

Remember Pat wanted to poop in it? *For real* poop in it?

I had to talk him out of it

RAINER

What else?

SEYMOUR

(Looking.)

The couch. I remember the couch

(RAINER takes three folding chairs and makes a couch. SEYMOUR looks: *it's not quite right*. RAINER adjusts the folding chair couch.)

Better.

That means

That way was the risers and audience

(RAINER unfolds a few chairs for the audience.)

And the porch
with the swing and the wind chimes
is in the next room. Cut in half by this wall—

RAINER

And where were you?
When you told him about us

(Having walked into this, SEYMOUR needs a moment.)

SEYMOUR

I was in the audience

(RAINER motions and SEYMOUR rises and sits in the “audience.”)

RAINER

Where was Pat?

SEYMOUR

the couch

(RAINER sits on the folding chair couch.)

He was reading the paper.

(*Pat reads the newspaper?*)

The *review*

(A big piece of the puzzle for her.)

The crazy part?
 I don't remember like
 I remember this stuff—the *blocking* the
 I was here; Pat was there
 but I don't remember like
 My *objective*?
 Why I told him then?
 there wasn't some *inciting incident* or

He was reading the review out loud and
 then I told him

(A long pause as RAINER considers this. She takes out her phone, finds something, she reads. SEYMOUR recognizes it.)

RAINER

You know this kid. He was the one who grew up on the fringe of the neighborhood, the timid boy with downcast eyes. Born at the edge of town, he was not the first friend you picked to play with.

(SEYMOUR looks away.)

In Seymour William's new play, "*Crowded Lives*," which opened last night at the Metal Cross Theater, the neighborhood pariah has come over to play. On the distorted posture of the mopey Reginald, a high school dropout who collects vintage wind chimes, Mr. Williams hangs his tale of drifting youth—

SEYMOUR

Blah blah; get to the good stuff

(RAINER scrolls, finds it.)

RAINER

...humorous and nimbly written, however, the scene stretches believability, pushing the play into mawkish sentimentality.

(SEYMOUR, *There we go.*)

Mr. Seymour strains to impose the standard tropes of drama on his play, which fundamentally, at its heart, wants to be a character study.

(SEYMOUR nods in agreement...)

SEYMOUR

Let's hear about Pat

RAINER

...It's Mr. Shelby's reticent Reginald who's most likely to be remembered. This gifted young actor, making his New York introduction, who despite dark good looks, brings a touching sense of physical gawkiness to Reginald's gesticulations, particularly his scenes with Rainer Wilcox—*your only mention*— who plays the sublimated butcher's daughter that rouses Reginald to the potential of life beyond the river bank.

Mr. Shelby's Reginald is tortured, and wounded by a dim future, but unlike the rest of the cast and production, he seems to live in the constant present, which means he has / the brightest future of all.

SEYMOUR

The brightest future of all

(. . .)

RAINER

How did you tell him?

SEYMOUR

I said
Pat I'm in love with Rainer

(This is the first time RAINER has heard this.)

RAINER

...did you mean it?

SEYMOUR

(yeah)

RAINER

say it again

(He's hesitant, but he complies, saying it again to her, and again to Pat.)

SEYMOUR

Pat I'm in love with Rainer

I think I

I must have
 (thought)
 That if I tell him?
 then you'd break up
 and then
 you'd be with me

But instead
 he asked you to marry him

RAINER

Why didn't you say something to me?

SEYMOUR

...why did you say Yes to him?

(There's a sad deflating stillness between them.)

(After a moment, the door to the room opens slightly—startling them both—)

SEYMOUR

(To the door.)

WE STILL HAVE TEN GODDAM MINUTES!

(The door to the room shuts.)

(To RAINER.)

Rainer if Pat comes to these presentations—

RAINER

If he doesn't come I'm divorcing him.

(She looks to SEYMOUR. He looks terrified.)

*ARGH! SAY SOMETHING!
 SAY ANYTHING!
 WHAT ARE YOU SO SCARED OF?!*

SEYMOUR

THIS

I'm scared of THIS

That you *think* you can love me more than him

When I know that's not true

It wasn't back then/

it's still not

RAINER

How do you know?
How can you know what I feel?

SEYMOUR

(Referencing the review.)

Because *I'm not the first friend you pick to play with?*
Because when Pat gets drunk / at your mom's funeral

RAINER

You thought you knew back then/
What I felt

SEYMOUR

Or when Pat doesn't come home for Christmas (you turn to me)

RAINER

And you were wrong!
We were both wrong
FOR FIFTEEN YEARS!

SEYMOUR

Don't you understand you're doing all of this *because* of him?

RAINER

/No that's—

SEYMOUR

That Maria's only taking lessons from Samuel *because* of her husband?
It's not about *me*; it never was

RAINER

No listen okay—
Cindy called me. Three months ago
She asked me is there anything Pat / could do for you?

SEYMOUR

Whoa whoa wait—

RAINER

A writing gig TV assisting somebody—I don't know
She didn't know either really
Just something

SEYMOUR

Pat got me this job?
MaryAnne calls me out of the blue because Pat—

RAINER

No
I called MaryAnne.

SEYMOUR

...

RAINER

First it was
What was I doing? How are the kids?
Then: *Why wasn't I acting? I should come audition*
I told her I don't like anything out there
Nothing by mothers written by—nothing I could relate to
Which was a lie—I was scared; it's been so long
But then she says
Why don't you write a play?
Why don't you write something you relate to and I'll put that up
And then you can be in it and

SEYMOUR

She commissioned you?

RAINER

No no she's not—I'm not getting *paid* or anything/

SEYMOUR

And you used my class me/
To facilitate that process?

RAINER

No that's what I'm
I'm trying to tell you it's not about Pat
it never was
It was always about you
Trying to help
you

SEYMOUR

(Blown away.)

You know it's not any good right?
Your play?
You know that right?
Thinly-veiled

Very on-the-nose
Completely fucking obvious

RAINER

...

(They stand there both feeling gross. SEYMOUR grabs his jacket, his stuff etc.)

SEYMOUR

These are our lives; we can't rewrite them.

(The door bursts open! Moving around RAINER and SEYMOUR, JESSIE, CLEMENTINE, HERMAN and LYDIA enter, and set the space up for the Presentations. Seven music stands are lined up, along with seven folding chairs behind each stand.)

(Beyond the room, play rehearsals resume simultaneously with the sounds of Savate martial art practice, while single-page programs are handed out to “the audience” by HERMAN and CLEMENTINE.)

(Eventually, EVERYONE takes a place behind a music stand and reads from printed pages set before them. When necessary they lower their music stands and sit—this is a *play reading*.)

(SEYMOUR switches off half the florescent ceiling lights creating a lit Staged Reading Area, contrasted by a dimmed section for an “audience.” This once private space for the first time has now become public. The “audience”, theoretically, is made up of the friends and family members of our writers. Throughout the Presentations, from behind their music stands, our writers may make eye contact, wave to an acquaintance, and generally respond to being the focus of an audience’s attention. Their dialogue with one another during this time is not the only dialogue happening; in-between each presentation there are fluid moments of unscripted conversation occurring. *Talking among themselves*.)

(Before moving behind his own music stand, on the dry-erase board, akin to the text written in the single-page programs, SEYMOUR writes:)

PRESENTATIONS

By
 CLEMENTINE

JESSIE
HERMAN
LYDIA
SCOTT
RAINER

CLEMENTINE

(Reading from her pages.)

As the lights dim
Lilith stops strumming her guitar
Only her voice pervades through the microphone
Slowly swallowed by the crowd's mounting palaver.

(Sitting in her chair, from behind her music stand, LYDIA winces
and writes down a note in her notebook.)

LYDIA

(palaver?)

CLEMENTINE

Epilogue: *Bar Fight At Rockwood Music Hall [Almost]*
Outside Adam waits for Lilith as she pushes through the crowd with her steel guitar

HERMAN

Lilith

RAINER

There you are. You came

HERMAN

Yeah
You invited me?

RAINER

Yeah I know that Adam

HERMAN

It was a mad house in there.

RAINER

The guy after me he's like a big deal / or something

HERMAN

I almost got into a fight.

What? RAINER

Nothing just people wouldn't shut the fuck up when you were playing
I didn't though. HERMAN

That's good! RAINER

They look at one another. CLEMENTINE

You were great /
Better than me HERMAN

Ah no you know...
Thanks RAINER

Are you going back in or? RAINER

Yeah no I'm actually
I'm trying not to
to drink um
anymore? /
So HERMAN

Oh RAINER

Pause. CLEMENTINE

I just wanted to come and say
Say thanks for sending
For *rescuing* those lyrics I wrote you? HERMAN

they're beautiful RAINER

HERMAN

I shouldn't of—It's was *dumb* I threw them away
Or deleted them or whatever

RAINER

You do know how email works right?
Just because you delete something doesn't mean it's gone forever

(Unnoticed, ignored on first glance, thought to be a late audience member, SCOTT enters the room wearing a beautiful dress.)

HERMAN

Yeah well
I should get going.

RAINER

Congratulations by the way
On the music fellowship?

HERMAN

Oh thanks but
I haven't gotten it yet—I'm only a semi-finalist
There's like four hundred of us

CLEMENTINE

Pause

LYDIA

You don't have to read—

HERMAN

I'll see you later

CLEMENTINE

Lilith nods
and Adam walks off
She stands there for a moment
Looking onward...

Then slowly
She's swallowed
by a crowd of pedestrians
and everything fades
The club and the city
The music the cabs the sidewalk
Nothing left
to the intangible darkness.

End of play

LYDIA

Sorta

(A blast of applause from the audience; everyone claps. Our writers *talk amongst themselves*. LYDIA writes down some more notes. Sensing, she stops and looks at HERMAN. SEYMOUR addresses the “audience.”)

SEYMOUR

OKAY
THANK YOU LYDIA
AND WE’VE GOT ONE MORE TO GO
SO TAKE A QUICK MOMENT
GRAB A SLICE OF PIZZA
OR A SODA—

SCOTT

Hi Rainer!

SEYMOUR

AND WE’LL BE RIGHT BACK

(SCOTT moves towards RAINER, taking his place behind a music stand. Everyone greets him emphatically.)

SCOTT

Hi thanks *Thank you*
I’m sorry I’m late

(Leaning in, to RAINER.)

...is Pat here?

RAINER

(Shaking her head.)

His flight should have landed by now
But I haven’t heard from him

SCOTT

(Disappointed.)

Oh

RAINER

I’m sorry Scotty

SCOTT

Don't be! For what?

RAINER

You look amazing

SCOTT

You look amazing! *Smile!*

(RAINER does her best to smile as everyone continues to mingle, grabbing quick drinks or slices of pizza, sharing thoughts with LYDIA about her pages etc, until after a minute or two passes:)

SEYMOUR

Rainer? (It's time)

RAINER

Uh can we wait a few more minutes?
Pat was going to read for me.

SEYMOUR

(Checking the time.)

Can maybe *Jessie* read?
Instead of Pat?
We can't wait any longer

JESSIE

No problem

RAINER

okay...

(EVERYONE looks to RAINER as she gets her pages ready.)

SCOTT

—I'll go.

I have a song
I wrote it for this class—during this class
Is that okay?

SEYMOUR

Sure. Go right ahead
I didn't think you had anything

SCOTT

I do

(SCOTT moves to the upright piano and sits, bracing himself.)

CLEMENTINE

EXCUSE ME
EXCUSE ME EVERYONE?
PARDON ME SCOTT
SORRY FOR THE INTERRUPTION

BUT AT EXACTLY THIS TIME
NEXT MONDAY?
RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM

JESSIE AND I

WE'RE DOING A READING
OF A VERY IMPORANT PLAY
THAT JESSIE'S FATHER WROTE
CLARENCE GODFRY
ABOUT FORTY YEARS AGO

CLARENCE WAS AN AWARD WINNING PLAYWRIGHT
IN THE LATE SIXTIES AND EARLY SEVETIES
WHO RECENTLY PASSED FROM LIVER CANCER

I HADN'T REALIZED WHEN I FIRST MET JESSIE
THAT I HAD SEEN ONE OF HIS FATHER PLAYS

A PLACE TO BE NOBODY

IN THE WEST VILLAGE
NEARLY FORTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

WE WILL BE READING *A PLACE TO BE NOBODY*
IN IT'S ENTIRITY
NEXT MONDAY
RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM
AND YOU ARE ALL INVITED
AND WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE
OR HERE

(The audience claps and cheers...)

JESSIE

WE WILL ALSO BE READING...!
THE FOLLOWING MONDAY AFTER THAT UM
CLEMENTINE'S PLAY

WHICH YOU HEARD A LITTLE BIT OF TONIGHT
WHICH SHE HASN'T NAMED YET

CLEMENTINE

—Or finished

JESSIE

IT'S UNTITLED
BUT IT'S REALLY REALLY GREAT AND
COOL AND
ALL ABOUT TIME TRAVEL AND SPACE AND
STARDUST AND

CLEMENTINE

PREDESTINATION

JESSIE

WE'RE STARTING A THEATRE COMPANY TOO
WE'LL BE DOING THESE READINGS
EVERY OTHER MONDAY AT EIGHT P.M.
AND EVERYONE'S INVITED TO COME OR JOIN
OR SUBMIT OR WHATEVER
SO
THANKS

(More clapping and cheering from the audience.)

(To SCOTT.)

Go ahead Scott

SCOTT

(At the piano.)

HI

MY NAME'S SCOTT
I'M WRITING A MUSICAL
THE WHOLE THING TAKES PLACE
IN A HALLWAY
IN A HIGH-RISE BUILDING

CHARACTERS COME IN
AND OUT OF THE APARTMENTS
AND RIGHT NOW
TWO OF OUR CHARACTERS
HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER
IN FRONT OF A DOOR
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HALLWAY

(Cheers from the audience as SCOTT plays the first notes of
Scott's Theme.)

SCOTT

AND CHARACTER ONE SAYS:

That doesn't have to be you anymore.

AND THE PIANO BEGINS:

You can be anyone you want to be

In here

(And SCOTT begins to sing...)

*Look at me closely, who's face do you see
Gaze now closer, recognize these eyes
Do you see yourself? Familiar like me
Life was a dream that is becoming true*

*Room Sixteen Twenty, is there when you need it
Through an unlocked door, inside a bare room
Room Sixteen Twenty, is where you can be me
And I can be you, in Sixteen Twenty*

THEN CHARACTER TWO SINGS:

*You look familiar, no doubt we have met
Somewhere in the past, behind a closed door
You look different, but we're not strangers
I've dreamed of us before we were Us*

*Room Sixteen Twenty, is there when I need it
Through an unlocked door, inside a bare room
Room Sixteen Twenty, is where I can be you
And you can be me, in Sixteen Twenty*

BACK TO CHARACTER ONE:

*I want us to feel like this forever
Never forget me; I'll remember you*

CHARACTER TWO:

*What's this feeling? Strange and enlightening
A gentle eclipse is overcoming me*

THEN BOTH CHARACTERS TOGETHER:

Room Sixteen Twenty
(Room Sixteen Twenty)
There when I need it
(There when you need it)
Room Sixteen Twenty
(Room Sixteen Twenty)
Showed me to you
(You are me)
Teach me how to be
The hope that's inside you
(The hope that's inside me)
Where you can be me
(Where I can be you)
And I can be you
(And you can be me)

Room Sixteen Twenty is me
(Room Sixteen Twenty is you)

...

THAT'S IT

(Everyone cheers! Except for RAINER. Her eyes locked on the closed door, trying to will Pat's arrival.)

RAINER

(Come on Pat...)

SEYMOUR

... ALRIGHT!
 THANK YOU SCOTT

(Meaning it, perhaps moved.)

THAT WAS
GREAT

SCOTT

THANK YOU

SEYMOUR

ONLY ONE LEFT NOW TO GO

(SEYMOUR looks nervously to RAINER. LYDIA and JESSIE stand and raise their music stands, in anticipation of RAINER's pages. RAINER is still sitting, staring at the closed door.)

LYDIA
 ...Rainer? RAINER
(Come on Pat...)

JESSIE
 ...Uh hey girl (Rainer?)
(Come on Pat...)

(LYDIA and JESSIE look at one another:
Now what? Then to SEYMOUR: What do we do?)
(Come on Pat...)

(SEYMOUR approaches RAINER.)

SEYMOUR
 Rainer?

(RAINER looks from the door to SEYMOUR. *Pat's not coming.*)

RAINER
 okay...

(RAINER stands and raises her music stand; SEYMOUR moves behind his. She adjusts her pages. . . Then looks out at the "audience.")

RAINER
 HI
 . . .

THIS IS MY PLAY
 THIS IS
 THIS IS IT.

(LYDIA looks to SEYMOUR, who nods *Go Ahead*. LYDIA faces her pages. She reads:)

LYDIA
 Act two scene eight
 The pool
 Bathed in shades of blue
 Samuel stands at the edge of the dark pool

Hosing off his scuba diving gear
 The sound of an expensive car pulling up outside
 Highbeams stretch out across the surface of the water
 Maria approaches wearing her untied
 worn-out
 running shoes

JESSIE

Is that him?

RAINER

I have to go back. You understand that. I can't miss my mother's funeral

JESSIE

So what was all this then?
 Just some vacation some Spring Break
 rich housewives go on when they're feeling disillusioned?

LYDIA

The expensive car *honks*

(. . .)

(RAINER freezes. Then crumbles, overtaken...)

RAINER

I'm sorry—

(She abruptly exits through the door, SEYMOUR trailing closely after her.)

(Just outside the door, out of sight, they can barely be heard, partially whispering to one another. . .)

RAINER

(Off.)

I can't I can't/
 I'm sorry I

What am I gonna do?
 What can I

He didn't come...

I didn't think he'd
 I can't believe
 What am I supposed to

SEYMOUR

(Off.)

shh it's okay it's
 shhh it's

I'm
 I don't know I

I know
 I know

I'm sorry

I don't know

Tell me what (I should do) (Off.) RAINER

I don't (know)
I'm here okay? I'm
I'm here though (Off.) SEYMOUR

what should I/
tell me what (Off.) RAINER

I don't uh
You should come back (Off.) SEYMOUR

(come back?) (Off.) RAINER

you should
come back and
and read (Off.) SEYMOUR

I can't Pat was (supposed to read) (Off.) RAINER

It doesn't matter
it doesn't—Rainer
You wrote a play
You should hear it
Come back (Off.) SEYMOUR

(SEYMOUR reenters first, followed by a bleary-eyed, embarrassed RAINER. He approaches JESSIE.)

Mind if we switch? (To JESSIE.) SEYMOUR

JESSIE

all you Teach

(JESSIE moves to SEYMOUR's music stand, and SEYMOUR picks up Samuel's pages that were meant for Pat. He motions for RAINER to stand next to him.)

SEYMOUR

Uh HEY

LET'S UH

LET'S TAKE THIS BACK OKAY?

(To RAINER, then to LYDIA)

Let's go back to um

uh

Maria approaches wearing her untied worn-out running shoes?

(To the "audience.")

FOR SOME CONTEXT uh

MARIA IS A STAY-AT-HOME MOTHER

WHO ONE DAY GOES RUNNING

AND THEN DOESN'T STOP

(And uh)

LYDIA

SHE RUNS AWAY FROM HER FAMILY

AWAY FROM HER OLD LIFE

IN SEARCH OF A NEW ONE

(SEYMOUR: *Right.*)

JESSIE

SHE RUNS FAR UH

ALL THE WAY OUT OF STATE

SHE FINDS AN OLD FRIEND OF HERS

A TEACHER

CLEMENTINE

YES HE'S A SCUBA DIVING TEACHER

SCOTT

AND THERE'S A CLASS OF STUDENTS TOO

HERMAN

SHE'S ON A JOURNEY

SEYMOUR

YES

AND

(To RAINER.)

THIS IS THE END? (of that journey)

(She nods.)

THIS IS THE END.

(SEYMOUR signals LYDIA.)

LYDIA

Oh-kay

(Back on the page again.)

Maria approaches
wearing her untied
worn-out
running shoes

SEYMOUR

Is that him?

(RAINER pauses, looking at SEYMOUR.)

RAINER

(Finally, drawn, shakily.)

I have to go back. You understand that. I can't miss my mother's funeral

SEYMOUR

So what was all this then? Just some vacation
some Spring Break
rich housewives go on when they're
feeling disillusioned?

LYDIA

The expensive car honks

RAINER

Don't say that. You know that's not what this was

SEYMOUR

(Building some fire...)

Then then you tell me what this
What it was
Because I don't know either

(. . .)

RAINER

We have *children*
 We have to *think*
 I can't just—

SEYMOUR

He doesn't love you.

(SEYMOUR shrugs, RAINER shudders at this truth she's written.)

And you know that
 And I'm so sorry
 Because you deserve to be loved

(. . .)

LYDIA

The expensive car honks *again*

SEYMOUR

It that what you're choosing? An unloved life to go back to?

RAINER

...What can I do?
 I don't have a choice
 I'm doing the only thing I can—

SEYMOUR

There's always a choice. You're just

You're scared of it
 and I am too
 I'm scared too

But I'm here this time
 And *I'll believe you*
 If you tell me it's true
 I'll believe it

RAINER

...

LYDIA

The expensive car *HONKS*

(Then, very faintly, we hear the sounds of the New York streets...)

RAINER

(Pulled back to her pages.)

I'm sorry I have to go I can't—

(RAINER begins gathering her pages together...)

SEYMOUR

Wait!

RAINER

I can't stay here any longer
I'm sorry Samuel
This isn't the place for me either

LYDIA

Slowly Samuel approaches her
He bends down
He gently tightens
and ties
each of her worn-out running shoes
He looks up at her

(SEYMOUR is looking for his last line, but it's not there.)

But he has nothing left to say

(Each holding a single last page, RAINER and SEYMOUR have
locked eyes. RAINER leans in, and she kisses SEYMOUR.)

Maria gives him a final kiss good bye
Then turns and moves towards the headlights
leaving Samuel alone
at the edge of the pool

(The world around RAINER fades, but she remains in spotlight.)

RAINER

(OUT.)

I wake up
During that time of morning when everyone sleeps
Before the sun has cracked the night
When everything's still

My children my husband

My loneliness
My stay-at-home mom guilt

I lace up my shoes
I open the door
And I stand before the cold indifference of the world

You'd think I'd be frozen stiff
Out there like that
Running with nothing
You'd think the ice and frost
It would wash over me
the suffering of getting colder and colder until

and it would be easy
to lay down
to sleep like the rest of the world sleeps
to dream of children
to long for my husband
it would be so easy in that cold

but I'm *running*
out the door I'm running
past the iced purchases of homes

thud-thud-thud

past the frozen ponds in the subdivisions

slap-slap-slap

the frosted shopping centers
the silent freeways

huff-huff-huff

huff-huff-huff

I am running
Shedding clothing
A furnace in my chest
Too far gone now to turn back
I am running
And if I stop
I'll die

(During this, the door to the room has opened. No one is there.)

LYDIA

End of play

(BLACKOUT.)

EPILOGUE:

Sometime later.

The room is empty, the dry-erase board bare, the tables and chairs are folded against the wall. A play can be heard rehearsing in another space. A long moment of nothing happening.

(SEYMOUR enters wearing a t-shirt and sweating. He drops his stuff and moves to the AC in the window. He turns it on and sucks up some cool.)

(He turns around, looking at the bare room.)

(He waits.)

(Then he moves to action, taking one of the polyurethane tables and unfolding it, setting it in the center of the room. He moves and takes the second table, unfolds it, and sets it next to the other.)

(He pauses, doing some mental calculation.)

(Is it six? Or seven?)

(*Seven.*)

(He takes out seven folding chairs and places them around the table. He counts again.)

(A play is rehearsing in the adjacent room. He listens.)

(He notices the dry-erase board. He moves to it, takes the marker in hand, he writes.)

(*IMAGINATION + STRUCTURE = ART.*)

(He stands back, he looks at this.)

(Then something *happens...*)

SEYMOUR

Oh

(*Oh...*)

(Perhaps urgently, SEYMOUR finds a pen and paper and writes this *Oh* down. As he's writing, the door to the room opens...)

(SEYMOUR does not look up.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY

*SCOTT's transition from the beginning of the play to the end, should happen organically as the play progresses; nothing too abrupt—he's testing the water. His classmates notice, but say nothing. Which is its own kind of support.