

Asleep In the Woods

Written By: Eliot Hall



Characters:

HENRY: Angel's crush 17
ANTON: Angel's Sister 19
ADRIAN: Mom of Angel and Anton. 43
ANGEL: Anton's brother 17
PETER: Paul's brother. Uncle of Anton and Angel.
BEN: Anton's tutor 30
GEORGE: Half Brother visiting
STRAFF: Firefighter 40's
FREDDY: Convict Firefighter early 20's

ACT I

A wealthy house in Lake County California. A maid is there but not present. ADRIAN is very distracted waiting for someone. She walks around a lot- can't sit still-it's hard for her. ANGEL is dancing around jumping up and down. She dances jazz and Ballet can't decide which one she likes more. ANTON is on his phone talking to someone.

ANGEL

Mama mama! Look- look at this move here *(She flourishes a flawless aerial)*. It's a- Mama! Look! *(she is extraordinary at dancing not only in the way of technique but in the irregularity in her improv. She moves with a tilted grace.)*

ANTON

No fucking way you didn't actually- *(to ANGEL)* shut up! And she walked in on what? *(ANGEL turns up the volume on the stereo)* What? What!

ADIRAN

Angel I can- hold on, Anton, don't say that to your sister.

ANTON

What? No I can't- No I can't go into another room my half brother's coming home in like-

ANGEL

Mama I don't think George really cares about the old candelabra. And those paintings are so brutal there's a reason we keep all that stuff in the basement.

ANTON

Hold on. Angel! Turn the fucking music down!

(She begrudgingly does)

ADRIAN

Anton!

ANTON

Sorry.

ADRIAN

(Pacing, looking for dust and something to make her mad at the maid) Oh! Look at this dust. I thought Debra cleaned this room.

ANGEL

Mama when is George coming?

ADRIAN

I don't know how we live in this dust bowl. I don't know Angel soon. I don't know.

(Footsteps are heard they all look to the front door expecting to see George, singing is then heard alerting all of them that it is actually Peter)

PETER

(heavy set man with grisling beard, carrying a massive double barreled shotgun, he is followed by BEN, ANTON's tutor... singing) Blood in the eyes the whole crow lights! The wisdom of the snake speaks louder than the dove! Don't you think so my boy.

ADRIAN

Oh Peter you scared us, how was the forest? Did you catch anything?

PETER

Looks like all the juicy animals have gone into hibernation I'm afraid.

BEN

Psht tell them the truth Peter! As always we had the damn boar in our sights and-

ANGEL

Did he sneeze again this time? Oh Peter.

BEN

No no no not like that he-

PETER

The poor boy slipped on a spot of good green moss. The real fluffy stuff tumbled halfway down the gorge. *(They all laugh)*

BEN

He's forgetting the crucial point at which he not so lightly shoved me down that hill.

PETER

Well if you aren't going to let me use your shoulder as a mount I don't see the use of you breathing all over me.

ADRIAN

Well I'm just glad you two didn't shoot each other. You know George is coming today. I need you on your best behavior.

PETER

(Crossing to the liquor cart to pour a drink) George the old shoe! Ah right I forgot he was coming today- bit late isn't he hmm... *(Drinks)* Nothing like appealing to the primal features of the psyche that craves liquor as much. Look at all these books on how to see right, how to read correctly, how to think rightly. Am I doing something wrong? I'm confused, you'd think these smart fellows would know where the piss pot is by now.

BEN

Here comes the pseudointellectual bandwagon ready to leave the station.

ANGEL

Don't you mean train Benny? Trains leave stations.

BEN

Well I hardly see why-

PETER

(laughing) Dont worry yourself over him sweet Angel he has a lot to learn doesn't he?

ANGEL

Oh he most certainly does.

PETER

You see the problem with your generation's intellectual liberals is your idealistic nature. You dream of this Utopia. This socialist paradise that's never *truly* been done. You live in this world just as much as they live in theirs. Your idealistic nature will be your downfall, mark my words. Look at the bloodshed of the French revolution, the bloodshed of Napoleon. None of you theater kids know how to start a true revolution. Ha! Live in reality, live in the hope for successful progress. Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains remember that. *(burps and exits)*

BEN

Idiot. *(Sighs)* You know what he wanted to do since we didn't shoot anything? He wanted to bring back these three ferrets we passed by driving back.

ADRIAN

I think that's adorable.

BEN

Where is Anton?

ANTON

I'm here Ben.

BEN

That's professor Jacobs to you. You didn't show up for our lesson yesterday. Did you know that?

ADRIAN

Yes yes, he was feeling quite sick. I thought it best for him to rest. I thought you had told him.

ANTON

Oh shit I'm sorry that's on me. Tomorrow for sure.

BEN

Great, because we are studying my favorite topic tomorrow.

ANTON

Oh no not-

BEN

History! Yes, the cure to our country's future lies in it.

(more to himself, ANGEL Laughs)

BEN (Continued)

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools... and so on to a great future I suppose.

ANTON

What are you laughing at?

ANGEL

Oh nothing. It's just, history is so easy.

ANTON

No, no I see, giggling over the newest heartthrob more likely.

ANGEL

Shut up! Mama!

ADRIAN

Oh Anton you shouldn't tease her about those things, it's not very nice.

ANTON

What? Can't speak for yourself? C'mon Mom don't be her PR manager, she's old enough. What? Why are you so offended?

(ANGEL storms off crying)

ANTON (Continued)

I didn't even say anything!

ADRIAN

Angel come back honey he didn't... What is wrong with you today?

ANTON

Nothing! I just...

ADRIAN

What?

ANTON

Nothing, I'm sorry I'll find her.

(he exits)

BEN

Was he really sick yesterday?

ADRIAN

(Getting up and looking at the paintings) Oh God she's right these are awful aren't they? I don't know anymore, does it really matter if he didn't want to learn yesterday? There's no use in forcing him. You know that.

BEN

Well I simply don't see another viable option. He has his tests coming up soon. We really need to come to some sort of understanding.

ADRIAN

I can't talk about this right now. George should be here soon.

BEN

You're right, i'm sorry.

(he puts his hand on her shoulder it is awkward and uncalled for)

BEN (Continued)

Well I should get going. *(he gets his hunting cap and starts for the door)*

ADRIAN

Ben.

BEN

Yes?

ADRIAN

Thank you. We are all grateful to you. Paul too. You two would have gotten along beautifully. His favorite subject was history as well.

BEN

(laughs) Yes I've seen his library. I'm sure we would have. *(he turns to leave, stops)* Did you get my letter yesterday?

ADRIAN

Hmm?

BEN

My letter.

ADRIAN

I did.

BEN

Sometimes it's just hard for me to talk about something right there and then when it happens. I have to digest it. I mean you know, think and process and come to some sort of understanding... sorry i'm much better in writing.

ADRIAN

I have to think about it Ben.

BEN

Yeah of course, I wasn't thinking like now. (He grabs his coat and leaves) I like the paintings.

(ADRIAN notices a stain or something on the rug. She gets to the floor to inspect it. ANGEL comes in in a rush to get to the speaker she starts to unplug it and turns to head to her room)

ADRIAN

Angel! Sweetie, stop please. Just, please don't go to your room. We haven't seen George in so long. *(sighs)* Angel sit- put that down. Are you going to tell me anything about this Henry, or am I just going to have to figure out everything over dinner... I'll tell you one thing, if he doesn't like **my lamb chops** I'm afraid he isn't welcome back.

ANGEL

(laughs) Oh Mama he's wonderful really. He took me by that part of the creek with all the baby doug firs hanging in it-you know? Where all those apple trees are. He told me of each type. He said I reminded him of his favorite apple- the "pink pearl". He said it was because of my easy laugh. But I know it was just because of the stupid pink dress I had on. *(laughing)* He thinks he's a poet too! So proud that he deleted his instagram three years ago. I know! Like some kind of drug addict or something. He even recited some of his poetry to me. God it was so awful- I loved it all the more. He didn't even know what a winesap was- kept pretending like he did. What's really great about him is how he looked away so much. He was always thinking about something. No way it could be that interesting. I really doubt it. He could have no thoughts of his own.

ADRIAN

I can't wait to meet him.

(GEORGE enters he is awkward here staring at both of them)

GEORGE

Adrian, it's nice to see you again. Place looks great.

ANGEL

How 'bout the paintings?

ADRIAN

(talking over ANGEL) It is really good to see you. Family is... very important right now. Right Angel?

GEORGE

Of course. Angel you're so tall!

ANGEL

Yup that's what they all say.

GEORGE

Where is Anton? I thought I would catch a glimpse of him in the window.

ADRIAN

He's somewhere here. How was the trip?

GEORGE

Disastrous if I can be completely honest. I felt like we were going to crash halfway across the pacific.

(He takes off his jacket and hands it to ADRIAN, who oddly takes it as well as his hat, he busies himself looking around his old home touching the furniture)

ADRIAN

Oh that's no good.

GEORGE

Not much has changed really, how amazing.

ADRIAN

Just like how you remember? George grew up in this house just like you.

GEORGE

No it's, uh, it's wonderful. I'm glad that you both didn't change anything.

ADRIAN

Well your father was very adamant about keeping everything the same dusty same. Here let me show you the room you'll be staying in.

GEORGE

I meant to call you earlier but I got caught up. I can only stay for a couple of days. I know I said it would be longer. I need to see a certain painting Paul left me in his will. It's a painting with a woman in a tree.

ANGEL

What?

ADRIAN

What do you mean? I thought you were moving to California. What are you talking about? The house... (she looks at Angel, who gets the message and leaves). Look I don't know how much Mary-anne told you about the house.

GEORGE

Yes yes she told me about it don't worry. I've been thinking about it on the way over. We can freeze some of Paul's assets. There is a section in the code of practice that mentions something about buying out vessels in the mortgage. He was so paranoid about the will thing. He wanted it to be so informal.

(ANTON enters)

GEORGE

Hello there Anton!

ANTON

George, hey. It's good to see you. Have you seen Angel?

ADRIAN

She just went to her room sweetie. (He starts to leave) Wait why don't you stay silly? Just for a bit c'mon. Chilly in here isn't it? Maybe we can get the fire going. Anton, you're good at that. Why don't you start it?

ANTON

There's no point. It's going to get warmer later.

ADRIAN

Well I'll see if I can get the damn thermostat working. I must have reworked that thing a hundred times. (Singing) Freezing frozen icicle blue.

(She exits)

GEORGE

Is there something wrong Anton?

ANTON

No, I've just been having this... I don't know- its been a day (he keeps looking at the audience strangely) actually I was wondering. Where's the rest of your stuff?

GEORGE

Perceptive aren't you. I was just telling Ari-

ANTON

Adrian.

GEORGE

Adrian, right. I was just telling Adrian that I had to leave much sooner than I said. Something has turned up.

ANTON

What are you doing here then? What could you do in such a short time?

GEORGE

I'm here for your mother Anton. And for you.

(ANTON begins to look at the paintings)

ANTON

She put these out because she knew you were coming... Do you like them?

GEORGE

Yeah I do. Do you like them?

ANTON

Not really.

GEORGE

Is there something wrong?

ANTON

No, like I said. I'm a bit fuzzy today. I was hoping you could tell the story about the donkey and the key lime pie. (He begins to laugh) That's like my first memory of you. Did you know that?

GEORGE

Well it is a good story isn't it?

ANTON

Just tell the end at least- at dinner.

GEORGE

Should I do some magic as well?

ANTON

I think we can skip the magic this time.

GEORGE

You did figure it out so easily. Gave me a shock.

ANTON

Have you said hi to Angel yet? She's been excited to see you.

GEORGE

I did. She looks so different from when I saw her last.

ANTON

In what way?

GEORGE

I don't really know how to explain it.

ANTON

It's like she finally got off the train tracks. Like she was following them for so long but the suns went down. And now she has to find her own way.

GEORGE

Have you two gotten closer? I remember that tree house. You two were always up there day or night. I saw it was gone. That's too bad.

ANTON

It blew over in a storm a while back. Probably a good thing. It was definitely a health hazard. Peter can't build anything with those two glass eyes of his.

GEORGE

You're not wrong. Still it's a shame.

ANTON

It's alright. Angel used it the most. She was really upset when it fell.

(ADRIAN enters with ANGEL)

ADRIAN

Well I think the damn thing is broken. Here let me show you to your room. You must be so tired.

GEORGE

I'm alright.

(They exit, ANGEL begins to leave with them)

ANTON

Angel wait.

ANGEL

Yeah?

ANTON

(He struggles with this) Angel. You know I love you right? I just want you to know that.

ANGEL

I know.

ANTON

I feel like you want to know. And all those little things in the back of our heads are keeping us from saying it. I wanted to break it. To switch my mind up. Give it a trick. It's not something I would say right? But I just need you to know. I don't want my love for you to be in a different version. Like how Dad used to check if we were breathing every night and thought we didn't know. Like how Mom wastes all her time on the photo albums and rearranges our rooms. I don't want my love to come to you in a disposable form. It's all around us right? Connects us like they all say. But it's so hard sometimes. I just want it to be raw and uncomfortable like how it is now.

ANGEL

I know.

ANTON

I feel like I wasted all those years being angry at him. Like he was kept alive just to torment us. Like my anger was fueling something in him. I used to make weird faces at him and yell at him when no one was around. I just wanted... I don't know- a reaction, something. The mind is so much vaster than just our eyes, ears, and mouth. I know that now. It's beyond everything. I'm sure he knew and that hurts me so much sometimes.

ANGEL

(Comes to him and embraces him) He loved you.

ANTON

I know

ANGEL

He loved you.

ANTON

I know (he is not crying but is empty of emotion)

ANGEL

He loved you... He loved you... He loved you. Just breath like the ocean-ok?

ANTON

I'm ok. I'm fine.

(ANGEL exits seeing he wants to be alone.)

ANTON

I find it hard sometimes. The waves crashing in my ears. The buds unfurling. It distracts me from who I am and what I want to be. I keep moving right? I'm moving up. I can't begin to understand... When you look in the mirror long enough you begin to realize how little you know how to see. No wonder so many books are on how to see right. I don't recognize you anymore. You live somewhere in a place like something almost being said. Sometimes I can't get these rhythms out of my head. I'm just moving, moving and I can't quite stay on beat... I've been laid before. Could you tell? I have. You can see it in my eyes right? In my body language. She was really attractive too. But... when it came down to it. How could I put this politely? When it came down to it I couldn't perform. She was nice about it though. She told me sweet things. She smelled like candy and incense. It was like... What was I saying? I can't quite get the... something.

(ANGEL from the door)

ANGEL

Did you say something?

ANTON

No nothing.

The lights dim. The scene is outside. A river is downstage past the end of the stage. A broken down bench lays close to the edge of downstage. Willow trees surround the area. ANGEL runs to the edge of the river holding HENRY's hand.

ANGEL

Here, here look.

HENRY

What?

ANGEL

Oh it's gone. There was this natural dam that formed from all the storms. The rocks fell in such a beautiful way. All these colorful leaves piled up against it, like a sunset. A sunset in the creek.

(HENRY sits on the bench and takes out his notebook)

ANGEL

Are you writing a love poem?

HENRY

No, I just had this thought about what you said.

ANGEL

What do you mean?

HENRY

"Leaves falling like sunsets... baptized in the river"

(ANGEL stifles a giggle)

ANGEL

But it's a creek, Henry, not a river.

HENRY

"Baptized creek leaves forming a sunset" no no no but there's something there... *(He turns back to his notebook and begins to write)*. Look at all these different types of trees, wonderful!

ANGEL

When I first learned to dance, I always looked at the trees, at their movement- their easy notions. My Mom took me to Joshua tree. I could hardly stop myself from laughing. The trees were so... giggly there I don't know how to put it, they looked so funny. To me, their branches seemed to spell out the answers to my questions. I hold them close to my heart, really I do. Because... there's nothing else. Nothing greater than them, really. All we can do is grab hold of the mirror. And if you can, just for a second just an inch then... *(sighs)*.

HENRY

Then what?

ANGEL

Then... I don't know? Something

(She sits next to HENRY on the bench. Tension grows as she sits closer to him than he is comfortable).

HENRY

I can tell your family really likes art.

ANGEL

Can you now?

HENRY

Well, with all of the paintings...

ANGEL

My father was a painter. The first woman he married was very wealthy, and they moved into the big house.

HENRY

Are they all your fathers?

ANGEL

Oh no. They're a mix. The two of them used to travel around the world picking up different paintings.

HENRY

What happened to her? If I can ask.

ANGEL

She passed away before I was born. I know nothing about her really... Well, she did have a love for my brother.

HENRY

Did they have any kids?

ANGEL

Yeah George. He's staying with us now. You'll meet him tomorrow. He's nice. But I don't know him too well. He wasn't close to Paul.

HENRY

I'm sorry for your loss.

ANGEL

Thank you (smiling) you know you'd be surprised how many people are scared to say anything about it. Like if they brought it up I would just... I don't know go crazy and attack them. We'd known for a while it was going to happen. The doctors gave him much less time than it actually was. So I should count myself lucky really.

HENRY

Were you very close with him?

ANGEL

Yeah, I was. You see how I have this dimple here? How it's on one side? He used to say it was because Anton kept poking my face when I was a baby to see if I was still alive. I used to sleep a lot. Now I can barely sit still for 10 minutes. The funny thing was that he had the same dimple in the same spot as me.

HENRY

Did he say he got it the same way?

ANGEL

(laughing) I don't think so Henry. It was just a funny little coincidence. We would always poke each other in the same spot. Like he gave me this look or I gave him the look and we would just poke each other. I don't know it's kind of stupid now that I think of it.

HENRY

I think it's beautiful.

ANGEL

Aww enough to write a poem about?

HENRY

Yes... How's your Mother doing?

ANGEL

She's doing the best out of all of us. Sometimes it feels like he never even passed away to her. I don't know, she's so good at dealing with all of this. It's probably because she thinks that it would be better for us... Though, sometimes I see her closing her eyes on the outside porch. That's where he used to smoke cigarettes- since she wouldn't let him smoke in the house. After he passed away, she used to accuse Anton of smoking them. He never did, but she said she kept smelling them throughout the house.

HENRY

The smell must be strongest on the porch.

ANGEL

Yeah. She started to take most of her calls on that porch. She says it's because the "reception" is the strongest. I don't know why she's so scared to tell us she misses him too.

(BEN, ANTON, and Peter are heard from off stage. ANGEL and HENRY both give a start.)

ANGEL

Quick, let's hide behind here.

HENRY

Why? Are we not supposed to be here?

ANGEL

Of course we are, but we can really scare my uncle c'mon be fun!

(They hide)

BEN

If God created Adam and Eve, why would he let them sin? If he created all-created the devil. Then, where does evil come from? Why would God allow that evil? Does that mean he is capable of

evil? I see an inconsistency. If we were made in God's image then where does evil come from?

PETER

You're thinking about it completely wrong. There is no finagling about. There is a certainty in my heart that you lack. The certainty of the unknown. You are missing out on it. There is no evil, no sin, nor right or wrong. We are all perfect because the more powerful part of us is certain of it.

BEN

Then I must be the sheep right?

PETER

No you are the blind shepherd. So certain, so certain, so certain.

BEN

Life is real. People are real. Art is real. I don't live in accordance with some unknown bearded guy. (He smiles) Or woman.

PETER

No. Art should be seen not the way it is, and not the way it's supposed to be. But the way it appears in dreams. All of it a tumble of bright colors and loud sounds we can barely remember.

(He pulls out a large box vape)

ANTON

I thought it was my lesson for today.

BEN

This is why we're having class outside... I came to a realization in the third year of my MA. That realization led me to the West. It led me to nature. I wanted it in the purest sense. A man learns more about himself from 20 miles on the road than he does 20 years in a library. *(he realizes he might be talking about himself now. He turns to ANTON)*

ANTON

That doesn't make sense.

PETER

Don't tell your mother.

ANTON

laughs I'm not uncle.

ANTON

How many miles we walking today then?

BEN

We've done our walking for today I think. What are we on now; Ancient History?

PETER

interrupting Or your sister she only thinks I smoke cubans.

BEN

talking over him I wanted to do things a little differently today as you can see. The arrival of George has got me thinking about far away places. Do you know much about the Polynesians?

ANTON

Not really. Whole lotta birds I think.

BEN

They were wonderful travelers. Perhaps the greatest explorers we know of. They had such an accurate navigation system that it rivaled the conventional methods for hundreds of years. They knew the stars. Could read them like a book. But here's the interesting part. They had no paper. No pencil no ink no nothing to write on. So the question is... How did they come to navigate the stars without ever writing anything down? And how did they teach something like that to their people? Well the first question is still a mystery. But the second is most interesting. They would teach it through song and stories. Stories and chants they'd roar on the ocean. Can you imagine hearing such a thing? An army of people yelling directions in the stars all in tandem.

PETER

That's a wonderful image.

BEN

So much of the ancient world is unimaginable to us. The introduction to domesticated livestock and wheat laid out more change than you'd think. In a way, these plants domesticated us. The Mayans never had wheat. The entire layout of their civilization is alien to us... (he looks around) I'm so grateful to be here with you two. It has been a trial has it not?

ANTON

(Chuckling) What do you mean?

BEN

Everyone. All of you are like family to me. You are so generous to me. You're lucky to have such a wonderful mother.

ANTON

Ben... it isn't you. You know that?

BEN

Sometimes I don't know where to go. I wrote her this ridiculous letter. I don't know what i'm doing.

ANTON

It's not you. She's not ready. You understand that?

PETER

(Crosses to where ANGEL and HENRY are hiding) Sometimes it can feel like we don't know where to go. It can feel like the pressure on us reaches a level of-

ANGEL/HENRY: Boo!

(Peter gives a cry, BEN and ANTON both jump. ANGEL and HENRY both laugh)

PETER

(begins to cough violently) You! You'll kill me next time! Don't give me a start like that.

ANGEL

(Peter's cough continues) Uncle? Are you ok what's wrong?

PETER

I'm fine. Let me just catch my breath. (He tries to sit down ut trips and falls. Everyone rushes to him)

BEN

Everyone move back! Move back, he's ok just give him some space.

(ANGEL runs and cradles him on the ground.)

PETER

I'm ok everyone please. I just need a second.

ANTON

You're clearly not. What's wrong?

PETER

It's the new blood thinner medication. It just makes me light headed sometimes. I'm fine, really sweetie.

ANGEL

I'm sorry.

ANTON

So dramatic aren't you uncle.

PETER

You know me. I used to do quite a bit of acting, nothing really ever stuck. Seems I always had a conflicting "artistic vision" with the director. It just sounds like made up excuses for being dumb.

BEN

Let's just get you back to the house ok?

PETER

(Rising) Fine... Hello there, other assailant.

HENRY

Hi, I'm Henry.

PETER

Are you now? Ha! Sorry for the abrupt introduction.

BEN

C'mon let's go. (He helps Peter up and begins to walk him back.)

ANGEL

I'm going to go with them to make sure he's ok. I'm so sorry. I wish we could have spent more time.

HENRY

No, no worries of course I understand.

ANGEL

Thank you. (She gives him a kiss on the cheek)

(They all exit excluding HENRY and ANTON. ANTON hops on one of the rocks)

ANTON

Henry.

HENRY

Yeah. It's nice to meet you.

ANTON

Henry is a French name. Did you know that? It's pronounced Henri. French doesn't have an "h" sound.

HENRY

I didn't know that.

ANTON

Let's get right to it. What are your intentions with my sister?

HENRY

Well, I... um-

ANTON

(He slowly smiles) I'm just messing with you man.

HENRY

Oh, shit yeah you got me.

ANTON

How'd you two even meet?

HENRY

I work at the bagel place on Fern. I was listening to your teacher. He seems really cool.

ANTON

Yeah he's a really nice guy. Angel never tells me anything about her life. What'd she say about meeting me?

HENRY

Oh she... doesn't talk about you that much.

ANTON

Makes sense.

(From offstage: ANGEL: HENRY!)

HENRY

I should get going.

ANTON

It's good to meet you.

HENRY

I'll see you tomorrow. I'm coming to dinner.

(HENRY Exits. Lights dim)

ACT II

ANGEL and HENRY are alone in the living room. A storm rages on outside. Lightning is very prevalent. Noise from the kitchen and dining room is heard. HENRY is looking out of the window to the lightning and the rain. Time passes. HENRY looks through each window refusing to meet ANGEL's eyes. She lounges on the couch. First lazily then begins to like a cat stretch out provocatively. He clears his throat and pulls out a small book from his back pocket.

HENRY

I... I was meaning to... I mean I wanted to read you something. It's from Neruda.

ANGEL

Is it now? I would rather we skip the literary digest for tonight.

HENRY

(chuckles) What do you mean?

ANGEL

Oh I don't know. Something more (*lightning strikes fast and quick*) like that.

HENRY

(He starts to blush and puts on his glasses to read)
O my dearest,
nothing but shadow there
where you walk with me through your dream:
you tell me when the light returns.

ANGEL

I wonder if you can read without these (*she removes his glasses*).

(*He brings the book closer and she begins to tug at it.*)

HENRY

Angel I haven't finished *(she laughs)* Angel! I was-

(They begin to tug together at the book until she lets go and he falls over)

ADRIAN

(from the kitchen) Everything ok?

ANGEL and HENRY

Yes!

ANGEL

(laughing) Oh Henry are you ok?

HENRY

(He gets up very embarrassed fixing himself) Can I have my glasses back please?

ANGEL

But you look so pretty without them. You have wonderful eyes.

HENRY

Please?

ANGEL

(Handing them back) Henry... What's wrong?

HENRY

Nothing, nothing I just-It's just, it's you.

ANGEL

Me?

HENRY

When I think about us together. When you get up from the table, or smile in that little corner of your mouth, or look away thinking long about the stars... All I want to do is to be with you. But... then you look at me and- I feel all dumb all over like someone hit my on the head with a pan or something. Or when you dance! And I see how you move-like a wild animal or the changing seasons. In the way you stand up, or cross your legs. It makes me want to throw all this *(gets out notebook)* away.

ANGEL

Look at me- No, no not like that. Look at me.

(she goes to kiss him, but she bumps into his glasses. They giggle and she draws back. She removes his glasses. Maybe putting them on. Then she grabs his hand and puts it on her waist. There is a pause where they are looking at each other drawing closer. Then they embrace. Lightning strikes fast again and the power goes out. From the kitchen the voices can be heard reacting to the power outage.)

(from off stage)

GEORGE

(screams) Sorry it just shocked me that's all.

PETER

No worries, no worries. I know we have some candles around here. C'mon somewhere here.

ANGEL

(laughing) Looks like the house is telling us something.

HENRY

(laughing) Does this happen often?

ANGEL

Yes we have a terrible **electrical connection** here.

(Peter enters)

PETER

Angel sweetie? Are you close to the little table under the mirror?

ANGEL

Yes.

PETER

There are some candles in there. Could you grab some for me?

ANGEL

(she goes to get them bumping into various set pieces) I found them Uncle. Here you go.

PETER

Ah, my Angel thank you. *(he strikes a match on his boot or jacket lighting the candles, to the kitchen)* The candles are in here Adrian! Hello there Henry. Welcome to the house. Help me with this will you?

(He begins going around propping up the candles in the candelabras. BEN, ADRIAN, George, and ANTON begin to enter and help)

ADRIAN

I'm so glad you found them.

ANTON

We should get that fireplace started for more light.

PETER

I'm going to check that fuse box. Anton, c'mon let's go.

ANTON

Yeah let me just grab my jacket.

GEORGE

I'll get this fire started.

BEN

I can come with you boys.

ANTON

Why?

PETER

Anton. It's ok my boy. Me and Anton are very used to this. It's becoming something of a ritual. Hmm... that reminds me of what Wilder used to go on about. Something about all those families from Babylon. We know nothing about them, but they all sat down for dinner, and I bet when their heating went out they had some ritual like us. It seems more...

Everyone

Peter!

PETER

Right right right let's go.

(ANTON and Peter exit)

BEN

Do you need any help with that?

GEORGE

(struggling with the fire) no, no I have it.

ADRIAN

I am so sorry Henry. Do you need to go home? This is not how I wanted your first dinner with us here to be.

HENRY

Oh no, It's nothing. I've been having a wonderful time.

ANGEL

(Grabbing the stereo from in a cabinet.) Hey mama look what I found. Oh and it uses batteries!

(She starts to play some music. Van Morrison's "These Dreams of You" begins to play.)

ANGEL

I love this song.

ADRIAN

My old stereo. I had forgotten where I put that.

ANGEL

C'mon mama move those feet!

ADRIAN

Now you might be the professional. But you are missing one crucial part, baby.

ANGEL

And what's that Mama?

ADRIAN

You don't got the hip. The soul that I got. You got a lot to learn.

ANGEL

Mama! *(they begin to dance together laughing)*

BEN

(at the fireplace) No, no kindling is the most important.

GEORGE

I know how to start a fire I-

ADRIAN

What's wrong Henry? Cold feet?

HENRY

Oh I uh. I don't compare to you two. I'm more of a thinker.

ANGEL

He's actually more of a looker to me.

ADRIAN

Come here you dummy.

(They begin to dance)

BEN

Look. Just lighting more newspapers is not going to solve anything. You need-

GEORGE

I am building a triangle it needs-

ADRIAN

Have you two ever actually gotten dirt under your nails?
(she goes to the fireplace and completely rearranges it. She then lights the match she has been holding onto in her mouth on the side of the fireplace and starts the fire. It begins to burn well.)

ADRIAN (Continued)

I don't know why you two didn't think to ask of me. I've started more fires than both of you combined. I'd bet anything on that. I was the son my father always wanted. Taught me the great necessities in life. How to light a fire and spit right.
(imitating her father) C'mon Adrian grow some hairs on your chest.

BEN

You're right. College degrees seem to be becoming less and less advantages. I was reading this-

ADRIAN

Oh give it a rest. Come on... What's wrong?

(She and BEN begin to dance together. He is sweet when he holds her. Gentle.)

GEORGE

I don't feel like dancing at the moment. What? I might as well cancel my flight. The road is going to be flooded.

ADRIAN

Well maybe, you can stay as long as you promised.

GEORGE

What is that supposed to mean?

ADRIAN

Oh I don't know. You don't show up at the funeral then promise to stay at least a month. Is that right BEN? It was a month. To make up for missing the funeral. Or am I beginning to forget things already?

GEORGE

I told you. I couldn't make it. And you have a hell of a mind to assume-

ADRIAN

I don't care.

GEORGE

You don't know the first thing about our relationship. I had said my goodbyes much earlier you knew that. Why did you even care if I was there?

ADRIAN

It's not like I was missing you. He was missing you. He missed you.

GEORGE

You don't know the-

ADRIAN

I do know him! And more importantly I knew how he felt about you.

ANGEL

Stop! Just stop. Please.

(Peter and ANTON enter soaked in rain. ADRIAN begins to exit)

PETER

Oh that is a real wagon tipper! Black Ocean spray! Comes quick through the veins! *(to ADRIAN as she is leaving)* I couldn't get the... ok. The fuse is shorted. I'll get on the phone with PG&E. But they probably couldn't get their trucks through tonight. It

looks like we'll be out all night... You see right here I keep a book of T.S Eliot's poems. Don't understand the guy for one word, but he keeps me safe in these kinds of things. Henry.

HENRY

Yes?

PETER

Your mother must want you back soon. I can walk you back if you would like.

HENRY

I can manage Peter thank you. I should be leaving now though.

BEN:

I'll leave with him, don't worry. I live close to you Henry.

HENRY

I enjoyed my time here very much. You have a wonderful family.

(He exits with BEN)

PETER

Well I guess since all the losers have gone we can have some real fun. Where'd you put uno boy i've been dying to make some money (he exits to the kitchen with ANTON)

(Lighting strikes again loudly, ADRIAN enters in soon after carrying the painting Asleep in the Woods)

ADRIAN

Why don't you just take what you came for and leave.

GEORGE

Why are you so stubborn about this! It's mine, I'm sorry that you had some attachment to it.

ADRIAN

You really are a piece of work, you know that. What would Paul think? What would Olivia say if she knew what you were doing here?

GEORGE

Liv and I split up months ago.

ADRIAN

Really?

GEORGE

Yes. (he puts the painting down and heads upstairs to pack up his things, ANTON enters)

ANTON

What's going on?

GEORGE

(From upstairs) I was going to see if I could use some of that money to loan you for the debt.

ANGEL

What debt?

ADRIAN

Another one of your schemes. No George I'm, I'm just done with all of it..

ANTON

What are you talking about what's going on?

GEORGE

Your Ari is willingly turning down an opportunity to save this old shitty house.

ANTON

Hey, I told you not to call her that!

GEORGE

(He begins coming down the stairs) Will you please just. I can't fucking stand it here. Everything smells like him. Which one of you still smokes? I can't... Fuck.

ADRIAN

Don't talk to him like that.

GEORGE

What's the problem? Brothers fight don't they.

ADRIAN

It's mean.

ANTON

You're a liar, you weren't going to use the money to save the house. He's in debt too Mama. That's the only reason he came out here.

ADRIAN

Just get out of here.

(George puts on his coat, gathers all of his belongings and heads for the door. He grabs the painting roughly. Angel lets out a yelp of alarm. ANTON goes to grab the painting from him)

ANTON

Just take one of the other ones!

(George rushes to take the painting. ANTON goes to grab it and accidentally punctures a hole through the canvas. George lets out a string of curses.)

ADRIAN

Anton stop! Stop! It's ok. Both of you just stop! Get out of my house. *(She exits to get the rest of his things)*

GEORGE

It was my house longer than it was yours. Do you have any idea how valuable this is? *(He gives it another look and tosses it to the ground)*

ANTON

Just take one of the other ones and leave! *(George begins to take all the other paintings off the wall. Ripping them off. ANGEL goes to the ripped painting on the ground and begins to cry cradling the remains.)* Do you have any idea how long Mom had to sit with him in the hospital?

GEORGE

No I don't. My Mothers dead. So you should save-

ANTON

Oh I know. He would call out for her. Calling out for her in his dreams. Persilla, Why do the daisies grow down? You really know nothing. She got real good at talking to herself. She would go on and on about her day. Saying the ups and downs. Showing him pictures of you. Pictures of the art we would make. She's stronger than all of us. The word sacrifice doesn't begin to encapsulate the things she did. *(He begins to tear up)* And you know, sometimes I think all that pain and all the blame is

against him. And I would curse him and resent him. I even refused to see him! I.. I can't believe!

(Peter then enters)

PETER

What's going on?

GEORGE

Out with the old. In with the new Peter.

(George exits. ANGEL is left at center crouching looking at the painting.)

ANTON

I'm finding Mom.

(ANTON exits upset.)

PETER

Angel, What happened?

ANGEL

He broke my heart.

PETER

What do you mean?

(Time passes. Peter brings her up from the painting to the couch.)

PETER

Angel I... I find that- I mean I know that it seems. When Paul passed away I was reminded of things that were spent. How do I put this? He had a gentleness that I envied. I was the last to see him. He told me that only I could understand him now. I had to be strong for you. For your brother I know. I'm sorry I'm not. I wasn't. I was sick with my thoughts. Once I quit my job in Montana. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't find what to do with my hands. 30 years. 30 years keeps you in the monotony. Sucks you into routine. Lauren would catch me getting dressed early morning everyday. No agenda, nothing. Just a sick habit of a sick man. I'm having a difficult time with the articulation.

ANGEL

What are you saying Uncle?

PETER

I'm so happy to spend this time with you. To know you. I never wanted to have my own family until I saw you two. Until I realized... You mean so much to me.

(They embrace. Lights fade to black.)

ACT III

It is now summer, a year has passed. ANTON has been away in college. A fire is raging 10-20 miles away. They have been given the sign to prepare to evacuate. An evacuation order is not in place yet. A couple of firefighters are in the living room covered in ash and exhausted taking a nap on the couch and floor. ADRIAN enters bringing a platter full of sandwiches and juice. She is not in a bad mood. This in a strange way solves a lot of her problems with the debt of the house. Sounds from their radios constantly are heard indistinctly. ANGEL enters.

ANGEL

(whispering) What did he say about the front block?

ADRIAN

Which one?

ANGEL

The cute one duh.

ADRIAN

He didn't say anything different.

(ANGEL takes one of the sandwiches and takes a bite)

ANGEL

Peanut butter!

ADRIAN

Most people expect peanut butter in their peanut butter and jelly sandwiches sweetie.

ANGEL

People with no taste.

ADRIAN

We're out of almond anyway.

(the youngest of the two firefighters-sleeping on the floor- is woken up by them talking and is embarrassed that he fell asleep)

ADRIAN

Oh dear you can go back to sleep, don't worry about the food or anything. Like I said the house is yours, the shower still works in the back and I think Peter has some frozen steaks if you want something more filling than these. I'm sorry I wish we were better stocked.

FREDDY

Don't worry about it. Thank you so much for letting us hold up here for a bit. You really didn't need to.

ADRIAN

Sleeping in your truck shouldn't be tolerated by anyone. You boys deserve the Ritz as far as I'm concerned. Am I disturbing your friend?

FREDDY

Well he's always been disturbed, so I doubt you could add too much to that.

(ANTON enters carrying two oxygen tanks, he crosses to the door)

FREDDY

(getting up going to help him) Hey dude you didn't have to do that thank you.

ANTON

No it's no problem really lemme do it... Was he sleeping on the floor mom! Dude take my bed, it's the first door up the stairs to the left. Why didn't you offer him that?

ADRIAN

Well I didn't know.

FREDDY

It's ok dude thanks for the offer. I'm alright anyway I've gotten more sleep than most of the crew.

ADRIAN

How's Peter?

ANTON

(Snorts) We tried to get him up. Sometimes I think about how different he is than Dad, but things like this just remind me so much of him. It also doesn't help that Ben keeps lecturing him. At least that keeps him up I guess.

ADRIAN

I should check on them.

(ANTON and ADRIAN exit. Freddy gets up from the floor and begins to inspect some of the art)

ANGEL

So... what made you want to become a firefighter?

FREDDY

Huh?

ANGEL

I said, What made you want to become a firefighter?

FREDDY

(He turns to look at her, perhaps noticing her for the first time.) As a young man in this area, you only really have three options. Go do construction, get into logging, or you become a firefighter for the forest service.

ANGEL

So are you from Middle town?

FREDDY

No, no I'm from somewhere else.

ANGEL

Oh ok... Do you like fighting fires?

FREDDY

Well me and Straff are part of the hotshot crew, so we're the first to the fires.

ANGEL

That's quite the name isn't it. It suits you.

FREDDY

It's actually kind of the worst to be honest. Used to be easier, I heard.

(Freddy gets a buzz on his radio, he pales a bit)

ANGEL

What is it?

FREDDY

It's nothing. The fire has just doubled its E4 zone.

ANGEL

Is that really bad?

FREDDY

It's not unexpected, but it's faster than we thought. (he goes over to Straff shakes him awake) The E4 zones doubled since 2400.

STRAFF

What? (he radios to his base) what's the WUI size in E4? (indistinct radio) It hasn't doubled Frederick, Ben was saying the E2 debris tripled. Why do I have to keep explaining to you how our fucking scaling works?

FREDDY

I'm sorry. (he goes back to sleep)

ANGEL

So it's really difficult then.

FREDDY

Yeah it is. About 16 of us die every year fighting fires like this. I'm glad your Mom doesn't seem too worried about it.

ANGEL

She's just happy that the insurance share she got can pay off the mortgage. It's been a huge struggle for us. It's not like she won't miss the house obviously. But she grew up in the city. It's hard for her living out here with no close neighbors.

FREDDY

We don't know how this fire is going to change. It's all up to the winds. You guys have everything packed right?

ANGEL

All the essentials. We had been moving the art all year in preparation for something like this. So it's just all the stuff we have hanging that needs to go. How long do you think you'll be a firefighter? As long as him?

FREDDY

(laughs) I hope not.

ANGEL

Then what? A fire chief?

FREDDY

No, no I actually want to be published some day. I really like writing

ANGEL

A writer? What do you write about?

FREDDY

Love, I don't know really. I just started. But I just have so much in here. Let me read you something! I haven't been able to read my writing to anyone in a while. Is that ok? Straff isn't one for poems to be honest.

ANGEL

Is he ok?

FREDDY

(laughing) yeah that's what the end of a 72 hour shift looks like.

ANGEL

Oh my God. I didn't know you guys worked that long.

FREDDY

Here listen to this:

And of love we know nothing?

And in dreams I dreamed of you thinking clear rapture. I met you in that oak grove round the bend with the string wrapped tight around its neck.

And if I find a sign- God among us! God is among us!

Find the water in the ravine to live with by stripes of the past!

Do we only live in love when we see it in the eyes of strangers and those we hold dear?

Love holds no mind, no conscious only the ability (not unlike a plant) to grow towards sunlight. I will endure the deepest depths of the barest plains as we have seen in our green. God has endured us. I see him in the plants. In the trees. And in deceivers grasp we ask again what things may come when the great deepness takes us...

What do you think? It goes on like that for a bit.

ANGEL

It's incredible. It's like you follow a path but are also blinded by it. Like the love you once had is gone, and you keep looking for it in where you believe it resides in its most natural form. In nature.

FREDDY

Who are you? Incredible. What a thing to say. Have you met many writers?

ANGEL

A couple. I write some. I started just recently. I'm mostly a dancer.

FREDDY

Can I hear? If that's ok of course.

ANGEL

Yeah you can hear. Just don't laugh because it's not as good as yours.

(ANGEL goes to a cabinet beside one of the windows and draws out a sheet of loose paper.)

ANGEL

For the daisy I picked, it was chamomile instead. Straight stalk and white flower. Distinct in sunlight not moonlight-

For nothing but shadow now. When you walk beside me.

You tell me when the light returns. On four limbs.

On sand shore, rock, or fresh castles thresh.

You tell me. You tell me e' direction the moss grows.

Tell me the lie that begs my truth. Tell me...

FREDDY

Is that it?

ANGEL

No, but I don't like the rest... What do you think?

FREDDY

What do I think! Angel, it's beautiful. I can't believe you wrote that. You're amazing!

ANGEL

It's nothing really, it's not as good as yours.

FREDDY

No it is. It's better. I feel like I can't land in my words. Like I'm just venting all these things. All these useless words bouncing around. How could anyone understand them?

ANGEL

I understand

FREDDY

But I feel Angel! I look to the sky for answers, not to books. To the trees! The waves, the smells. Do you not look into the eyes of strangers or love? Do you not touch the trees when you pass them? To feel the answer! To maybe understand the divine. Jung said once that trees spelled out the meaning of life. To him it was the answer. Just like how Montaigne struggled with death. It was only till he felt it, did he understand the answer. And the answer is in the question! We look at it wrong. He could see through the walls. Through his psyche through the walls of our realities. I can too, Angel I see it all. I see my way through the traffic. Sometimes I just close my eyes and feel the path take me! I understand how it all turns. I can feel us spinning! I've scared you haven't I? I'm sorry I do this too much.

ANGEL

No, I feel like I understand where you're coming from. The way your mind works. Have you met Ben yet?

FREDDY

I don't think so.

ANGEL

I think you two would get along.

FREDDY

I can't imagine someone could be more interesting to talk to in this house. I'm still thinking about that poem you wrote. It

just stuck to me. That line you said about the direction the moss grows. That's it that-

ANGEL

(ANGEL steps closer to him) I know. It's what you were looking for.

STRAFF

Freddy?

FREDDY

Yeah?

STRAFF

Go fit the truck we're leaving soon.

FREDDY

Yeah, yeah of course. You mean the dozer?

STRAFF

Obviously not.

(Freddy exits. Straff begins to devour the plate of sandwiches and drinks the juice while ignoring ANGEL)

ANGEL

I don't like you.

STRAFF

What's your name?

ANGEL

You're mean to him.

STRAFF

(Laughs) Mean to him? Why do you say that?

ANGEL

Just the way you talk to him it's not nice. Some of those sandwiches were for him as well.

STRAFF

They don't taste too good anyway. What do you know about Freddy?

ANGEL

What do you mean?

STRAFF

I mean since you're so quick to defend him.

ANGEL

I think everyone should be treated with respect. What's wrong with that?

STRAFF

Nothing, nothing sweetie. Where's your Mom?

ANGEL

I don't know? What is it about him you don't like? Are you jealous of him?

STRAFF

No, no I'm not actually. I think you're too quick to judge people.

ANGEL

I don't need any more deliberation to know who you are.

STRAFF

I wasn't talking about me.

ANGEL

I don't understand.

STRAFF

Freddy is here as part of the fire-camp program. Where'd he say he was from?

ANGEL

From around here. I still don't know what that means.

STRAFF

Fire-camp is an inmate initiative that we have with the local prison.

ANGEL

So... he's a criminal?

STRAFF

Yeah if that's what you wanna call it. You wanna know what he did?

ANGEL

No... you're horrible.

(ADRIAN, BEN, and Peter enter. Peter is resting on BEN's arm. He is in a state of dishevelment.)

PETER

I'm fine! I'm fine you don't have to hang on to me all about. It's insulting. As they say "suffering is grace, and of grace we know nothing but what it leaves behind." Oh and that "truth waits for eyes unclouded by longing." That's one you've got to remember well Adrian. I can see it all slipping if you know the measurement I'm describing.

STRAFF

Of grace we know nothing but what it leaves behind? That doesn't make sense.

PETER

Oh yeah? Try this one on then: Dead I was-I came to life weeping-then I started to love. Do you understand grace from the cry of a baby, or the words on a tombstone? Be sure of it now. Be rid of it tomorrow. (He begins to start coughing)

ANGEL

The smoke isn't good for him, we have to leave now.

PETER

I'm fine. I'm fine, I just need to sit for a bit.

(ANTON and Freddy enter. ANTON is wearing gear from the trucks. He is smiling.)

ADRIAN

Anton, why are you dressed like that?

ANTON

Because I'm going with.

ADRIAN

No you're not.

STRAFF

Listen to your mother. It's no place for you.

ANTON

Look I can help. It doesn't matter what it is. I can just bring you guys water, or distribute the food. I can help in any way.

ADRIAN

I'm not having this, ok? No more. We're leaving.

ANTON

I'm staying. I don't care if I don't know what I'm doing. I'll chase the trucks. It doesn't matter to me. I need to do something! Don't you see that? And I can finally help here. I can give myself to something. Why don't you want this for me?

ADRIAN

What did you tell him?

FREDDY

Hey I said nothing. It's all his idea.

ANTON

I'm leaving mom just listen to me I-

ADRIAN

No! Don't you see all this we have to deal with already! How could you be so selfish! I can't think about more. I can barely think about this place going up in flames. Losing him all over again. I can't. I can't Anton. Don't do this.

ANTON

(crying) I can't be here anymore. I can't stay in this cycle. I need to know that I mean something. I need to know about this drumming in my head. And when I saw that truck and the stories he had of the blaze. I heard them quiet. (he goes to hug her, she turns away and exits)

BEN

Don't do this Anton. Please. It's dangerous. You could get hurt.

STRAFF

He'll be ok. We have a lot of volunteers at the lakefront anyway.

(Peter starts to cough again)

BEN

Just come with us! Enough of this...

He grabs Peter and they begin to exit. Peter whispers something in BEN's ear about wanting to say something to ANTON. He tries to speak but his voice is weak; he gestures to ANTON to come closer. He whispers encouragement in ANTON's ear, then gives him a kiss on the cheek. Peter and BEN exit

ANTON

Don't try to stop me.

ANGEL

(she smiles and give him a big hug) I think it would be good for you. (She whispers something in his ear)

ANTON

(crying) I love you so much. All right let's go!

FREDDY

Yeah head out gimme a sec.

(ANTON exits. Straff gives them both a look. Chuckles then leaves)

FREDDY

Goodbye Angel. I don't know if I'll see you again. But it was so nice to meet you...What's wrong?

ANGEL

Why didn't you just tell me about the fire camp program? I wouldn't have thought any less of you.

FREDDY

Really? You would though. I know it. Did he tell you what happened?

ANGEL

No. It doesn't matter. I don't care what that guy says. You have a good heart. You don't need to hold yourself back. It doesn't define you obviously.

FREDDY

But it does. It does Angel. It has to define me. It's my cross to bear.

ANGEL

What did you do?

FREDDY

It doesn't even matter. Can I hear the rest of your poem?

ANGEL

Umm yeah ok. (She pulls out the poem)

ANGEL

Tell me the lie that begs my truth.

Tell me the tears I have are just for the falling ferns.

For the waves crashing like starlight open on full nights and empty ones.

I learned once-

(The radio says something loud about the fire being in critical condition. Straff enters worried)

STRAFF

We need to go now! USAA didn't backlight the right area. Let's go!

(He hurries Freddy out. He waves to her in apology. ANGEL picks up the remaining bags. Sirens start in the background. She looks at the paper in her hand)

ANGEL

That life delights in life.

(Looking up from the paper)

That of love we know nothing.

That all is clear and I alone am clouded.

(ANGEL gives one more look to the house and waves goodbye. The lights fade. The curtain is drawn)

The End