

A Hopeless Place

by

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CHARACTERS

WYATT "WY" KNOTT	mid-late 20's, male, wears earth-toned dashiki's
SONNY AULWES	early 20's, female, wears bright colors/patterns
RICHARD "BIG DICK" SHERWOOD	early 20's, male, wears athletics T-shirts, typically wrinkled or stained
TRIXIE	early 20's, female

SETTING

A college campus: a dorm room and the Quad

TIME

Present

ACT I

Scene 1	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	6 weeks ago.
Scene 2	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	4 weeks ago.
Scene 3	The Quad.	3 weeks ago.
Scene 4	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	1 week ago.
Scene 5	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	3 days ago.
Scene 6	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	2 days ago.
Scene 7	WYATT and DICK'S dorm room.	Now.

ACT [I]

SCENE [1]

(the stage is set up like a dorm room with two desks and chairs, bunked beds, and a single dresser--all in relatively tight quarters Center Stage. A heavy door sits in a single wall SL or SR so that the audience can see action in the "hallway" as well. There is a light switch beside the door inside the room. Clothes are strewn on the floor on one "half" of the room. One desk is piled with textbooks and notebooks so the surface isn't visible, a letterman jacket hangs messily on the chair back. The other desk contains a burning candle, a tidy stack of textbooks, a single piece of notebook paper, an inkwell, and an ink pen. WYATT sits at the second desk, writing with the ink pen by candle light, mumbling to himself. The stage is low-lit, otherwise. It's evening.)

(SONNY enters and knocks excitedly at the door, startling WYATT.)

SONNY

Dick!

Dick!

It's me--surprise!

Dick?

WYATT

Uh. Um... Not here!

SONNY

Dick, I'm coming in!

(WYATT fumbles to cap the inkwell and hide the piece of paper within the textbooks on his desk as SONNY unlocks the door and enters, flipping on the room lights.)

SONNY

Dick?

WYATT

Uh, uh. N-no! He's not here right now!

SONNY

Oh!

WYATT

Why're you breaking in to people's dorm rooms?!

SONNY

You must be Dick's roommate, Wyatt! It's nice to finally meet you! Dick's told me so much about you!

(SONNY shakes WYATT'S hand emphatically.)

WYATT

Oh. Uh. Yeah. Um. He has?

SONNY

Yeah! Like, how you're a non-trad and how you, like, tried to kill yourself your first time through college, so how this is a really big step for you and how he's, like, your baby-sitter or guardian angel or something--he's not really sure which.

WYATT

Oh... Yeah... That stuff... Stellar...

SONNY

To be honest, I'm not quite sure why he shared all that shit. I guess it was just stuff that was happening in his life, ya know? But I was definitely like "you

probably shouldn't go around introducing him like that, it's not good for people's self esteem! I'm sure he's a good guy!"

WYATT

No. No, it isn't.

SONNY

But he was just like, "But babe, it's just between me and you. You understand. Don't go blabbing about it and it's all cool." And I was like, "yeah, I get ya'. Still-"

WYATT

Did he say anything else about me? Like, I dunno, something remotely positive?

SONNY

Oh. Well, yeah. I mean, he told me that you like to wear dashikis and write poetry by candle light. He thinks it's weird, but I think it's cool. Post-Romantic. Like Tennyson.

WYATT

Yeah, they're comfortable. Tennyson, huh? I guess that's not so bad.

SONNY

No, sir! And I see an inkwell. Very authentic! Feather quill?

WYATT

Not quite. B-but metal pens were mass produced in the 19th century, in Tennyson's time.

SONNY

I hadn't known! I suppose the lavender-scented candle isn't very authentic though.

WYATT

N-no, I suppose not.

SONNY

Wait--are you writing one right now? Is that it? Let me see!

WYATT

Wait! No!

(SONNY snatches the paper stuck between the textbooks, holding WYATT'S flailing back in the process.)

SONNY

(reading) "To friends, and family, to those I have loved and those for whom I never had the chance..."

(SONNY puts her back between WYATT and the paper as she reads.)

WYATT

Stop! It's- It's not finished yet!

SONNY

(reading) "I must finally bid you adieu cruel world"--a little cliched, don't you think?

WYATT

...Jesus, it's a first draft.

SONNY

You know what I like to do when I want something I'm writing to look really dated, really *authentic*? It's a trick I learned when I was a kid, making, like, time-stained treasure maps and ransom notes addressed from the captors of my dashing and daring 17th century French lovers--all poets, mind you, with beards and perfectly quaffed dark hair, muscles pushing at the thin linen of their tunics, dark chest hair climbing from the deep, white "V" of their collars. Their soft and elegant hands...

(SONNY is lost in the image for a moment.)

Anyway, so, you hold the edges of your paper to a flame.

(SONNY does so, rotating the paper as
the edges single and smolder.)

But you have to be careful, right? It's okay to obscure
the text a little bit. But too much and it's illegible.
Of course, that's okay for, like, treasure maps and
shit.

(SONNY catches the whole page on fire
and drops it on the desk.)

Eek!

WYATT

Jesus!

(WYATT moves to extinguish the flame,
but SONNY pulls him back.)

SONNY

Let it burn; don't hurt yourself!

WYATT

But the desk!

(They watch as the page flares and dies
to ash.)

Aw, man. Fuck. They're going to take that out of my
room deposit for sure.

SONNY

You'll be fine, I'll have Dick sign off on the room
condition and the school will be none the wiser.
Besides, it gives this desk *character*. This--*This* desk
is a *poet's* desk.

(SONNY nudges WYATT suggestively.)

WYATT

Okay! Cut it out, Goddamnit! Who do you think you are
anyway? Just breaking in to people's rooms and starting
fires and shit! Ruining their work!

SONNY

Pfft. "Ruining." I *saved* your "work" from giving the

world a reason to point and laugh at you.

WYATT

They've already got plenty.

SONNY

Jeez, stop that!

WYATT

No! And I'm tired of this "suicidal" shit following me around. Everyone who knows thinks I'm dangerous or unstable, or both. Untouchable, a leper!

SONNY

Doesn't necessarily look like your tired of it...

WYATT

No! You don't get to judge me! I'm here, I've renewed my commitment to this. I'm going to do it. Alone.

(beat)

And who the fuck are you anyway? What do you know? And why do you have a key to our dorm room? Are you a psyche major? One of "Big Dick's" slutty cheerleaders or something?

(SONNY slaps WYATT.)

SONNY

Now who do you think you are? I am no "slut," asshole! My name is Sonny Aulwes and I'm the new RA on this floor. And Dick's *fiance*! *That's* why I have a key!

(beat)

WYATT

(rubbing his cheek) Wait... The "fiance" part or the "RA" part?

SONNY

The RA part.

(beat)

And to that point: are you aware that it is against residence hall policy to have open flames in one's dorm

room?!

WYATT

I am. But Dick never cared!

SONNY

Well, then perhaps I can let it slide. *This* time, Knott.

WYATT

Wait, you know my last name too?

SONNY

Yeah. I told you: (loudly) I'm your new RA. Your suicidal ass is *my* responsibility. (normal tone) Of course I'm going to learn everyone's name and of course I'm going to know what's going on with them.

WYATT

Fuck. Stay out of my business!

(beat, WYATT calms himself.)

Jesus! Still a helluva way to make an entrance. I suppose you are aware that it's against residence hall policy for an RA to enter a student's room without notice.

SONNY

Or probable cause.

WYATT

And?

SONNY

It smelled *heavily* of lavender outside your room.

(beat)

WYATT

Touche.

(beat)

SONNY

So... Any chance you want to talk about that "poem" you

were writing?

(WYATT looks away and sits on the bottom bunk.)

WYATT

Not really. I was exploring the prose poem. It was a first draft, I told you already. Don't be so critical.

SONNY

Did it have a title?

WYATT

I don't know. I was thinking something clever like "Paul's Epistle to the Episcopalians" or something Sufjan-y like "Goodbye, or, How to Lose a Guy in 30 Years, or, the Existential Ramifications of Spending 'the Last Days' in an 8x8 Cell with a Silverback Gorilla."

(beat)

Or, simply, "Thanks, Obama."

SONNY

Wow. That's brutal.

WYATT

I know.

SONNY

I prefer Rihanna. Personally. Ya know, when I'm feeling down.

(beat)

Wait--Tell me you know Rihanna.

WYATT

Of her. I know *of* her. Not exactly my scene.

SONNY

Oh no, you do not get to dismiss Rihanna out of hand like that!

(SONNY sits excitedly beside WYATT on

the bed and pulls her smart phone from her pocket.)

"Diamonds?" "Work?" "We Found Love?" No? Seriously? Well have I got a treat for you! I've got it right here on Spotify. You just wait, Mister, oh yes!

("Diamonds" by Rihanna starts to play at full phone volume.)

WYATT

Must we?

SONNY

Shhh! Rihanna is speaking now!

(WYATT shrinks. And they listen. SONNY sings along.)

"Find light in the beautiful sea, I choose to be happy."

Ohh... Can you feel that determination? The driving beat, the swelling music, feel the courage rising in your breast!

(WYATT remains reluctant.)

Feel it!

(SONNY pounds the beat out on WYATT'S chest with her fist.)

Do you feel it now?

WYATT

Ouch! Yes, I feel it! Ow, stop!

SONNY

Just feel it! "Shine bright like a diamond. Shine bright like a diamond. You're beautiful like diamonds in the sky!"

(WYATT slowly gets into it, tapping his foot at first, then drumming on the bed spread.)

That's it! Work it out!

(SONNY rises and starts dancing, then pulls WYATT up too. They dance through the final notes.)

Woo! That's the stuff! Yeah! Alright! You felt it! I'm proud of you!

WYATT

God, thanks. Sheesh. I don't remember the last time I danced.

SONNY

Dancing is good for you! Get's the blood flowing and the endorphins going! Yeah! Woo!

(beat)

Alright. Now I should really finish my rounds!

(SONNY opens the door to go, but stops.)

You coming, new friend?

WYATT

Uhh... No?

SONNY

Wrong answer!

(SONNY grabs WYATT by the shirt and pulls him through the door. Fade to black.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [2]

(WYATT and DICK'S dorm room, as it looked in Scene 1, except the lights are on, the candle isn't burning, and WYATT sits at his desk with an open laptop and textbook, typing busily. It's evening.)

(DICK and SONNY enter from the hallway in the throes of passion. SONNY pushes DICK up against the dorm room door, kissing him. The sound startles WYATT. DICK fumbles with the doorknob without giving it his attention. It persists long enough that WYATT rises to his feet, unlocks, and opens the door. DICK and SONNY tumble in atop one another.)

DICK

Whoa, Wy! Holy shit, bro! That was some scary shit!
Why'd you open the door?

(SONNY laughs off the incident.)

WYATT

Because you guys were scratching at the door like cats in heat. If I had known you were actually bringing the heat, I would have thought twice. But this is kinda funny too. Guess even "Big Dick" Sherwood doesn't always see the offense's move.

SONNY

Oh, solid burn, Wy! Now, help me up.

(WYATT grabs SONNY'S outstretched hand and pulls her off of DICK.)

DICK

Ha ha. Very funny indeed, Knott. I'd like to see you out on the field one of these days, puttin' your money where your ass is!

WYATT

I don't think that's how the idiom goes, dude.

DICK

You're the idiot here, Knott. Don't push me.

WYATT

Alright, alright. Whatever you say, big guy. No offense meant. Just, do your fucking against the wall instead of the door next time and we'll avoid all of this in the future.

SONNY

Speaking of which--Dick, I'm going to use the restroom. But I'll be right back for you.

(SONNY winks and exits through the door.
WYATT sits back down at his desk, no longer looking at DICK when speaking.)

WYATT

You guys didn't come here to get nasty, did you? I really need to finish my homework.

DICK

Nah, don't worry, Knott. We'll go back to her room if that's the way things go. She doesn't have a roommate, ya know. Most RA's don't, in fact.

WYATT

Guess you're just one of the lucky ones, Dick.

DICK

Yeah...Something like that.

(DICK removes his shirt and wanders about the room, retrieving different shirts from the piles on the floor and smelling the armpits, turning his nose

up at each in turn.)
Hey, Wy, you got a T-shirt I could borrow?

(WYATT turns to look at DICK.)

WYATT
Why? What's wrong with yours?

DICK
They all stink. Besides, one of yours would make my muscles look bigger. I bet Sonny'd think that's hot.

WYATT
(reluctantly) Yeah, sure, whatever, in the second drawer.

(WYATT returns to his work. DICK knocks him lightly in the back of the head.)

DICK
Thanks, bro. I promise I won't stretch it out too much.

WYATT
Yeah, yeah. Just don't get used to it.

(Dick pulls a black dashiki from WYATT'S drawers and puts it on.)

DICK
Hey, this is pretty comfortable.
(beat)

How 'bout it? Do I look *cultured*?

(WYATT only grunts.)

So. Sonny told me you two "hung out." The other night when I wasn't around. Said she came to surprise me but all she found was you writing poetry by that stinkin' candle again. Said she oughtta write you up for it.

WYATT
(Disinterested) Did she now?

DICK
Yeah, she did, but it's cool. I talked her out of it. Told her you really didn't have much else in your life,

so why didn't she let you have this one little thing.
So you're welcome.

WYATT

(Sarcastically) Oh. My. God. Thank you, Dick. The lavender candle really is all I cling to in this world. It reminds me of my dear departed grandmothers like nothing else ever could. Thank you, thank you.

DICK

Yeah, you're welcome. But don't get any ideas, Knott. She's *my* girl. Just because she's throwing you a sympathy bone, don't mean she's DTF, ya know? She's got all the bone she'll ever need. Right. Here.

(DICK makes lewd gestures with his hips.)

WYATT

Grow up, Dick. I understand the nature of platonic relationships. Thanks.

(WYATT turns to face DICK again.)

Hey. Why'd I never know you had a fiance though?

DICK

What? Are we friends now or somethin'? That I'd be spilling my guts to you?

WYATT

No. You know. It's just...You know...

(DICK grabs WYATT by the shoulder. WYATT winces.)

DICK

(Angrily) Hey, man. I'm trying to be nice to you. Don't fuck this up for me. Our lives are none of your goddamn business. And I will expect you to remember that.

(WYATT shoves his hand away.)

WYATT

Jesus! Okay! I was just asking! I figure, two guys

spend a semester in an 8x8 cell together they learn a thing or two about each other, that's all. Like how you told Sonny I was suicidal?

DICK

Aw, shit, she told you that, man?

WYATT

Yeah. She did. It was awesome.

DICK

Damnit, Sonny. I told her to keep her mouth shut about it! Didn't expect you'd be the one she told though.

WYATT

Oh? Who *did* you expect then?

DICK

I dunno, her mom or some shit? They like to talk. A lot.

(beat)

Anyway, sorry, bro. That one was my bad, really.

WYATT

(sighing) Whatever. It's fine. Not like it's really a secret anyway. At least I don't have to feel like I'm hiding something.

(SONNY enters through the door.)

SONNY

Ta-da! Your darling monarch has returned!

DICK

My queen!

(WYATT responds with a weak bow.)

SONNY

So, what do you say we go back to my room, Prince Charming? I've got some leftover lasagna from last weekend's floor event and a chilled bottle of--

(WYATT locks eyes with SONNY,
disapproval on his face.)

--Gatorade. With our names all over it.

DICK

Aw, you really know how to spoil a guy, babe. Carbs and electrolytes? What more could a guy ask for!

SONNY

(suggestively) Dessert, perhaps?

WYATT

Okay, can you guys just go now? Some of us actually care about class in the morning.

DICK

He's right, babe. Let's go. I'm hungry and the air in here is kinda...weird smelling.

SONNY

Okay, love. Yeah, let's go.

(beat)

Thinking about writing any poetry tonight, Wy?

WYATT

(irritated) No, I've got too much homework to do right now.

SONNY

I'm glad. Really, I am. Do your best.

WYATT

Yeah, thanks.

DICK

Yeah, I don't want the whole room smelling like lavender when I get back.

WYATT

Go!

(SONNY and DICK exit through the door.)

WYATT

(shouting) And for the record the weird smell is your damn fault! Ugh...

(WYATT taps his phone and "Diamonds" by Rihanna picks up in the middle and plays for a few bars. Blackout.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [3]

(Lights up on The Quad, midday. The impression of bright Autumn sky, yellow-green grass, and the shade of an adolescent tree. WYATT sits on a quilt staring intently at his smart phone. A carved wooden pipe smolders in his other hand.)

(SONNY enters.)

SONNY

Hey, Wy!

(WYATT is startled.)

WYATT

Oh! H-hey, Sonny!

SONNY

Look at you! Hanging out on the Quad and... smoking?
Like the cool kids!

(SONNY kneels down beside WYATT.)

(quietly) You know there's no smoking allowed on campus, right?

WYATT

Quit being such a square, Sonny!

SONNY

Wy... I'm an RA. That makes me, like, a professional square. Someone is going to reprimand you sooner or later.

WYATT

Is it gonna' be you?

(beat)

SONNY

Fine. No. But I'm not covering for you either.

WYATT

Relaaax. I'll just knock it out and apologize if I have to. It'll be fine.

SONNY

Well, whatever, it's your educational experience.

WYATT

Thank you.

(WYATT pulls at the the pipe and returns to reading his phone. SONNY examines their surroundings, searching.)

SONNY

So... This quilt is quite the piece of art. All the colors and patterns. I never would have suspected you owned something so... exciting.

WYATT

(chuckling uncomfortably) Um. Yeah, thanks. I think.

(beat)

My aunt sewed it for my high school graduation. It's composed of fabrics from all over the world. My uncle is in the air force, ya see, so they've lived all over. My aunt sews a lot, so inevitably she collects a lot of really cool and unique fabrics. She makes stuff like this for all us nieces and nephews.

SONNY

Cool! I often wish I could sew. My grandmother could, but she died when I was young. And I never saw my mother doing it. She'd just buy second hand and we'd wear it until there were holes. Wash, rinse, repeat! I can't even sew a button on straight! Do you sew at all?

WYATT

No. Never cared to learn, I guess.

(beat)

Kinda makes you regret the things you'll never know,

huh?

SONNY

There's always time!

WYATT

Easy for you to say...

(SONNY slaps WYATT'S arm.)

WYATT

Ow! What was that for?!

SONNY

Quit spouting that fatalistic bullshit, Wy! It's not good for me, and it sure as shit ain't helping you.

WYATT

Jesus. Is this going to be a thing with us?

SONNY

What -- you saying stupid shit and me putting you in your place?

WYATT

Damn. That's cold.

SONNY

(imitating him) Life's cold, Sonny. Accept that death knocks at your door when you least expect it. Like a Mormon.

WYATT

Hey, maybe the Mormons deserve it, but I do not sound like that!

SONNY

You sound *exactly* like that.

WYATT

Alright, fine! You win. Maybe I do. Read too much Cioran or something.

SONNY

Chi-who?

WYATT

Emil Cioran? He was a French-Romanian Nihilist. Among the most famous.

SONNY

So is that what you're doing on this beautiful spring day? Reading tomes of French nihilistic philosophy?

WYATT

No.

(beat)

I'm reading Japanese death poems.

SONNY

Jesus Christ, Wy!

WYATT

What?! They're beautiful!

SONNY

Yes, it's a romantically depressing thought. I get it.

WYATT

Good then.

(WYATT resumes reading his phone and pulling at the pipe. Beat.)

Ya wanna hear one?

SONNY

Ugh. Yes, fine.

WYATT

You want a pull of this?

(WYATT offers SONNY the pipe.)

SONNY

No thanks, I don't smoke.

WYATT

It's just a spliff.

SONNY

Wyatt!

WYATT

What? It helps me manage my anxiety!

(beat)

You could really benefit from a little anxiety management.

SONNY

I have pharmaceuticals for that, thankyouverymuch. Are you going to read me one of these poems or not?

WYATT

Of course!

(reading) A small night storm blows
Saying 'falling is the essence of a flower'
Preceding those who hesitate

SONNY

Well, it is a very sad and pretty image.

WYATT

Yeah. The novelist Yukio Mishima wrote that one before he tried to overthrow the Japanese government in 1970.

SONNY

Wow. Heavy. Didn't go so well?

WYATT

Nah. The country wasn't interested so he cut his own belly open and died.

SONNY

Jesus.

WYATT

Yeah. I guess he romanticized imperial Japan and didn't want to exist without it.

SONNY

Romanticizing the past to spurn the future. Not much for optimism, huh?

WYATT

Ya know, Cioran said, "only optimists commit suicide. Optimists who no longer succeed at being optimists."

SONNY

Jesus.

WYATT

Yes, "Others, having no reason to live, also have no reason to die."

(beat)

SONNY

So you were an optimist once.

(WYATT lowers his phone again.)

WYATT

Maybe. Probably. Yeah.

(SONNY smiles.)

What?

SONNY

Nothing. Just smiling.

WYATT

Hm. Seems suspicious to me.

(Blackout.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [4]

(WYATT and DICK'S dorm room. It's dark save for a table lamp lit on WYATT'S desk. The candle is gone. WYATT scribbles in a notebook. "Love Without Tragedy / Mother Mary" by Rihanna plays.)

(DICK and TRIXIE enter from the hallway in the throes of passion. TRIXIE pushes DICK up against the dorm room door, kissing him. The sound startles WYATT. DICK fumbles with the doorknob without giving it his attention.)

WYATT

Damnit! I told you guys! Fuck on the wall, not the door!

(WYATT unlocks and yanks the door open. DICK and TRIXIE tumble in atop each other.)

DICK

Ow! Damnit, Wy!

WYATT

I'm not even sorry, dude. I already told... you...

TRIXIE

Ow, man. Is this your roommate, Dicky? You're right, he is kind weird. What are you wearing?

WYATT

It's a dashiki. And it's comfortable.

DICK

(In unison with WYATT) It's comfortable.

(beat)

What? It is.

WYATT

Who is--

(DICK punches WYATT in the shin.)

Ow! Son of a bitch!

DICK

Shut up, Knott! Don't say another word, fucker.

WYATT

It was just a question, Dick!

DICK

What're you doing here? The lights were off but it doesn't smell like lavender.

WYATT

Yeah, well, I'm trying something new.

DICK

Where'd you get that lamp?

WYATT

Knicked it from the common area.

(beat)

Are you and your... "friend" stayin'?

DICK

Hey, baby, what's the sitch' with your room?

TRIXIE

My roommate's a nerd. Total prude. She'd report me if I walked around the room naked.

WYATT

It's okay, Dick, I was just leaving.

(WYATT grabs his pen, inkwell, and a notebook and makes for the door. DICK gets up and quickly blocks his path.)

Get out of my way, "Big Dick."

DICK

Don't you go where I think you're going. I told you my life is none of your business.

WYATT

Yeah, well, that's the crazy thing, isn't it, Dick? Nobody's life is ever truly their own. Everything you do affects everyone else in the world. Butterfly effect, Dick.

DICK

The Kutch'? What's he got to do with anything.

WYATT

Get out of my way, Dick. I don't really have an urge to be the Abigail Williams to your Goody Proctor. Not worth the pain.

DICK

Who?

WYATT

Nevermind. Let me through. I'm just going somewhere quiet to write.

(DICK hesitates, but let's WYATT pass.)

DICK

Alright, dude, but so help me God...

WYATT

I don't even know if your condition is in *his* purview.
(WYATT exits through the door, slamming it behind him.)

TRIXIE

Sheesh. What a weirdo.

DICK

Hush up, Trix. Now come to daddy.

(DICK and TRIXIE come together in embrace as lights dim Center Stage and come up on the Hallway. DICK and TRIXIE

continue to disrobe and climb under the sheets on the lower bunk. SONNY enters with a bag containing a paper cup of soup.)

WYATT

Jesus! Sonny.

SONNY

Well, nice to see you too, Wy. What're you up to?

WYATT

Y-ya know, just doing some writing.

SONNY

But it doesn't smell like lavender.

WYATT

Yeah, well, I'm trying something new.

(beat)

What are you doing right now? Why don't you come with me? Hang out.

SONNY

That's thoughtful, Wyatt, I would like that.

WYATT

Great! Let's go--

SONNY

--But I gotta see Dick first. He didn't make it to dinner tonight. He's not feeling well, huh?

WYATT

Yeah... you could say that...

SONNY

Well, you go on ahead. I'll catch up with you. Library?

WYATT

On second thought, why don't you give it to me and I'll give it to him? I think he's really contagious. You wouldn't want to come down with it too.

SONNY

Don't be silly, Wy. We've shared a lot more than the flu. I'll be fine.

(SONNY continues towards the door. WYATT catches up with her and blocks her path.)

WYATT

Wait! I'm ready to talk about that poem. Ya know, "Thanks, Obama"?

(SONNY touches WYATT tenderly and coos.)

SONNY

That's great, Wyatt. I'd love to talk.

WYATT

Great.

SONNY

Just as soon as I deliver this soup. I won't stay long, trust me.

WYATT

But-

SONNY

I appreciate your concern. I'll be fine.

(Resolute, SONNY pushes on and knocks on the door. WYATT hangs his head and moves to leave, but watches over his back.)

Dick? Dick? I know you're in. Wyatt told me.

(WYATT throws his hands in the air and clutches his head. DICK and TRIXIE startle from their place on the bed. DICK gets up and creeps towards the door.)

How are you feeling? Dick?

(DICK opens the door a crack.)

DICK

(in his best faux-sick voice) Hey, babe, what're you doing here? I thought you were hanging out with your mom tonight?

SONNY

I was, but she went back to the hotel room. Said something about an upset stomach, something about the wine or bad scallops? I don't know--you know mom.

DICK

Haha. Yeah. Hypochondriac.

(SONNY touches DICK's face tenderly.)

SONNY

No. Behave. She's just sensitive. She was asking what we thought a Fall wedding date. She said she looks better in fall palette. And I kinda like the juxtaposition of dormancy and new life. It's poetic.

DICK

You know me, babe. I'm into whatever position you are.

SONNY

Mom said she missed you tonight. (suggestively) I did too. Can I come in? I brought soup.

DICK

N-no. I'm sorry. You shouldn't. I don't know what I have but I really don't want you catching it.

(DICK snatches the bag of soup.)

SONNY

It's okay, babe, like I was telling Wyatt, we've shared worse. Where's your shirt? You must be cold. (suggestively) I can help.

(TRIXIE gets up and quickly dresses.
DICK is distracted by this.)

DICK

Actually, I'm burnin' up, babe. Whatever I got is really wreckin' me.

SONNY

I'm sorry, dear. Why don't you let me play sexy nurse?
It'll be fun.

DICK

(quietly over his shoulder) No... What're you doing...
Hey...

SONNY

Dick?

(TRIXIE pushes DICK out of the way and
exits the door.)

TRIXIE

(to SONNY) Look, I'm sorry. I didn't know anything
about this. I swear. I don't want any part in this
bullshit.

(TRIXIE glares at DICK, then hurries
down the hall and exits. SONNY is
stunned and confused.)

SONNY

You... Son of a bitch!

DICK

Sonny! Love! Wait!

(DICK reaches for SONNY through the
door, but SONNY slams the door, smashing
DICK'S hand.)

Ow! Fuck my face, that hurt. Fuck!

(SONNY runs away down the hall. She
stops before WYATT, who's been there,
but fighting the urge to watch. SONNY
stares WYATT down, then slaps him. SONNY
exits. WYATT is stunned for a few
moments.)

WYATT

Sonny! Wait! I'm sorry!

(WYATT doesn't move, but watches where SONNY was, as if transfixed by an afterimage. Then he looks back to cracked dorm door, the lights now on and DICK'S curses still ringing through it. Blackout.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [5]

(WYATT and DICK'S dorm room, early evening. A bath towel is jammed under the door. The scented candle burns on WYATT'S desk again beside the stolen lamp. The room is hazy with smoke. WYATT and DICK sit near each other, passing WYATT'S pipe back and forth, trading pulls. DICK tends to cough after each pull. DICK'S hand is wrapped in a cast.)

DICK

(staring at the cast) It's not how I imagined college, dude. Nope.

WYATT

Which part? Being a football star? Having a fiance? Cheating on her?

DICK

Yeah--well, no. The football stuff, yeah, the finance stuff, no. I mean, eventually, ya know, cheating and all.

(DICK chuckles and punches WYATT in the knee.)

Not in college though. Football, though. Yeah, that was my dream. My purpose. It's all I ever cared about. Thought I'd just be blockin' and fuckin' my way through this school. Come out the other end with a pro contract and no children. Then Sonny and I started dating in high school and everything changed. I saw something outside of football, outside of myself, ya know?

WYATT

So what happened?

DICK

I dunno. I guess I saw a future where I was bangin' only one chick--can you imagine it, Knott? One chick. Forever. Just one.

WYATT

(dismissive) Sounds awful, sure. Why didn't you tell Sonny how you felt?

DICK

I don't know. Didn't want to deal with her cryin' and stuff, I guess.

WYATT

Scared?

DICK

Pfft. Fuck that! I ain't scared of nothin'. Least of all some tears.

WYATT

Alright. Whatever you say, "Big Dick."

DICK

Tch. I'll show you "big dick," ya' smug little bastard.

WYATT

It's okay to be scared, Dick. Own it. Drink it in.

(WYATT inhales deeply.)

Smells like sweet, sweet acceptance, doesn't it?

DICK

Smells like weed, cigs, and flowers.

WYATT

Exactly, Dick. Exactly.

(WYATT and DICK pass the pipe back and forth for a few silent moments.)

You gonna' apologize to her?

DICK

To Sonny? Shit, man, no. She doesn't want to see my

face. And I don't really want to talk about it.

WYATT

Fraidy Cat. Is that fair to her?

DICK

Fair? Fuck fair and fuck you. You see this? (indicates his cast) This is what scares me, man, nursing this for the next month. She got hers. But whatever, I'll just have to double down. KFC-style.

WYATT

A hand for a heart? Still kinda' seems like she's getting the short end of that stick.

DICK

I don't care, dude. I feel bad, what more do you want from me? Let's stop talking about me. Since we're buddy-buddy now, I want to ask you somethin'.

WYATT

Dick, I--

DICK

Why'd you do it? Try to off yourself?

WYATT

Dick, I don't really want to talk about that.

DICK

No, I don't care. I didn't want to talk about Sonny, but there we go. So, you, you talk about this.

WYATT

Dick--

DICK

I'm you're RA. I demand it.

WYATT

Sheesh. That power really goes to your head, huh?

DICK

I don't know if it's the power or the pot.

WYATT

Yeah yeah...

(beat)

I don't know, man. It was a stupid thing to do. I shouldn't have.

DICK

Well, no shit, dummy, but you did.

WYATT

I don't know. I guess I was feeling... trapped.

DICK

Trapped?

WYATT

Yeah. Trapped. Like a factory farm animal. You know. You get it. Your world is no bigger than this tiny box and you're slowly dying, crawling second by crawling second. And there's no outside world, and the past is shit, and the present is more shit, and all I could see in the future was more shit. So I was like, "Why wait?"

DICK

And then you tried to off yourself.

WYATT

Yup.

DICK

Why didn't you just fuck some chicks, do some shots, and sleep it off?

WYATT

I mean, it does sound like the beginnings of a charmingly self-destructive cycle, Dick.

DICK

I dunno. I'm doin' alright.

WYATT

Aside from the glaringly obvious dysfunction in your life?

DICK

Alright, whatever. So where'd you go wrong?

WYATT

Trying to do it on campus. Too many eyes, too many "concerned" individuals. But they don't care about you, not really, just how your actions reflect on them.

DICK

Whoa. Slow down. How do you figure?

WYATT

Well, take my parents. They were "concerned," my mother always in the hospital bringing flowers and talking to the doctors. But when I finally got out she couldn't even talk to me, just started crying every time she looked at me, made dad do all the talking. "You need help" this and "you need to reapply yourself" that. I didn't. Fuck shrinks. Fakes like everyone else. You know what no one ever did, though? Friends, family, administrators? They never asked me *why*, not really. They never tried to understand me, not without judging me first. Their eyes just gloss over like dolls, all full of pity and self-righteousness.

DICK

Dude. Maybe... Maybe. You don't want them to understand.

WYATT

What?

DICK

Maybe you *like* being different, like feeling like an *alien*.

(WYATT opens his mouth to respond, but reconsiders and turns away, gazing through the floor. Blackout.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [6]

(WYATT and DICK'S dorm room, late evening. The scented candle burns on WYATT'S Desk while he scribbles in a notebook. "Numb" by Rihanna is playing.)

(SONNY enters and knocks softly on the door. WYATT stops the music.)

WYATT

Uh. Who's there?

SONNY

It's me. It's Sonny.

WYATT

Sonny?

(WYATT hesitates a moment, then jumps up and tugs the door open.)

Uh, hey... Sonny. How are you?

SONNY

Are you listening to Rihanna?

WYATT

Oh, uh, no. Well, maybe, yeah.

(SONNY smiles weakly.)

SONNY

I told you its powerful stuff.

WYATT

I guess you did.

(beat)

I'm sorry. Dick's not here right now--

SONNY

Game night. I know. I came to see you.

WYATT

Oh, sure, um, come in. Please.

SONNY

(entering the room) Thank you.

(SONNY looks ghostly blue pale, fragile with dark rings under her eyes. She moves with with a tired stiffness.)

WYATT

Whoa. Um, are you okay? You don't look so hot.

SONNY

Can we sit down?

WYATT

Oh! Yeah, yeah, of course.

(WYATT pushes piled clothes from the bottom bed and sits, indicating SONNY sit beside him. SONNY sits and lays her head on WYATT'S shoulder.)

SONNY

Can we keep listening to Rihanna?

WYATT

Oh. Uh, y-yeah, of course.

(WYATT pulls his phone from his pocket and restarts the playback. SONNY sighs and slumps into WYATT, placing her hand on his knee. WYATT hesitates, then rests his hand on hers.)

SONNY

Ah, yeah, I love this one.

WYATT

Uh, yeah, it's really been... resonating with me. Lately, I mean.

SONNY

Yeah...

(They listen in silence until the song is through. SONNY begins to sniffle, escalating into sobs.)

Wy?

WYATT

Sonny? What's wrong?

(She sobs harder.)

What's wrong?

SONNY

I-I think I did something stupid.

WYATT

No no no, Sonny, Dick was the stupid one. He can be a real piece of shit sometimes. Reeaall piece of shit.

SONNY

T-That's not what I mean.

WYATT

What do you mean?

(beat)

SONNY

I-I took some pills. Like, a lot of pills.

WYATT

(frantic) What? Sonny!

SONNY

(choking back sobs) I-I said it was stupid!

WYATT

Oh fuck! Sonny! (fumbling with his phone) We need to call you an ambulance!

(SONNY, with sudden lucidity, obstructs WYATT'S phone with a hand.)

SONNY

No, no doctors! They'll take everything! I came to you because I *thought* you'd understand! I don't want people to see me like this, to think of me like--

WYATT

Unstable? Dangerous? Like me...

SONNY

Wyatt! It's not always about you!

(WYATT remains silent while SONNY continues to cry.)

WYATT

(quietly) Do you want to die?

SONNY

What?

WYATT

Do. You. Want. To die.

SONNY

Wy, I--

WYATT

(intensely) Do you want to die?!

SONNY

Yes! I do!

(SONNY breaks down.)

I do! I do... I do...

WYATT

Why?! Why...

(WYATT begins to cry too.)

Why, Sonny... Why...

SONNY

Because it's over! It's all over...

WYATT

Sonny... What's over?

SONNY

Everything, Wyatt! My relationship! My future! Now, my job, my scholarships! Everything!

WYATT

Sonny...

SONNY

You should understand!

WYATT

Sonny... I do... Which is why I'm at a loss here.. This is... crazy...

SONNY

So now I'm crazy, Wyatt? *I'm the crazy one?*

WYATT

Jesus, Sonny, no. Not like that! Honestly... I just... Never thought of *this* side of the coin before... It's... Agonizing...

SONNY

I'm sorry, Wy. It was wrong of me to put this on you.

(SONNY rises to leave. She stumbles and WYATT steadies her, then helps her back to sitting.)

WYATT

(growing in intensity) No. You won't. I won't let you. I won't leave you alone!

(beat)

Just like you won't leave me alone...

(WYATT envelops SONNY'S hand in both of his as she cries.)

What did you take?

(beat)

Sonny?

SONNY

Off-brand Cymbalta...

(beat)

WYATT

I'm sorry, Sonny. I didn't think... I'm so sorry.

SONNY

We're all broken, aren't we, Wyatt?

WYATT

Despite our greatest efforts...

(beat)

Why do you want to die, Sonny?

SONNY

I shouldn't have to tell you...

WYATT

I know, Sonny. I know. But why don't you try?

SONNY

I don't want to talk about it anymore. It's done.

WYATT

Soo, What? You just want to sit here until you slip peacefully into Death's embrace?

SONNY

I dunno... Something like that.

WYATT

Jesus, Sonny...

(WYATT inhales deeply, and exhales slowly.)

SONNY

Do you want to hear my death poem?

WYATT

What?

SONNY

I wrote a death poem. Do you want to hear it?

WYATT

Absolutely not.

SONNY

You're not a little bit curious?

WYATT

Not even a little.

SONNY

But I wrote it. Thought a lot about it. It's in my room... But I don't know if my mom would let anyone read it...

WYATT

Still a "no."

(beat)

SONNY

I'd really like to have your critical opinion on it...

(beat)

WYATT

Fine. Alright. Let's hear it.

SONNY

A butterfly lost
In the hurricane's blue eye
Drowned in open sky

WYATT

(thoughtfully) Pretty image. The rhyme is nice too.

SONNY

I thought a lot about Mr. Mishima's poem. Did you write one? A death poem? Ya know. Back then?

WYATT

No. I didn't. Do you... Want to listen to Rihanna?

(SONNY hesitates, then nods and lays his head against WYATT'S shoulder again.

WYATT plays "We Found Love" by Rihanna from his phone.)

SONNY

(after the verse) "What it takes to come alive." Pfft. Funny.

WYATT

I guess... What do you think though?

SONNY

(weakly) I dunno. Love?

WYATT

Yeah, but, honestly, what is "love."

SONNY

"Baby, don't hurt me?"

WYATT

Funny.

SONNY

Fuck if I know.

WYATT

You've been spending too much time around me... I think it's a willingness to do things you wouldn't do otherwise. Self-sacrifice.

SONNY

(half laughs) You got that right...

WYATT

But to come alive... Desire? Definitely. What are we if we don't want?

SONNY

Being?

WYATT

Being is doing and doing is wanting. Look at us right now: you're still "being."

SONNY

At the moment...

WYATT

So you're still wanting. What do you want?

SONNY

Death?

WYATT

Well, assume it's already yours.

SONNY

I dunno then. Peace? What do you want?

WYATT

I want to "come alive." Like in the song. I *don't* want to feel alone anymore.

SONNY

Oh, Wyatt... Aren't we all alone?

WYATT

Maybe... But just because it's true doesn't mean we need to feel like it is...

SONNY

That sounds borderline delusional.

WYATT

Yeah, but isn't a lot of life delusion to some extent? The inaccuracy of memory, confidence in the future... Fuck, the internalization of the external--one could argue relativity is a delusion.

SONNY

That's mighty optimistic of ya, Wy...

WYATT

I guess it is, huh? Maybe Dick was right...

(SONNY snorts a half laugh. Her eyes have been slowly closing and her speech has slowly declined in volume and articulation.)

SONNY

...That's a good one...

(beat)

Sonny?

(beat)

Sonny?

(beat)

Hey, Sonny! Wake up. Stay with me, Sonny!

(WYATT tries to rouse SONNY, shaking her, lightly slapping her face. Her eyes only flutter at best.)

Sonny! Shit. Okay. Fuck. Okay, alright. Call 911. Yeah. Fuck!

(WYATT frantically dials "911".
Blackout.)

ACT [I]

SCENE [7]

(WYATT and DICK'S dorm room, mid-afternoon. IT looks recently cleaned. The piles of clothes are gone and the desks arranged neatly. The lamp is gone from WYATT'S desk, but the scented candle burns there. WYATT'S laptop sits closed beside the candle. DICK is sitting on the edge of the bottom bed and WYATT is putting some things in a dresser drawer before closing it.)

WYATT

Okay, how's it look in here?

DICK

Cleaner than it did on day one. Huh. It's kinda nice. Smells a little bit like a pine tree, though.

WYATT

A warm and welcoming pine tree.

DICK

Sure. That.

WYATT

You sure you don't want to be here when she comes by?

DICK

Pfft. Fuck no, man. Too much drama for me. I am not emotionally mature enough for any of this. So I'm going to bounce now before I risk it.

(DICK rises and makes his way to the door and opens it, but stops.)

Hey, Knott?

WYATT

Yeah, Dick?

DICK

I'm sorry, man. You've been a good roommate.

WYATT

Thanks, Dick. I appreciate that.

DICK

Don't get used to it.

(DICK closes the door and exits. WYATT sits at the desk, pulls a piece of notebook paper out, and readies his pen and inkwell. Then, he rises and approaches the light switch, rests his finger on the lever, but hesitates. He removes his finger, sits back down, and begins writing. SONNY enters after some time. She cautiously approaches the door and knocks.)

WYATT

(startled) Sonny!

(WYATT races to the door and yanks it open. WYATT and SONNY stare at each other a moment, frozen. SONNY breaks the standoff and throws her arms around WYATT. He returns the embrace.)

SONNY

Oh, Wyatt! I'm so sorry!

WYATT

No, Sonny, please. I'm sorry!

(They both have begun to cry.)

SONNY

I don't want to die, Wyatt! And I don't want to feel so lost!

WYATT

I know, Sonny. I feel so responsible for this. I didn't know what to do, but I kept Dick's sordid little secret from you and it was a betrayal. I'm sorry. I should have been a better friend to you!

SONNY

(choking back sobs) I mean, yeah, it was fucking stupid.

WYATT

Alright--

SONNY

And fucking selfish.

WYATT

Okay--

SONNY

And a fucking betrayal of our bond.

WYATT

I know--

SONNY

And that's, like, ninth-level-of-Hell shit.

WYATT

(sobbing) Sonny. Jesus. I know. I'm sorry. It was stupid. *Fucking* stupid.

(beat)

SONNY

I forgive you... We were both stupid.

(beat)

I-I was just so scared, Wy. I was. I don't think the drugs would let me feel it, but I knew it. In my head, I knew it.

(SONNY'S tears renew themselves.)

Thank you! Thank you! So. Much.

(SONNY pulls back and suddenly kisses WYATT. WYATT refrains from returning the action. They separate.)

WYATT

(shocked) Wha-what was that?

SONNY

Oh! I'm sorry, Wyatt! You've just been so caring. I mean, you saved my life! Not everyone would do that.

WYATT

R-Sonny... I'm glad that I can support you, really, but, we're two very fragile people.

SONNY

Like a pair of China dolls.

WYATT

Yeah... But, Sonny, I need to tell you something. I'm joining the Peace Corps.

SONNY

The Peace Corps.? You're leaving?! But what about all that stuff about "renewed commitment"?

WYATT

I'm sorry, Sonny. I was shitting myself. And you. I was as aimless as I've ever been. I was just bending to social pressures. And things can only bend so far before they break. I had already learned that once... But I'm being honest now. I was--am... afraid. Afraid of betrayal, afraid of failure, afraid of being lost and alone. The power over my own life? That's control, at least.

SONNY

I get that, Wyatt... I guess I did the same thing... But I didn't mean to sacrifice your sense of control in doing it...

WYATT

It was a self-sacrifice.

(WYATT and SONNY share a knowing kind of smile.)

SONNY

So. The Peace Corps. then...

WYATT

Yes! To do something for the world community, to be a part of something greater, based more so on my desire to contribute than my ability to excel.

(beat)

Why don't you come with me?

SONNY

Wy... I-I can't just leave. I mean, the school didn't fire me from my position, just put me on a "health related" leave of absence. I would feel like I'm abandoning my obligations. And School? I can't just quit that.

WYATT

Sonny, Sonny, I know. I'm not suggesting we pack our bags tonight and hop a plane to Tibet! I mean, there's a whole application and approval process. The earliest I'd be leaving is probably Summer, realistically. You could absolutely finish the school year.

SONNY

I don't know, Wy... It sounds like a huge commitment.

WYATT

Of course it is. But so is life!

SONNY

Wow. You're being intense about this.

WYATT

Sorry.

SONNY

No! no... It's good. I'm glad. I just... I just think I need to sleep on something like this. It's a big deal.

I mean, I just stepped back into the shoes of the living, kinda...

(WYATT takes a seat at his desk and opens his laptop.)

WYATT

I feel the same way.

(beat)

Just, think about it, okay? I know it's not easy, but I think it's important.

SONNY

I know you do, Wy.

(beat)

I think I'm going to go lie down for a bit, ya know, collect myself. Apparently, my mom got the school to let her clean my room while I was in the hospital. I'm sure I'll have to find everything again. But she means well. Do you... want to meet in the caf later for dinner?

WYATT

Absolutely. I'm going to get this application done right now and then I'm free whenever you need me.

SONNY

Sounds great. I'll text you later.

(SONNY moves to exit the room and close the door, but WYATT stops her.)

WYATT

Hey, Sonny?

SONNY

Yeah, Wy?

WYATT

Would you, actually, leave the door open?

SONNY

Yeah, Wy.

WYATT

Oh, and one more thing--

(WYATT plays "Diamonds" by Rihanna.)

(mouthing) "Shine bright like a diamond. Shine bright like a diamond. Find light in the beautiful sea, I choose to be happy."

(They share a smile. Blackout.)

END.