

“Inside Doubt”

Characters

Thoreau - Abby
Joy - Derek
Anger - Robert
Sadness - Aria
Supporting characters - Rahul
Narrator - Anyone off stage

Props

Signs
Bed sheet/pillow
Woodchuck
Book
Axe
Controls
Nature & flashback sounds

Costumes

Thoreau - white shirt, black jacket, beard, bow tie
Joy - yellow shirt, blue wig
Anger - Shirt, tie, pants, fire incorporated
Sadness - blue baggy clothes, blue bandana
Supporting characters - flannel, bow tie

Intro

Thoreau is on his deathbed. The narrator walks on stage.

Narrator (Robert): It's the Spring of 1862, at Thoreau's family home in Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau is on his deathbed.

Narrator walks off stage. Emerson walks into the room.

Emerson: My good man Thoreau, how have you been?

Thoreau: Hey Emerson, my body is teeming with disease but other than that -- I've managed. It's been a long time since I've seen you. How have you been?

Emerson: As well as man can be. So, your journey is nearing its close, do you have any regrets?

Thoreau: I'd rather not define my existence through regrets.

Emerson: Ah, yes. You and your philosophical ventures. Having spent all of that time in the woods, did you find your answer? Your purpose?

Thoreau: What are you asking me?

Emerson: Have you made peace with God?

Thoreau: Peace with God...?

Flashback music plays as Thoreau and Emerson leaves the stage.

Scene 1: Joy

Narrator walks on stage.

Narrator (Rahul): The year is 1845. It's been three years since Thoreau returned from college where John, his brother, died of tetanus after a shaving incident. Now home, Thoreau pursues his own philosophies.

Narrator walks off stage. Thoreau is standing in his house looking at the floor, frustrated and in deep thought. Anger, Sadness, and Joy come on stage.

Anger (yelling): This is so FRUSTRATING! Everyone around us is living such terrible lives of unnecessary desperation. There must be an easier way.

Thoreau (looks up): What is the point of life? Why am I here? There must be a solution to all these problems!
(Thoreau and all emotions return to deep thought)

Joy: (Thoreau lightens up) Hey! Why don't we try some simple living for two years at Walden Pond? We'll be able to discover what it truly means to live untouched by human institutions -- we'll suck out the very marrow of life!

Thoreau: Nice thinking, me! *(points to brain)* Let's move to the woods!

Narrator walks on.

Narrator (Rahul): They move to the woods.

Narrator walks off. Nature sounds plays.

Sadness: I wonder if John has a house like this one now... I wish he'd come to visit sometime.

Joy: (ignoring Sadness) These woods are a much-needed change from the environment in Concord. With only food, shelter, clothing, and fuel, we can definitely find a way to live simply and make an amazing life with our \$28.125 cabin.

Nature sounds stop.

Sadness: Why are we living in this dump?

Joy: *Dump?* This place isn't a dump, Sadness. Check this out! *(takes controls)*

Thoreau: Amazing! If I put my mind to it, any place is Heaven, and I can be the god of my own realm. I am finally at peace in my solitude. Wait...! I am not actually alone...am I? *(emphasize reference)* To be or not to be *(pause)* alone? That is the question. *(ponders)*

Joy: *(drops controls)* Of course we are not alone. There may not be people here, but Nature is here with us! We can be friends with the animals, the pond, and even the trees!

Anger: Trees are incredibly helpful-- much better than the atrocious paper that people print their meaningless *(air quote)* 'news' on.

Sadness: Aren't we recording our thoughts on paper??

Anger: Don't sweat the details, Sadness.

Joy: Self-reliance, the natural sustenance of Nature and thought -- ah, this is heaven. Everyone should live this way -- forget science, forget progress, forget the ideas of old. You should be able to count all of your inhibitions on one hand.

Sadness: Stop progressing? That's a terrible idea. All ideas are terrible.

Joy: Hey! Let's just go and harass some animals...

As scene transitions, flashback music plays.

Scene 2: Anger

The narrator walks on. Nature sound plays.

Narrator (Rahul): While walking through the woods, Thoreau runs into a wood chopper from Canada.

Narrator walks off.

Thoreau: Ah, good fellow. I am pleased to see you again.

Wood Chopper: How are you doing good sir?

Nature sounds stop playing.

Joy: Oh, look at how great he is -- a true man of Homeric sorts!

Anger: Oh, stop. This man is not Homeric; he can't read Greek or even anything! All we do is translate for him.

Sadness: It's ok -- it doesn't matter as long as he leads a simple life, right?

Anger: The hell you mean it's ok. Why are we responsible for doing all this work?

Joy: *(takes controls)* It nourishes our soul, Anger.

Thoreau: I'll read you the classics again today.

Anger: What is wrong with you, Joy?

Joy: Stop being so annoying! We're reading!

Thoreau: *(Opens book and begins to read in a very distraught tone.)* Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles, murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses, hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls... *(pretends to read in background)*

Sadness: Does any of this even matter?

Anger: Sadness! If you don't have anything helpful to say, don't speak!

Woodchopper leaves and Thoreau is alone.

Anger: The woodchopper is an animal man! He is of a primal nature and does not understand life. *(grabs controls from Joy)* Stop taking control, Joy!

Thoreau: That man may live simply, but he has the mind of a child! Why should I read you what you should have spent your life studying yourself?! It's not my fault you wasted away, valuing idleness over spirituality!

Joy: Stop, Anger! *(pushes Anger from controls and takes over)*

Sadness: You're gonna hurt Thoreau!

Joy: Me?! Anger is going to taint his mind with hate and prejudice! We *only* need to focus on simplicity.

Anger: You don't realize what you are doing! You're suppressing our thoughts and our past experiences. **We're living a contradiction!**

Sadness: If we're going to help anyone we need to help ourselves first!

Anger: *(To Sadness)* I don't need your help! *(To Joy)* You need to stop, Joy, before you destroy Thoreau's mind.

Sadness: *(more irritated and sarcastic)* Before you destroy his mind? You call this *sane*?

Controls back on table. As scene transition, flashback music plays.

Scene 3: Sadness

Woodchuck slides onto stage.

Thoreau: A woodchuck!

Joy: What a beautiful creature, look at its glorious fur coat!

Anger: Makes you just wanna, you know, rip it to shreds and gouge on its blood!

Joy: What?!

Sadness: Dibs on the eyes.

Joy: Stop!! What is wrong with you guys?!

Anger: *(defensive)* I'm hungry!! Is that a crime?

Joy: It is if you want to rip it to shreds!! Come on guys! We need to be one with Nature, to learn the true facts of life, to discover the laws that define all things, to--

Sadness: *(finishes Joy's sentence)* -- eat some quality woodchuck eyes.

Joy: *(huffs)* No! I don't understand you guys! I've never seen this side of either of you.

Anger: What side?!

Sadness: Never seen this side? Damn Joy, if you need the woodchuck's eyes more than us, just say.

Joy: *(takes controls)* That's it! I'm taking full control!

Anger: *(attempts to take control but fails. Joy pushes Anger away.)* Wait! You can't do it alone you idiot!

Joy: *(bangs fist)* Nature. Is. Beautiful. Animals. Are. Marvelous. The. Ants. The. Loon. The. Pond. The. Trees.

Thoreau: *(Looks and moves around)* Wow! These ants fight just like real humans! Isn't the intrinsic obedience of baby partridges amazing? Wow! This leaf might symbolize God! Gee willakers -- is that *air*?!!

Joy: *(fatigued)*

Anger: Having a good time yet? We've stopped eating meat. In fact, we've cut down on all sustenance whatsoever.

Joy: *(crazed kind of talk)* You have a problem with *my* piloting? At least it isn't contradictory and rash! There's nothing wrong with how we live.

Sadness: We drink from the same stagnant water we bathe in.

Joy: *(crazed)* Well, soon we won't need those things. Spirituality is so fulfilling; you don't need water, food, sleep -- anything! We can live for eternity!

Sadness: I don't know what you're on, but I need some, like a lethal amount.

Anger: Sadness, shut up for God's sake.

Joy: *(getting more frenzied)* Imagine it! Total spirituality! Self-sustenance in its purest form! If. I. Could. Just. Work. These. Controls!!

Sadness: *(tries to remove Joy from controls)* Okay Joy, seriously though. One emotion can't take over.

Joy: *(shoves Sadness away)* I have to discover what everything means! **I need to live the life John couldn't!!**

As this happens, Thoreau is out front getting more and more agitated. When Joy says the last part, Thoreau should be on his knees with hands over head.

Anger + Sadness + Joy: **silent shock (Joy falls to the ground)*

Anger: What the hell? Joy is sad? How does that work?

Sadness: *(to Joy) (Joy begins to get back up)* So that's it. That's why everything has gone haywire, why I don't feel like myself, why we keep contradicting each other. It's all you, Joy. You're barring me from making us feel sadness. Joy! He was our brother! Let us grieve dammit!

Anger: So nearly all our conclusions have been wrong? It's all just been Joy masking sadness? What a waste of two years! *(to Joy)* You wanted us to learn how to live, but you've only subtracted from our lives. Congrats. Does it feel good to be in control?

Joy: It was never about control! We have so much information: the Greek classics, the Hindu Vedas, the Christian Bible; the truth of life lies somewhere! We need to find the answer before we end up like John!
As scene transitions, flashback music plays.

Resolution

Narrator (Rahul): Back in the Spring of 1862, Thoreau lies dying as Emerson watches over him.

Thoreau is lying in bed, dying. Emerson is still standing beside him. Emotions stand around Thoreau.

Sadness: So, this was all pointless?

Anger: Unbelievable, two years stuck in a happy-go-merry facade.

Joy: So, what? We were happy!

Anger: *So?!* We spent *two* years living as a crazed hermit in a cabin in the woods denying reality!

Joy: We went there to find the beauty in everything, to discover what it really means to li--

Anger: *(interrupting)* We went into the woods to reach conclusions. To obtain a spirituality that would allow us to live as if we were a fisherman sitting at the edge of the stream of time. We said, "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation"—but what do you call these two years we spent in the woods? We struggled for control and drove ourselves mad. What is that if not a life of desperation?! There is no point in searching for conclusions anymore.

Joy: And, who says we haven't found them already?

Anger: Joy, just stop!

Joy: Think about it! **We lived in the way we saw fit.** Anger, didn't you love living away from society?

Anger: Well, I guess. It was a welcome respite from the and frivolous fads of that filthy village!

Joy: And Sadness, didn't you enjoy those lonely morning walks in which we contemplated the meaning of life?

Sadness: You could say that.

Joy: We may not have lived all of the lives we wanted, but we lived in our own way. God didn't give us the endless time we desired, but we were given enough to learn, read, and think. **Life is what *you* make of it.**

Sadness: So, did we reach our conclusions?

Emerson: Well, Henry? Have you made peace with God?

Emotions all place hands on controls.

Thoreau: I wasn't aware that we had quarreled. Now comes good sailing. Moose. Indian.

Thoreau dies.