

# IT'S NEVER NOW IN NEW ORLEANS

## THESIS

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Shanthi Cleckler would like to thank her wonderful parents for all of their love and support during her time of creative growth. She was very proud and blessed to have her father, Lewis Gordon Cleckler, direct It's Never Now in New Orleans in March of 2008. Shanthi never really saw the sparkle in her play until she saw it through her fathers eyes.

Shanthi would also like to thank Naropa University for planting the seed of inspiration in her mind as well as John Hood, her wonderful actors, John Iverson for giving the character of the Clown a voice, and her little dog GiGi.

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## CHAPTER I

### It's Never Now in New Orleans

In Christopher Vogler's book The Writer's Journey, he discusses the journey of a hero, a character who, through the course of a story, encounters obstacles, characters who either aid or hinder the hero from completing their mission, as well as various other distractions that the hero must conquer in order to find his or her reward or lesson.

The process of writing my play It's Never Now in New Orleans, followed the hero's path as described by Vogler. It grew and changed, leading the hero from one way of being to the next: from despair to hope, weakness to strength, folly to wisdom, love to hate, and then back again. My own personal journey with writing It's Never Now in New Orleans, is very similar to the formula that Vogler writes about in his book. It involves dealing with an abundance of archetypes, some who stayed the same, and other archetypes that morphed through the progression of the play into characters with completely different wants and needs than they originally started with.

This essay will examine the process of how It's Never Now in New Orleans expanded from the illusion of a wink into an intense come-hither stare, and explore the evolution of the archetypal characters featured in the play. My interest in playwriting began many years ago as a young child. My father is a playwright, who immersed me into the theatrical world from the time that I was first able to comprehend drama's meaning and importance. One of my earliest memories is when I was two or three years

of age and my father took me onto the stage at the Dallas Theatre Center. Placing me on the bare stage, he went to stand behind the very last row of seats, leaving me standing on an empty stage, a wondrous child bathed in a sea of perpetual light. From his invisible perch behind the endless rows of seats, my father ordered me to project my voice. I have forgotten what I said but it was probably along the lines of ‘hello?’. Not satisfied with my vocal presence on stage, my father then ordered me to act as if I had just had a nightmare and was screaming for my mother. I did so, and, from the applause coming from the darkness, I realized that I had done a satisfactory job.

From that experience my new-found passion for theatre continued to grow. I was intrigued with the plays that my father and I would perform for my mother. How the scripts were broken up into scenes and acts, how the characters’ moods and intentions were evident in the words alone. Late at night, I would lie in bed and construct whole scenes with only my own two hands to act out the characters. The plots were simple, and carried on from one night to the next, until the conflict was eventually resolved. The first play that I ever wrote was entitled “The Magical Laundry Hamper”. It depicted the adventures of a brother and sister in a magical underground world when they innocently tumble down the laundry chute in their newly bought house. The play was in two acts which I wrote when I was eight years old. It is a project that I look forward to working on in the future as a full-length children’s play. In future years, I continued my study in the theatrical arts but concentrated on the performance aspect rather than the study of writing. I attended the theatre program at Naropa University, studying performance art during my undergraduate years. Naropa University, while housing the world famous Jack Kerouac

School of Disembodied Poetics, did not offer a course in playwriting. However, it was there, while attending a creative writing course, that I began to hatch the subject matter that would eventually turn into my play It's Never Now in New Orleans.

During this writing course, there was an exercise in which the students of the class were assigned to pair off and each spend ten minutes telling the other person a story that would depict an interesting incident in our lives. My partner was an adorable girl name DeDe who told me this amazing story about how, at age seventeen, she traveled from Colorado to New Orleans to visit her older brother. While in New Orleans, she came across a vast array of characters, including a strange clown from whom she attempted to buy marijuana. I was enraptured by her story and saw it vividly in my minds eye while she told me her wild tale. Her characters resembled the archetypes that were also present in The Wizard of Oz, but on a darker note. I was immediately intrigued with the characters that she described to me: their personalities, their actions, and their motives.

Although I had never spent time in New Orleans, my mind filled in the blanks of her story--smells, the street people, and the sounds that I imagined to be so bright. We were not allowed to take any notes while the other person told their story until after the class, in which everyone would quickly scribble down any and all tidbits of information that they could recall. The details that we could not remember we were told to make up, as long as they went with the flow of the story and did not change the outline of the plot.

The original ten page version of It's Never Now in New Orleans features DeDe as the heroine, with the call of adventure occurring when she decides to leave her coughing boyfriend to visit her brother in New Orleans. Tyler is surprised to see her, though not in an altogether pleasant way. When Tyler leaves DeDe alone at his apartment with his

easily annoyed roommate, she decides to enter the world of New Orleans in search of a cup of chickory coffee to take the edge off after her trip. Venturing out on the street, she finds a vendor and buys a cup of chickory coffee, not knowing that it does not contain caffeine. The clown emerges from an alley and informs her that, while there is no caffeine in her cup, he has something that will take the edge off just as well. The clown, whose soul has been so smeared with soot and sorrow, is relieved to have a fresh breath of air like DeDe in his life, and does everything in his power to spend time with her. In the short story, the character of the clown was written very differently than he was in the actual script and fluctuated between being the antagonist and DeDe's sidekick. As in the script version, DeDe does end up in the clown's house, but she stays there of her own free will, not because she is being forced to do so. DeDe feels sorry for the clown, an aspect that I decided to leave in the script. When DeDe does leave, she passes by a vast array of street people but there is no dialogue exchanged between them. In the end of the short story, DeDe arrives at her brother's house to discover that a water pipe had burst and the many volumes of her journals had been ruined. While upset at first, DeDe accepts this destruction, seeing it as a sign for her to make a fresh start in her life.

My short story version of "It's Never Now in New Orleans" (originally titled "Tick Tock, The Clown Picked the Virgin's Lock") was very well received by my teachers as well as the rest of the class, and was actually published in Naropa's annual creative writing magazine. More importantly to me, DeDe loved the story and said that it captured her experience better than she could have portrayed it herself.

After graduating from Naropa University with my BA in performance studies, I put my writing projects on the back burner and decided to concentrate on teaching theatre



rather than actually practicing the art itself. I was determined to follow a different path than my father and make my own unique mark on the road. However, after my third or fourth standing ovation by students after class, I decided that it was, after all, in my blood.

My love of theatre and learning largely influenced my choice to move back to Texas from California and apply for graduate school at my father's Alma Mater, Texas State University-San Marcos. Originally studying directing, I did not delve into the playwriting program until summer of 2006, during which time I registered for the beginning playwriting class with John Hood. I found that, as well as enjoying the class, the whole process of playwriting came fairly easy for me. John Hood taught in a way that my mind easily grasped and his vast knowledge of the subject was amazing. We saw eye to eye on many changes in my work and I felt as if everything was finally coming together. One of the final projects that John Hood assigned the class was to write a ten to twenty page script for stage or screen. With this assignment, It's Never Now in New Orleans finally began to take shape. Other than "The Magical Laundry Hamper", this would be the first play that I would actually write. Many questions began to flood my mind, and those questions slowly became doubts and fears. I had only been to New Orleans once when I was ten, but I didn't get to really see anything since my mother made me keep my eyes closed after we saw a little monkey-type man humping up on a fire hydrant. How would I convey the images in my head to the audience when I hadn't even been to the place that I was describing? Would the characters and their actions make sense to a general audience? How on earth was I going to be able to write a script that

was ten to twenty pages long? These questions quickly began to dissipate as I began to complete the writing exercises that John Hood had assigned the class.

The treatment that we were assigned to write helped tremendously, not only because it helped me again become familiar with the story that I had written years ago; but also because it enabled me be able to ‘see’ what could, and could not, be performed on stage. It also helped me develop my play into a staged performance rather than just a short story. The first draft of It’s Never Now in New Orleans was very brief, with only six characters compared to the final script’s cast list of fifteen. The original ten to twenty page play focused on the character of DeDe, her brother Tyler, his roommate Cody, a silver street performer named Edward and a drug dealing clown. The plot was centered around DeDe and her search to find a joint of marijuana. The only characters that she came in contact with, other than Tyler and Cody, were the silver performer and the clown. The story was there, but it lacked the plot structure of an actual play. I was frustrated and annoyed that a story of which I was so proud was so difficult to turn into a workable play.

Formatting the script alone was a nightmare. Being an extremely inexperienced computer person, I was constantly turning in scripts that were a margin off, or a font size too big. Also, being fully aware of the impending decision that It’s Never Now in New Orleans might be performed at Texas State, I was naturally concerned about the content of the script and how it would be received by the play’s audience. While not featuring nudity or violence, many questionable and, to the wrong person, very sensitive issues such as child molestation, prostitution, and drug addiction, do arise. I considered toning down the script to make it more ‘consumer friendly’, but chose not to when remembering

theatre is meant to express, not censor, the visions of the playwright. I ended up allowing the disturbing images to continue shuffling around my script, leaving little stains wherever they wished.

Despite these few roadblocks, I was determined to develop alongside this play until it reached its full potential. Its characters had already taken residence in my head, with the silver man lounging on a hammock in my brain. I was now friends with these characters; I could not let them down. I would turn this story into a full length script. Writing the full script of It's Never Now in New Orleans posed more problems than I had originally predicted. At first, I struggled over extending the subject matter to include enough substance to span the eighty to one hundred and twenty prospective pages. I found myself inserting new dialogue in the script not because it had relevance to the content of the play, but because it would increase the length of the scene. Ironically, none of this 'page filler' would end up being part of the completed work. The problems stated above were solved over a series of multiple re-writes. In the re-writes, new characters would constantly be raising their heads. Reading the Christopher Vogler book The Writer's Journey, helped with my progress. I became intrigued with his description of archetypes and the characters which they represented in my play. I had, unknowingly, written quite a few of these archetypes in the script already, but reading more about them really sped up my progress as well as the quality of my revisions.

The character of DeDe remained playing the part of the protagonist, as well as the archetype of the Hero. I originally saw her as this archetype because the play centered around her and her character's search for self-identity and wholeness. I felt that the audience would easily identify with the feelings that DeDe would experience throughout

the course of the play, the desire to escape to a new place with characters that were vastly different from the ones which she had previously encountered in Colorado. DeDe started out as the strongest character in the play, but while rethinking the content of the script, I realized that I was using her as more of a vessel to introduce the new characters rather than actually concentrating on her own personal growth and quest of knowledge. While DeDe had most of the characteristics that are expected in a Hero archetype, she lacked the true mark of a Hero, that of self-sacrifice. Although she effectively demonstrated personal growth throughout her journey, it was mostly because of the trail of characters that she encountered, stepping stones that she skipped across which led her to her destination, not because of her own drive or desire to achieve her goal. Eventually, her role in the play would be altered to highlight different traits that are present when creating a Hero but without changing her role as the protagonist.

DeDe's older brother Tyler, although his character was not a constant presence, was the voice of Reason in the play. From the beginning, he is doubtful of DeDe's decision to come to New Orleans and attempts to show her the dangers without actually telling her not to stay. His character is confident that DeDe will realize the error of her flippant ways and change her mind about pursuing a life in New Orleans. Even at the end of the play, he is careful to guide her towards the right decision rather than force her to do so. Tyler is one of the original characters in the play and was based on the actual version of DeDe's brother.

Cody was written to counteract the kindness that Tyler demonstrates towards DeDe. He is very much the Skeptic in the play. Cody dislikes change and considers DeDe a threat to his and Tyler's everyday routine. I always pictured him as suffering from

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. I created Cody to be the indifferent character that provides DeDe with a reason to venture out in the city of New Orleans. Cody's character is one of the few characters that I created based on an actual person. This choice made it easier for me to write dialogue for the character, but also challenged me to not be trapped by writing how the 'real' Cody would handle DeDe.

The first situation that DeDe finds herself in is when she comes across a group of prostitutes. The characters of Lola, Kristi, Marci, and Nancy Boy were not present in the first draft of It's Never Now in New Orleans but were added during rehearsal when an actor stood in for the very small role of a passing hooker. By seeing this section of the play read, I was able to see how more conflict could be added to the play. This scene enabled me to write a very interesting variety of characters that provided comic relief as well as demonstrating to DeDe that life on the streets was not as glamorous as she previously thought. I also used one of Nancy Boy's lines to introduce the character of the Clown. The madam prostitute, Lola, also played the part of the antagonist, attempting to lure DeDe into the life of a prostitute. Boy #1 and Boy #2 were created in order to provide a situation in which Stella could be introduced, as well as cementing in the audiences' mind how quickly a young girl could be placed in an uncomfortable situation when in an unfamiliar place. Before this scene DeDe had a wonderfully curious attitude which made her naiveté even more obvious than before. These boys introduced the series of challenges to which DeDe would soon be introduced.

One of the major changes that I made in It's Never Now in New Orleans was the addition of the character 'Stella'. Stella came into existence when I realized that I needed a character to portray a mentor to DeDe. Stella was a street smart, jaded ex-prostitute,

who was a few years older than the character of DeDe. She takes DeDe under her wing and, at the end of the play, sacrifices herself in order to save DeDe from the evils of New Orleans, thus making her a catalyst hero. She exhibited heroic actions that caused change in others, but did not change her. These attributes are ones that largely influenced the changes made in the script. In the end of the play, because of her actions, she ends up in a place that was lower than where she started. The character of Stella made the stakes of the play higher, as well as adding in a different feminine dimension to the script. I was also concerned about the male/female ratio of parts in the play. I feel that there is an extreme shortage of plays which feature as many female parts as those for males, and I did not want my play to be one of those.

Personally, my favorite character in the play was that of Edward, the silver performer with a heart of gold. Edward had saved Stella from being raped by several men, which formed an unbreakable bond between the two. The idea for his character came to me while visiting Chicago a few years ago when I was delighted by the men who portrayed frozen silver statues in the park. I often imagine different scenarios when I “people watch” and was intrigued by the endless possibilities that could have caused one to pick that certain profession.

Edward acts as the Guardian archetype in the play, yet he is not without his vices. He is a heroin addict whom the clown fondly refers to as ‘Colander’ because of the many holes in which dirty needles have pierced through his body. Despite his personal downfalls, Edward is an extremely likable, charming character who enjoys being dramatic with his words as well as through his actions. Edward is the one who pushes

Stella to help DeDe, even though it is evident that she wants to protect DeDe from the experiences that she has to go through.

The Clown. Ah, the Clown. The Clown's character is one from which I took the archetypal characters of the antagonist, emotion, protagonist and put them in a blender to create a composite character. Although in the original version of the play the Clown was confused, nutty, and a little sweet, he soon morphed into a painted-up mad man. I wanted the Clown to represent all that is tempting in this world, a proverbial snake that tempts the innocent with a velvety forked tongue. When he is first introduced to DeDe, he speaks with a pompous tone, as if he is in control of the entire city and no one is in control of him.

The Clown alternates between being kind and lively, to dark and unpredictable. I wrote the character this way because I wanted a somewhat logical reason for why DeDe would stay in the Clown's company for such a long time. If the Clown had been harsh and abrasive from the start, I doubted that DeDe, no matter how naive, would have left with him. I included the character of Esmeralda to be an anti-guardian of sorts. She represents what the future might hold for DeDe if she decides to stay in New Orleans as well as showing the conniving nature of certain street beggars. Esmeralda has a harsh wisdom about her which I demonstrated by giving her the last line in the play which depicts the never ending cycle of life and death in the city.

After the addition of the new roles, I found myself being very concerned with the relationships of the characters in the play. DeDe and Tyler should have a playful relationship, but one in which a single word can bring a very serious tone to the dialogue. The most important relationship in the play, I believe, is that which exists between Stella

and Edward. The relationship has a brother/sister feel to it but also that of a father and daughter. It is also during their dialogue in which a lot of secrets about Stella's past are discovered. Stella and the Clown share a perverse secret that only they know about, opting to allow the audience to imagine the lust and horror that had occurred. The interaction between the druggies that litter the stage should be subtle, with them moving as one, pulsing in rhythm with the heartbeat of the Clown.

I had to conduct research while attempting to describe the streets of New Orleans. The location of the play was based mainly on the short story that I had written earlier. While I had a picture in my head of how the city would look, I wanted to make sure that my visions were accurate rather than just a montage of images that I picked up in novels and films. I researched several of the more notorious inhabitants of New Orleans online as well as in journals and articles. By doing this, I quickly became acquainted with several outlandish characters that were almost too odd to believe. There was 'The Oyster Girl', who performed erotic fan dances in the thirties while inside a huge oyster shell. Her story is one that I would like to explore further and perhaps incorporate into a short film script. I laughed about the antics of Large Marge, an overly voluptuous prostitute who had a passion for dime store rings. When asked why she never tried to purchase a real gem, she replied "Honey, these cheap rings shine brighter in my mind than a real one would ever shine in the sun." Then there was the tale of Pretty Peter Pan. Peter came to New Orleans as a young man and quickly became one of the most desired male prostitutes in New Orleans. With his charming attitude and kind heart, he was often invited to exclusive parties as a 'special' guest. Peter influenced many of the character



choices that I made for Edward. Also, several of my friends had previously lived in New Orleans and I looked towards them for hints on the whole energy of the city.

One decision that I had to make was the year in which the play took place. The story was originally told to me in 2000, but I wanted the play to be set far enough back that it would not be considered 'Post-Katrina'. It's Never Now in New Orleans means just what the title implies, that the play can be performed during whatever decade the director wishes. Personally, I chose the year 1986 for the reason that I felt it was during a decade in which the characters would comfortably fit into. The 80's featured a time when issues like AIDS, hardcore drug use, and the punk attitude ran rampant in the streets of larger cities. However, the script could be re-written to take place in more recent times although it would alter the wants and needs of many of the characters. DeDe could have traveled to New Orleans to check on her brother's safety after the hurricane, Stella would be a homeless victim of the storm, and the rest of the characters would be made even more desperate than they already are. The clown would become even stronger of a character, reveling in the chaos and misery that followed the disaster. I briefly toyed with this idea but decided against it in the end, partially because I was pleased with the current premise of the script, and also because I did not want to delve into more sensitive issues than I already had.

While polishing up the script, I was under the impression that, as my graduate thesis, it was to be performed in the studio black box theatre as an actual production, so I had high hopes in the way of how the play would be staged. Even though I realized that I would not be the director, I still had the set painted in my mind. I pictured a three ring circus of sorts, with stage left being Tyler's apartment, the center stage ring would be

where the street scenes would take place, and stage right would represent the crumbling abode of the Clown. Even though I knew that it was beyond the resources available to me, I would of adored to of had the backdrop be a film screen that would pan Bourbon Street when DeDe would walk across the stage. I really wanted to capture the constant movement of a busy New Orleans street, the smell, the sounds, the lurking people whose faces you never get to see.

I was eventually assigned to work with John Boulanger as the director of It's Never Now in New Orleans and the production was assigned for room 209. I was quite happy with this arrangement, seeing how I have always respected John's work and felt very comfortable working in room 209 during past productions. John and I met several times after this arrangement, which occurred right before winter break. I was ecstatic at how alike our visions of the production were and was very impressed with all of the research he had conducted after reading the script.

After winter break, during a meeting with Dr. Debra Charlton, I found out that, because of an overloaded schedule, John would not be able to direct a full production of my play. While at first I was a little disappointed and unnerved by this news, I was pleased with the fact that the theatre department had decided that It's Never Now in New Orleans was to be performed as a stage reading which would be directed by my father, Lewis Cleckler. My father was the whole reason why I became involved with theatre in the first place, so I was excited at the prospect of working with him in a playwright/director relationship. A few of my professors were, understandably so, concerned with the conflicts that might arise when a father and daughter work together. I, too, had a small inking of reservation when it came down to this subject. Any doubt

which I might of have had was quickly erased as soon as my father and I had our first pre-production meeting about the performance of my play. After my father's first reading of my play, he said that he liked it and believed that it would work. He thought that there was a lot of conflict, strong characters and that, while reading it, he did not know what was going to happen until the end. He then told me that he would be more than happy to direct my play, even though it involved him driving two and a half hours from Kerrville for each rehearsal and performance. My father, Lewis, was familiar with staged readings, as some of his plays had been presented in that manner as well. He decided that, while still adhering to the assignment of performing the play with scripts in hand, he would direct it as he would an actual performance. What he did not want, was a reading of my play in which the actors merely stood behind music stands and read the lines while exhibiting little character. He understood that the lighting and set resources were limited in room 209 but he reassured me that the lines of my play were so powerful that they would carry themselves.

The process of casting was very exciting for me. Having always been on the other side of the stage lights, I was curious about the process. One of the things I was concerned about was not stepping on my father's toes and influencing his decisions due to the fact that the people who would be auditioning were my peers. I met with John Hood and voiced my concerns. He told me that, even though my father was the director, I still had a say in the casting process providing that I felt very strongly about the possible actor's portrayal of the character.

I was unsure on how to arrange the auditions at first, but after talking to Dr. Fleming I was under the impression that I was to be able to sit in during the auditions for

Caucasian Chalk Circle as part of my casting process. However, when my father and I arrived at the theatre we were told it was a closed audition and that there must have been misunderstanding. Luckily, John Iverson, who was dramaturge for Caucasian Chalk Circle, took notes on who was cast and who was not. He emailed me a list of the actors whom he thought would be suitable for my play. I contacted these people as well as a few personal friends of mine. Through Facebook and MySpace I invited the actors to an audition. Instead of having certain scenes picked out for the auditions, my father opted for the script to be read in its entirety, an option that I felt was unconventional to the other auditions that I had been part of, yet it ended up being successful. The part of Esmeralda was immediately cast, with Megan Sullivan bringing the part more alive than I could have hoped for from any actor. Everyone invited to the auditions showed up, with the exception of John Iverson, who had to work that night. John had attended one of the playwriting classes that I took with John Hood and had read the part of the clown throughout the process of the play. Because of multiple reasons, like his age, stage presence, and voice, I had pre-cast him in the role of the Clown. This caused problems among the actors who were vying for the role of the Clown. They were disappointed that the role was already cast and thought that it was unfair to the actors who had read for the part during auditions. Despite their reservations, the cast seemed pleased with John's portrayal of the Clown.

My father, being unfamiliar with the actors who were auditioning, had the actors wear name tags the night of callbacks. This made it easier for him to select the actors for the parts and make notes according to their acting talent, instead of asking me who the certain actors were. My father and I agreed and disagreed on a few aspects of the casting

of the play. One was the role of Edward. I always imagined Edward as an African American male. My father saw the character as an asexual hero, one who sought after the approval of the Clown. My father chose an actor, Brady Faucett, who was very talented and portrayed the character very differently than I had imagined, but who was incredible in the part. He especially worked well with the actress that my father cast as Stella. The role of Stella was the most difficult to cast. When I wrote Stella I imagined her as a character less attractive than DeDe, a lost soul who was slightly jealous of DeDe. My father cast Lindsay Hicks as Stella. Lindsay is a very beautiful blonde girl who, despite her incredible acting talent, I thought was too pretty to play the part of the young damaged prostitute.

One evening, right before auditions, a friend brought a girl named Kristina to my house. I knew right away that she had the right look to make an excellent DeDe and asked her to come to auditions. She reminded me very much of the original DeDe whom I had met in Boulder. She was slight of stature, very pretty, and exhibited a certain ditsy character despite being very intelligent. While I had already cast her in my mind as soon as seeing her read, my father had reservations. Three BFA actors were auditioning for the role of DeDe and they all gave amazing readings. Kristina had been in theatrical productions before, but they had occurred about ten years ago and were all in local musicals that took place in her small hometown. After the call backs, however, you could tell that she would be able to exhibit a strong stage presence. I was pleased that my father cast her for a number of reasons: one being that she exhibited a strong grasp of DeDe's characteristics. Kristina, aside from being a very talented actor, was also quite

enthusiastic about her role. I had quite a few people ask me where I had discovered her after the performances.

After the decision to cast Kristina as DeDe, I was left with two very talented actors. Rachel McVey and Ashley Rountree. They were originally cast as street people and druggies but they were such talented actors that it seemed a shame to not take advantage of having them act in my play. As I mentioned before, I feel that there is an extreme lack of roles for females in the theatre world and I did not want to contribute to that. It was because of this observation that I wrote in the scene between DeDe and the prostitutes. While realizing that these are not exactly the most empowering roles for female actors, I felt that the addition of this scene would add some movement in a part of the play that I had previously thought was stagnant. My father agreed with this choice and it was added into the script about a week after rehearsals began. I was very lucky in the fact that both my father and I had similar choices as far as the casting went. The rest of the group was easily cast, and I was amazed how beautifully it all came together.

The rehearsal was the first time that I had ever heard my script read all the way through. It was a feeling that I cannot describe in any words, no matter how hard I try. I actually cried throughout the whole rehearsal. The biggest compliment came from Chris Climer, who played Tyler; he and I were in the Directing for TV and Film class together. After the first read-through, he asked me why I had not written every project for that class. I told him that I was tempted, but didn't want to be the dictator of the group. He then blamed me for our not getting a better grade in the class.

During the casting process I realized which lines worked and which ones didn't. I had to alter quite a few scenes that I did not know were off until I saw them actually

performed. I believe that was when the needed changes in the script were the most obvious as well as easily fixed. With very little persuasion from me, my father and I agreed on the mood of the play. He agreed with my idea that there should be three separate sets, Tyler's apartment, a street area, and the Clown's home. The one thing that my father was adamant about was that there would be no black outs between scenes. While directing, he also stressed the importance of using as much of the stage as possible and insisted that the props should be pushed as far upstage as possible in order to expand the performance space.

My father chose for the actors to be visible during their entrances and exits, having them keep in their character until they were completely out of view of the audience. This involved using the side aisles of room 209 with actions being performed in the aisles rather than the actors waiting to enter the stage. My father utilized the lack of set to his advantage, using simple black boxes along with tri and bi-folds to set the scenes rather than confusing the set with unnecessary props. Instead of blackouts he chose to have the characters that remained on stage move the props while accompanied to background music. This way, my father's vision would keep flowing in accord with the New Orleans street scene, which he wished to portray throughout the play. My father's constant direction for the actors was to keep the energy moving in spite of any staging difficulties that might arise.

Throughout the rehearsals I was constantly making changes to the script-- nothing major that would confuse the actor, just a minor tweak here and there. I found that one of the perks with having my play performed as a staged reading, was that I could change the lines of the script more freely. There were a few actors, such as DeDe and Cody, who

insisted on memorizing their scripts. While my father and I were both very impressed by their commitment to the play, we still ran across some problems. Henry Craff, the actor playing Cody, had his lines down pat by the first rehearsal. The problem was that I changed quite a few of his lines during the course of the first few rehearsals. While he was very flexible with this, it still threw quite a few kinks into the rehearsals of the scene, especially since he enjoyed acting out the scene without a script. Kristina, the actor who played DeDe, was determined to have all of her lines memorized in the play, even though I repeatedly conveyed to her that this was not necessary. The difference between Kristina and Henry was that Kristina kept her script with her throughout the rehearsals and performances. She rarely even glanced at it, but it made her feel more comfortable as well as putting my father and I a little more at ease. There were also a few odd relationships between characters that had to be re-directed. The most major incident occurred in the relationship between the actors playing the roles of Tyler and DeDe. As it turned out, there was a very strong mutual attraction between the two actors that bled over onto the stage. At times, when DeDe and Tyler were directed to playfully fight, there were obvious sexual undertones. This was addressed and dealt with, but caused another problem to arise. Now the two actors were overly aware of the space between them and kept at an almost unfriendly distance. Eventually, a comfortable medium was achieved.

The main problem that we ran into during the rehearsal process was that of attendance. While having an attendance problem in the past, this experience taught me to never have one again. At the first auditions I passed out paper forms for the actors to fill out that asked for their name, contact information, and a schedule of when they would be



able to rehearse. At first, while reading the forms, I was amazed at how easily the rehearsal schedule could be made. It seemed that all of the actors had the same nights open at the same time! I thought to myself, 'Wow. This is easy!'. I was wrong. Actors would call right before rehearsals saying that they had to cover for someone at work, they were ill, had to go out of town, etc. And there was also the problem that my show was going up the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday after spring break. Luckily, my actors worked with me most of the time. Lindsay and Brady, the actors playing Stella and Edward, were a different story. They were busy with other scenes and BFA activities, none of which they had informed me of on their information sheet. Those two characters were in most of the scenes and it was frustrating to have to work around them. Both Lindsay and Brady assured me that, since they lived together, they would rehearse at home. This made me feel a little better but still it frustrated my father that he would not be able to direct them in their scenes. While it was great that the scene with Tyler, Cody, and DeDe could be rehearsed so many times, as well as that between the Clown and DeDe, my father and I would have liked to of had a few more rehearsals that could include Stella and Edward.

Another problem that occurred during rehearsal was that my father lives a little over two hours away from San Marcos. A few times he drove up to San Marcos to find that the only people who showed up were Chris Climer (Tyler), Kristina (DeDe), Henry Craff (Cody), John Iverson (the Clown), and sweet Erik French, who didn't really have any lines. We only ended up having two rehearsals when everyone was there, not including the performances. Looking back, I wish that we had had a dress rehearsal. My

father opted for minimal costume pieces but they ended up confusing a few of the actors in the performances.

Opening night was a nightmare. I had purchased a silver spray for Edward from the local costume shop. The owner of the store told me that the spray worked on skin as well as hair. I took his word on it, and faithfully gave it to Lindsey in order to spray Brady silver. Instead of the intended effect, I was met with blinded eyes. Brady had, in the true fashion of Edward, got the silver paint in his eyes and was temporarily blinded. Though it broke my heart to see one of my main actors crying his eyes out, I was even more distressed when the actor playing the Clown entered the dressing room with no voice. Due to an outbreak of road rage, the generally kind and even-tempered John Iverson had yelled in his car to such an excess that his voice was reduced to nothing more than a gravelly whisper. By this time I was expecting an actor to lose their hearing and that I would have to incorporate the 'Hear no evil' monkeys into my play. While Brady was able to wash the toxic paint out of his eyes, John's voice did not improve. I sat in the audience cringing while the lines that I had so carefully written were uttered so gruffly. Other than John's voice and Brady's red eyes (which actually fit the role), the show went smoothly. Once again, I cried my eyes out at the sheer magnitude of feelings that occurred while words that I had written caused the audience to react. I saw the vision that once hid away in my mind jump out in front of my face. It was one of the most beautiful things that I have ever experienced.

Watching the next two shows was much more enjoyable for me. I was able to relax and pay attention to the audience's reactions. It was odd--the lines that I thought

were the most amusing, received the least laughs. It was not how they were delivered, it was just personal choice. The experience was highlighted by the fact that an audience member (who knew me fairly well) was amazed enough to ask his girlfriend ‘did these ideas come from little Shanthi’s sweet mind?’ While I was somewhat bothered by this insult to my creativity, I still found it intriguing that I was able to create something that people did not think I was capable of. Even the parents of the actors told me that they had enjoyed my play; although a few added in ‘despite the disturbing content’. I was also pleased that there was no comparison to the Wizard of Oz from the audience. Horace in *Ars Poetica* states that it is better to follow a traditional story than to invent a new one. I was aware of the similarities, but was still relieved that no one brought that up in their comments.

After the play had finished, I met with John Hood to discuss the concerns and observations that I now had about my script. The main concern was that of changing the protagonist from DeDe to Stella. Like I previously stated in this essay, I felt that DeDe was a rather weak character. John Hood suggested that I make it either Stella or Tyler’s story, seeing how their characters had more depth than that of DeDe. In the end I chose to concentrate on Stella. In the final draft of It’s Never Now in New Orleans, I added a scene between Tyler and Stella which occurred before DeDe knocks on the door. In this scene Tyler and Stella are in a romantic embrace, which is at first interrupted by Stella questioning why Tyler has yet to introduce her to his roommate Cody, and then by DeDe’s unexpected arrival. Tyler pushes Stella out on the fire escape but is oblivious to the fact that she quietly observes the beginning scene that occurs between DeDe and Tyler, leaving right before Cody arrives. This offers a reason why Stella chooses to

rescue DeDe from the two street boys. This addition also adds a twist at the end when Stella propositions Cody. This ending leaves it up to the audience to decide what will happen when Cody and Stella do go back to Cody and Tyler's place.

While re-reading Christopher Vogler's The Writer's Journey , I was amazed that I did not recognize Stella as the Hero of It's Never Now in New Orleans sooner. She very clearly goes through the stages of the Hero's Journey. She begins in an ordinary world, where she has gotten out of hooking and is steadily dating Tyler, then accepts the call of adventure by wanting to help DeDe. Stella is reluctant at first, but is encouraged to accept the call by her mentor, Edward. Afterwards she crosses the first threshold by venturing back out on the streets where she encounters tests and enemies such as the Clown. After DeDe is led astray, Stella is forced to approach her inmost cave; the Clowns house. There she endures the ordeal of confronting the Clown and takes possession of her reward, DeDe. In my current re-writing of the script, I try to make this journey more evident in Stella's character and wish that it had been so in my production at Texas State. All in all, I was very pleased with the performance, and it helped me get over many underlying fears that I didn't even know I had. After the final performance of the original script, John Hood told me that he was proud of me. I cannot begin to explain how much those words meant to me. Knowing that someone actually believed in me was a feeling that I had never experienced. Especially on a scholastic level. It was because of his honesty and encouragement that I was able to go through this life changing experience.

In the future, I plan on using my degree to teach playwriting to younger school-age children who might only be offered that chance later in life. While doing this, I plan on writing as many plays as possible. John Hood told me once that a real playwright

always has at least three plays that he/she is working on. I am not yet to that level, but I do have about five plays in the works. Two of them have already made it to the writing stage, and the other three are still incubating in my head. I enjoy what I do, and it has taught me a lot of self discipline as well as confidence, something that I lacked before. As for It's Never Now in New Orleans, I plan on putting it to the side for a while, not too long that I forget the many feelings that its production stirred up in me, but just long enough to be able to see it with fresh eyes the next go around. While letting it rest, I want to send it, as well as my full length play Plastic Covered Chairs, to a few fringe theatres in the area as well to other theatres out of state.

My journey through the production of It's Never Now in New Orleans has come to an end at Texas State, as well as my education here. My writer's journey has just now begun in the outside world. I have returned with the elixir, and I intend on sharing it with others, whether it be by teaching or having my work produced on stage. Regardless of the outcome, whatever it may be, I cannot wait.

## CHAPTER II

It's Never Now in New Orleans – THE PLAY

## ACT I SCENE I

Tyler's place is an older apartment with yellowed wall fixtures and a leaking ceiling. There are flyers from concerts posted throughout the apartment along with some framed items that are gifts from relatives that are oblivious to the style of a 20-something. Center stage there is a worn couch surrounded by doily-covered milk crates. A constant dripping sound is heard as well as various street noises. STELLA, a beautiful, yet worn girl 22 years of age is locked in an obscene embrace with TYLER, age 28, on the thread-bare sofa.

STELLA

Shhh!

TYLER

(continuing to kiss her neck)

What?

STELLA

I thought I heard something.

TYLER

Just don't worry about it. It's probably just the wind or something. C'mere.

STELLA

(pushing Tyler off of her)

The wind doesn't sound like it has a Mustang engine. Are you sure your roommate isn't home?

TYLER

Not for a while. We still have time.

STELLA

(giggling)

Not that you need it!

TYLER  
(playfully straddling her)  
Shut up. I give you all the time you can handle.

STELLA  
(kissing Tyler)  
You don't know what I can handle.

TYLER  
(pulling off his shirt)  
Then show me...

STELLA  
(stopping Tyler's advances)  
Why don't you want me to meet him?

TYLER  
Who?

STELLA  
Your roommate.

TYLER  
I don't know. It's just that...

STELLA  
You're embarrassed by me?

TYLER  
No. I just think Cody would freak out at having someone in the apartment.

STELLA  
(sitting up)  
Especially a little street urchin, huh?

TYLER  
Baby, he freaks out about me even being here by myself! It has nothing to do with you.

STELLA  
(pouting)  
I don't see how that could be, considering the fact that he doesn't even know I exist.



TYLER

He will soon. Let's just enjoy now, ok? I mean, now's all we have, right?

STELLA

(settling back in Tyler's arms)

I just want to feel like I'm worth being known, y'know?

TYLER

I know you. Isn't that enough?

STELLA

(kissing Tyler passionately)

Yeah. Right now it is.

DEDE, 17, is a girl with a worried expression on her pretty face. She is a petite girl but her motions are that of someone twice her age. DeDe walks with naive confidence and takes any chance she can get to be dramatic. This is her first time anywhere but her home state, and she is filled with excitement.

DEDE

(Dede enters from off stage)

Thanks for the ride! Take care!

VOICE

(OFF STAGE)

No problem, hon! You want me to wait until you're sure your brother's home?

DEDE

(walking over to the door and knocking)

Nah. It's cool! He'll be here. I know it.

VOICE

(OFF STAGE))

Alright dahlin'. Don't get got!

DeDe knocks again on the door, startling the lustful couple.

TYLER

What the hell?

STELLA

I told you I heard something!

TYLER

(checking watch)

What? Cody doesn't usually get home for another 15 minutes!

STELLA

Maybe he got off early?

TYLER

No, he never gets off early. Go out the fire escape.

STELLA

What? Why?

TYLER

(pushing Stella towards the  
window)

Just go out there!

STELLA

This is fucked up.

TYLER

Stella, I'm sorry! I just don't want to deal with this right now, ok? Please?

STELLA

(grabbing her bag and  
straightening her clothes)

No one ever seems to want to deal with anything.

TYLER

(looking through the peephole)

Whatever. Shit! It's DeDe!

STELLA

Who the hell is DeDe?

TYLER

I'll tell you later! Just get out there!

STELLA  
(climbing through window)  
Fine. FINE!  
(quietly)  
Fuck you.

TYLER  
What?

STELLA  
(exiting to the fire escape)  
You heard me.

Tyler quickly straightens up his apartment as well as himself. He glances through the window to make sure Stella is gone before he walks to the door. As he opens the door, Stella peeks through the window and watches the action from her perch.

TYLER  
(opening door)  
DeDe! What the hell? What are you doing here?

DEDE  
(jumping on Tyler and wrapping herself around him in a furiously happy hug)  
Surprise! I came to visit you!

TYLER  
I can see that! Ok, ok, ok! For God's sake, DeDe, let go and come in!

(glancing towards fire escape)  
My neighbors are going to think you're some sort of lost love or something!

DEDE  
I can't let go! I seem to be stuck to you! It must be the humidity...

TYLER  
(prying DeDe off him)  
Ha ha. Very funny. Come on, lets grab your stuff.

DEDE

Alright. Be careful though. That one's kind of heavy.

TYLER

Hell yeah it is! What do you have in here? A set of encyclopedias?

DEDE

Close. My journals.

TYLER

You brought all of them?

DEDE

Of course! They're not safe with anyone but me. You have no idea what the information inside those pages could do if it got into the wrong hands!

TYLER

I hope I never meet the person who would even want to go through all of that.

DEDE

Tyler! I want you to know that I have been leading a very interesting life since you left! I'm a totally different person. I've seen things!

TYLER

Whatever you say, DeDe. Whatever you say.

DEDE

(wandering around the  
apartment)

It's perfect! Oh my goodness, Tyler! It's absolutely perfect!

TYLER (CONT'D) (cont'd)

It's ok. Nothing special. It's just a place to live.

DEDE

Tyler! It's so much more than that! It's an extension of your being! It's like you with walls!

(smelling the air)

DEDE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

And mold.

TYLER

Hey! It's just the climate, not my cleaning!

DEDE

Whatever. So, tell me everything! What have you been doing? What's Bourbon Street like? Are there really brothels? Do you go out alot? Do you ever go to brothels? Do you have a girlfriend? Or a boyfriend? Or both? Have you ever...

TYLER

Whoa! Hold on a second! Before we go into any of that, why don't you tell me why you're here?

DEDE

To surprise you!

TYLER

I think we established that. Ok, first things first. How did you get here?

DEDE

Some friends gave me a ride.

TYLER

All the way from Colorado?

DEDE

Oh Tyler! You still have the Creedence album I gave you! Isn't it the greatest?

TYLER

Don't change the subject. What friends?

DEDE

What friends what?

TYLER

What friends gave you a ride here?

DEDE

Just some people.

TYLER

You hitchhiked, didn't you?

DEDE  
(sarcastically)  
No! Of course not! Why, it's so dangerous!

TYLER  
I bet it's hard to be a smart ass when you're really such a dumb ass, isn't it?

DEDE  
Well I got here safe and sound. That's what really matters anyway, right?

TYLER  
You should open your own travel agency with that motto. Wait, does Mom know you're here?

DEDE  
She thinks I'm going through another one of my 'not talking to her' moods ever since I got mad that she got mad that I moved in with my boyfriend.

TYLER  
Which one?

DEDE  
Honestly, Tyler. Do you try to make me sound like a slut?

TYLER  
I don't think I've ever had to actually try...

DEDE  
Tyler!

TYLER  
Sorry. Proceed.

DEDE  
(stretching on couch)  
Anyway, his name was Mark. You never met him but he was wonderful! Absolutely, mostly wonderful!

TYLER  
Mostly?

DEDE  
He coughed.

TYLER

Coughed?

DEDE

Coughed.

TYLER

(laughing)

DeDe. Seriously! Everyone coughs!

DEDE

Not like him, though! He coughed these huge, hideous, hacking coughs! It was like dating someone who had severe tourettes, but who coughed instead of cursed!

TYLER

Was he sick all of the time or what?

DEDE

No. He just had really bad lungs and he insisted on smoking three packs of cigarettes a day. I'm telling you, Tyler, it was horrible! He would actually smoke a cigarette every five minutes! I know. I timed him! I just couldn't take it anymore. It was as if each piece of phlegm he hacked up was a piece of my heart that he had inhaled over the months that we were together!

TYLER

You're so poetic, DeDe.

DEDE

(sadly)

How come everyone always says that when I'm not trying to be? Well anyway, that's why I'm here.

TYLER

(teasingly)

To be poetic?

DEDE

(glaring at Tyler)

No. Because of Marks coughing. I woke up in the middle of the night to him sounding like he had a hair ball, and I thought to myself, I'll go visit Tyler!

TYLER

Sis, I love to hear the situations in which you think of me, but I don't understand. You came to New Orleans for some peace and quiet? There are things here that are far worse than a coughing boyfriend.

DEDE

But it's different! And that's just what I need! For things to be different! I just had to get away. From Mark, from Mom, from Radish,....

TYLER

Who's Radish?

DEDE

Mom's new boyfriend. She met him at a rainbow festival in Sedona. He's a musician, but he took so much acid in the 60's that he can't play that much anymore. Heck of a record collection though. Can you show me a brothel now?

TYLER

DeDe, you don't want to go to a brothel. They're disgusting.

DEDE

(excited)

So you've been to one?

TYLER

No! I just know because... well. Because everyone knows. I don't know how, but they just do. Anyway, don't change the subject. You're so good at that, changing the subject. You get that from Mom, y'know.

DEDE

(sadly)

I wish I'd gotten more from Dad.

TYLER

You have stuff from him too. Mom just comes out more because you're female, that's all. How is Mom? Is she doing ok?

DEDE

I guess. She's just different that she used to be, that's all. She misses you. So do I.



TYLER

I've missed you too. Now, how much longer are you planning to be my little 'surprise'?

DEDE

I dunno. I thought maybe I could look for a job here.

TYLER

Please don't tell me that is why you want me to take you to a brothel. Because if it is to pick up an application ...

DEDE

Tyler! There you go thinking I'm a slut again! I will never ... they have applications? Like the GAP? I mean, I guessed they would have try-outs or something, but actual applications! I mean, wow!

TYLER

DeDe! I don't know if they have applications.

DEDE

Do they pay taxes?

TYLER

Does who pay taxes?

DEDE

Y'know. The ... 'Girls'.

TYLER

Your fascination with this subject is making me uneasy.

DEDE

Sorry. Well, where do you work? Maybe I could get a job there! Nothing permanent, that's not me. Just maybe something semi-permanent?

TYLER

(uneasily)

I don't know, DeDe.

DEDE

Why not?

TYLER

Well first of all, you hate Chinese food, and second of all--

DEDE

(Interrupting)

I don't hate Chinese food! I'm just not fond of it. Ever since that story that Gramma told me about that poor little dog ... I mean, that poor couple just wanted the waitress to watch their little (mispronouncing name) Dauchshund.

TYLER

Doxon.

DEDE

No, I think it was a Dauchshund.

TYLER

They're the same dog, DeDe. You're just saying the name wrong.

DEDE

No, I'm not!

TYLER

Anyway, second of all, I don't want to be worried about you every single moment.

DEDE

(snuggling up to Tyler)

But if we work together then you won't have to worry about me.

TYLER

Wrong. Have you ever heard the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'? Well that won't be the case with me! If you work with me then I will know how long you have been out on a delivery, what depths of New Orleans the manager has sent my little sis into, and then I will be very worried! I can see myself now, going after you and finding you in the back room of some voodoo club dancing with a monkey that you'll claim to be the reincarnation of that hamster you had in fifth grade!

DEDE

(sadly)

I miss Mr. Nibbles.

TYLER

What I'm saying is, that if you plan on staying here you need to find a job that suits you. Maybe at a coffee shop or something. You like coffee, don't you?

DEDE

I guess. I was hoping for a something a little more exciting though.

TYLER

(sighing)

Like Chinese food?

DEDE

Exactly!

TYLER

Ok, DeDe. I'll ask them if there might be a hostess position open or something. But it's only temporary until you find your own job, alright?

DEDE

(hugging Tyler)

Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!

TYLER

It's cool. I'm guessing you need a place to stay, too?

DEDE

(lounging seductively on couch)

Well, I'm sure I could find someone who wouldn't mind having a seventeen year old girl crash on their couch for a while. Which way is Bourbon Street again?

TYLER

Uh huh. Sure. I don't think so. You can stay here until you get settled. I'm sure Cody won't mind.

DEDE

Who's Cody? Is he your boyfriend? Ha! I knew it!

TYLER

(swats DeDe)

No. Cody is my roommate. He should be home in a little bit. We usually miss each other because he gets home at the same time I leave for Wongs.

DEDE

Where does Cody work?

TYLER

Cody? Oh, he's a barker for a brothel.

DEDE

Really?!?

TYLER

No. He delivers pizzas. Gotcha!

DEDE

(going after Tyler)

You asshole!

TYLER

(turning the chase on DeDe, not  
noticing that CODY has  
entered)

Girl face!

CODY is a 26 year old man who looks 16;  
he wears a pizza delivery shirt and  
exudes an air of annoyance and  
frustration. He kicks DeDe's bags out  
of the way as he enters.

CODY

God, Tyler. Take it to your room.

TYLER

Hey Code. Off early?

CODY

No. You're late. You should start your little reindeer games  
earlier next time.

(noticing DeDe and her luggage)

Why are all these bags here? And who the hell is this?

TYLER

Cody, this is my sister DeDe.

Cody smiles at DeDe and begins to pick up the bags of hers that he knocked over.

CODY

Hi.

TYLER

She's 17.

Cody drops the bags and rolls his eyes at Tyler.

DEDE

Why do you always say that after you introduce me to your friends?

TYLER

Because I know my friends. And I know you.

CODY

Where the fuck did you come from?

DEDE

Nice to meet you, too.

CODY

(to Tyler)

You have a sister?

TYLER

I'm sure she'll tell you all about it while I'm at work.

DEDE

How long will you be at work for?

CODY

She's staying here?

TYLER

Until 10:30 or 11:00. You'll be fine. Cody, don't take her to any brothels.

CODY

What?

DEDE

Don't listen to him. He's crazy.

TYLER

Remember, no brothels!

Tyler exits

ACT I SCENE II

CODY

So why are you here?

DEDE

To visit Tyler. Have you known him long?

CODY

For a few years. We used to run around in the same crowd before we became roommates.

DEDE

You guy's get along ok?

CODY

That's a weird question. Why wouldn't we?

DEDE

I dunno. Tyler used to kind of be hard to take, that's all.

CODY

Well, everything is cool here. I mean, he has his moods and all, but we get along alright.

DEDE

So he's happy?

CODY

(sitting on couch)

Listen. I know you're his sister and all, but I really don't think it's my place to say whether your brother is happy or not. He's just ... I don't know, he's just Tyler.

DEDE

I was just worried about him. I mean, my mom and I haven't hardly heard from him for over three years. After our dad died.

CODY

Well, maybe there's a reason for that.

DEDE

For my dad dying?

CODY

No. For why Tyler hasn't talked to you in so long.

DEDE

What are you trying to say?

CODY

That it might not be your business. Maybe he just had to get away.

DEDE

But he's my brother.

CODY

I think we've established that.

DEDE

Then there shouldn't be anything wrong with me being curious about what he's been doing these past three years!

CODY

I never said there was. I just don't want any drama happening. Can't you just go to a motel or something?

DEDE

Why would I? Besides, I'm broke.

CODY

Aren't we all. I don't mean to be an asshole or anything, but Tyler and I have a kind of regimen around here. And you might throw a ... a ... ATCHOOO!

DEDE

Bless you.

CODY  
(in the midst of a sneezing  
fit)  
This place is so goddamn moldy! What are you staring at?

DEDE  
(looking at Cody disdainfully)  
Nothing. You just remind me of someone, that's all.

CODY  
Who?

DEDE  
My Ex. He coughed all the time. That's why I'm here.

CODY  
That's shallow.

DEDE  
I know! That's what I said! Here he is keeping me awake at  
night, annoying God-knows-who in the movie theatre...

CODY  
I meant that about you.

DEDE  
What?

CODY  
The shallow part.

DEDE  
Oh. Well. I guess everyone has their vices. Coughing,  
sneezing...

CODY  
(sneezing)  
Why are you here again? As a spokesperson for an allergy  
medication?

DEDE  
(going through spice rack)  
You guys have any pot around here? Tyler always hid it in the  
tarragon container at home. No one ever seems to use tarragon  
for some reason. Pity.



CODY

Why is it a pity? I can't even remember what tarragon smells like.

DEDE

Which proves my point exactly. So do you?

CODY

Do I what?

DEDE

Have any pot?

CODY

I have my personal stash but that's only for me.

DEDE

Can you get some?

CODY

I don't know. You'd probably have an easier time with it than I would.

DEDE

I don't see how. You're the one who lives here and all.

CODY

Yeah, but you're the one who's a chick.

DEDE

What does that have to do with anything?

CODY

It just seems that pretty little things like you have an equally pretty easy time getting what they want.

DEDE

You'd be surprised.

CODY

Whatever. I could make a few calls, but I guarantee that if you go down the block a bit and ask some skankster guy about it, you'll be back within fifteen minutes.

DEDE

Y'think?

CODY

Yeah. Just walk around a bit. I'm sure you'll come across something if it doesn't come across you first. I'm going to go lay down for a bit.

DEDE

Do you want me to wake you up when I get back?

CODY

(shutting door)

Not really.

ACT I SCENE III

SETTING: A dimming New Orleans street. Posters on the buildings describe various attractions and events. Lights bounce randomly across the stage, lighting up various points of interest. The stage is speckled with people, including a group of prostitutes who mimic people passing by behind their backs. There is also a strange little monkey man who is performing an erotic dance of sorts to a fire hydrant. He sees DeDe, runs towards her, and briefly performs his dance for her before scurrying away. The group of prostitutes laugh at DeDe's shocked expression.

MONKEY MAN

Tweaky tweaky!

DEDE

(noticing hookers)

Oh! Hi.

LOLA

(aloof)

Hey.

DeDe watches the hookers with interest as they proposition random males.

A man walks by and ignores the  
prostitutes but turns around when he  
sees DeDe.

MARCI

Hey, honey. Change your mind?

MAN

I might of. How much?

KRISTI

Depends on how much you want.

NANCY

And how good you want it to be.

MAN

What about her?

KRISTI

(cuddling up to the man)

Nancy? Aw, you don't want her. I'm right here.

MAN

(pointing from Nancy to DeDe)

Not him. HER.

NANCY

Her?

MAN

Her.

LOLA

Sorry Jack. She's not with us.

MAN

(walking off)

Too bad. Advertising with something like that might make you  
some money.

NANCY

What the hell was that?

(to DeDe)

Hey! You! Get away from here!

KRISTI

Yeah! Go on! This is our corner!

DEDE

Sorry!

DeDe starts to walk off but is stopped by Lola. Lola is obviously the one in charge and has an air of class about her.

LOLA

Wait.

MARCI

Great. This is just great! Like there's not enough of us here already. Now I'll never make enough to get outta here.

LOLA

Shut up, Marci.

(to DeDe)

What's your name, honey?

DEDE

DeDe.

LOLA

Lola.

DEDE

Hi. Hey, I was wondering, do any of you know where I could get anything?

KRISTI

(laughing sarcastically)

Talk to Nancy boy here. He always seems to have something!

NANCY

(swatting Kristi)

Bitch. You know that cleared up fine, just fine!

DEDE

Never mind. So, are you all, um. Working girls?

LOLA

I prefer the term business women.

KRISTI

When we actually get some!

NANCY

(to Kristi)

It's been so slow that I'm actually considering going to work for the clown. Can you believe it?

MARCI

Ew. That's an all time low.

KRISTI

Yeah. Even for you!

LOLA

Do what you want. Besides, you're all easily replaceable.

(to DeDe)

I bet this little one would love to take your place. Wouldn't you, hon?

DEDE

(realizing Lola's intentions)

Me? Oh! I couldn't. I'm sorry.

LOLA

(laughing)

They all say that at first.

MARCI

Yeah. You get over it after a while.

KRISTI

I just imagine that it's George Michael I'm giving head to. That helps.

MARCI

I always think of David Bowie. One guy actually kinda looked like him.

NANCY

He didn't at all!

MARCI

He did so! Kinda.

NANCY

More like George Burns with a bad dye job and an earring.

MARCI

(embarrassed)

He wasn't that old.

LOLA

Don't listen to them. It's not bad. Best money that you can make here. Especially when you're new in town.

DEDE

How'd you know?

MARCI

Because you're still smiling. And not just 'cuz you're getting paid to.

KRISTI

What the fuck? You get paid for smiling?

(to Lola)

I want the johns she's been getting!

LOLA

Not with that mouth.

KRISTI

What's wrong with my mouth?

LOLA

It talks back.

(to DeDe)

So, you interested? It's not the oldest profession in the world for nothin'.

DEDE

So that's true?

LOLA

Since the dawn of time.

DEDE

That's so romantic. I mean, I know it's probably not, but the idea of it is. Just the word 'prostitute', makes me think of red velvet curtains, cheap burgundy wine, and swinging doors!

KRISTI

(confused)

Swinging doors? Like getting kicked out of places?

DEDE

No. Like in old western saloons. I don't know why I think of them, but I do.

NANCY

Mmmmm-mm! I love me a cowboy!

LOLA

Let me tell you something, FiFi.

DEDE

DeDe.

LOLA

Whatever. Anyways, you're right. It is romantic! You get to meet all types of wonderful people in this business, and sometimes you even fall in love.

DEDE

I thought that was against your rules or something. To fall in love.

LOLA

Not when it's with the right man it's not. Plenty of my girls have been whisked away by wealthy men who have enjoyed their services.

KRISTI

Who?

NANCY

Yeah. Who?

LOLA

(ignoring Kristi and Nancy)

Happens all the time.

KRISTI

Sure as hell has never happened to me!

NANCY

What about that cute Frito Lay truck driver you went to Biloxi with?

KRISTI

(to Marci)

Wait, is that where you were last weekend? With some rich guy?

LOLA

(steering DeDe away from Marci)

I just think you should give it a try. I need another girl and it looks like you might need me, too.

MARCI

Yeah. She needs you just like she needs a hole in her head.

KRISTI

Marci, don't start.

LOLA

(scoffing at Marci's remark)

Don't be jealous. You'll still get work. Maybe I can have a twenty-five-cent Tuesday or something.

MARCI

(to DeDe)

You want to know what it's like to work the streets? It's an awful, horrible thing! Not romantic at all!

NANCY

I think it is.

MARCI

(to Nancy)

Oh, that's just because you like it rough.

(zoning in on DeDe)

It's not like in those dime store romance novels. Not one bit! When you're in, you're in and there's no escape! Ever heard of a retired hooker? No? That's because there are none. They just get used and used until finally they're all used up, just like an old napkin underneath a car seat. And that's if they even make it that far! You think it's romantic to spend your life doing things that would make your mama cry? Hell, you don't even hardly get paid.



LOLA

(taking Marci aside)

Hey! That's not true! I take only a small percentage of what you earn! Besides, I pay for everything you need.

MARCI

Like that crack head abortionist you sent me to last weekend? Thanks! Thanks a whole fucking lot!

KRISTI

Ha! I knew you weren't with no rich man!

LOLA

Hey, things happen! Things that are beyond my control. It's that way with any job you get.

(to DeDe)

So? What do ya' say? Wanna give it a try? I'll let you keep all your wages 'till you get the hang of it.

NANCY

Talk about twenty five cent Tuesdays!

DEDE

(pausing)

Um. Can I ask you guys a question?

NANCY

If it's about technique then I can answer it.

DEDE

No. Thanks though. I was just curious, do you have applications?

LOLA

Applications? Ha! Honey, the only thing I look for in a girl is a pulse and a low self-esteem. You interested?

DEDE

I don't think I really qualify.

LOLA

If you change your mind, you know where we're at. Girls, let's go try in front of Mulligan's. Their happy hour is just about over now, and you know what I always say!

KRISTI

(happily)

'If you can't get 'em while they're sober,'

MARCI

(half heartedly reciting the  
often repeated saying)

'You can get 'em when they're drunk.'

NANCY

(giggling)

Speak for yourselves!

The hookers exit, passing by two  
teenage boys who immediately surround  
DeDe.

Boy #1

Hey little girl.

DEDE

(walking past them)

Hi.

Boy #2

(walking after DeDe)

Hey! Where ya' going?

DEDE (cont'd)

Walking.

BOY #1

Well why don't you walk back this way? I want to ask you  
somethin'.

DEDE

(stopping)

What?

BOY #1

(smugly)

Wanna go out sometime? I think you might like me.

DEDE

Sorry. I have a boyfriend.

BOY #2

Well, where is he?

DEDE

At home.

BOY #2

That's not here, is it? Why don't you stay here with us for a while? Have some fun?

DEDE

(Walking away)

No... I don't think so. Thanks anyway.

BOY #1

(blocking DeDe)

I think you want to.

DEDE

No. I don't.

BOY #1

Yes you do.

DEDE

No. I really don't.

BOY #1

I really think you do.

DEDE

And I really think I don't!

DeDe tries to get around the boys when Stella walks upon the scene. Stella begins to turn around but stops and steps in between the boys and DeDe.

STELLA

Oh, let her go.

BOY #2

Aw, great. It's you. We weren't doing anything.

BOY #1

Yeah! We was just trying to talk to this little lady. Nothin' wrong with that.

STELLA

It doesn't really look like she wants to be talked to.

DEDE

That's probably because I don't.

BOY #2

(whining)

She just wasn't giving us a chance! We were just trying to make her give us a chance.

STELLA

Get home. Your mamas are gonna be mad when you end up late for dinner. And I'm pretty sure she's not gonna give you a chance either.

BOY #1

Ok. Ok. We're going.

The boys exit blowing DeDe kisses along the way.

STELLA

(walking away)

You should go home, too.

DEDE

(going after Stella)

Hey, wait a minute!

STELLA

What?

DEDE

I just wanted to say thank you!

STELLA

For what?

DEDE

For back there.

STELLA

Oh. No problem. They're just little punks, that's all.

DEDE

They didn't seem too little to me.

STELLA

The taller one's 15 and the other one is 14. Chris, the younger one? He still wets the bed. I know. I sometimes work with their mamas down at the laundry mat.

DEDE

What's your name?

STELLA

Stella.

DEDE

I'm DeDe.

STELLA

Hi.

DEDE

Hi...

STELLA

(starting to walk again)

Nice meeting you.

DEDE

(following Stella)

Where are you going?

STELLA

To see a friend.

(seeing EDWARD)

Ah. There he is.

Edward is dressed entirely in silver. He wears a silver suit which appears to be silver fabric but upon closer inspection is nothing more than a dime store suit enticingly covered in duct tape. The parts of his body that are visible from beneath the suit are painted silver. Edward's movements are robotic and he accompanies them with a series of beeps, dings, and whistles that seem impossible for a human to make. DeDe slowly approaches Richard. He is poised on top of a grocery crate that has been spray painted silver.

DEDE

(to Stella)

What's he doing?

STELLA

Same thing all of us is doin'. Trying to make some change.

The silver Edward notices DeDe and sidles up to her. Playing along, DeDe digs in her purse for a few seconds before pulling out some change. Edward mechanically dances lower so that DeDe will be able to deposit her change into his hat.

DEDE

Here ya' go!

EDWARD

Thank you Miss Sweet! Ever so kindly!

DEDE

(laughing)

You're welcome!

EDWARD

(twirling DeDe around)

Beg your pardon, Miss Sweet, but you are the priddiest thing I have seen in quite a while! You can't be from this city, or can you?

STELLA

Take it easy, Romeo.

DEDE

No. I'm from Colorado.

EDWARD

Colorado! So far away!

STELLA

I heard Colorado is pretty. Why'd ya' come here? To trade in the mountains for some swamps? Good fuckin' deal.

DEDE

I came to visit my brother. He lives here and I'm gonna stay with him.

EDWARD

(winking at DeDe)

Well, I hope you have a nice adventure while you are here.

DEDE

Wait! Um. I was wondering, do you know where I could maybe find a joint? I bet you've got a few in your hat before!

EDWARD

(scurrying around picking up  
change)

I have been known to take a puff or two. Stella here would know better than me, tho'.

STELLA

How come you always think I know where everything is? Gawd!

EDWARD

Well, don't you?

STELLA

(embarrassed)

Yeah.

(MORE)

STELLA (cont'd)  
(to DeDe)  
What do ya' want?

DEDE  
Just a little bit. A joint's worth, maybe?

STELLA  
I can do that. Hold on a sec.

Stella walks over to a young man in the crowd who shakes his head when she approaches him

STELLA (cont'd)  
No go. We can try someone else I guess.

EDWARD  
(grinning)  
Or we could go see 'him'.

DEDE  
Who? Is it very far?

EDWARD  
It shouldn't be. We're going to see the clown.

STELLA  
The clown? You gotta be kidding.

DEDE  
(giggling)  
The what?

EDWARD  
The clown. He'll be able to find you what you need.

STELLA  
And a bit more.  
(taking Edward aside)  
I don't think that's a good idea.

EDWARD  
It'll be fine. I was goin' to see him anyway.

STELLA  
I thought you quit doing that shit.



EDWARD

I did. I quit quitting.

STELLA

Funny.

EDWARD

I try. So how long do you plan to stay with us in this city of surprises?

DEDE

I don't know yet. That depends on some things.

STELLA

Like what?

DEDE

On whether or not my brother can get me a job, if he even wants me to stay with him. Just stuff.

EDWARD

I wouldn't make any plans to leave just yet.

DEDE

Why not?

EDWARD

Because this place has a habit of not letting go when you want it to. It'll cling to ya', the way most habits do. I've been here long enough that I feel like I've never been anywhere else. But I'm not from here. It's much more windy where I'm from.

DEDE

Where? Chicago?

EDWARD

You are a smart little cookie aren't ya'?

DEDE

I try. I don't think my brother would agree with you, though.

STELLA

Why'd he come here?

DEDE

I think he just needed to get away.

EDWARD

Ah. Don't we all. I came down here with my daddy. He was a performer too. I still remember the first time he painted me up and took me down to the corner. We pulled so much paper that day! I think it was around two hundred Franklin's for three or so hours of work. Oooo Weeee! You should have seen how mad my mama was when she came in to give me a kiss good night and saw little hints of silver paint still on my eye lids! See, when daddy gave me a bath I was still so excited that my eyes were wide open and, well, I guess he just forgot 'bout the paint still on my eyes.

DEDE

Why was your mom so mad?

EDWARD

Well, she just didn't like the idea of my daddy using me to make an extra buck. Not that I minded though. I thought it was just the greatest thing! We had so much fun pushin' our act! But mama just didn't see it that way.

DEDE

I bet she didn't mind the money though. I mean, that's a lot for just a couple hours work. Especially if you're having fun doing it.

EDWARD

Ah, see that was where the problem was. See, my mama never really did see much of the money. Daddy, like most men, had his vices. And his could be an expensive one. So one day he just packed me up and we left. Daddy said he could tell that mama was getting to her breaking point and that he didn't want to be around to see it. So we came here.

DEDE

It seems like this is the place to come to if you're running away. I wonder what it is.

EDWARD

Or maybe what it isn't. It's the city that can remind you of no other place. People can come here and never have to worry about running into someone that they used to know, or love or hate.

DEDE

I like that. It's like you're nobody.

EDWARD

And there are a lot of nobodies in this place, let me tell you! And then you got a lot of nobodies who think they're somebodies!

STELLA

And that's the worst kind!

DEDE

(laughing)

We even have those in Colorado! So, is this clown a nobody?

EDWARD

(seriously)

No ma'am. This clown is somebody. Yes, he certainly is.

STELLA

Or at least he likes to think he is.

DEDE

Oh. Well, do you think he'll be around soon?

EDWARD

He sure will be. The clown always has this weird way of showing up right when you think he won't.

DEDE

Is he really a clown? Or is that just some sort of nick name? I knew a really fat kid one time who everyone called 'bones'. Is the clown something like that?

STELLA

(walking towards a huddled mass  
against a wall and gently  
kicking it)

Yeah. He's something like that.

ACT II SCENE I

CLOWN

(leaping up and doing a  
somersault of sorts)

(MORE)

CLOWN (cont'd)

Why the stars appear behind my eyes! The silver man gives the clown such a sudden surprise!

The CLOWN is a melted ice cream cone of a man whose makeup looks slept in though it is evident he has not slept a wink. His costume is a shabby patchwork of random bits of materiel covered with questionable looking stains. Edward delivers a grand trumpeting noise as he presents DeDe to the clown and empties the contents of his silver hat into the clowns out stretched hand.

CLOWN (cont'd)

Thank you, Colander.(looks at Stella disdainfully) I see you still have your pet with you. Have you tried dressing her up in a little vest and giving her an organ? I imagine she'd turn out to be a lot more useful.

The clown drops a small baggie into Edwards now empty hat.

CLOWN

And what do we have here?

Edward performs a spin while holding his thumb and index finger together in front of his mouth.

EDWARD

The sweetness needs some help from the clown.

CLOWN (cont'd)

Ah! Our Mary Jane seeks some of the same?

DEDE

If you don't mind?

CLOWN

I think the clown can help you out, but we must travel.

DEDE

How far? I want to be back before my brother gets off work. He'll kill me if I'm not there.

CLOWN

Well, when is that, little one? And I'll tell you how far away it is!

DEDE

Around eleven or so. But maybe earlier.

CLOWN

Then where we're going is not that far! Farewell, sweet Colander! Until tomorrow?

EDWARD

(saluting the clown)

If there is one!

CLOWN

So negative!

DEDE

It was nice to meet you.

EDWARD

(kissing DeDe's hand)

The pleasure was all mine, pretty girl. Don't let this city eat you alive.

DEDE

Maybe next time I can see your father perform with you!

EDWARD

That's not likely to happen. See, Daddy got real sick from lead poisoning 'bout ten years ago. He's in a hospital somewhere up north. Still talkin' about my mama. Y'know. Sick and dreamin'.

DEDE

Oh. I'm sorry.

EDWARD

Don't be. Just one of the hazards of the business. Stella, still beautiful!

CLOWN

Colander, the road is leaving without the show, hate to hurry, but we must go.

Exit Edward

The clown drapes his arms around the shoulders of Stella and DeDe. Stella quickly ducks under his arm and brushes herself off with disgust.

STELLA

This is as far as I go.

CLOWN (cont'd)

Little Ms. New Orleans isn't going to join us? Oh, well. I'm certainly not one to make a fuss.

DEDE

Where are you going?

STELLA

I got some stuff to do, that's all. DeDe? Why don't you come with me? I'll show you the New Orleans that the tourists don't get to see!

CLOWN

I'm pretty sure that such a well traveled young lady has already seen the back of a car. Come with us, Stella! I think you're forgetting all the fun we used to have.

STELLA

No, I think I'm remembering all the fun you had!

(walking off)

I'm out of here. Good luck, DeDe.

DEDE

Wait!

CLOWN

(imitating Brando in A  
Streetcar Named Desire)

Stella!!!!

DeDe walks towards Stella, hesitates,  
and returns to the clown.

DEDE

Why'd she run off so quick?

CLOWN

Probably just a little jealous. Not everyone is deserving of the clown's company. And they hate it when they have to be around someone who is. Follow me.

DeDe walks after the clown, trying to keep up with his erratically varying speed.

DEDE

Is Colander his real name?

CLOWN

(chuckling)

No. I believe our friend's real name is Edward. I just call him Colander because he is silver and full of holes.

DEDE

From what?

CLOWN

(spinning around to face DeDe)

From what?!? Where is it that you've come from, child? To ask why the silver man has holes? Why they are from the wares that I provide to my oh-so very much private public! And don't get me wrong, my dear. There is a very distinct difference between 'to peddle' and 'to provide'! The clown never peddles, pushes, pries, nor persuades! If he is approached, then he will present. And when he presents, his public is pleased. And let's just say that Colander has been pleased for a good many years.

DEDE

So all the money people give him just goes to dope?

CLOWN

(kindly))

Child, people would not believe how many addictions they feed by trying to be good hearted.

DEDE

I imagine that they also end up helping alot of people too. I mean, not every person you give money to on the streets turns around and uses it to get drugs.

CLOWN

(laughing)

Ah! May your innocence deliver us!

ACT II SCENE II

DeDe and the Clown pass by a little old woman who is bundled up in an igloo of trash bags filled with more trash bags. Her gnarled hand shakes open every time someone passes by.

ESMERELDA

(to person passing by)

Oh, lookit dose kind kind eyes! Dose kind, kind eyes haf' a liddle sumpting for a poor ole lady? For sho' dey do!

The person reaches into his pockets and sprinkles some change into her gnarled hand.

ESMERELDA (cont'd)

Tank you! Oh, I knows kind eyes when I see dem! Oh for sho'!

CLOWN

Hello, Esmerelda! How is the queen of the castle doing today?

ESMERELDA

'Bout to be a whole lot bettah nows dat de clown is here! I was getting so cold. You have some warmth to give a little ole lady?

CLOWN

(laughing)

That might work on the general public but it won't work on me! See, I know a secret ...

(to DeDe)

She's only forty-three!

DEDE

Forty-three??

ESMERELDA

It has been a hard life! I want to see you afta' youse been on da streets for a few years!

(MORE)



ESMERELDA (cont'd)

I predict dat dose priddy little apples in yo' cheeks will be rotten to de core. For sho' dey will be!

CLOWN

(swatting at Esmerelda)

Oh, Esmerelda! Be kind to this young lady! She is not trying to infringe on the benefits you receive from your life on the streets.

ESMERELDA

I do not care. All I knows is dat even de' most golden of corn turns into de' harshest of whiskey.

CLOWN

That you will gladly consume, no doubt! Let metaphors play upon themselves on the paper of poets as we move on to more relevant things. Do you wish to dip into my fountain of your disappearing youth? Or should I merely pass you by like all the others?

ESMERELDA

(digging through her nest)

No, no, no. I gots some change.

CLOWN

(to DeDe)

How charmingly unique! A panhandler with change!

ESMERELDA

I heard dat! Here. Take it and be on yous ways.

The clown takes a Crown Royal bag from the old woman and then reaches from behind his ear to produce a small bag of powder.

CLOWN

'Til next time, Esmerelda.

ESMERELDA (cont'd)

Jus' get outta my sight. Groups scare de tourists away.

DEDE  
(to clown)  
I don't think that's what's scaring people away at all.

ESMERELDA  
(calling out to the clown and  
DeDe)  
Remember what I said! Whiskey!

The Clown and DeDe move away from  
Esmerelda and towards a group of boxes.

CLOWN  
I'm sorry, what were you saying?

DEDE  
About what?

CLOWN  
About a world where beggars take the money that you give them  
and go out and buy a hot meal?

DEDE  
Oh. I guess it's not true in some cases but...

CLOWN  
So it's a fairy tale! Oh, I love fairy tales! You must tell  
me more!

Nancy approaches the Clown and DeDe. He  
is about thirty-one and looks like he  
borrows make-up from the clown on a  
regular basis.

NANCY  
(wrapping his arm around the  
clown's shoulder.)  
Hey funny boy. Wanna make me laugh?

CLOWN (cont'd)  
(pushing Nancy to the wall with  
his forearm against his neck)  
Fucking whore! Don't ever touch me again! Ever!

NANCY

Lemme go! You're crazy!

DEDE

Stop it!

The clown grimaces at Nancy, smiles at DeDe, and quickly lets go of the hooker. In a comical way he makes a big deal of checking to see if she's ok as she sputters and coughs.

NANCY

(coughing)

Screw you.

CLOWN

Ah, I would just love to imagine how many men you have tantalized with that attractive proposition!

DeDe begins to sneak off.

CLOWN (cont'd)

(chasing after DeDe)

He reminded me of my father.

DEDE

You would do that to your father?

CLOWN

The acorn will fall close to the tree, but it's up to an educated man to determine if it's a nut.

DEDE

(pulling her arm away from the clown)

Hey. I really need to get back to my brother's. I mean, it's getting late and he'll be worried.

The clown falls to his knees and wraps his arms around DeDe's legs like a child.

CLOWN

Noooooooo! Oh please, oh please! I promise I fell far from the tree! Just stay. Please stay! We're almost there. I promise!

DEDE

But my brother...

CLOWN

It won't take long! Please! You're so sweet and green, the clown promises he won't pick you, but he will cause a scene!

DEDE

I just don't know about this. Couldn't I just wait here while you go get it? I mean, I won't leave or anything!

A vagrant walks past and leers at DeDe.

CLOWN

Of course! It might take a bit, but you are more than welcome to wait out here! Alone. And by that I don't mean by yourself.

DEDE

Wait! I just don't think I should go in. I don't really know you, and...

CLOWN

And one should follow one's own advice on occasion, don't you agree?

DEDE

Yeah, that's what I'm saying.

CLOWN

But, fortunately this is not one of those occasions.

DEDE

It's not? Because, I really think it is.

CLOWN

Of course it's not! Why, you are here with the clown! He will take care of you, and get you your smoke. But you have to come with him in order to toke!

DEDE

Why do you always speak in rhyme? I think it's very confusing.

CLOWN

(mocking DeDe)

Why don't you speak in rhyme? I think it's very dull!

DEDE

It's not nice to imitate people.

CLOWN

If you don't like the way you sound, you shouldn't sound like it. But that's a trivial man dressed in a trivial suit whom I do not wish to deal with at this time. Come here princess, and allow me to welcome you into the jesters castle.

DeDe walks in the building in front of the clown who closes the door behind her with an ill-intended flourish.

ACT II SCENE III

Lights dim and then raise on the other side of the stage where Edward is pulling items out of a moldy duffle bag.

Stella walks over to Edward, who is beginning to touch up his paint job with a spay can of silver paint and mending his suit with carefully cut pieces of duct tape.

EDWARD

Where's your little friend?

STELLA

With the clown.

EDWARD

You left her?

STELLA

Yeah.

EDWARD

Oh.

STELLA

Why?

EDWARD

Nothing. Do you think that glitter would stick to the spray paint if I did it quickly enough?

STELLA

Don't change the subject, dammit.

EDWARD

(innocently)

What subject?

STELLA

About DeDe. And leaving her with the clown.

EDWARD

Oh. That. I'm just surprised you did, that's all. Now come over here and help me with the back of my neck. I can feel it flaking off.

STELLA

(spraying the back of Richard's neck)

What the hell was I supposed to do? Force her not to go in? She wouldn't of listened. I know how girls like her are.

EDWARD

How are they? Like you?

STELLA

I was not at all like her when I came here. I grew up in this fucking state. I know how it works.

EDWARD

Yep. Caddo Lake. Scary place.

STELLA

It was your idea to take her to the clown in the first place.

EDWARD

It was not my idea to leave her there.

STELLA

I hate you.

EDWARD

No, you don't.

STELLA

Well, right now I do.

EDWARD

I just think that there's some similarities between you two, dat's all.

STELLA

Between that little girl and me? Hah! I've been older than her since I was born.

EDWARD

Which wasn't that long ago, if I recall.

STELLA

It was a long time ago.

EDWARD

But not so long that you shouldn't remember.

STELLA

Who would want to?

RICHARD

You should want to, that's all. Remembering where ya came from is what makes you realize where you are.

STELLA

That's what I'm trying to forget.

EDWARD

Which is why you should remember.

STELLA

Now you're beginning to sound like the clown. I don't know why you hang around with him anyway. Well, I know, but it still doesn't make sense.

EDWARD

What does? I need what he has, and he needs people to need him. I think it's a be-yoo-tiful relationship. Besides, if I didn't need the clown around...

STELLA

(interrupting Edward)

There you go sounding like him again.

EDWARD

(ignoring Stella)

I would've never found you.

STELLA

(pausing)

She'll be ok.

EDWARD

Just like you were.

STELLA

I mean, she's tough. Kinda.

EDWARD

Hmmm mmm. She sure seemed tough to me.

STELLA

And her brother is here. She can always call him.

EDWARD

Yessir. Just call her brother. She be fine.

STELLA

The clown won't do anything, he just wants some company and she wants some weed. Makes sense in my book.

EDWARD

Like clockwork.



STELLA

Damn you, Silver! Making me feel guilty and shit! I got no reason and you know that!

EDWARD

I'm not makin' anyone feel guilty. Like my daddy always said, 'only the hit dog cries'.

STELLA

Oh, what the hell does that mean?

EDWARD

That no one keeps crying 'bout something dat doesn't hit em'.

STELLA

I don't have to worry about that. I just hit back.

EDWARD

I don't recall seein' any bruises on tha' clown.

STELLA

(somber)

Don't talk about the clown.

EDWARD

Alright. I won't. I just want you to realize who's talking to him right now.

STELLA

You play dirty, y'know that?

EDWARD

The truth's dirty. You should know that by now.

STELLA

I'm dirty, does that mean I'm the truth?

EDWARD

The Lord says that the truth lives in all of us, so, yes, I guess you are tha' truth. Never woulda imagined that you were a virtue, tho'. Not with that face.

STELLA

Screw you! What's wrong with my face?

RICHARD

It's empty. Jest like that lil girls face is gonna be empty too, here pretty soon.

STELLA

Sounds like you like this girl.

EDWARD

Just how I used to like you.

STELLA

And how is that?

EDWARD

In the opposite way that the clown did.

STELLA

Shut up.

EDWARD

Aw darlin'. Don't be that way. I jest want you to remember where dat girl's at.

STELLA

What if I don't want to remember.

EDWARD

Then she'll always have to. Do what ya' want. I was jest saying, well, nuthin.

STELLA

Fine. I'll go.

EDWARD

You are such a good person.

STELLA

Yeah.

EDWARD

It's amazin' what a good person you are.

STELLA

Ok. Just be quiet.

EDWARD

(teasing)

I am just plain astounded 'bout your kindness!

STELLA

Well stop being astounded and c'mon.

EDWARD

Wha'? I ain't going no where. Big day tomorrow.

STELLA

(imitating robot like dance)

Of what? Being silver for silver? Like you have to prepare for that. Always looks made up on tha' spot anyways. Besides, you're the one whose idea it was to go get her.

EDWARD

All I was doin' was suggesting. There's no commitment when you just suggest

STELLA

Oh yeah there is. You know the clown. He trusts you.

EDWARD

He just don't know how scared I am, that's all.

STELLA

You're scared? Ha! I knew it. I knew there was no way that you weren't a little bit afraid of him!

EDWARD

I'm afraid of people who aren't afraid of themselves. Tha' clown isn't afraid of himself, and that's why everyone is afraid of him.

STELLA

That doesn't make any sense. I'm not afraid of myself.

EDWARD

You should be. Everyone should be. I know I give myself the shivers sometimes. I think you gotta be crazy if you don't.

STELLA

And why is that?

EDWARD

Because only you knows what you are capable of, what you've done, and what you'll do. It seems like the clown has forgotten all that. Like he wakes up everyday with a clean piece of paper ta' scribble on.

STELLA

I thought that was what you were supposed to do, forget yesterday and live for today and all that bull shit. I remember my Granny had a needle point pillow that said 'Today is the first day of the rest of your life'.

EDWARD

It shoulda said 'Learn from tha' past' underneath it.

STELLA

I'll be sure to write home and tell her that.

EDWARD

All I'm tryin' to say is that the clown don't feel bad for what he's done, 'cuz he chooses to forget it. Forget it and go on doing tha' same thing. Like they say, tha definition of craziness is doing the same thing over and over and still expectin' different results each time.

STELLA

You read that on a bathroom wall, didn't you?

EDWARD

I might of. It don't make it any less powerful, tho'. I've read some of tha' most powerful facts on tha' bathroom wall. It carries a sorta wisdom with it.

STELLA

I'm just glad that you don't read actual books. I'd never get a damned word in edgewise.

EDWARD

Remind me ta' go get a library card.

STELLA

Very funny.

EDWARD

Speaking of funny, aren't ya' goin' somewhere?

STELLA

No.

EDWARD

You sure looked like you were getting ready to go somewhere.

STELLA

I told you, I'll only go if you go with me. But I'm not going in there.

EDWARD

You won't have to. I like being tha' hero.

STELLA

I can tell. It's annoying.

EDWARD

That lil girl won't think so. I bet she'll think it's grand!

STELLA

I really don't care what she thinks. I just wanna get her outta there and be done with the whole thing. So are we going or not?

RICHARD

Whatever you say.

STELLA

Ok then. C'mon. Let's get this over with.

EDWARD

Did I mention what a kind person you are?

STELLA

Did I mention that you should go to hell?

EDWARD

Said like tha' ambassador of kindness herself!

STELLA

(pausing)

It's probably too late.

EDWARD

It has been a while.

STELLA

I mean, who are we anyway? These kinda stuff happens. It's not like we could really do anything.

EDWARD

We could do sumpthin. At least go ever there.

STELLA

You don't have any left, do you?

EDWARD

That's not why.

STELLA

It really has been a while.

EDWARD

It's probably too late.

STELLA

(pulling a box out of her bag  
and emptying it on the  
pavement)

Wanna play some dominos?

EDWARD

Does the clown like little girls?

STELLA

(serious)

That's not fucking funny.

EDWARD

It wasn't meant to be. Play your double six. I know you have it.

The pair begin playing dominos as the lights slowly fade and come up across the stage on a door nestled in the street's rubbish.

ACT III SCENE I

The clown pulls open a door nearly camouflaged by the trash. DeDe and the clown enter the abandoned warehouse.

There are random pieces of newspaper pasted up over the windows in such a way that one cannot tell whether the newspaper is to keep the sun out or a madman's art project gone awry. There are passed out druggies around the area who are bent in uncomfortable looking positions and the sound of their breathing and snoring is heard throughout the scene. Beer bottles, bongos, and other paraphernalia litter the room.

The clown guides DeDe to a moldy couch and dusts off the seat for her to sit in.

CLOWN

M'lady! What shall we do now?

(scooting closer to DeDe)

Do you wish to seduce the clown with a sultry brow?

DEDE

(scooting away)

Listen, I really need to jet soon. So, maybe you could get me that pot? I gotta hurry.

CLOWN

I have baggies in all colors and flavors! Suitable for all types of cravers! My castle is littered with these little plastic bags of sunshine, Why, look!

The clown pulls a piece of multi-colored cardboard out from underneath the couch.

DEDE

What is it?

CLOWN

Curious John created this lovely stained glass piece out of my baggies. Notice the homage to 'The Last Supper', that's my favorite part. I've always imagined myself very similar to the lead character of the painting.

DEDE

You mean Jesus?

CLOWN

(brushing her aside)

Oh, is that what people are referring to him as these days?  
Then yes. Like the Jesus of New Orleans! The king of kings!  
What?

DEDE

(giggling)

Nothing. It's just that that's a pretty big step as far as  
comparisons go.

CLOWN

(hurt)

I don't see how. Jesus took one fish and made it feed many! I  
can expand my wares with a dose and dab until it satisfies  
plenty!

DEDE

I don't think that's really the same thing.

CLOWN

I think it is! Are you blind to the similarities? Look around  
you? What do you see?

DEDE

Um... I don't know. Alot of passed out people? Trash?

CLOWN

(holding up the stained glass  
baggie art)

My disciples! Each one of these friends have been carefully  
picked and cultivated to resemble the characters which in  
this piece are clearly stated!

The clown suddenly throws the cardboard  
across the room and hits a passed out  
junkie.

JUNKIE

Watch it!



CLOWN

Get off of my throne before I defile you just as your father did when you were a child! Disgusting wretch of a man!

The junkie swaggers upright and tosses  
the cardboard piece back at the clown  
while stumbling to the door.

JUNKIE

Man, just let me alone, ok? I was sleeping!

DEDE

I thought he was one of your friends. Your disciple?

CLOWN

He was. Everyone can act like a friend for a little while.  
The ones who come back after they know you're crazy, now  
those are the ones who are your friends.

(gesturing towards door)

He might be back. He might not. Who knows? Do you?

DEDE

Right now, I'm not sure I know too much of anything.

CLOWN

It's not good to know too much of anything. It muddles your  
mind with possibilities and 'woulda coulda shouldas' If you  
dare to dream, you are bound. Bound to fail and disappoint.  
That's what my father always said. He's dead.

DEDE

I'm sorry.

CLOWN

Why? I'm not.

DEDE

It's just that... well. My father's dead too.

CLOWN

(excited)

He is? Well, what a coincidence! Our random meeting has begun  
to make sense! So tell me, what did your dear old dad do to  
you?

DEDE

Do?

CLOWN

Yes.

DEDE

Nothing wrong. He was wonderful. I don't want to talk about this right now. Can I go now?

CLOWN

(disappointed)

He was?

DEDE

Who. Oh, my dad. He was. Why? Wasn't your father?

CLOWN

He loved me. In his own way.

DEDE

That's nice.

CLOWN

And he let many other men love me in their own way as well.

DEDE

(nervously)

Oh.

CLOWN

That's why I'm here. Formed into a clown by many an old man's leer! Daddy dearest didn't want his friends to be able to recognize his son. So he dressed me up. At first it was in a little sailor suit that suited me well. But then my father realized that as well as taste, the men could still see my sweet little face! The clown make up did away with that. And besides, some men found a little crying clown particularly charming!

DEDE

(horrified)

Oh my God. How old were you?

CLOWN

(laughing hysterically)

I was nine when it began, and fifteen when I finally ran. But the damage was done. I was no longer a son. And I ran wee wee all the way home!

DEDE

(moving towards a window and  
subtly trying to open it)

Why didn't you report him? Or something?

CLOWN

(hysterically)

Report him? Report him!? How do you report something that no one thinks is a sin? Wait. Why are you here anyway? What do you want from me? I don't even know you and you are in my house!

DEDE

(going to the door but finds  
that it is locked)

You invited me! I don't even know you! I just wanted some weed and you wouldn't let me leave! I should be home waiting for my brother! Not in this, this, crack house! Please! Let me out!

CLOWN

(blocking the door)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry! Forgive me and my cruelty! I just forget who I am. A lonely dunce, in this house of sin! I will get you the grass that your mind yearns to roll in. Just wait here. I'll be back, not in eleven seconds, but ten!

(cautiously backing away from  
the door)

DEDE

I think I've given you all the time that I can spare.

CLOWN

(handing DeDe a small plastic  
bag)

Are you friends with me again? Has the lowly clown proven himself worthy of the princess?

DEDE

Thanks. I appreciate it. Um, but it's getting late. I'll, I'll see you around, ok?

CLOWN

Wait!

DEDE

Oh, what now?

CLOWN

(offering DeDe a pipe)

Try this.

DEDE

What is it?

CLOWN

This is Now.

DEDE

Now?

CLOWN

New Orleans Wish. And, as you know, wishes often become wasted.

DEDE

Like?

CLOWN

(gesturing to passed out  
druggies)

Then. Then becomes when spinning now. How it ends nobody knows, which road to take, right or mistake, the choices blend.

DEDE

(taking the pipe)

Now?

CLOWN

Make it what you want, wonderful, or worry. Scarred or starred. It's always now.

DEDE

I'm not sure. I'll just smoke  
when I get back to my  
brother's place.

CLOWN

(holding out a pipe)

Just stay for a puff? The clown has New Orleans special  
stuff! You've come all this way, this is it. No longer will I  
make you stay!

DEDE

Fine.

As DeDe inhales from the pipe the  
passed out druggies slowly come to  
life, creeping from their places  
towards her on the couch.

DEDE

I, I feel thick inside, like the air is touching me.

CLOWN

It's the humidity.

DEDE

Wha' what was that?

CLOWN

That you don't need to know. Lay back, my princess, watch the  
back of your eye lids glow.

Taking deep breaths, DeDe lies down.

DEDE

(closing eyes)

I gotta go back.

ACT III SCENE II

The clown moves around to the back of  
the couch as his disciples slowly wake  
up from random places on the stage.  
They home in on DeDe. A deep rhythmic  
breathing comes from the mist of  
vagrants that are swarming above DeDe.

The beat is broken by Stella and Edward crawling through the window. The clown opens his arms in welcome to the transients and watches as they lustfully cluster around the couch in a mock pose of the last supper. The clown freezes, arms out stretched. They hold the pose for a second, slowly gathering over the passed-out DeDe; the clown raises his face to the heavens and starts crying silently as a river of eye liner flows down his crackled white cheeks. Edward begins swimming through the group trying to get to DeDe. Finally Edward emerges from the mass with DeDe cradled in his arms. Stella, Edward and DeDe move towards the exit. The clown, who has been in a meditative state since the feeding began, breaks from his 'Last Supper' pose of rapture.

CLOWN

Where are you taking her?!?

STELLA

Where you can't touch her. Or me!

Stella and Edward push the groggy DeDe towards the door.

CLOWN

She was my picture!

The clown howls in fury as he tries to climb over the languid forms of his followers but only gets the door slammed in his face.

CLOWN

Pretty pity, such a pretty pity! A rolling stone gathers no moss, but a stranded stone is just waiting to be tossed!

The clown slides down the door with a mournful howl.

CLOWN (cont'd)

She might have tumbled, fell and tripped, but it is still me who will make her skip!

Stella leads DeDe away from the clown where DeDe collapses in a head-lolling heap. Edward walks back to the clown while Stella tries to get DeDe to stand up.

EDWARD

Just let her go. She ain't no use to you. She's jest a little thing. You got enough people 'round here to entertain you, let this one go.

CLOWN

But she was mine! I love her! They usually try to run away. And she didn't! She liked me! And I love her!

EDWARD

You know that kind of love only turns ta' hate after a while, after you get tired of her.

CLOWN

But I wouldn't tire of her, not this time, not this one! She's different than the others. Not dim-witted and slow, but as bright as the sun!

EDWARD

Just go inside. Do whatever you need ta' do and pass the smooth out. You'll forget all 'bout this in tha' morning. I hear that they say tomorrow is tha' first day of tha' rest of your life.'

CLOWN

What the hell does that mean?

EDWARD

It means that tomorrow you won't remember this.

Edward spins the clown around and puts a sleeper hold on him.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I hope this doesn't hurt our workin' relationship.

Edward and Stella help the very displaced DeDe stumble through the street.

DEDE

(drowsily)

What happened? Where are we going?

STELLA

Somewhere I didn't get to go.

EDWARD

We're takin' you home, sweetness.

DEDE

I don't feel good.

STELLA

I know you don't. What's your brother's number?

DEDE

I, I, I don't remember. Can I sit down? I wanna sit down. Please let me sit down! (begins crying)

STELLA

Not yet. We need to get you out of here and back to your brother.

DEDE

I'm so dizzy. I think I'm gonna get sick.

STELLA

What the hell did he give her?

EDWARD

With tha' clown, you never know.

STELLA

(standing)

I'm gonna go ask him.

EDWARD

Like he's gonna tell you.

STELLA

Well, I'm gonna make him tell me.



EDWARD

Besides, I don't think he's even gonna remember what he dosed her with. You gotta remember, we're talkin' 'bout a guy who can't even remember the last breath he took, let alone the last drug he did!

STELLA

What are we gonna do here, huh? Just watch her die? Because I just don't think I could handle that!

EDWARD

There is a clinic a couple blocks from here. I think it's a 24.

STELLA

(pacing)

No. No clinics.

EDWARD

Why not? I went there one time and they were real nice.

STELLA

Because, what are always at clinics?

EDWARD

Ambulances?

STELLA

No. The other cars with flashy lights.

EDWARD

Ah. I understand. Well, we'll just tell them tha' truth! They know tha' clown. They'll understand.

STELLA

But they'll ask questions. And if I know cops, they'll trick us up somehow and it'll all be our fault!

They both look down at DeDe in silence.

EDWARD

I guess we could just leave her here. Someone kind'll come across her sooner or later.

STELLA

You are a confusing man, y'know that? One minute you want to save her from all the evils in tha' world, and now you're perfectly fine with just leaving her on tha' streets!

EDWARD

I never said I wanted to save her from all the evils in tha' world. That would be impossible. I jest wanted to save her from tha' clown.

STELLA

I wish we knew her brother's number. This is what he gets for never fucking giving it to me.

EDWARD

You know her brother?

STELLA

Long story.

Stella begins screaming into DeDe's lolling face but to no avail.

EDWARD

Check her bag thing.

STELLA

What bag thing?

EDWARD

I saw her pull it out when we were on our way to the clown.

Stella begins to gently frisk DeDe and comes upon a little thin strapped soft satchel of sorts. Stella begins rummaging through lip glosses, lighters and other random personal things until she finds a scrap of paper.

STELLA

Ah ha! Tyler. 555-2831. Go call him.

EDWARD

How come I gotta go while you jest get to sit here?

STELLA

You want to wipe puke off yourself, it's perfectly fine with me.

EDWARD

Be back in a sec!

STELLA

(soothing)

Come on, Baby. Stay with me. It's gonna be alright. God, I hate it when people say that. I can't believe I just said that! People who say everything's gonna be alright usually have no idea what's going on inside you. I would rather have someone tell me that it's not going to be alright! That it's gonna hurt alot, that you're gonna have scars, and when it's over, it's not really over. The scars are always there to remind you, even if you can't see them.

I mean, fuck! It's never gonna be over! Even when you're back from wherever you came from, this moment will still be etched in your mind, in your soul! You'll remember it and feel the moment all over again, maybe not as bad, but you'll still feel sick inside when you think about it. That's the thing with pain. Body pain is gone after you heal. But heart pain, y'know, like when you lose someone you love? That's the pain that stays with you forever. When you know that you can't make somebody love you, especially when they figure out who you used to be, or who you are now. So look at it this way. At least you just have body pain. God knows I wish that was all I had. You can fix that.

DEDE

(rolling over to look at  
Stella)

Did you say something?

STELLA

(laughing)

Nothing important. You feeling OK? Richard just left to call your brother. He should be back soon. What did you take? You puked on me.

DEDE

I'm sorry! Oh, God. I don't remember anything. That clown guy handed me a joint and I took a hit and, and, and that's all I remember. Did, I mean, did he do anything to me? He didn't, did he?

STELLA  
(suddenly hugging DeDe)  
Nah. We got to you before that.

The clown enters from stage right.

CLOWN  
Well, what a touching sight. Most perfect one I've seen all night.

STELLA  
(letting go of DeDe and getting  
up protectively)  
Get out of here.

CLOWN  
Oh! Don't let me disrupt you! I enjoyed seeing darkness put  
out light. You two have a sort of poetic chaos,  
(to a passing vagabond)  
Don't you agree?

STELLA  
I said get out of here!

CLOWN  
(sarcastically)  
But why? You don't want me around your little friend? Why  
not? Jealous?

STELLA  
Just go. Her brother's on his way to get her. Let her be.

CLOWN  
Why, that is it. Isn't it? You're jealous!  
(laughing)  
You miss what we had? Is that why you're blue? I feel like  
such a silly boy, I never knew! It's nothing you did, you  
know? They're always wonderful when they're soft and young.  
But for some reason they always grow!

STELLA  
Or they get so ruined that you throw them away.

CLOWN

Ruined? It's nothing that they don't want and need. Or at least they think they do at the time. I am the clown! I make them happy!

STELLA

How do you make them happy? How the hell do you think you make anyone happy?

CLOWN

(tsking DeDe)

Why, you little stupid, stupid girl. I thought you had grown out of asking such silly questions! I guide them out of this place! Take them to a softer dream. One where the edges are warm and fuzzy, not dirty and muggy! I make their memories blur into something that never happened, something that they were previously trapped in! What better of a happiness is that?

STELLA

One that is real!

CLOWN

Real? A happiness that is real? Why next you'll want me to bounce you on my knee like Santa Claus!

(to DeDe)

I bet you still believe in Santa, don't you, my princess? Think he'll come down and save us all? Protect us from all of life's trips and falls? I'll tell you a secret, I kicked Santa in his red velvet balls and laughed and laughed when away he crawled!

STELLA

You're a sick bastard, you know that?

CLOWN

(feigning shock)

Moi? No! Such insults coming from you today, Stella! Maybe you need a little treat, or did you run out of paying fellas?

STELLA

I don't do that anymore.

CLOWN

Did the nickname start to get to you? What was it again? Oh yes. Whore!

DEDE

(trying to stand)

Will my brother be here soon? I want my brother.

CLOWN

(trying to get past Stella to  
DeDe)

Your brother? Him again? Come with me, child. This is the place you belong in! A place with no time or space! I have all sorts of things that your cupid's bow can taste!

STELLA

(blocking the clown)

Just leave her alone! That's all I ask! Just go! She doesn't belong here!

CLOWN

Everyone who comes here belongs here! That's why this city exists! To house the lost who come to be found! And I find them, oh, yes I do! And if you don't recall, I believe that's how I found you.

STELLA

You didn't find me, you took me! Stole me from, from, from everything!

CLOWN

Your everything amounts into nothing. Even to me. This little thing even knows that. It's so simple that even the innocent can see! I'm not leaving here until there's one or perhaps two, with me.

(pushing past Stella to the  
passed out DeDe)

Wake up. Wake up into the dream. I'll make sure you never slip into sleep again.

STELLA

I'll call the police! I swear I will!

CLOWN

No you won't. And even if you do, it won't be me who they take, it will be you.

(picking up DeDe)

Come on. You'll be the beauty to my sadness, the dreamer who makes sense of my madness. You won't deny me of that, will you? A saving grace?

(MORE)

CLOWN (cont'd)

Surely you won't rob me of her angel's face? A second chance? Or maybe she's my third. I stopped counting years ago. Even you would take one if it were offered, I know I'm right. So beautiful, so light. I like them best like this. Never a word, never a fight.

STELLA

(struggling with the clown)

Put her down!

CLOWN

Why? I found her, she's mine!

STELLA

Take me.

CLOWN

(surprised)

Take you? Now why would I want you? You're not an angel, a fallen one maybe.

STELLA

Because I'm already here! I know what you want. I can give it to you! I know how the game works, what to do!

CLOWN

I don't want your dusty little body. Too many finger prints are already littering it. I imagine many a heinous crime could be solved by dusting the dirty little crevices of your body.

STELLA

I'm not like that anymore. C'mon. I could be there for you better than she ever could! Talk to you! Sell for you! Anything!

CLOWN

Anything?

STELLA

(defeated)

Anything.

CLOWN

(comically considering)

Well, I could use some extra income and you do already know how to get some. I perhaps could use your help, giving that you help me, and not just yourself.

STELLA

It will be like in the beginning, I promise! All for you! Just don't take her.

CLOWN

I have to admit the offer is tempting. But not convincing. But you have to know, if you run away again, I will tear you limb from tattered limb!

STELLA

I won't.

CLOWN

But how will I know?

STELLA

(softly)

Because I have nowhere else to go.

CLOWN

What is it?

STELLA

What is what?

CLOWN

(gazing at DeDe)

About her. What is it about her?

STELLA

I dunno. I guess because she doesn't know any better. And I don't want her to learn any different.

CLOWN

And that's it? That's the reason you are giving this sacrifice of yourself?

STELLA

I guess. I don't know. Just put her down. Let this one go. Just this one?



CLOWN

Maybe because she reminds you of someone you used to know? A very long time ago?

STELLA

Just put her down, ok?

CLOWN

(putting DeDe down gently)

Well, if it means so much to you. I don't like to see my little minions be blue! Though I hate to trade in Snow White for one of her dwarfs.

(kneeling next to DeDe)

Be careful, princess. Don't get lost in what the world tells you, because it's most likely lies, and then evil will erase your star from the sky.

(turning towards Stella)

It is now.

STELLA

I know.

CLOWN

(throwing Stella over his shoulder)

My new toy! Well used to many but new to me! I will keep you a secret that only I will see!

EXIT CLOWN AND STELLA

DEDE

(waking up)

Wha? Stella? Oh. My head.

DeDe gets up slowly, still affected by the drug. Slowly, characters emerge from the scenery. They are joined by actors who are dressed like Stella, Edward, Esmerelda, and the Clown, but are different actors. DeDe tries to talk to them but they just continue to ignore her as they circle the set.

DEDE (cont'd)

Stella! I... wait. You aren't Stella. Edward! What's going on?

(MORE)

DEDE (cont'd)  
 (realizing that it is not  
 Edward)

Where is Edward? Who are you? Where is he? Where is Edward?  
 Can you help me? I, I, I think I'm sick. I don't know where I  
 am!

(the silver man ignores DeDe)

DEDE (cont'd)  
 (to Esmerelda)

You remember me, don't you? Please, please help me! I don't  
 know who anyone is, where I am, who I am! Please!

ESMERELDA  
 (laughing)

What did I say, child? What did I say? The sweetest of corn  
 turns into the harshest of whisky! The sweetest of corn turns  
 into the harshest of whiskey!

DeDe spins counter clockwise to the  
 migrating group of madness, begging  
 them to remember her, to help her. A  
 voice cries out and the crown  
 disappears.

TYLER  
 (pushing past characters)

DeDe? DeDe?

(seeing her)

Oh my God! DeDe! What the hell are you doing here? Are you OK  
 Oh my God, you're not ok!

DEDE  
 (sleepily)

Tyler? Tyler!

(hugging Tyler)

Oh! I'm so glad to see you! I don't know what happened! Oh,  
 don't be mad Tyler! I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! I shouldn't  
 have....

TYLER  
 (interrupting)

Shhhh! I'm not mad. Well, a little bit. But I'm more happy  
 that you're ok! What happened?

DEDE

I, uh. I met this girl and we were going to find some weed and... where is she?

TYLER

Where is who?

DEDE

Stella.

TYLER

What?

DEDE

I, she was just here! I think. She saved me and I don't know. I ended up here.

(standing up)

Where is she?

TYLER

She probably just left. C'mon. Let's get you home.

DEDE

(pushing Tyler away)

No. She wouldn't of left me. She saved me!

TYLER

Listen, Dede. All I know is that some guy called me and said that you were in trouble and gave me the address. I don't know anything about Stella and I think you need to lie down. So let's get a cab and get you back to my place, ok?

DEDE

Just wait a sec, what if the clown got her?

TYLER

Clown? Ok, sis. You really need to lay down for a bit.

DEDE

I'm serious! There was this creepy guy dressed as a clown and Stella and Edward saved me, but I don't remember anything else!

TYLER

Wait. Edward?

DEDE

Yes! He's the silver man!

TYLER

(realizing)

He's the guy who called me. I mean, he said his name was Edward.

DEDE

Tyler, believe me this once! I'm not lying! I promise! There is a clown, and there is a Edward and there is a Stella but there might not be if we wait much longer! He'll hurt her and I, I just can't let him do that!

TYLER

Stella? What happened to Stella?

DEDE

I'm trying to tell you! The clown took her! You don't understand. He was nice, but nice in a way that made you worried. There was something in his eyes, Tyler, something that made you sick when you looked into them.

TYLER

DeDe! Listen to me! Seriously, now. What are we going to do?

DEDE

(grabbing Tyler)

I know where she is! She's at the clown's place! I think I know the way! Come on!

TYLER

(stopping DeDe)

I don't know if I want to deal with this right now. Let's just go back to the apartment, smoke a J, and listen to that Creedence record, OK?

DEDE

I don't want to smoke anything again in my life! Tyler, please? Just this once?

TYLER

(taking a slight pause)

DeDe?

DEDE

Yeah?

TYLER

Remember that old cat we used to have?

DEDE

Izzy?

TYLER

No. Not Izzy, the other one.

DEDE

Oh. Sherman.

TYLER

Yeah, that one. Well, remember how he used to run away and we'd all be so nervous that he wouldn't come back?

(DeDe nods)

But he always would. Yeah, he'd have some scratches and cuts on him, but he always came back. That's how people are. They disappear for a while, and when they come back they might be a little worse for wear. That's just how this place is. It swallows them whole and spits them out and then the whole process just starts over again. It's not bad, it's just this city's history.

DEDE

We would still go look for Sherman, though. Wouldn't we? This is not a cat, Tyler! This is a person!

TYLER

(quietly)

I know she is.

DEDE

Tyler. I think I need to go home now. Right now!

TYLER

Sure, sis. It's only a few blocks. I'll give you a piggy back ride.

DEDE

No. Not your home, Tyler. My home!

TYLER

You're gonna make up with Mom? Good.

DEDE

No. You aren't listening to me. No one ever listens to me! I want a home! For me! I'm tired of being lost in other peoples' lives. Always walking on egg shells for fear of breaking something that I can't even see! I think that's why I came here. Because I thought I could find that home with you, but you have already made this home yours...

TYLER

DeDe, you know you are more than...

DEDE

I know, Tyler. But I wouldn't let myself feel welcome. Does that make sense?

TYLER

(mumbling)

Not much of today has made any sense.

DEDE

I thought New Orleans was going to be it, but it's not. I've been here for less than twenty four hours and have collected enough nightmares to last me a lifetime! It has taught me something though. That I have to be able to breathe. I can't be suffocated. And I can't stay here. I'm sorry, Tyler. I really am.

TYLER

(slowly guiding DeDe off stage)

I just think you need some rest.

DEDE

I'm not changing my mind, Tyler.

TYLER

I know you're not. I'm going miss you, sis.

DEDE

(stopping)

We have to find Stella, Tyler.

TYLER

I'm planning to.

DEDE

What?

TYLER

Never mind. Let's get out of here. And then I'll fill you in on the past three years of my life. But you can't tell Mom! Deal?

DEDE

Deal! Tyler?

TYLER

Yeah?

DEDE

I missed you too. Alot.

TYLER

I know. We're all gonna be ok, DeDe.

DEDE

Y'think so?

TYLER

Yeah. I really do.

Tyler and DeDe begin to leave when the Monkey Man enters and dances up to DeDe.

MONKEY MAN

Tweaky tweaky!

Tyler grabs DeDe by the arm and pulls her away.

Exit DeDe and Tyler

The Monkey Man is alone on stage when Stella enters with a bloody knife in her hand. The Monkey Man sees her, screams, and runs off stage.

Stella wanders upon the spot where DeDe once was. She has the smeared remnants of the clowns make up on her face. She looks around, doesn't see DeDe, sadly laughs and shakes her head as she tosses the knife in a pile of trash bags in the corner. Then she takes out a compact and cleans off her face and hands as she walks away whistling 'House of the Rising Sun'.

A minute after Stella exits, Esmerelda emerges from the nest of trash bags, sees the knife and picks it up.

ESMERELDA

The streets talk, holler and howl. Listen and you can hear! They tell of secrets and sorrow, rhymes that will never be solved, news that has yet to happen! Will it be a local hooker's body found, or a druggie clown murdered? Flip a coin to see what all the chatter will be...

(taking a swig from a paper bag  
clad bottle)

Whiskey?

END



## **VITA**

Shanthi Truth Cleckler was born in Hollywood, California, on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978, the daughter of Lewis Gordon Cleckler and Monica Ellis Cleckler. After being homeschooled on an isolated ranch in Real County, Texas, she was accepted at age 15 into Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas in 1994. Shanthi attended Southwest Texas State University in Kerrville, Texas in 1997 then attended Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in performance in May 2002.

During the following years she attended classes at the Twin Lakes College of the Healing Arts in Santa Cruz, California, while teaching theatre to grades 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> at Magic Apple School in Aptos, California. Shanthi entered the Graduate College of Texas State University-San Marcos in September of 2005.

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