

## THE SECOND LAW

By: Abigail Johnson

Characters, in order of appearance:

MOTHER (f, 45-60)

A caring, yet somewhat overbearing woman. She struggles with Elle's mental condition throughout the first act, and is sometimes frustrated by her daughter's refusal to realize the extent of her condition. Pushy, but well meaning.

ELLE (f, 20-25)

An intelligent, once-idealistic, and stubborn undergrad who falls into a depression after the sudden death of her step-brother. Elle is engaged in high-level physics research, and ultimately uses physics concepts and principles to deal with the loss of her brother. Prior to Brian's death, Elle struggles with his growing love for law, as she refuses to let go of the idealized notion that they both ought to be creating something that "matters" in academia.

FREUD (m, 25-60)

Sigmund Freud, the psychologist, appears to Elle after she begins to read his work. In this play, Freud functions as both the embodiment of Freud's own ideals, as well as a flesh-and-blood character who cares deeply for Elle's well-being.

BRIAN (m, 25-30)

Elle's stepbrother, who is approximately 5 years older than her. Highly intelligent, having graduated early from college and law school, he takes a position at a firm in Los Angeles. Brian struggles with the notion of being a lawyer, as he is deeply passionate about physics, having majored in it for undergrad. However, he gradually becomes passionate about law. Following his death, Brian appears to Elle as a guiding voice.

THOREAU (m, 25-60)

Henry David Thoreau, the writer, appears to Elle in the same manner as Freud. The works of Thoreau are integral to Brian and Elle's relationship, as well as the physical manifestation of Brian's death. Like Freud, Thoreau function both to exhibit an ideal, as well as serve as a support system and guiding voice for Elle.

## ACT I SCENE ONE

*Elle is alone in her room. She is sitting on her bed, wrapped in a blanket. She looks like hell—hair a mess, and dressed in lounge clothes. It's clear that she's been sitting in silence for a while. As she hears her mother knock on the door, she quickly checks the clock, throws her hair into a ponytail, and, scrambling, grabs a book off of her bedside table, which is completely covered with books. She is just beginning to pretend to read it when her mother enters the room.*

MOTHER: Can I come in?

ELLE: Just a minute.

MOTHER: Elle, please open the door.

ELLE: It's open.

*MOTHER enters.*

MOTHER: Elle. How are you?

ELLE: *(Suddenly calm)* Hey, mom.

MOTHER: Where have you been?

ELLE: I've been here.

MOTHER: Elle.

ELLE: Mother?

MOTHER: You're only *here* for three more days before you go back to University.

ELLE: I'm aware.

MOTHER: If you do well this semester, you might get your position in the lab back.

ELLE: Yeah.

MOTHER: The research you did last winter, it was really innovative. I'm sure they'll take you back.

*They sit in silence for a moment.*

MOTHER: Well.

ELLE: Well?

*MOTHER puts her arm around ELLE, who shrugs it off.*

ELLE: Well what?

MOTHER: I see you're all bundled up.

ELLE: Well, the weather is changing.

MOTHER: Right. It's September.

ELLE: I know how to read a calendar.

MOTHER: It's seven thirty, Elle.

ELLE: I know how to read a clock.

MOTHER: You never came down for dinner.

ELLE: Sorry?

MOTHER: I'm trying not to be pushy, Elle. But I explicitly told you dinner was at six.

ELLE: *(Getting touchy)* Oh, well you know me and Dostoevsky. We just have a grand old time. I got carried away.

MOTHER: That's not Dostoevsky. That's...

*MOTHER grabs the book from ELLE's hands. She looks at it, and then sets it down on the bed.*

ELLE: Right.

*ELLE turns away from MOTHER.*

MOTHER: ...are you reading Freud?

ELLE: *(Clearly trying to avoid the topic of Freud.)* Oh. I... just finished the Dostoevsky.

MOTHER: You hate Freud. When did you start reading Freud?

ELLE: Why do you care?

*MOTHER crosses her arms.*

MOTHER: Elle, look at me.

ELLE: *(Cold, and without feeling.)* What?

MOTHER: Are you okay?

ELLE: I'm okay.

MOTHER: Are you?

ELLE: I'm just tired.

MOTHER: What do you have to be tired about?

ELLE: I'm just tired.

MOTHER: You're not tired. You're anxious as hell.

ELLE: I'm not.

MOTHER: Oh, Elle, you've always been so hard on yourself.

ELLE: I'm not anxious.

MOTHER: Elle, I'm worried about you.

ELLE: *(A bit snappier)* Well, don't be.

MOTHER: I'm trying to believe that you're okay, but I'm worried.

ELLE: I'm okay.

MOTHER: I want that to be true.

ELLE: *(Returning to numbness.)* Yeah.

MOTHER: I raised you, Elle. You're a strong person. But right now? You need help. This is just as hard on me as it is on you. Ever since—

ELLE: *(Growing tension)* I sort of want to be alone right now.

MOTHER: Back when I was in therapy the other day—

ELLE: Mother...

MOTHER: I don't want to make assumptions about you, but it's just that my therapist says—

ELLE: *(Snapping)* Look, I don't give a damn about what your therapist says, okay? I don't need some middle-aged social worker who graduated from some no-name college in some irrelevant city giving me life advice. *Beat.* A middle-aged social worker who has, as I might point out, never met me. You can't possibly think that your therapist can give you sound advice about my mental condition.

*She pauses for a moment, fuming.*

Besides, I have a job. It might not be working in a lab anymore, but it's a job. I'm sorry if that's not good enough. But, I go to class. I have a life. There's nothing wrong with me.

MOTHER: Elle—

ELLE: *(Interrupting her)* And if there were, I wouldn't go solving it with your emotional talk-therapy bullshit. Okay?

MOTHER: You're a little young to be making that kind of statement, aren't you?

ELLE: I don't think age is necessarily a prerequisite for adequate self-analysis, mother.

MOTHER: What I'm trying to say is—

ELLE: Is that I don't know what's best for me?

*Brief pause.*

MOTHER: No. That's not what I mean at all.

ELLE: *(going a bit off the wall)* Because maintaining good marks in school and keeping my head after all that has happened— oh, did I mention the fact that I always go to class and I always pay all of my bills on time and that I've never missed a day at work and that my friends think I've got my shit together and all that—is probably a pretty good indication that I—

MOTHER: But are you happy? Elle, look at me. Are you happy?

ELLE: *(Very numb, staring at the ground.)* I'm functioning just fine.

MOTHER: Look at yourself.

ELLE: Please get out.

MOTHER: No, Elle. Like I was saying, my therapist thinks it's a good idea for you to go see—

ELLE: *(Still numb)* Please. Get. Out.

MOTHER: He was my son, you know.

*(There is a long pause. Elle takes a deep breath.)*

ELLE: Stepson. He was your stepson.

MOTHER: I just want you to be happy again. It's been eight months, Elle. Eight months of this.

*ELLE looks away.*

MOTHER: Can you look at me for a second? Elle please, look at me.

ELLE: Can you leave now?

MOTHER: Are you in control?

ELLE: What do you mean, 'am I in control'?

MOTHER: Are you in control? You. Do you have control over yourself?

ELLE: I do.

MOTHER: Can I trust you when you say that?

ELLE: Yes.

MOTHER: Are you sure?

ELLE: Yes.

MOTHER: Are you absolutely sure?

ELLE: Yes.

*The two look at each other in a few moments, both unsure of what to do next.*

MOTHER: I love you, Elle.

ELLE: I love you too.

*MOTHER exits. ELLE looks around her room for a moment. She gets up and grabs a copy of THOREAU's WALDEN and then sits on her bed. Suddenly, a voice appears. It is THOREAU, sticking his head out from under the bed. This should be somewhat comedic.*

THOREAU: The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.<sup>1</sup>

ELLE: *(As if THOREAU's voice is a regular, slightly irritating occurrence.)* Oh god.

*THOREAU emerges.*

ELLE: I appreciate the company, but I don't really need your advice right now, Thoreau.

THOREAU: *(Ignoring her)* Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all.<sup>2</sup>

ELLE: *(Sarcastically)* Yeah, so it makes great sense that I'm reading Freud.

*Suddenly another voice appears. It is FREUD. He sticks his head out from under the bed.*

FREUD: The ego is not master in its own house.<sup>3</sup>

ELLE: And, here we go again.

*FREUD emerges out from under Elle's bed. At first, ELLE greets him with nervous laughter, but eventually, she grows in conviction. She stares at him for a moment, as if waiting for him to speak. FREUD merely crosses his arms.*

ELLE: *(With disbelief.)* I'm fine. I am completely and utterly fine.

FREUD: One day, in retrospect, the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful.<sup>4</sup>

ELLE: I hate you, Sigmund Freud. Also, you're an asshole. Also, did I mention that I'm fine?

FREUD: Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.<sup>5</sup>

ELLE: For god's sake will you please stop quoting yourself?

FREUD: *(Melodramatically)* Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks. In order to bear it we cannot dispense with palliative measures... There are perhaps three such measures: powerful deflections, which cause us to make light of our misery; substitutive satisfactions, which diminish it; and intoxicating substances, which make us insensible to it.<sup>6</sup>

ELLE: Guess not, then. Just hold on a minute, while I go strangle myself.

FREUD: *(Gesturing)* Powerful deflections...

ELLE: I'm just resting. It's been a long couple of days. Hell... weeks. Hell... it's been a long couple of months. But I haven't broken, alright?

FREUD: Substitutive satisfactions...

ELLE: *(Laughing)* Oh? Oh, are you trying to make a point here?

*Angrily, ELLE grabs a bottle of pills from a drawer on her bedside table. She pours them into the trashcan.*

ELLE: *(Angrily)* How 'bout them apples, Sigmund? How about your little theories that I'm 'deflecting', or that I'm 'substituting'. Huh? Well, I'm not going to take a swig of Johnny Walker thinking it's going to solve all my problems. I'm not going to go popping vicodin, Freud. I'm a scientist. *(Suddenly softer.)* I know that isn't going to work.

*FREUD walks around and sits on the edge of ELLE's bed, hands folded. ELLE is speaking to him, but does not face him.*

ELLE: That isn't going to work.

FREUD: The ego is not master in its own house.

*Fade to black.*

**ACT I SCENE TWO:**

*The room is empty. A slightly-drunk Elle stumbles in, followed by an equally-drunk Brian. Elle has just graduated high school. Brian has recently graduated law school.*

ELLE: That was pretty fun. I didn't know parties were fun. Why did nobody ever tell me parties are fun?

BRIAN: Oh, just wait till college.

ELLE: No, no no. This was a one time thing. No partying in college. Nope, nope nope. Not for me.

BRIAN: *(Laughing)* Oh, just wait till college, Elle.

ELLE: No, no, no. Physics. I'm going to do all of the physics.

BRIAN: Physicists get drunk, too, Elle.

ELLE: Like, so much physics. I'm gonna map out the whole fucking universe.

BRIAN: I speak from experience, you know.

ELLE: And you know what else I'm going to do?

BRIAN: What is that?

ELLE: Physics.

BRIAN: I don't think you mentioned that one.

ELLE: There are so many questions. Like, so many.

BRIAN: Our dad is going to be pissed if he finds out I let you get drunk.

ELLE: But I have to physics.

BRIAN: You don't have to physics right now.

*ELLE runs over to her bookshelf and picks up a large physics textbook.*

ELLE: Do you know what this is Brian? This is what you gave me. I was a sophomore.



BRIAN: And I had just finished undergrad.

ELLE: It was a nice gift.

BRIAN: Well you had to continue my legacy.

ELLE: Why'd you give it up for law?

BRIAN: What, physics?

ELLE: Yeah, physics.

BRIAN: I didn't give it up. I just uh...

ELLE: What'd you do?

BRIAN: I put it on hold.

ELLE: Why'd you do?

*BRIAN stands up on the bed, arms outstretched goofily.*

BRIAN: Because the world is my oyster.

*ELLE laughs.*

BRIAN: I wanted to live deeply and suck out all the marrow of life.

ELLE: Well hello, up there Thoreau.

BRIAN: Is it Thoreau who said that?

ELLE: Hell yeah, it was.

*ELLE climbs on to the bed as well.*

ELLE: Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures!

*They both fall.*

ELLE: I'm a little intoxicated.

BRIAN: (*pointing at ELLE goofily.*) Yes.

ELLE: You're a little intoxicated.

BRIAN: (*Pointing at himself goofily*) Yes, yes I am.

ELLE: My blood alcohol level has got to be greater than...than...

BRIAN: Avogadro's number.

ELLE: Well, now you're just being silly.

ELLE and BRIAN in unison : Six point zero two-two times ten to the twenty-third!

ELLE I fucking love science.

BRIAN: I fucking love it too.

ELLE: But *you're* going to LA in three months.

BRIAN: Yeah, yeah.

ELLE: You just got back from grad school. I miss ya kid!

BRIAN: No, no, no that's my line.

ELLE: Not any more kid!

BRIAN: It's like... it's like the first law of thermodynamics.

*ELLE stops. She stares at BRIAN for several moments, puzzled.*

ELLE: What?

BRIAN: Do you remember Mr. Door?

ELLE: Only the best high school physics teacher ever.

BRIAN: *(Imitating a highly eccentric professor with an excited, rickety voice, standing up on the bed)* Today, dear students, we will be learning about the first law of thermodynamics. Energy can be neither created or destroyed. It can only change forms.

*Brian drops the act.*

BRIAN: Well, I'm changing forms. Physics to law. Here to LA.

ELLE: Are you really comparing your life to the first law of thermodynamics?

BRIAN: Um, yes.

ELLE: Go on, brother.

BRIAN: And the second law. The second law of thermodynamics. That's me too.

ELLE: *(Also imitating a stodgy professor, standing up on an armchair)* The second law of thermodynamics. Entropy increases over time. And what, do you ask, is entropy? Well, my students. Entropy is everywhere.

BRIAN: *(Mimicking the professor)* Entropy is the tendency towards chaos in a closed system.

ELLE: *(Mimicking the professor)* Entropy means that over time, my dear students, things get more...

BRIAN: *(Mimicking the professor)* complicated.

*ELLE drops the act.*

ELLE: And how does that play in?

*BRIAN drops the act.*

BRIAN: *(Shrugs)* Things get more complicated.

ELLE: And what about the third law of thermodynamics?

BRIAN: Well, let me tell you about that one.

*BRIAN once again assumes the over-dramatized persona of a highly eccentric professor.*

BRIAN: The third law of thermodynamics states that entropy at absolute zero--the point, my dear students, at which there is no molecular motion, is, my dear students, zero.

*BRIAN drops the persona.*

BRIAN: I've got to keep moving.

ELLE: *(Nodding)* You've got to keep moving.

BRIAN: I've got to keep moving... or else...

ELLE: Or else you be at 0 Kelvin!

BRIAN: Well, it's a little more than that. It's just...well never mind about that. Forget about it for now.

ELLE: We've got summer!

BRIAN: The summer is young!

ELLE: The summer is young.

### ACT I SCENE THREE

*Elle is sitting on her bed, completely in shock. She is shivering, clearly not in a good state of mind. MOTHER is sitting on the bed, trying to console her. FREUD and THOREAU are standing next to the bed. MOTHER does not acknowledge their presence. ELLE clearly notices them, but attempts to ignore them. ELLE is very much in her head.*

ELLE: *(Numb)* It was so cold.

MOTHER: You're okay. You're okay.

ELLE: It was so cold.

MOTHER: You're safe now.

ELLE: It was so quiet.

MOTHER: Breath. Just breath.

*ELLE stares blankly.*

MOTHER: Elle--

ELLE: Where is Brian?

MOTHER: Oh, Elle they tried to--

ELLE: Where is he?

MOTHER: Elle he...

*Mother sits down. There is a long pause as ELLE realizes what her mother is about to say. She begins to shake violently.*

ELLE: No.

THOREAU: A lake is a landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is Earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.<sup>7</sup>

ELLE: I tried.

MOTHER: This is all such a shock for everyone.

ELLE: *(Suddenly very quiet.)* No.

MOTHER: Elle, I'm so sorry.

ELLE: *(Getting less numb and more emotional)* Why?

MOTHER: He's in a better place now

FREUD: We tell ourselves how lovely it would be, would it not, if there were a God who created the universe and benign Providence, a moral world order, and life beyond the grave, yet it is very evident, is it not, that all of this is the way we should inevitably wish it to be.<sup>8</sup>

*Long pause.*

ELLE: You can't know...

MOTHER: But I choose to. I choose to know that.

ELLE: I just...

FREUD: Everyone owes nature a death.

ELLE: He's gone.

THOREAU: The church is a sort of hospital for men's souls and as full of quackery as the hospital for their bodies.<sup>9</sup>

*Long pause.*

MOTHER: I like to think that he's in a better place.

THOREAU: The universe is wider than our views of it.<sup>10</sup>

MOTHER: Oh, Elle... He had such a good life.

ELLE: He had a short life.

THOREAU: If a man is alive, there is always danger that he may die, though the danger must be allowed to be less in proportion as he is dead-and-alive to begin with. A man sits as many risks as he runs.<sup>11</sup>

ELLE: He had a good life.

MOTHER: He had a good life.

ELLE: What do we do now?

MOTHER: I don't know, Elle. I don't know.

*Fade to black.*

**ACT I SCENE FOUR:**

*BRIAN is standing, hands in pockets. ELLE is standing, pacing slightly. Both are trying to say goodbye.*

ELLE: It's been a great summer.

BRIAN: Yeah. Yeah, it has.

ELLE: Lot's of uh, good memories.

BRIAN: Yeah. There are.

*Long pause.*

ELLE: So I guess this is it?

BRIAN: This isn't it. I'm a phone call away.

ELLE: Yes, but this is it for *this*.

BRIAN: For *this*? Yeah. For now.

ELLE: You're going to be great.

BRIAN: I can only hope, as expensive as rent is.

ELLE: Says the one who graduated early.

BRIAN: That doesn't necessarily mean that...

ELLE: Oh, come on. You're 22 years old and you have a JD.

BRIAN: I mean, I'm only starting out.

ELLE: Says the one climbing the corporate ladder at lightning speed.

BRIAN: Oh, you know me. Always got to get to the top.

ELLE: Was that sarcasm?

BRIAN: No. I mean... yes. I mean, sort of.

ELLE: Okay...? What do you mean, "sort of"?

BRIAN: The real reason I'm moving out west, it isn't because of the position. I mean, it is, but..

ELLE: But what?

BRIAN: Well, there were plenty of other positions I could have taken. Plenty of firms that are much closer to home. I just--

ELLE: Come on, Brian, spit it out!

BRIAN: Well, maybe I'm idealistic, but California is a nice place to start afresh. I'll be completely out of my comfort zone. It'll be refreshing. I need that. Can you understand that?

ELLE: Yeah. Yeah, I can.

BRIAN: Also, think of the babes...

ELLE: Brian, god! You pig.

BRIAN: Tan, tall, blond...

ELLE: Please, keep me out of your sex life.

BRIAN: I do believe there's a Katy Perry song that's particularly relevant to this situation...

ELLE: Wow, when did you become such a cultural attaché?

BRIAN: I'm moving to LA, Elle. I've got to keep up with pop culture.

ELLE: Oh, whatever.

BRIAN: They might shun me if I don't!

ELLE: Whatever you say, Brian.

BRIAN: Promise you'll visit?

ELLE: Once the college application process is over, I'll hop on the next plane.

BRIAN: There's always Stanford! I'll take you some time.

ELLE: Stanford? Please.

BRIAN: There's always Berkeley?

ELLE: That's more in the ballpark...

BRIAN: I hear the Los Angeles Community College District is really hopping these days.

ELLE: Brian!

BRIAN: I'm kidding Elle. But really, visit. Please.

ELLE: I will.

BRIAN: I'll miss ya kid.

ELLE: I'll miss you too, kid.

BRIAN: I've got a plane to catch.

ELLE: And you don't want to miss it?

BRIAN: No. I don't want to miss it.

ELLE: You better go catch it then.

BRIAN: I'll call when I land.

ELLE: Talk to you then, Brian.

BRIAN: Bye for now!

ELLE: Bye for now.

*They hug, and then BRIAN exits.*

*Fade to black.*

## **ACT I SCENE FIVE:**

*ELLE is sitting on her bed. She is holding a phone when her mother walks in.*

MOTHER: Did you call the University?

ELLE: Yeah.

MOTHER: Is that who you were on the phone with?

*ELLE nods.*

MOTHER: *(Suddenly cheerful.)* So, sleep well last night?

ELLE: You betcha.

MOTHER: Can I get you anything?

ELLE: No, I'm good.

MOTHER: Good!

*There is an awkward silence.*



MOTHER: Your hair looks nice today!

ELLE: Thanks.

*There is another awkward silence.*

MOTHER: Did I tell you about what my book club is reading?

ELLE: No, you haven't.

MOTHER: Well, it's this really fascinating novel about a woman in the civil war era who--

ELLE: Look, if you have something else you want to ask me, just ask it.

*Brief pause.*

MOTHER: Did you quit?

ELLE: Well, I'm not on the project anymore.

MOTHER: I don't think that was a good idea.

ELLE: I'm still enrolled in classes.

MOTHER: But the rest, you just quit the rest?

*ELLE shrugs.*

ELLE: I guess you could call it that.

MOTHER: What, were you fired?

ELLE: I mean, I guess you could call it that too.

MOTHER: Jesus, Elle. What's next? Tell, me. What can I expect next?

ELLE: I haven't exactly been putting in the hours. What were you expecting this time?

MOTHER: I'm sorry, Elle.

ELLE: I can't do this anymore.

MOTHER: Elle, please. Please tell me you'll at least find another job.

ELLE: I need to focus on...on other things.

MOTHER: Elle, you've worked so hard. You've spent months on this.

ELLE: So?

MOTHER: Months of your life. Years, even. You love physics.

ELLE: (*Sarcastic*) Yeah. Sure. I just love it.

MOTHER: You've invested so much, and I just think that--

ELLE: For what?

MOTHER: Well, it's been a part of you.

ELLE: For what?

MOTHER: Well, I..

ELLE: I don't see why me continuing with this...this... project is going to help me.

MOTHER: Don't you love--

ELLE: Love?

MOTHER: It got you this far.

ELLE: Yeah, great.

MOTHER: It got you here.

ELLE: Yeah, and where is here? I'm sick of here.

MOTHER: Elle you will move on one day.

ELLE: I can't just move on and forget. I'm sick of continuing this thing that's been a part of me for so long, when I can't even tell you why.

MOTHER: Elle.

ELLE: Where is here?

MOTHER: Don't make this more than it is...

ELLE: (*Bitter*) No. (*beat*) What does it matter?

MOTHER: You might not be able to see it at the moment, but--

ELLE: (*Bitter*) You know it's funny. It's so, so damn laughable. I've spent months on this research, and I can't even tell you why anymore.

MOTHER: Oh, Elle.

ELLE: Maybe I knew. Maybe I knew at some point in time but right now, I just can't. I can't tell you why.

*Brief pause.*

MOTHER: Is it him?

*Elle is somewhat taken aback. She pauses for a moment.*

ELLE: What?

MOTHER: Is he the reason why?

ELLE: Well, he's gone.

MOTHER: Everything happens for a--

ELLE: No. Don't you get it? Nothing happens for a reason. You and I are a specks of dust in a universe that is, in layman's terms, spinning out of control. And I may have put my research on the backburner, but I know enough physics to say that with a level of confidence that's pretty damn high.

*There is a very long pause.*

MOTHER: Is it always like this for you?

ELLE: Most of the time.

MOTHER: What does most of the time mean?

ELLE: Sometimes there are glimmers.

MOTHER: Glimmers. What do you mean?

ELLE: I mean sometimes, for a moment it's okay. And I think I could...I could get back to it all.

MOTHER: Can you hold on to them? Those moments.

*Beat.*

ELLE: If there's one thing I've learned, it's that you can't hold onto anything.

*There is a long pause.*

MOTHER: Can I get you some tea?

ELLE: Earl grey please.

MOTHER: Elle, just think about it.

ELLE: No sugar.

MOTHER: No sugar.

*Fade to black.*

**ACT I SCENE SIX:**

*BRIAN and ELLE are in the middle of an involved discussion about ELLE's research. Brian is sitting in an armchair and Elle is sitting on her bed.*

BRIAN: I'm not sure that I agree. You're going to have to explain this to me one more time.

ELLE: Well, on the atomic level, time is different. It's less complex, and entropy operates differently. It's like this paradox, you see, like--

BRIAN: Wait. But the second law of thermodynamics states that--

ELLE: Entropy increases, I know. In a closed system, everything becomes more and more complex, more and more chaotic over time.

BRIAN: So, what exactly are you going here for?

ELLE: Well, in my research, I'm looking at entropy.

BRIAN: That's pretty set in stone, isn't it? Chaos ensues, right?

ELLE: Well, on a macroscopic level, yeah. But I'm talking particles.

BRIAN: Particles?

ELLE: Particles.

BRIAN: Tell me more.

ELLE: I just hate the idea that we're all heading towards this indeterminable mass of complexities...of chaos. I don't want to believe that. I can't embrace that. I'll concede that entropy is inevitable when you look at the universe, but what about atoms?

BRIAN: What about atoms?

ELLE: Elementary particles. There's movement, sure, but there's less room for complexity. When you boil it down to what we're made of, to our base elements, we aren't barreling towards chaos. We're... well, we're vibrating.

BRIAN: But, we are barreling towards chaos.

*ELLE gets up and grabs a physics textbook from her bookshelf.*

ELLE: We're the sum of our parts aren't we? I say we aren't barreling towards chaos. Not completely anyways. Here, read chapter fourteen.

BRIAN: Not now, Elle. Maybe later.

*ELLE puts the book back on the shelf.*

ELLE: Suit yourself. I'm telling you Brian, it's a viable theory.

BRIAN: What about Eddington's arrow?

ELLE: Eddington's arrow?

BRIAN: Jesus, Elle have you done research?

ELLE: Of course!

BRIAN: Sorry, I didn't mean to sound brash. Eddington's arrow.

ELLE: Tell me about it.

BRIAN: Well, Arthur Eddington was a physicist.

ELLE: Yeah, I'd gathered as much.

BRIAN: A physicist who had some really neat theories about time and entropy. If I understand him correctly, basically he said that time moves in one direction, like an arrow.

ELLE: Oh! And in accordance with the second law of thermodynamics...

BRIAN: We can prove the direction of time by looking at how natural systems become more and more complicated over time.

ELLE: Yes, but I'm talking about molecules.

BRIAN: But think about it Elle-- it's a theory that can be applied to the physical world--

ELLE: Well, yeah obviously--

BRIAN: --but also to the progression of the abstract.

ELLE: The abstract?

BRIAN: Ideas. Relationships. Think about the human narrative, Elle. You're born alone. You meet your family, you build friendships. People drift in, people drift out. You get tangled up.

Bam. Entropy. It's like our family, your mom, our dad. It all started out so simple. We were all living our separate lives until... well, until things started branching.

ELLE: Whoah, whoah. Atoms. Particles.

BRIAN: Sorry, it's just so fascinating. I know, I get a little carried away. I've just been thinking a lot about thinking lately.

ELLE: Thinking about thinking? You're crazy.

BRIAN: I don't know. Maybe it's new-age bullshit, the whole west coast mentality, you know? But I've just been thinking about how things drift. But also about how some things don't drift.

ELLE: What do you mean?

BRIAN: Well, everything is fleeting. I see it in the corporate world all the time. Everything is always moving. But there are these tenets, these ideas, these codes that remain. People are always bustling in and out, but their ideas, you know-- the moral codes that we've based our laws on, they've got roots. They change in context, but they've got roots.

ELLE: What are you trying to say?

BRIAN: I'm trying to say that people change, and entropy functions there. But ideas are forever. And ideas come from people. It's fascinating.

ELLE: (*laughing*) God, you're so damn new age. Aren't you supposed to be moving up in the firm? Embracing the rat race?

BRIAN: I always make time for philosophical rants.

ELLE: That you do. I'm impressed.

BRIAN: Full of surprises, I am.

ELLE: That you are. Hey, have you read Walden?

BRIAN: Way to change the topic, Elle.

ELLE: Well, not really.

BRIAN: From the nature of time to a hermit in the woods?

ELLE: Not exactly. It's not completely non-sequitur. Thoreau talks a lot about knowledge, and the self, and living in the moment. Have you read it?

BRIAN: Yeah. It's been awhile though.

ELLE: You should read it again.

BRIAN: Should I?

ELLE: I can lend you a copy, if you'd like.

BRIAN: I would like.

*ELLE gets up and takes a book off of her shelf. She gives it to BRIAN.*

ELLE: It's one of my favorites. Promise me you'll read it?

BRAIN: Promise. So, how's the first semester going?

ELLE: It's great. It's really flown by. I can't believe it's fall break.

BRIAN: I'm so happy for you Elle. I loved college.

ELLE: I love it too.

BRIAN: I'm glad.

ELLE: Thanks! Oh, also I'm going to present some research proposals to the physics department. Hopefully I can get into a lab.

BRIAN: So you can finally prove me wrong about entropy?

ELLE: Something like that.

BRIAN: If I weren't at the firm, I'd be right there with you in the lab.

ELLE: So you can finally prove me wrong about entropy?

BRAIN: No, so I could create something that lasts. That's my one regret about working at the firm. I want my ideas to live on.

ELLE: That's awfully ideological of you. I thought law school was supposed to beat that out of you.

BRIAN: Funny. But really, I'm thinking that maybe I'll work at the firm for a few more years, pay off my loans, and then... I don't know. Do something that matters.

ELLE: Law matters.

BRAIN: Yes, but I mean, something that *matters*.

ELLE: Yeah, yeah I can understand that. Thankfully, you've got time. We've both got loads of time. We're young.

BRIAN: Ah, but things get complicated.

ELLE: They don't get *that* complicated.

BRAIN: (*teasing*) Don't forget about entropy, Elle.

ELLE: Well, we'll see about that.

*They both share a laugh.*

BRIAN: That we will, Elle. That we will.

*Fade to black.*

## **ACT II SCENE ONE:**

*The stage lights are low, indicating a dream sequence. Elle is sleeping in bed. Brian enters through the door, hands by his side, stoic.*

BRIAN: Are you glad I brought the skates, Elle? It's so beautiful here this time of year. Look at the pines. Look at how their branches are so heavy with snow. And look— there's the tree we climbed when we were younger. Do you see it Elle? I see it. I see us, us there, climbing. I see your little red hat, the one your mom knitted. And I see me, wrapped up in our dad's scarf. They never knew it, but we climbed all the way to the top. I don't think they would have let us. We were so small back then, not like we are now. Let's go to the lake more often. You and me. It'll be like it was when we were kids. You can forget about your research for a bit and I'll forget about LA. It'll be us. Here. Together. I'll fly here every month if I have to. It's so beautiful. Look at how sun glints off of the lake. It's like glass, Elle. I'm going to try out the ice, maybe do some figure eights.

ELLE: (*tossing and turning, mumbling*)

BRIAN: It's so beautiful here. I'm going to try out the ice.

ELLE: No...

BRIAN: It's cold here, Elle.

ELLE: Please...

BRAIN: I'm cold, Elle. It's dark here.

ELLE: No...



BRIAN: Everything is so—

ELLE: *(Sitting up with a jolt)* No!

*(fade to black for a moment, and then the lights suddenly flick on. MOTHER has burst into the room. BRIAN is gone.)*

MOTHER: Elle!

*Mother rushes to ELLE's side.*

MOTHER: It happened again?

ELLE: Yes.

MOTHER: I'm sorry, hun.

ELLE: This is the fourth time this week.

MOTHER: They'll stop, eventually.

ELLE: Will they?

MOTHER: They will.

*Beat.*

ELLE: It's been three months.

MOTHER: I wish I could say I wasn't expecting this to happen again. You'll get better, but it's a process.

ELLE: I miss him.

MOTHER: I know.

ELLE: I'm falling apart.

MOTHER: No, Elle. You're here. I'm here. It's going to be okay.

ELLE: Entropy increases.

MOTHER: What?

ELLE: Nothing.

MOTHER: I love you.

*ELLE stares blankly.*

MOTHER: I love you, Elle.

ELLE: Don't you miss him?

MOTHER: Of course I do. But, I have to find some way to move on. I want that for you as well. Have you thought about getting back into your research? Sometimes work can help us. It can help us out of things.

ELLE: Well, sorry but, there's just something about the finer particulars of molecular motion that doesn't particularly appeal to me right now. Besides, they're not going to let me back in the lab. It was hard enough to get into in the first place.

MOTHER. I understand.

ELLE: Whatever.

MOTHER: Elle, have you considered talking to someone about this?

ELLE: Mom, I'm not crazy.

MOTHER: I didn't mean that.

ELLE: Sure.

MOTHER: So, you wouldn't mind if I called someone? Someone...professional?

ELLE: I meant, sure as in "sure you meant to imply that I'm completely sane and sound. Why else would you suggest that I go devote an hour of each day to some shrink?" Sure.

MOTHER: Be reasonable, Elle. It wouldn't have to be every day.

*ELLE looks at mother, clearly irritated, refusing to speak*

MOTHER: It's nothing to be ashamed of.

ELLE: This discussion is closed.

MOTHER: Elle, please.

ELLE: I'm not talking about this right now.

MOTHER: Elle.

ELLE: No. *Beat.* Look, I didn't sleep well last night. I need to get some rest.

*(MOTHER hesitates a bit, unsure of whether or not to push any further.)*

MOTHER: Alright. I'll wake you at lunch.

ELLE: Thanks.

*(MOTHER exits, and FREUD emerges out from under ELLE's bed.)*

ELLE: Sometimes I wish I could just forget it all.

FREUD: *(Stretching)* Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?<sup>12</sup>

ELLE: Not you. Please, let this be another dream.

FREUD: The madman is a dreamer awake.<sup>13</sup>

ELLE: *(rolling her eyes)* Oh, god. You're kidding.

FREUD: And it is only after seeing man as his unconscious, revealed by his dreams, presents him to us that we shall understand him fully.<sup>14</sup>

ELLE: I'm just mourning.

FREUD: In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.<sup>15</sup>

ELLE: I'm not melancholy. I have a dead stepbrother. I'm fucking mourning, Freud. Just go. Just let me mourn.

FREUD: Dreaming, in short, is one of the devices we employ to circumvent repression, one of the main methods of what may be called indirect representation in the mind.<sup>16</sup>

ELLE: I am sick and tired of your psychoanalysis, Freud.

FREUD: Woe to you, my Princess, when I come.<sup>17</sup>

ELLE: Shut the fuck up.

FREUD: *(FREUD shakes his finger at ELLE, teasing.)* Neurosis is no excuse for bad manners.<sup>18</sup>

ELLE: Do you think this is funny? Do you think that me trying to make sense of the shitstorm that is my life right now is *funny*?

*FREUD sits on ELLE's bed. He appears to care and his sense of mocking has disappeared.*

ELLE: I just want it all to make sense.

FREUD: It would be very nice if there were a God who created the world and was a benevolent providence, and if there were a moral order in the universe and an after-life; but it is a very striking fact that all this is exactly as we are bound to wish it to be.<sup>19</sup>

ELLE: Even after he left, we would always have next month. There were always phone calls, and when there weren't phone calls there was ... at least the possibility of one. But now there's just this vacuum. How does that work? It's funny. You know, the first law of thermodynamics states that energy can be neither created nor destroyed, only transformed. It's a law. It's a law of nature, for god's sake. You can't just go on breaking those things in life, or in death. But, I've been searching for where he went, and I just, he just... where did it all go?

*Elle pauses, and gives a sad chuckle.*

You know, I used to be able to do vector calculus. Vector calculus, for god's sake. Now I've lost my position in the lab. *(Beat.)* I can't even take a goddamn nap.

FREUD: No other technique for the conduct of life attaches the individual so firmly to reality as laying emphasis on work; for his work at least gives him a secure place in a portion of reality.<sup>20</sup>

ELLE: I want to. I might even say that I need to...to work. It's just that Brian always said that knowledge is what saves us. He said it's what makes us immortal. It's what makes us able to live on. But for what? He's hasn't. He's just... gone.

*(BRIAN enters the room. He is behind ELLE. ELLE sits on her bead, head in hands. She does not acknowledge whether or not she hears his voice.)*

BRIAN: I've always liked this quote by Arthur Eddington... "The great thing about time is that it goes on."<sup>21</sup> I think that's true. Everything is always moving. Entropy increases. Things change in the physical world. But in the world of ideas, we're not governed by any parameters, Elle. We aren't bound by time.

FREUD: Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?<sup>22</sup>

BRIAN: Memories will fade, and we might lose the specifics over time... but our ideas, our core thoughts, they'll always be with us. Or, not with *us* rather, but they'll always *be*. Elle, it's like immortality. Plato is still alive. You see? Pick up a copy of *The Republic*, and he's right there beside you. He's breathing down your neck. Ideas are forever, Elle.

FREUD: Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?

*BRIAN exits.*

ELLE: *(gives a sad chuckle)* I don't know what's real anymore.

FREUD: We believe that it is possible for scientific work to gain some knowledge about the reality of the world, by means of which we can increase our power and in accordance with which we can arrange our life.<sup>23</sup>

ELLE: I don't know what matters.

FREUD: Where does a thought go when it's forgotten?

*Fade to black.*

## **ACT II SCENE TWO:**

*Elle is sitting on her bed in her room. She is on the phone with Brian, who is in California.*

ELLE: Oh, no. I'm actually at home right now.

...Yeah, mom's got this charity thing, so I'm just here for the weekend. Yeah, so it's another few days out of the lab, but I'll deal.

Yeah. I know...

My research? Well, it's slow. But it's good...good like, hard. ...yeah and the professors are great so that helps.

...I bet.

...Busy, huh? So, is your boss an ass?...

Oh? Huh. That's good. I'm glad you're doing well.

..No, no, of course I do. I don't know Brian, it's just I sort of thought you were going to come back.

...No I always thought you could, but I sort of hoped you wouldn't want to.

...Yes, but what about doing something that matters? You went to Princeton for God's sake. You have a physics degree. And you're doing *this*? I mean come on.

...I'm not.. I'm not immature. I just thought that you and I...

...Oh, in a few years? So, that's still the plan.

...Sorry. I didn't mean to--

...Of course. Yeah, I guess I was wrong. I know, hard to believe.

...It *was* nice seeing you. And, thanks for calling.

...Christmas? Yeah, I'll be here. Of course. Oh, I really hope you can make it.

...I know. Well, try your best.

...Thanks.

...Love you too, Brian. Bye.

### **ACT II SCENE THREE:**

*ELLE is sitting on her bed, reading. MOTHER knocks softly and enters. MOTHER is excessively nurturing and caring, to the point where it is over the top.*

MOTHER: Elle, how are you?

ELLE: Okay.

MOTHER: Oh, that's fantastic Elle!

ELLE: Mmhm.

MOTHER: Good, oh I'm so glad that today is a good day.

ELLE: I didn't say that.

*There is a long pause.*

MOTHER: Well, you look nice.

ELLE: (*replete with humorous self-deprecation*) Well, come to think of it, it's only been about four days since I've showered last.

MOTHER: Elle...

ELLE: (*dryly*) I appreciate your flattery.

MOTHER: Elle, could I talk to you about something.

*ELLE shrugs.*

ELLE: What?

MOTHER: I hope you don't mind, I went ahead and made an appointment.

ELLE: What?

MOTHER: I made an appointment, Elle.

ELLE: With your therapist?

MOTHER: Nonsense! We're not going to have the same therapist.

ELLE: I told you I didn't want this.

MOTHER: We'll have different therapists. Same office, different therapists.

ELLE: I'm not going to have *any* therapist.

MOTHER: Well, I made an appointment.

ELLE: You can't just do that. I'm an adult. How did you even--

MOTHER: Well, I found an opening for you.

ELLE: Well, I really appreciate it. But no thank you.

MOTHER: Just go once. Please, you have no idea how this might help you, Elle.

ELLE: I don't need help.

MOTHER: Nobody wants to need help.

ELLE: I know the difference between want and need.

MOTHER: Do you?

ELLE: Yes, I'm fairly certain.

MOTHER: Elle, please. Give this a try for me. Enough time has passed, and since you're still having--

ELLE: No. Why is it up to you to decide if enough time has passed?

MOTHER: All I want is what's best for you.

ELLE: Are you just running down the list of cliches?

MOTHER: Elle! Do you not realize how difficult the past few months have been on *me*? Do you not get that this isn't all about you?

*ELLE pauses for a moment, looking down.*

ELLE: I'm sorry.

MOTHER: Therapy will help you Elle.

ELLE: Therapy will help?

MOTHER: Yes.

ELLE: Jesus, mom.

MOTHER: What?

ELLE: Why can't I make my own decision about this?

MOTHER: I know you're doing your best.

ELLE: Really? Because it doesn't seem like that's what you think.

MOTHER: Do you not realize how hard it is for me to see you like this? I'm your mother, Elle. I care about you.

*There is a long pause.*

ELLE: Yeah. I'm sorry.

MOTHER: Does that mean you'll try it?

ELLE: I don't know.

MOTHER: Please Elle, for me.

ELLE:

*Long pause, as ELLE considers.*

...I need more time. I want to do this myself.

MOTHER: Elle, please. Elle, I'm imploring.

ELLE: I'm sorry, mom. I'm sorry.

*fade to black*

## **ACT II SCENE FOUR:**

*It's early in the morning, and ELLE has yet to get out of bed. She is sleeping and sun is beginning to stream through the window. Enter BRIAN with a pair of ice-skates and a book.*

BRIAN: *(whispering)* Hey, sis!



ELLE: *(still sleepy)* Mmmm?

BRIAN: *(still whispering)* Surprise!

ELLE: Brian?

BRIAN: Happy Birthday, kid!

ELLE: Brian!

*Elle leaps out of bed, and wraps her arms around BRIAN's neck. He swings her around once. She laughs.*

ELLE: I thought you weren't coming back for another week!

BRIAN: I pulled some strings and got off work. So, I just figured that I'd hop on a plane and—

ELLE: And, you're here!

BRIAN: I'm here!

ELLE: How did you work this out? I thought you were swamped!

BRIAN: Well, I...

ELLE: You know what? It doesn't even matter. We've got to catch up.

BRIAN: *(Somewhat teasing, Brian dangles the skates.)* Elle, I just spent three hours driving around town looking for these. Every place within a thirty-mile radius was completely sold out, and I'm a little offended you haven't noticed.

ELLE: You didn't.

BRIAN: I heard mom accidentally threw out your old pair.

ELLE: Wait, are we going to the lake?

BRIAN: We're going to the lake.

ELLE: Okay, you are officially the best.

BRIAN: Well, I try.

ELLE: My own brother of thirteen years. What a relief.

*BRIAN hands over the copy of Walden.*

BRIAN: Also, here's your copy of Walden.

ELLE: Did you read it? Well, read it again, I mean.

BRIAN: Of course.

ELLE: And, did you like it?

BRIAN: I loved it. Again.

ELLE: Then, you should keep it.

BRIAN: I thought you liked Walden.

ELLE: I do like Walden. Keep it. You should have it.

BRIAN: Really?

ELLE: I've got, like, three copies. Don't worry about it.

BRIAN: Thanks, Elle.

ELLE: No problem.

BRAIN: So, tell me about your life.

ELLE: About my life?

BRIAN: About your life.

ELLE: You first.

BRIAN: Well, it's pretty sunny in LA. My friends are great. Things are good. Also—and I want this to be a surprise, so you have to promise not to tell until it becomes official, but—

ELLE: What?

BRIAN: I'm going to be partner of the firm.

ELLE: Partner?

BRIAN: Partner!

ELLE: Brian, wow that's... Wow. Partner.

BRIAN: Thanks, Elle.

ELLE: God, you just never stop.

BRAIN: Some call it passion.

ELLE: Some call it insanity.

BRIAN: No, I like my work. It keeps me grounded.

ELLE: Brian, I'm glad you're happy and all, but what happened to "I've got to quit the firm in a few years and do something that "matters"?"

BRIAN: Law is growing on me, Elle. It's case by case. I don't know... I'm not where I thought I would be, but it's...grounding.

ELLE: I guess I can buy that. I'm starting to get that with my research, I guess.

BRIAN: Oh?

ELLE: The grounding bit. Not the corporate ladder bit. It amazes me that you find that grounding.

BRAIN: Elle!

ELLE: I'm kidding, Brian. I know you're not completely soulless.

BRIAN: Well, that's refreshing. Anyways, your research! How is university?

ELLE: It's hard as hell. But it's good. I've got a position in a lab now. Remember that project I talked to you about last time you visited? It's really taken off.

BRIAN: I'm glad. You know, I'd still join you if I could.

ELLE: An undergraduate in physics and you're out advocating for the insurance industry. Way to go.

BRIAN: Elle...please don't be like that. Aren't you glad I came?

ELLE: Of course I am. It's just... what happened?

BRIAN: What do you mean?

ELLE: What I mean is, a year ago, you were all about leaving the firm and doing something that...that...

BRIAN: Mattered.

ELLE: What happened?

BRIAN: Things change, Elle. Entropy--

ELLE: Entropy increases. Right.

BRIAN: Elle, I've missed you.

ELLE: And I've missed you. Sorry, I didn't mean to sound--

BRIAN: Don't worry about it.

ELLE: It's been too long. Months, I guess.

BRIAN: Wow, yeah, I miss you Elle. You know, every once and a while, something will happen, something that reminds me of this place, of you. Of growing up. And, while I love my life out west, this place is always going to be home.

ELLE: Remember that winter when we stole all of the pumpkin pie on Christmas eve, and snuck out, and—

BRIAN: And ate it down by the lake! Mom had a fit.

ELLE: God, we were such awful kids.

BRIAN: How is dad faring? And your mom?

ELLE: They both miss you, but they're faring. Does dad know that you're here?

BRIAN: Not yet.

ELLE: How about my mom?

BRIAN: Nope.

ELLE: Wow, you've managed to keep all this from both of them?

BRIAN: It's a small miracle.

ELLE: So, when's the big reveal?

BRIAN: Well, when does your mom get home?

ELLE: A few hours probably. She's out holiday shopping.

BRIAN: Then I guess we better get moving to the lake!

ELLE: I guess so!

BRIAN: I'll go change. Meet you in the kitchen?

ELLE: Meet you in the kitchen.

*Brian Exits.*

ELLE: (*picking up the copy of WALDEN that BRIAN has left*) Hey, you left your—  
...nevermind.

*As ELLE picks up the copy of Walden, THOREAU pokes his head out from under ELLE's bed.*

THOREAU: Live deeply and suck out all the marrow of life.<sup>24</sup>

ELLE: You've returned from the west coast.

THOREAU: Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes.<sup>25</sup>

ELLE: Huh. No. Proximity is a luxury. God, If I could joust go back to when--

THOREAU: Never look back unless you are planning to go that way.<sup>26</sup>

ELLE: Thoreau, he's my brother. Well, step-brother. But, I miss him. Things have changed so much in the past couple of years. I'm about to start a new semester. He's about to become partner at his firm. Partner. Things have really, really changed.

THOREAU: Things do not change; we change.<sup>27</sup>

ELLE: I don't believe that. It's just, time goes by.

THOREAU: As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.<sup>28</sup>

BRIAN: (*offstage*) Elle, are you coming?

ELLE: On my way!

THOREAU: A lake is a landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature.<sup>29</sup>

*(fade to black)*

## **ACT TWO SCENE FIVE:**

*ELLE is sitting on her bed, alone. She is sobbing, gasping, and is very emotional. She begins to look around her room. Eventually, her sobbing stops. She gets up off her bed and walks to where a small red hat is sitting on her shelf. She picks it up and stares at it in her hands. She puts it down, sighing, and continues to look around the room.*

ELLE: This has to stop.

*Brian emerges.*

*ELLE walks over to the trashcan where she threw the bottle of pills. She reaches in and picks it up. She walks back to her bed, takes a seat, and then stares at it in her hand.*

BRIAN: It can't just stop, Elle. You can't reach absolute zero. It's not physically possible, Elle. It's just a theory. Everything is going to keep on moving.

THOREAU: On the death of a friend, we should consider that the fates through confidence have devolved on us the task of a double living, that we have henceforth to fulfill the promise of our friend's life also, in our own, to the world.<sup>30</sup>

*ELLE is deep in thought. After a while, she puts the pills down. She gets up, and picks up a copy of Walden. She begins to thumb through it. FREUD emerges from under the bed.*

THOREAU: Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures.<sup>31</sup>

ELLE: Adventures.

FREUD: By withdrawing their expectations from the other world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth, they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone.<sup>32</sup>

BRIAN: It's your choice, Elle. You can do anything. But remember Eddington. Remember.

ELLE: *(mumbling)* Entropy increases.

BRIAN: Elle, you can do something. You can think something up in the lab. Remember how we used to talk about the lab?

ELLE: I wish I'd had more time.

THOREAU: A single gentle rain makes the grass many shades greener. So our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts.<sup>33</sup>

BRIAN: There's still so much to discover, Elle.

THOREAU: We should be blessed if we lived in the present always, and took advantage of every accident that befell us, like the grass which confesses the influence of the slightest dew that falls on it; and did not spend our time in atoning for the neglect of past opportunities, which we call doing our duty.<sup>34</sup>

ELLE: I wish we had more time.

THOREAU: We loiter in winter while it is already spring.<sup>35</sup>

FREUD: Our dreams bring back again our earlier and successively developed personalities, our old ways of regarding things, with impulses and modes of reaction which ruled us long ago. <sup>36</sup>

BRIAN: You have to get up, Elle. Remember who you are.

THOREAU: Talk of mysteries! — Think of our life in nature, — daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, — rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The actual world! The common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?<sup>37</sup>

ELLE: We're the sum of our parts, aren't we?

BRIAN: That's it, Elle.

THOREAU: This whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space. How far apart, think you, dwell the most distant inhabitants of yonder star, the breadth of whose disk cannot be appreciated by our instruments?<sup>38</sup>

ELLE: ...or the sum of... something, anyways.

FREUD: We are what we are because we have been what we have been.<sup>39</sup>

BRIAN: Remember me, Elle.

THOREAU: You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this.<sup>40</sup>

ELLE: Chaos ensues.

*ELLE gets up again, and grabs a physics book-- the same that she showed brian many months ago. She also grabs a pencil.*

ELLE: Entropy increases.

BRIAN: Time goes on.

ELLE: It does.

BRIAN: This is what I believe in.

ELLE: This is what you believed in.

BRIAN: You'll keep going.

ELLE: I'll keep going.

*ELLE pauses, thinking for a moment. She looks at BRIAN.*

ELLE: I'll keep going.

BRIAN: You'll keep going.

FREUD: The communal life of human beings had, therefore, a two-fold foundation: the compulsion to work, which was created by external necessity...

ELLE: I'll keep going.

FREUD: ... and the power of love.<sup>41</sup>

BRIAN: I love you, Elle.

ELLE: I love you too.

*Fade to black.*

*Curtain.*



Production notes:

The set should be simple, as all scenes occur in Elle's room. The only necessary props should be present in every scene and are as follows:

1. A functioning door
2. A bed under which FREUD and THOREAU can hide when not in a scene.
3. A copy of Freud's *Walden*
4. A copy of any book by Freud
5. A physics textbook

Any other additional props or embellishments to Elle's room are at the discretion of the director. Lighting design should be simple and not distract from the dialogue. Low lighting may be used for Brian's monologue.

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*

- 
- <sup>2</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1849, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*
- <sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1917, *A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis*
- <sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation
- <sup>5</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation
- <sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1931, *Civilization and its Discontents*
- <sup>7</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1927, *The Future of an Illusion*
- <sup>9</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1849, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*
- <sup>10</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>11</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation.
- <sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1899, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- <sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1921, *Dream Psychology: Psychoanalysis for Beginners.*
- <sup>15</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1917, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works.*
- <sup>16</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1905, *An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria (Dora)*
- <sup>17</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1884, in an excerpt from a letter written to his fiancée, Martha.
- <sup>18</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation
- <sup>19</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1927, *The Future of an Illusion*
- <sup>20</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1931, *Civilization and its Discontents*
- <sup>21</sup> Arthur Eddington, 1928, *The Nature of the Physical World*
- <sup>22</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation
- <sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1927, *The Future of an Illusion*
- <sup>24</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>25</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1832, in a letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson's second wife, Lidian. Found in a collection of quotes by editor Jeffrey S. Cramer.
- <sup>26</sup> Henry David Thoreau, attributed quotation.
- <sup>27</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>28</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>29</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>30</sup> Henry David Thoreau, attributed quotation
- <sup>31</sup> Henry David Thoreau, attributed quotation
- <sup>32</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1927, *The Future of an Illusion*
- <sup>33</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>34</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>35</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>36</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1899, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
- <sup>37</sup> Henry David Thoreau, attributed quotation
- <sup>38</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>39</sup> Sigmund Freud, attributed quotation
- <sup>40</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 1854, *Walden*
- <sup>41</sup> Sigmund Freud, 1931, *Civilization and its Discontents*