

Drinking

by
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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Character 1	Thinks CHARACTER 2 shouldn't drink as much.	Any	Any
Character 2	Drinks.	Any	Any

SETTING DESCRIPTION

LOCATION

TIME

Monte Cristo Cottage

New London, CT

August 2012

The play takes place on a stage on the set of Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night. The literal or figurative interpretation is up to the production, but truly can be set anywhere that has a place to perform, somewhere to leave that is not a bathroom, and somewhere to leave where a car might be parked.

ACT I

The living room of James Tyrone's summer home on a morning in August 2012.

There is a bookcase in the rear, center-stage filled with hardback books with a picture of Shakespeare hanging above it. Ideally, it should contain novels by Balzac, Zola, Stendhal, Cervantes, philosophical and sociological works by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Marx, Engels, Kropotkin, Max Stirner, plays by Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, and Eugene O'Neill, poetry by Swinburne, Rossetti, Wilde, Ernest Dowson, Kipling, etc.

There is a cupboard on the stage right side of the bookcase and a painting mounted on the wall on the opposite side. The painting should be abstract in nature and painted in Modernist style.

There is a chair and a small table in front of the chair further downstage, center-right. To its left, there is another chair at an awkward length away, and perhaps a couch at its backside, which is not as nice as the rest of the room.

CHARACTER 2 is sitting in the chair closest to the table with half a bottle of rye whiskey on the table. There's an empty glass in front of them, and another glass over on the couch.

CHARACTER 2 breaks down and decides to pour themselves a glass of rye whiskey just as the footsteps of CHARACTER 1 can be heard.

*CHARACTER 1 enters stage left and stops
when seeing CHARACTER 2.*

CHARACTER 1

You're drinking?

With a condescending tone.

CHARACTER 2 takes a drink.

What is it this time? Rye? Bourbon? Scotch?

CHARACTER 2

Do you care?

CHARACTER 1

You know you shouldn't be drinking.

*Walks closer to CHARACTER 2, notices the
empty glass on the couch and then hovers
around the chair.*

CHARACTER 2

Oh no? Why wouldn't I be allowed to drink?

CHARACTER 1

You could drink if you could learn to do it in moderation.

CHARACTER 2

What does that even mean?

CHARACTER 1

You know what it means, don't play dumb.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I drink, I happen to think that's okay. You don't, I suppose? Like everyone else.

CHARACTER 1

That's right.

Sits down.

CHARACTER 2
You don't drink then?

CHARACTER 1
I drink.

CHARACTER 2
So you're a hypocrite?

CHARACTER 1
No.

CHARACTER 2
Well, what is it? Do you believe in drinking or are you staying sober?

CHARACTER 1
I stay sober well enough.

CHARACTER 2
Not entirely?

CHARACTER 1
Not entirely.

CHARACTER 2
Well, have a drink then.

Offers the drink CHARACTER 2 has already poured.

CHARACTER 1 shows a moment of reluctance, but quickly agrees and takes a drink.

Is slightly stung by the taste.

CHARACTER 1
Hm. No bourbon then?

CHARACTER 2
Nope. No bourbon here. Not for a while.

CHARACTER 2 gets up and walks over to the couch to retrieve the other glass, and pours themselves a glass of whiskey to join in.

CHARACTER 1

Why not?

CHARACTER 2

I don't drink bourbon.

CHARACTER 1

Why not? Seems liquor enough, same as any, and personally, I find it's a better taste.

CHARACTER 2

I don't drink bourbon!

CHARACTER 1

God, calm down. And you wonder why people don't want you to drink.

CHARACTER 2

Why? Because I don't drink bourbon and it's the vastly superior drinking liquor? The crème de la crème of drunk juice, the King Henry VIII de-soberer.

CHARACTER 1

What? Because you're a fucking asshole.

CHARACTER 2

Maybe, but I don't beat anybody.

CHARACTER 1

You sound just like my father.

Mimicking CHARACTER 1's father.

CHARACTER 2

It's okay son, just sit in daddy's lap and forget all about it.

CHARACTER 1

Don't call yourself daddy.

CHARACTER 2

I'm sorry son, I forgot you're too old for that. Hopefully, you're not too grown to throw a ball with your old man.

*Takes out a baseball and throws it at
CHARACTER 1.*

CHARACTER 1

Where the fuck did you get that?

CHARACTER 2

You know you really shouldn't drink if you're going to curse like that.

CHARACTER 1

Fuck off!

CHARACTER 2

Fuck off what?

CHARACTER 1

What?

CHARACTER 2

Fuck off what? Seems a nonsensical saying to me.

CHARACTER 1

It means fuck off, what do you mean?

CHARACTER 2

I'm just saying most times sayings have some deep-seeded meaning. Even ones that are quite bizarre in nature; there's some strange reason that makes them makes sense in the context of the rest of the world, even if it doesn't seem that way the first time you hear them as a child, but you go along because you don't understand anything yet and you just go along.

CHARACTER 1

Go along with what?

CHARACTER 2

Everything, sayings, living, breathing, drinking, not drinking. Whichever you prefer.

CHARACTER 1
What I prefer?

CHARACTER 2
Drinking.

CHARACTER 1
What?

CHARACTER 2
Bourbon I suppose, but I prefer rye.

CHARACTER 1
Do you have any?

CHARACTER 2
Whiskey?

CHARACTER 1
Bourbon!

CHARACTER 2
Never!

CHARACTER 1
Calm down, God.

CHARACTER 2
Nobody's called me God in a long time.

CHARACTER 1
Excuse me?

CHARACTER 2
You're excused, come to think of it... maybe no one has called me God.

CHARACTER 1
Why would anyone call you God?

CHARACTER 2
Well, who else would they call God?

CHARACTER 1
God?

CHARACTER 2
Yes?

CHARACTER 1
What?

CHARACTER 2
Did you want to ask me something?

CHARACTER 1
Ask you what?

CHARACTER 2
How should I know? Who am I, God?

CHARACTER 1
Decidedly not.

CHARACTER 2
Not yet.

CHARACTER 1
Not yet, not ever! The hell is wrong with you today?

CHARACTER 2
I haven't had enough to drink.

CHARACTER 1
Well, have another drink then.

CHARACTER 2
I can try, but we're almost out.

CHARACTER 1
You're almost out. I have some more in the car.

CHARACTER 2
How much more do you have in the car?

CHARACTER 1

A few bottles at least.

CHARACTER 2

A few bottles? In your car? And they say I'm the one with the drinking problem.

CHARACTER 1

You are the one with the drinking problem, that's why they're still bottles of liquor. If they were yours I'm certain they'd be empty by now.

CHARACTER 2

By who?

CHARACTER 1

You, don't play dumb!

CHARACTER 2

What's the difference?

CHARACTER 1

In what?

CHARACTER 2

Between drunk and dumb. Everyone wants me to play drunk so they can act like they're smarter than I am. Make themselves feel better. Make themselves feel high and mighty because regardless of all the dumb decisions they've made in their lives, which have inevitably ended all prospects of a bright and fortuitous future, they are able to take a certain sense of pride in their sobriety... as opposed to me, just because they don't drink. That's what I like about you.

CHARACTER 1

My pride?

CHARACTER 2

No! You're not sober.

CHARACTER 1

Yes, I am.

CHARACTER 2

No, you're not. You drink just as much as the lively folk.

CHARACTER 1

Not to excess....

CHARACTER 2

You drink enough to drink enough.

CHARACTER 1

I don't even know what that means.

CHARACTER 2

See! Proves my point. If you were sober you would've understood perfectly.

CHARACTER 1

I think I'd more likely understand if I were drunk.

CHARACTER 2

Well, there's at least three ways to change that.

*CHARACTER 2 pours another drink
emptying the bottle.*

CHARACTER 1 takes a drink.

When did you have your first drink?

CHARACTER 1

Why do you ask?

CHARACTER 2

We're drinking, might as well have some drinking talk.

CHARACTER 1

I don't remember. Children drank wine in my house when they were young. Never much, just to make us stop crying or go to sleep.

CHARACTER 2

So that's why you're a drunkard now.

CHARACTER 1

I'm no drunkard. Drinking then taught me I needed to drink in moderation. Never felt compelled to drink like you do.

CHARACTER 2

No, not like I do, just when I do.

CHARACTER 1

Well if I'm drinking half the bottle that's half a bottle you're not drinking.

CHARACTER 2

You think I can't get another bottle?

CHARACTER 1

No, I know you can, but it'll take longer, and that makes it take longer to get drunk. Perhaps even long enough for you to go home and not beat on anybody when you get there.

CHARACTER 2

Now I ain't never beat anybody!

CHARACTER 1

Of course, you haven't. That way you can have some pride.

CHARACTER 2

What pride?

CHARACTER 1

Your pride. The same pride as my dad. The pride that doesn't mean anything to anybody except yourself. The kind of pride so great it absolves you of every goddamn thing you've done wrong to your family so far.

CHARACTER 2

What have I done wrong to my family?

CHARACTER 1

What more do you need? Are you spending time with them? Caring for them, kissing them, telling them you love them?

CHARACTER 2

Well, what are you doing? You're drinking here with me all the same?

CHARACTER 1

Not every night. And I drink to give me a little something, not to take away everything else.

CHARACTER 2

How do you pretend to know how I drink?

Correcting CHARACTER 2.

CHARACTER 1

Why you drink.

CHARACTER 2

Why I drink! What's the difference?

CHARACTER 1

One is correct. One is wrong, and more likely to be used when you're drunk.

CHARACTER 2

I'm not drunk. I am empty though.

Sees the bottle is empty.

Weren't you the one talking about having a bottle in the car.

CHARACTER 1

No, that was the other person here.

CHARACTER 2

What other person?

CHARACTER 1

Goddammit, yes that was me.

CHARACTER 2

Well, go fetch it!

CHARACTER 1

Don't tell me to go fetch it. That's incredibly demeaning.

CHARACTER 2

I am sorry. My dear friend I in no way meant to demean you. I spoke rashly and I realize that was an inconsiderate way to treat you.

CHARACTER 1

Are you fucking with me?

CHARACTER 2

I've never fucked with you, but I would appreciate it if you wouldn't curse in my house.

CHARACTER 1

This isn't your house. Where do you think you are?

CHARACTER 2

Does it matter? Everyone else seems to know where we are, or at least not care enough to find out.

CHARACTER 1

I'm sorry. I think I've lost our point by now.

CHARACTER 2

Bottles. Bottles my dear friend. I seem to be out of any bottles that are still able to fulfill their purpose of becoming empty bottles, and you, by your own admission, have multiple bottles in your car, and I would be ever happier if you brought one of them in here, opened it, and made my glass significantly wetter than it has been ever since I drank the last drop in it, just a few moments ago.

CHARACTER 1

You're so fucking weird.

Walks out to their car.

CHARACTER 2

Shouting offstage

And please curb the cursing my dear friend! If you wouldn't mind!

Goes to the bookshelf and picks out a book very quickly and begins to read it.

*CHARACTER 1 walks back in with a bottle of bourbon in hand and notices
CHARACTER 2 reading intently.*

CHARACTER 1

What are you reading?

CHARACTER 2

I haven't the faintest idea.

CHARACTER 1

You didn't look at the title?

CHARACTER 2

I did not. I just jumped into the middle of the novel and the text seemed to be some incoherent rambling. How this ever became printed by any respectable publisher is surely beyond me. To think some man or woman wrote this babble and somehow thought, "Oh look at how absurd this is... it must be brilliant! Because no one would write something so bizarre if it weren't secretly brilliant, or at least that there wouldn't be some dumb schmuck of a critic who thought so.

CHARACTER 1

Well, what's the damn title?

CHARACTER 2

Don kwee-oat.

CHARACTER 1

What?

CHARACTER 2

By Miguel...

CHARACTER 1

Miguel de Cervantes? *Don Quixote*? Jesus Christ! No wonder you're reading babble, he's delusional!

CHARACTER 2

You're telling me!

CHARACTER 1

No, the character is delusional! The author knows exactly what he's doing. It's a brilliant novel and one of the most renowned of all time.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I've never heard of it.

CHARACTER 1

What literature class did you have where you were never assigned to read *Don Quixote*?

CHARACTER 2

English 1. And then I think English 2 after that.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, stop. You're so damn clever, but you can't recognize Cervantes. And you pretend to know theater.

CHARACTER 2

I do know theater you daft laud!

CHARACTER 1

Have you never seen *Man of La Mancha*?

CHARACTER 2

CHARACTER 2 starts to hum "Man of La Mancha (I, Don Quixote)"

Da, da, da, da, da-da-da; da, da, da, da-da-da. *Don Quixote! Man of La Mancha?*

CHARACTER 1

Yeah, fucking Cervantes!

CHARACTER 2

"The Impossible Dream"?

CHARACTER 1

Same as any.

CHARACTER 2

Well, this ain't no musical.

Gesturing to the book.

CHARACTER 1

No, no it's not a musical. It's a damn novel, as I'm sure you know, by you're picking out the book and it clearly being that of a novel.

Beat.

CHARACTER 2

What are you doing to me?

CHARACTER 1

What do you mean by that?

CHARACTER 2

Can't you just open the bottle already?

CHARACTER 1

Fine.

*Opens the bottle and pours it into
CHARACTER 2's glass.*

*CHARACTER 2 takes a sip and then spits it
out.*

CHARACTER 2

What the fuck is this!?

CHARACTER 1

Bourbon! What else?

CHARACTER 2

Bourbon! What do you mean 'Bourbon! What else?' Rye whiskey! That's what! I don't drink God Damned fucking Bourbon!

CHARACTER 1

You know, you really shouldn't curse so damn much.

*CHARACTER 2 throws the glass against a
wall or bookshelf shattering it onto the floor.*

Jesus Christ! What the fuck is wrong with you?

CHARACTER 2

You brought bourbon into my house!

CHARACTER 1

It's not your house!

CHARACTER 2

Just give me the bottle!

CHARACTER 1

No!

CHARACTER 2

Give me the bottle!

CHARACTER 1

I'm not gonna give you the bottle, you're just gonna smash it! I'm not letting you break a brand new bottle!

CHARACTER 2

You're goddamn right I'm gonna smash it into as many pieces as it'll break into. It never should have made it into this house in one piece to begin with!

CHARACTER 1

Why the hell not? It's just bourbon.

CHARACTER 2

I don't drink bourbon!

CHARACTER 1

Then don't drink it! I'll finish the bottle. I prefer bourbon and you prefer rye, so let's do with our preferred liquors.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I don't have any rye whiskey left. Your plan worked and you drank half the bottle, so now there's just your damn bourbon here, and I'll be damned if bourbon is gonna be the only liquor left here while I'm sitting here with nothing left to drink.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I have more bottles in my car. Mostly bourbon, but, but not only. I think I'm out of rye, but I have a bottle of gin, and I could bring it in here, and you could drink gin and I'll drink bourbon, and you won't have to taste another damn drop? Is that agreeable to you?

CHARACTER 2

Sure. That'd be fine. I can let you drink some damn bourbon if I've got some gin around.

CHARACTER 1

Well all right. I'll go get a bottle of gin.

CHARACTER 1 starts to leave with the bottle of bourbon left on the table but then realizes it shouldn't be left alone with CHARACTER 2 or else it will likely get smashed.

CHARACTER 2 has a similar epiphany that the bottle is being left unsupervised.

They both lunge for the bottle, but CHARACTER 1 gets to it first. They look at each other for a moment before CHARACTER 1 continues to leave to retrieve the gin.

CHARACTER 2 sits for a moment and then walks off stage right. The stage is bare for a few moments until CHARACTER 1 walks back on.

Where'd you go?

Walks over and leaves the bottle of gin next to CHARACTER 2's chair and then takes a sip of the bottle of bourbon as CHARACTER 2 walks back on.

Where'd you go?

CHARACTER 2

Had to take a piss.

Takes a moment.

CHARACTER 1

There's no bathroom over there.

CHARACTER 2 looks back.

CHARACTER 2

Yes, there is.

CHARACTER 1

No there isn't.

CHARACTER 2

Yes, there is.

CHARACTER 1

How the fuck is this even an argument, God, there's no bathroom over there!

CHARACTER 2

Calm down, a little piss never hurt anything.

CHARACTER 1

That can't be true.

CHARACTER 2

It can't?

CHARACTER 1

No. I mean, I can't recall a particular reference of a time when piss did hurt something, but there's no way that in all history piss has only been a positive measure.

CHARACTER 2

Why does it seem so unlikely? Have you ever had a bad piss?

CHARACTER 1

Not that I can remember.

CHARACTER 2

Can you remember a good one?

CHARACTER 1

Not particularly.

CHARACTER 2

But you remember the feeling of a good one, don't you?

CHARACTER 1

Well sure.

CHARACTER 2

So ha!

CHARACTER 1

Well, what about all the women and men who have issues peeing and are caused tremendous amounts of pain and suffering unable to pee.

CHARACTER 2

Pretty great when they finally are able to take their piss after all the pain and suffering, huh?

CHARACTER 1

Whatever the matter, doesn't seem to be the point, does it?

CHARACTER 2

Well, what's the point?

CHARACTER 1

Where the fuck did you piss??

*CHARACTER 2 looks at CHARACTER 1,
looks offstage, then back at CHARACTER 1.*

CHARACTER 2

You know you really shouldn't curse so much. And where's my gin?

CHARACTER 1

Are you serious? It's right in front of you.

Gestures to the bottle on the table.

CHARACTER 2

Ah, lovely.

Pours a drink of gin.

CHARACTER 1

How many drinks did you have before I got here?

CHARACTER 2

How on earth do you expect me to answer that?

CHARACTER 1

With a number, presumably.

CHARACTER 2

One thousand.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, shut up.

CHARACTER 2

Well, what number was I supposed to give you?

CHARACTER 1

A real one.

CHARACTER 2

It was a real one. I don't even remember the definition of an unreal number, do you?

*CHARACTER 1 thinks for a second, then
disregards the thought.*

CHARACTER 1

Real, unreal, that's not what I'm talking about. I mean a legitimate number of how many drinks you had before I came to you.

CHARACTER 2

How the hell am I supposed to know that?

CHARACTER 1

By telling me how many it was?

CHARACTER 2

Well, I'm sorry if I don't remember every drink I've ever had. I've not been gifted such a mind to remember everything I've ever done. Every drink isn't so special to me. How many drinks have you had in your life? Seems strange you'd judge me for not having a number when you can't even remember your first one!

CHARACTER 1

Don't be a damn idiot, I didn't mean every fucking drink you've ever had. I meant right now! Today! How many drinks did you have, other than the two I saw you drink, that are contributing to the influence you're currently under?

CHARACTER 2

That's quite a philosophical question for drinking conversation.

CHARACTER 1

No, it isn't.

CHARACTER 2

How many drinks still influence me today? Quite a lot I'd say. Even more, if you include the drinks of my father. Or my mother for that matter. Even you.

CHARACTER 1

What drinks have I had that influenced you?

CHARACTER 2

That drink of bourbon for one. Tore me apart inside.

CHARACTER 1

What is your deal with bourbon?

CHARACTER 2

What do you think? What was your father's drink?

Pause.

CHARACTER 1

Vodka I suppose.

CHARACTER 2

Tell me. You have a bottle of vodka in that car of yours amongst the endless bottles of bourbon for any sort of occasion?

CHARACTER 1

No. No, I don't have a bottle of vodka.

CHARACTER 2

And you ask me why I don't drink bourbon? When you know damn well what my father drank.

CHARACTER 1

I didn't realize your father drank.

CHARACTER 2

Every father drank.

CHARACTER 1

That's not true.

CHARACTER 2

It's true enough.

CHARACTER 1

Well fair enough. I figured it was more likely that you'd be the parent of someone who wouldn't know how to handle a friend bringing whiskey into the house.

CHARACTER 2

It's not a house.

CHARACTER 1

All as well, house or not, bathroom or whatever, you have too much damn whiskey.

CHARACTER 2

I have no whiskey.

CHARACTER 1

Have had, will have. Everything except your current status of having no whiskey. Though an option of whiskey is available to you...

CHARACTER 1 holds up his bourbon.

CHARACTER 2 grimaces.

Is this not the longest you've been without it in 10 years or so? Not taking into account that you have a bottle of gin at your breast.

CHARACTER 2

Who's fault is that?

CHARACTER 1

You're blaming me for your drinking?

CHARACTER 2

No, I'm blaming you for my drinking gin.

CHARACTER 1

I thought you liked gin.

CHARACTER 2

I do like gin; that's not the point.

CHARACTER 1

Well, what's the point? That it's not bourbon?

CHARACTER 2

No, that's not the point! Well, it's not entirely not the point.

CHARACTER 1

What happened with your father?

CHARACTER 2

What happened with yours? From what I hear he never beat you.

CHARACTER 1

No, he didn't beat me, doesn't mean he's anything more than a sorry excuse of a man.

CHARACTER 2

And what are you?

CHARACTER 1

What is that supposed to mean?

CHARACTER 2

Your dad was a drunkard who never beat anybody, I'm someone who drinks what they like and what they want. And... never beat anybody. More than I can say about my father. What about you? What do you say about yourself?

CHARACTER 1

I get by. I drink every now and then, who doesn't?

CHARACTER 2

Nuns, monks, and Mormons. Supposedly the happiest people on earth. Nuns and monks that is. Haven't heard about Mormons, but they seem happier than most, and they sure don't drink.

CHARACTER 1

So what? The secret to happiness is not drinking? Then why are you still drinking that bottle of gin?

CHARACTER 2 takes a swig of gin.

CHARACTER 2

And how has the world changed since my last sip? Or better yet since my father's last sip, or yours?

CHARACTER 1

The whole world is a sip drunker, or three sips drunker to be exact.

CHARACTER 2

Well, who's counting?

CHARACTER 1

None of us I suppose. As assuredly as one thousand is a real number.

CHARACTER 2

So you know the difference between a real and unreal number?

CHARACTER 1

That's beside the point.

CHARACTER 2

Well, what's the point?

CHARACTER 1

What did your father do to you when he was drunk on bourbon?

CHARACTER 2

How is that the point?

CHARACTER 1

It's not, but tell me. More than anything now I want to know.

CHARACTER 2

Why?

CHARACTER 1

Curiosity.

CHARACTER 2

That's not enough.

CHARACTER 1

Genuine interest. How's that?

CHARACTER 2

Better, but not sufficient.

CHARACTER 1

Because it matters to me to understand a little further the impact that drinking has on this world. On you. The effect that a father has on his children so I don't feel so strange for being unable to quit drinking this bourbon when I wouldn't drink another sip of vodka if your life depended on it.

CHARACTER 2

My life not worth as much as you or your mother's I suppose?

CHARACTER 1

Honestly, I suppose.

CHARACTER 2

I suppose.

CHARACTER 1

Well. Is that sufficient?

CHARACTER 2

Sufficient as I can tell.

CHARACTER 1

Well, tell me then.

CHARACTER 2

My father threatened to abandon us. And that's the truth. Not some story I made up to make this conversation between you and I seem a little more entertaining to an audience in a house, but it's my god's honest truth.

CHARACTER 1

He didn't leave I guess?

CHARACTER 2

No. Convinced him to stay, my mother and I did. I walked out into the road to make sure if he started to leave that I'd have a chance to catch him, but my mother kept him inside

and after about an hour I headed back inside and found my mother pleading with him, my sister making it worse, and a mess that I knew, if I pulled out the tears, I could mollify well enough to keep him from leaving.

Pause.

So he stayed. I wish I knew if that were better or not.

Beat.

Your father ever threaten to abandon you?

CHARACTER 1

Can't say he did. Did he beat you?

CHARACTER 2

No dammit! Does that make it better? Do all wrongdoings and psychological nuances become absolved if you don't beat your children?

CHARACTER 1

No, I wasn't saying that I just, you've mentioned more than once you never beat anybody, so I just thought maybe you said that compared to your father.

CHARACTER 2

I try not to compare to my father. In all honesty, I don't think I do.

CHARACTER 1

You don't?

CHARACTER 2

You do?

CHARACTER 1

I'd say so. I think given the comparison I leave him in the dust in regards to the decency of how you treat people.

CHARACTER 2

How about his father?

CHARACTER 1

His father?

CHARACTER 2

Seems men of a certain age convince themselves that they're a success of a parent if they did better than their father.

CHARACTER 1

You don't think that's true?

CHARACTER 2

I don't care. If you beat your children I don't give a damn if your father beat you better or worse.

CHARACTER 1

But I thought you said your father didn't beat you?

CHARACTER 2

He didn't! His father beat him, and his father beat him even worse, and I don't care, because my father put me through hell without having the slightest understanding of what was going on.

CHARACTER 1

What was going on?

CHARACTER 2

I was changing! And that's not a bad thing!

Pause.

I don't think it is. My mother never forgave me for being my own person, and my father never forgave me for the grief I gave my mother. Where was I to turn?

CHARACTER 1

I don't-

CHARACTER 2

I tried to turn to god! But what does that bring me to except to myself? I'd ask myself questions and give myself answers; give myself morals and hold myself to them; push myself harder than my parents ever knew how. I became my own guidance through the guise of God. But after you've lived enough years, and used "God" to progress your mind there comes a time when you realize God is Dead and it's your turn to take the accountability of your life into your own hands.

Beat.

Am I a good person just because I can boast that I know how to conduct myself as a

human being better than my father ever knew how? Or better than God ever knew how to teach me?

CHARACTER 1

I don't know if it makes you a good person. I don't know if I can say what a good person is.

CHARACTER 2

Well, you don't beat people.

They laugh.

Beat.

Let me have some.

CHARACTER 1

Some what?

CHARACTER 2

Let me taste some of the bourbon. It's been a while since I let myself swallow it.

CHARACTER 1

You sure? You're not gonna throw it against the wall the second it leaves my hand?

CHARACTER 2

I wasn't, but I must admit, ever since you put the idea into my mind, it is a very tempting concept. Kind of like throwing my father against the wall.

CHARACTER 1

You think you would if you had the chance?

CHARACTER 1 gives the bottle of bourbon and, being without a glass CHARACTER 2 knocks the bottle back and drinks a significant amount right there.

CHARACTER 2

Chance to what?

CHARACTER 1

Throw your father against the wall, or something to that effect?

CHARACTER 2

I don't know. I like the idea in some sick way, but I feel like if I beat him then he'd win in some sick way.

CHARACTER 1

I understand that.

CHARACTER 2

I used to not drink around him. I used to have some sense of pride that I could keep to some moral standard that he tried to force on me when he couldn't keep to his own standards. He always was a hypocrite of sorts.

CHARACTER 1

Aren't we all?

CHARACTER 2

Hypocrites?

CHARACTER 1

In some way or another. Throwing a bottle against a wall and preaching non-violence. Telling a friend not to drink and then joining in finishing a bottle or two.

CHARACTER 2

That doesn't make it any better.

CHARACTER 1

Sure doesn't. But it makes it easier.

CHARACTER 2

Is that better?

CHARACTER 1

Nope. But it's nicer. Plenty of things aren't better, but they're nice... gin, abstaining from beating your children, happiness in general.

CHARACTER 2

Happiness?

CHARACTER 1

Happiness never helped anybody. Not as much as pissing ever hurt anybody at least.

CHARACTER 2

You don't think pissing hurt anybody?

CHARACTER 1

Not much I suppose. It isn't nice, and it isn't happy, but it is sterile, and I can't deny that without lying in a very real way.

CHARACTER 2

Well, at least we've come to some agreement while we've all been here.

Beat.

CHARACTER 1

Why do you drink?

CHARACTER 2

What?

CHARACTER 1

We've come to at least one revelation so far since we've been here, I want to come to another. Why do you drink?

CHARACTER 2

Why do we need to come to the revelation of why I drink?

CHARACTER 1

It's not necessarily about your drinking.

CHARACTER 2

No?

CHARACTER 1

It's mine just as yours. You know that. As much as I hate to admit it, but there hasn't been a moment yet I haven't met you drink for drink. And although I feel as though I just enjoy it, and I don't hurt anybody. I have the slightest feeling that maybe that's not the beginning of it. It's some sort of end in a way, but maybe why I drink is something I don't feel comfortable saying, but I'm gettin' drunker and drunker and if I continue to drink and we continue to dig a little deeper, maybe by the end I'll feel comfortable enough with myself to have a little honesty about myself.

CHARACTER 2

You drink beer?

CHARACTER 1

What the hell does that have to do with anything?

CHARACTER 2

Just curious.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I'm not aiming to satiate your curiosity here.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I lied of course. It's more than curiosity, but I want you to answer first.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I can agree to that.

CHARACTER 2

Well, then you might as well answer.

CHARACTER 1

Yes, I drink fucking beer.

CHARACTER 2

And we'd been doing so well, such a while it had been since you'd cursed.

CHARACTER 1

Never mind my cursing. It makes no difference, it's just words.

CHARACTER 2

Well, it is and it isn't.

CHARACTER 1

What on earth does that mean?

CHARACTER 2

Your father curse?

CHARACTER 1

My father?

CHARACTER 2

Well, mine did. Just another point of pride I had from a rule he demanded of me more than himself, but me, being someone with a semblance of willpower and self-control... not to mention a conscience that I had obtained from a belief in God, and a belief in God instead of a belief in parents, I never cursed. More than never cursed in front of my father and mother. My father once told me he thought it was actually quite respectful, but it was anything but. More to the fact it was a way to disrespect. Because that's what I had for my parents; disrespect. Disrespect to their lives, their morals, and both lack thereof, and disrespect to their concept of who I should be or who I was.

Beat.

Who were you to your parents?

CHARACTER 1

Who was I?

CHARACTER 2

Did your parents see you for who you were? Or who you are? Or did they merely have an idea for who you should be, and be distraught at the fact that you had your own special idea for who you would turn out to be?

CHARACTER 1

No. If I understand your question, I was far different of a person than who my parents imagined me to be. Particularly my mother.

CHARACTER 2

Your mother?

CHARACTER 1

Yes. My mother.

CHARACTER 2

She why you drink?

CHARACTER 1

I don't think we're at that answer yet. I'm still getting more and more comfortable with talking about this at all.

CHARACTER 2

Need another drink? We seem to be out of bourbon.

CHARACTER 1

I don't know. Perhaps it's best we start to sober up for this conversation.

CHARACTER 2

I can tell you certain enough we'll be much better off with a little more bourbon.

CHARACTER 1

As long as you don't smash another glass or bottle.

CHARACTER 2

No promises, but probably not. Considering I've grown tired of gin.

Beat.

Toss me the keys? I'll go grab it.

Tosses the keys.

CHARACTER 1

They're...

CHARACTER 2

In the trunk, yeah, I know the drill, you're no fool.

Walks off.

*CHARACTER 1 starts to play with the glass.
Starts to spin the glass a little bit on their
finger and it inevitably falls and breaks on
the floor.*

CHARACTER 2 walks back in.

I didn't think I was gone so long to anger you so much to throw a glass, or did you fill it with vodka while I was gone?

CHARACTER 1

Ha. Ha. It was an accident. Do you have a broom? Or at least another glass?

*While speaking CHARACTER 2 grabs a
broom from offstage and sweeps off both
broken glasses.*

CHARACTER 2

Afraid not. I never had a third person here if I could help it, so I just keep the two glasses around. Reckon we can share.

CHARACTER 1

I've no fear of a bottle if you don't.

CHARACTER 2

Of course not.

Takes a strong swig.

Here.

CHARACTER 1 takes a strong swig.

CHARACTER 1

So have you figured an answer yet?

CHARACTER 2

Answer to what?

CHARACTER 1

Why do you drink?

CHARACTER 2

I enjoy it.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, come on. Don't play that with me.

CHARACTER 2

I know. I know it's more than that, but it seems different each time.

CHARACTER 1

What are the different reasons?

CHARACTER 2

First reason was because it was there. Second was because I could drink with someone I'd fallen in love with. And that happened more than once, I can tell you that. Third, because it was legal I suppose, and why not? I was stronger than my father, so why should I be

afraid to have a Guinness or two. Fourth because it was my birthday or a wedding. I don't know, there always seems to be a reason.

CHARACTER 1

What about now? It's not your birthday, and I hear no wedding bells. What's your excuse now?

CHARACTER 2

Helps me write sometimes. Not always, but right now.

CHARACTER 1

Is that worth it?

CHARACTER 2

I don't know. I can't say I'm qualified to make such a judgment. I suppose it'll be dependent on what comes out of me by the end.

CHARACTER 1

You know I was once told never to waste good copy. Had nothing to do with drinking, at least not that I can remember, and I hope remembering has nothing to do with it, but a great friend of mine told me that I should never waste a script that's too personal for my comfort if the words are worth something.

CHARACTER 2

Still believe that?

CHARACTER 1

I do. I frequently am brought back to that question, and I like to twist the truth and make it seem unrecognizable from the original words spoken between me and my idea of another person, but I have this feeling that one day I'll have to write something that is indeed honest. That is my own experience, whether it be religion, my parental upbringing, the drink, the laziness, the unwillingness, the every god damned aspect of my life that you could possibly find contemptuous. I keep feeling that I'll be so compelled to write something honest, about my own life, that I'll come out with a script that reflects Miller, O'Neill, or Williams and shows some aspect of my own life like they know how to do, but I know I'm scared. I want to write that script, but if I did, it doesn't mean it would be *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. My life isn't so interesting. We'll see if I find I have consumption, but until then I have to find words to say that fit me, and that fit you, that hopefully mean more than just a couple funny seeming lines that come from a drunken night in my house.

CHARACTER 2

This isn't your house.

CHARACTER 1

I know that... I know. It doesn't defuse from the point though.

CHARACTER 2

What's the point?

CHARACTER 1

That we're the same. I came here thinking that we were different. That I could help you, but the more I talk to you the more I realize we're the same, and your parents are my parents, your drinking is my drinking, and I can't escape your faults, just as I can't be happy and fulfilled at the same time.

CHARACTER 2

That why you drink?

CHARACTER 1

Is that even the point anymore? The more I ask you the less I care, the more I take another swig, and the more I have to take a piss.

CHARACTER 2

Well for heaven's sake don't let me keep you from taking a piss. There's a bathroom right over there.

Points stage right.

CHARACTER 1

No there isn't.

Walks off stage right to take a piss.

CHARACTER 2

"Sing a song, sing a sad sad song,
 Song of a beauty, song a joy.
 If I could sing a song, please my bonnie lass,
 I'd have a love to warm my heart before
 Before the love of my life would go away
 away to find me, and then to kiss me soon

but all my life, my life has gone away
and all my life to dismay."

CHARACTER 1 comes back.

CHARACTER 1

What was that?

CHARACTER 2

What was what?

CHARACTER 1

That song. Was that an Irish drinking song or something?

CHARACTER 2

No, I just started singing. Didn't have you here to bounce ideas off of so I started singing whatever came to mind.

CHARACTER 1

Well, it was nice. You have a nice voice. Nicer than I would have expected.

CHARACTER 2

I'll choose to take that as a compliment.

CHARACTER 1

Sorry. I realize that wasn't inherently nice, even though I meant it as a compliment.

CHARACTER 2

I appreciate it then.

CHARACTER 1

I'm glad.

CHARACTER 2

You sing songs?

CHARACTER 1

I do. I'm just not singing now.

CHARACTER 2

Why not?

CHARACTER 1

I don't really need to. Your drinking song I think was enough for the night.

CHARACTER 2

I'm satisfied by that. Can't say I'm totally satisfied tonight though.

CHARACTER 1

And what more do you need?

CHARACTER 2

I don't know. I wish I knew more about the reasons.

CHARACTER 1

What reasons do you not have answers for yet?

CHARACTER 2

Don Quixote for one.

CHARACTER 1

Don Quixote?

CHARACTER 2

You spoke so highly of Cervantes and his novel as if it were something like *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, or even *Buried Child*, but you didn't say why. Why does a delusional man make a genius writer?

CHARACTER 1

I don't know. I think it's comforting to see madness in a subject other than ourselves. Madness in O'Neil, in Cervantes, in our dreams where we're haunted by a copy of *Don Quixote* which we never read, but pretend like we did because it seems like a brilliant novel and has renown.

CHARACTER 2

You've never read it?

CHARACTER 1

Nope.

CHARACTER 2

Then why'd you call it genius?

CHARACTER 1

I believe it is, but I guess that really isn't the reason. I wanted to seem better read than I actually am.

CHARACTER 2

I don't care how well-read you are.

CHARACTER 1

I know you don't, but you're not everybody, and when you try to convince everybody, you forget the truth to yourself sometimes. I doubt I would have remembered that I'd never read it if I hadn't been having such a conversation with you, influenced by bourbon and some rye whiskey.

CHARACTER 2

Is that a good thing?

CHARACTER 1

It is what it is. There's goodness to it, but I'm not gonna absolve drunkenness, even if it is for the sake of honesty. It's not bourbon's responsibility to keep me honest, it's mine.

CHARACTER 2

But is it wrong to use drinking as a tool to keep you honest every once in a while? I highly doubt we'd be having this conversation if we hadn't gone through more than a bottle and a half of bourbon.

CHARACTER 1

That might be true, but honesty doesn't absolve murder. It just makes it honest.

CHARACTER 2

What does that mean?

CHARACTER 1

Nevermind, just a dilemma.

CHARACTER 2

Makes sense enough.

Beat.

CHARACTER 1

Do you love your mother?

CHARACTER 2

Yes.

CHARACTER 1

Why?

CHARACTER 2

What?

CHARACTER 1

We've been talking about our fathers, but I've yet to have some sort of revelation about my mother.

CHARACTER 2

Do you have to have one? Has she affected you like your father?

CHARACTER 1

Seems foolish to assume a man can affect a child more than a woman, especially when she's spent much more time with the child than he has.

CHARACTER 2

Well, what did your mother do to you? She ever abandon you?

CHARACTER 1

No. Ever abandon you?

CHARACTER 2

No, of course not. She and myself are what convinced my father not to leave. She was the only one he truly loved, and myself and my sister being the only ones she truly loved; she couldn't leave us, and he relented leaving her, and then with my tears, and heartfelt apology, there was enough to convince him to stay.

CHARACTER 1

So you don't resent your mother like your father?

CHARACTER 2

I probably resent her more. She only loved me because I was her child. Honestly, her love for me was just another part of her vanity.

Pause.

I've known that for a long time, but it hurts to say out loud.

CHARACTER 1

You don't think she loved you?

CHARACTER 2

She loved me, it was just vain. I know that seems to imply that it wasn't real, but understand that's not what I mean. I don't know how to say it better than that. Maybe I'm just kidding myself, but I'll leave that for you to decide; I don't think I need to come to terms with it myself at this exact moment.

CHARACTER 1

Well, what about you?

CHARACTER 2

What about me?

CHARACTER 1

The question I initially asked you. Do you love your mother?

CHARACTER 2

Like I said, yes.

Pause.

CHARACTER 1

Just yes?

CHARACTER 2

Yeah. I mean that's what it comes down to. I resent my mother more than my father, but I think I love her more.

CHARACTER 1

Why?

CHARACTER 2

She tried. She really tried. And that's something that has a profound effect on me.

CHARACTER 1

Why is that?

CHARACTER 2

Because it's all I ask from people. Most people have no idea what they don't know, nor do they care, and it's incredibly refreshing when somebody tries. That being said, there is no one more close-minded than my mother, and close-mindedness is exactly the thing my belief in trying is aiming against, but when it transfers to my mother trying to be a mother, trying to love me, trying to know what's best for me... even though I honestly believe she failed on every front, she tried, and that means something to me.

CHARACTER 1

Do you try?

CHARACTER 2

Try to what?

CHARACTER 1

Stop drinking for one.

CHARACTER 2

Why would I?

CHARACTER 1

Why wouldn't you?

CHARACTER 2

Who's it hurting? I don't beat anybody, and if I'm being honest I don't think I cause any psychological abuse to anyone I know, so what is the reason to stop?

CHARACTER 1

Because the abuse is still real. And you have a problem.

CHARACTER 2

I have a problem?

CHARACTER 1

Don't get so offended I have a problem too. But think about all of the children who do get that abuse from their parents.

Beat.

Why did you refuse to drink around your parents?

CHARACTER 2

Pride. Disrespect.

CHARACTER 1

More than that.

CHARACTER 2

I don't know what you mean.

CHARACTER 1

It stood for something. I think you did it for the fact of the matter that not drinking made a statement. Not drinking was a sense of power where you could survive without their crutch, without their privilege that hindered them from something more.

CHARACTER 2

Why do you assume all that?

CHARACTER 1

Because that's true of me.

Pause.

I used to believe in staying away from the whole lot because I looked at how it hurt so many people, I looked at the great plays and saw the pain it caused my favorite playwrights and figured the lot of the world would be better off with being rid of the juice altogether. And believing that, makes me resent the fact that I couldn't resist, whether it be with someone I love or some special occasion or some inspiration for something I couldn't come up with otherwise... and once I come to the fact that when it was no longer illegal for me, to know that I fully succumbed, I don't know; maybe I don't have the will I thought I had. Maybe I'm just as weak and as little deserving of respect as my father.

CHARACTER 2

Don't say that.

CHARACTER 1

I don't believe it. I just wonder. Have you ever failed yourself like that?

CHARACTER 2

It's no use creating such a strict standard like that. Nobody will keep to every stipulation they put upon themselves, so why should you be the one person on earth who is completely absolved of all wrong-doing?

CHARACTER 1

It's not just about wrong-doing. Not in general at least. But I know I failed in this respect.

CHARACTER 2

Makes you want to break the bottle. Doesn't it?

CHARACTER 1

I don't want to break the bottle.

CHARACTER 2

Just try it out. Throw it against the wall and tell me it doesn't give you a cathartic release.

Pause.

CHARACTER 1

Fine.

Throws the, now, empty bottle offstage and breaks it.

They are both slightly exhilarated.

Haha, ha!. Woo hoo! Is this what it feels like every time you break a bottle?

CHARACTER 2

I honestly doubt that. I figure it's more from all you've gone through tonight, but you can create that feeling again I'm sure.

CHARACTER 1

What do you mean?

CHARACTER 2

This won't be the last cathartic night you'll have. Me personally, I have a new cathartic experience every time I read *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

CHARACTER 1

What is your obsession with that play?

CHARACTER 2

I really want to be him.

CHARACTER 1

Him?

CHARACTER 2

Edmund, Eugene, whoever. I want to believe that all the work I'm putting in now will someday have a worthwhile payoff in fulfilling experiences.

CHARACTER 1

What experiences would fulfill you?

CHARACTER 2

What do you mean?

CHARACTER 1

Well, you watch plays and you drink. Those are two things that I know about you. Do you find them particularly fulfilling?

CHARACTER 2

One of them... maybe the other. Maybe one more than the other.

CHARACTER 1

Both worth it?

CHARACTER 2

Surely not, but they kind of go hand in hand in a way.

CHARACTER 1

Do they have to?

CHARACTER 2

For some people, I'd say so, yeah.

CHARACTER 1

You being one of them?

CHARACTER 2

I think it's safe to say....

CHARACTER 1

But is it safe to do?

CHARACTER 2

Still breathing aren't I?

CHARACTER 1

Is that all you need?

CHARACTER 2
Don't even need that.

CHARACTER 1
What?

CHARACTER 2
What?

CHARACTER 1
You don't need to breathe?

CHARACTER 2
Not necessarily.

CHARACTER 1
All right, well stop breathing.

CHARACTER 2
Oh, I wouldn't do that. Seems like a bad idea.

CHARACTER 1
Well just for the argument's sake, if you don't need it, why not do without it for just ten minutes or so?

CHARACTER 2
Well, I like breathing well enough. And I fear I'd miss it more than I'd like to if I did without it for ten minutes.

CHARACTER 1
...because you need it.

CHARACTER 2
Now I wouldn't concede that.

CHARACTER 1
This is ridiculous!

CHARACTER 2
What?

CHARACTER 1

How drunk are you?

CHARACTER 2

Not as much as I was before. In fact, do we have another bottle?

CHARACTER 1

You still have your gin, why not give it a swig?

CHARACTER 2

I'm developing a bit of a taste for the bourbon, maybe you and my father were on to something.

CHARACTER 1

I've got more bourbon in the car.

CHARACTER 2

Well, why not get som-

Has a sudden realization!

Shots!

CHARACTER 1

What?

CHARACTER 2

Shots! I have shot glasses!

CHARACTER 1

You have shot glasses?

CHARACTER 2

That's what I said, isn't it? We broke my whiskey glasses, but it just occurred to me that I still have a couple of shot glasses in the cupboard there. How about you go and grab them, and I'll get us another bottle of bourbon.

CHARACTER 1

Can you find your way to the car all right?

CHARACTER 2

Of course, I'm not so drunk.

CHARACTER 1

That cupboard there?

CHARACTER 2

That one precisely.

CHARACTER 1 gets up and walks to the cupboard as CHARACTER 2 goes offstage to retrieve another bottle.

CHARACTER 1 plays with the shot glasses a little and almost breaks one. Scared they might slip up, puts them down on the table, sits in the chair nearest the table, and waits patiently.

CHARACTER 2 comes back in.

Why are you sitting that way?

CHARACTER 1

What way?

CHARACTER 2

So prim and proper.

CHARACTER 1

I'm just sitting.

CHARACTER 2

Well, sit in the other chair, that one's mine.

Gets up and switches chairs.

CHARACTER 1

Does it really matter?

CHARACTER 2

No. No, it doesn't, but if it doesn't bother you too much, I have a preferred chair for when I drink. I don't know why, but this just feels the proper perspective.

CHARACTER 2 frames up a vantage point with their hands.

CHARACTER 1

Fair enough. Doesn't bother me.

CHARACTER 2

Lovely.

Pours two shots.

CHARACTER 1

What's the use in shot glasses anyway? They don't last long enough to make it worth the pour.

CHARACTER 2

You're absolutely right, but they're plenty of fun.

CHARACTER 1

Fun?

CHARACTER 2

One, Two, Three, Shot!

Drinks and then CHARACTER 1 drinks just behind.

All right. Now you call it.

Pours two more shots.

CHARACTER 1

I'm not gonna call it.

CHARACTER 2

Call the shot!

CHARACTER 1

I don't want to.

CHARACTER 2

Well, you have no excuse against shot glasses being fun if you're not willing to truly participate.

Takes a moment.

CHARACTER 1

One, Two, Three, Shot!

They both drink.

Kind of fun.

CHARACTER 2

Aye!! I told you!

Beat.

Do you know the most amount of shots you've ever had in one night?

CHARACTER 1

I don't know, but I've certainly drunk more tonight than I ever had in my life.

CHARACTER 2

I'm honored to be the one to usher you into a new record.

CHARACTER 1

It's not really a record I needed to break.

CHARACTER 2

No, but it's one you had to break, so it's worth what it is anyway.

CHARACTER 1

I'm not sure I really caught that.

CHARACTER 2

And you say I'm the drunk one.

CHARACTER 1

You're certainly drunk, I haven't any doubts about that.

CHARACTER 2

Drinking drunk, isn't the real difference between the two merely philosophical and inconsequential in nature.

CHARACTER 1

You think being drunk is inconsequential?

CHARACTER 2

Well, it can be, but that's not what I was saying. I was just merely trying to say I prefer that it is said of myself that I am drinking rather than that I am drunk.

CHARACTER 1

Well of course you do; drunk isn't meant to be flattering.

CHARACTER 2

Neither is drinking, but I hold a special significance for drunk.

CHARACTER 1

Oh really? Well, what, my friend, has to happen to qualify you as drunk?

CHARACTER 2

I have to hurt somebody.

CHARACTER 1

Does that include yourself?

CHARACTER 2

I suppose.

CHARACTER 1

Does it include me?

CHARACTER 2

Naturally.

CHARACTER 1

Well, what do you have to say about hurting me tonight then?

CHARACTER 2

When did I hurt you?

CHARACTER 1

When you screamed at me and broke the glass for giving you bourbon.

CHARACTER 2

I hurt you? I threw in a totally different direction than you!

CHARACTER 1

You didn't hit me, but that was scary. Someone who has been "drinking", shouting at me and breaking glass. It's very startling. I knew nothing too drastic would happen because I know you, but it felt very inappropriate, and it scared me. And it hurts that a friend would scare me like that with no concern for me.

CHARACTER 2

I- well I-

CHARACTER 1

Not to mention you're drinking bourbon now... of your own accord... and no sense of apology at all. No admission of wrongful treatment, just a sense of total self absolution, because you know your own pain from bourbon, and don't care how you affect others.

Pause.

CHARACTER 2

I am sorry. That was inconsiderate. I recognize that. My emotions get away from me....

CHARACTER 1

When you drink...?

CHARACTER 2

When I drink?

CHARACTER 1

Would you have made the same spectacle if you weren't "drinking"?

CHARACTER 2

Hard to say. I'm not the most level-headed person in the world, but I see your point. Even if I would have done it totally sober, I can feel that it was made grander and worse because of it.

CHARACTER 1

I'm glad you acknowledge that.

CHARACTER 2

All right. I concede.

CHARACTER 1

Concede what?

CHARACTER 2

I'm drunk tonight, not just merely drinking.

CHARACTER 1

Good.

CHARACTER 2

Hopefully, I make worthwhile the fact.

CHARACTER 1

What do you mean by that?

CHARACTER 2

Hopefully, I can use the drunk for something beneficial.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, so that makes it okay?

CHARACTER 2

No, just making the best of an unfortunate situation.

CHARACTER 1

So you admit we're in an unfortunate situation here, and yet you continue to drink so much?

CHARACTER 2

Well, I don't hurt people most of the time. I'm not saying It hasn't been a negative thing in my life once or twice; I'm just saying I know how to use it beneficially.

CHARACTER 1

How?

CHARACTER 2

I write something. I grab that pen and paper over there and hopefully I come up with something beautiful.

CHARACTER 1

All right, well, do it. I wanna see.

CHARACTER 2

See what?

Gets up, picks up the pen and paper, and brings them back.

CHARACTER 1

Write something. Show me something beautiful.

They look at each other, almost testing one another.

CHARACTER 2

All right.

CHARACTER 2 turns to the pen and paper and starts to think. Doesn't take long and starts to write. Gets a few lines down and then pauses.

CHARACTER 1 looks over at the page during the pause and CHARACTER 2 gestures CHARACTER 1 away to ensure more privacy until what's written is ready.

CHARACTER 2 writes more; while waiting, CHARACTER 1 pours another shot and drinks.

After a lengthy bit of silent writing, CHARACTER 2 finishes.

CHARACTER 1

You have it?

CHARACTER 2

I do.

CHARACTER 1

Something beautiful?

CHARACTER 2

I'd say so.

CHARACTER 1

Well, let's hear it.

CHARACTER 2

Lets.

They look at each other in agreement.

"Digging up bones
and throwing them outside
They felt weaker than the last time.
Each time I go back again
I wish I'd heard the call to stop
But it all starts over again, exactly the same
Just two couplets to tell you it wasn't enough
My words fall soft, shaped like mâché papier"

CHARACTER 1

You mean paper-mâché?

CHARACTER 2

It's inverted. Has a better ring that was, and kind of works with the translation.

CHARACTER 1

What translation?

CHARACTER 2

Literally: chewed up paper.

CHARACTER 1

Chewed up paper... well I don't know if I'd call it beautiful, but it's nice enough.

CHARACTER 2

Thank you.

CHARACTER 1

I suppose. I don't know if I'd say it makes the drunkenness worthwhile though.

CHARACTER 2

It's not about making it worthwhile. It's just an attempt to use the drink while I'm already drinking. It inhibits me enough to not second guess myself every second I write a new word. Something that is truly invaluable.

CHARACTER 1

Well all right, it's not worthwhile, but it's whatever you want it to be.

CHARACTER 2

What's that supposed to mean?

CHARACTER 1

I'm just getting the feeling that we're going to reach the end and nothing will be different.

CHARACTER 2

Different how? End of what?

CHARACTER 1

Where is all this going if not to end your drinking?

CHARACTER 2

Why should I stop drinking? Why not you?

CHARACTER 1

If I stop drinking, will you?

CHARACTER 2

No!

CHARACTER 1

Then what's the point of making it about me? I'm talking about you; why don't you stop drinking? You hurt people when you're drunk, you don't care about the same things you do normally, and you write poems no one's ever gonna read.

CHARACTER 2

You don't know that.

CHARACTER 1

I do. You're just writing to write.

CHARACTER 2

Well, what's wrong with that?

CHARACTER 1

Nothing, unless you have to get drunk to do it and hurt the people around you.

CHARACTER 2

I rarely do that, and it's not as though people don't hurt each other every day. And I'd wager that I hurt people that way less than most people.

CHARACTER 1

Maybe so.

CHARACTER 2

And if I can get a little bit more out of drinking, then why not use it every once in a while?

CHARACTER 1

We're not really talking about every once in a while though, are we? We're talking about you drinking like this every fucking night.

CHARACTER 2

Quit with your cursing!

CHARACTER 1

Every night then. You don't think it's a problem?

CHARACTER 2

Where's the problem? I hurt people less than most people, and quitting drinking won't make me perfect, and without drinking, we'd never have had such an open conversation like this!

CHARACTER 1

But what's it all worth?

CHARACTER 2

Worth?

CHARACTER 1

Yes! If we go away from all this the same as we left then what was it all for? I'm drinking with you tonight at your speed, but I can't do this again. I won't do this again! I'd hope to reach you in your own way, but so much of this conversation is for nothing if you do it again alone tomorrow. Perhaps it'll even be worse.

CHARACTER 2

How do you figure that?

CHARACTER 1

You'll add bourbon to the equation I assume.

CHARACTER 2

Oh.

CHARACTER 1

Yeah. And all the talk of our fathers and mothers won't mean anything if you take the bottle just as much, or perhaps a bit less.

CHARACTER 2

They're not why I drink. I mean, they're not not why I drink, but they're not not why I do anything ever. They're my parents, and that effect will be in everything I do, always, but I drink because I like it.

CHARACTER 1

Why? Is it really so great you need it this much?

CHARACTER 2

Maybe I drink so someone like you will come up to me and say, "You're drinking?" with a condescending tone.

CHARACTER 1

Oh come on, it's not that.

CHARACTER 2

No, not really, but it is nice when you come up to try and get me to stop, and we have an open conversation like this.

CHARACTER 1

We can talk like this again.

CHARACTER 2

I doubt that.

CHARACTER 1

Maybe not every night. Or every time we see each other, but we're close friends. We can talk candidly more and more.

CHARACTER 2

You say that, but when was the last time? It has to be over ten years since we spoke so candidly to each other.

CHARACTER 1

Maybe that's my fault. Yours a little bit too, but you can't expect every conversation to get deep like this?

CHARACTER 2

But drinking a little helps, doesn't it?

CHARACTER 1

It does.

CHARACTER 2

And who says I have to stop drinking for this to mean something?

CHARACTER 1

I do!

CHARACTER 2

Well, I don't! I say that if I can come away from this knowing more about myself then that's something to be proud of. I know more about my father than I did two hours ago. And I think you do too. Even if the effect is still there, is there not more worth in an action simply from knowing why you're doing it?

CHARACTER 1

I don't know. Maybe, maybe not.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I think so. Maybe next time I won't break a glass full of bourbon when a friend makes a nice gesture.

CHARACTER 1

I'd bet on that.

CHARACTER 2

As would I. And that's better.

CHARACTER 1

But that's a little trivial, isn't it?

CHARACTER 2

You underestimate how angry bourbon made me before tonight.

CHARACTER 1

That doesn't seem to matter.

CHARACTER 2

Not to you, but plenty to me.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I'm glad you feel better about bourbon. I truly am. I just want a little more for you.

CHARACTER 2

And I want more for you, but I don't see any reason why that can't continue. Why can't we try to enrich the lives of each other, perhaps even find someone who drinks worse than you or me and help them know why they drink just a little more than they did two hours ago.

CHARACTER 1

You or me? Don't equate your drinking with mine.

CHARACTER 2

You're drinking just as much as I am.

CHARACTER 1

You had a thousand drinks before I came, you said so yourself.

CHARACTER 2

So have you, I'm sure, give or take. I've seen plenty a cocktail in your hands during all the parties and gatherings we've been to.

CHARACTER 1

I've had drinks before, sure, but I didn't have anything to drink before I came to you.

CHARACTER 2

Neither had I.

CHARACTER 1

Bullshit!

CHARACTER 2

Bull nothing.

CHARACTER 1

I know your drinking habits, not a night goes by where you don't have something to tie you over into the night.

CHARACTER 2

There's an aspect of truth there, but I hadn't started yet.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, come on!

CHARACTER 2

It's true. I try to write without it before I inevitably succumb.

CHARACTER 1

Your pen and paper were over there!

Gestures to where they were before.

Not to mention the bottle was half empty when I got here!

CHARACTER 2

I hadn't gotten around to writing yet, but I was gonna. And the bottle was half empty from last night. I didn't even have another bottle for after. I was just gonna finish the half a bottle without you, but with you, all of a sudden, I've drank more than I could have by myself.

CHARACTER 1

Are you telling me, that this amount of drinking isn't a normal thing for you?

CHARACTER 2

I'm not saying that at all. I've had this much and more time and time enough, but that doesn't change the fact that tonight I've had more to drink with your influence than I would have otherwise.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I thought drinking with you might help you understand and accept easier where I was coming from, trying to get you not to drink.

CHARACTER 2

And you're absolutely right. See, drinking can be a good thing.

CHARACTER 1

Of course, I'm not saying that it CAN'T be a good thing, but the good it brings isn't worth the amount you drink. I mean, you yourself idolized Eugene O'Neill so much, did he not demonize his father's and his brother's drinking in that play?

CHARACTER 2

Maybe so, but he still drank.

CHARACTER 1

Was it a good thing?

CHARACTER 2

Yes and no.

CHARACTER 1

Stop with the caveated answers!

CHARACTER 2

But that's the truth! It's like needing to breathe.

CHARACTER 1

You don't need to drink like you need to breathe.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I do, and I don't. I truly don't need either, because need doesn't exist.

CHARACTER 1

Oh, come on!

CHARACTER 2

It's true. Need exists in a way, but not on its own. Need only exists with a caveat. I don't need to breathe, but I need to breathe to live. I don't need to drink, but I need to drink to write poems or plays the way I do or to have this conversation with you.

CHARACTER 1

Is it worth it?

CHARACTER 2

Is breathing?

CHARACTER 1

Yes!

CHARACTER 2

And so is drinking. At least for tonight. At least with you.

CHARACTER 1

Well, I won't be here to drink with you every night, I can promise you that.

CHARACTER 2

Maybe not. But you're here now. And you don't need to be.

CHARACTER 1

I don't need to be here to live, but I need to be here if I want you to stop drinking.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I need you here to drink. I didn't drink before you came, I won't drink after.

CHARACTER 1

So you're gonna stop drinking when I leave.

CHARACTER 2

In a way.

CHARACTER 1

No, not in a way, tell me yes or no what you'll do.

CHARACTER 2

It's not always a yes or no answer. I won't drink any more of what I'm drinking tonight, but I'm not predicting the whole future of my life based on what we're saying now.

CHARACTER 1

Well, what is coming? At least give me some satisfaction for the time I've spent here. Give me some solace to let me feel like I've made a difference.

CHARACTER 2

You don't have that already?

CHARACTER 1

Not how I want.

CHARACTER 2

Well, I can't give you what you want.

Pause.

I can't do it.

Pause.

They look at each other intently. Trying to understand each other as they understand themselves.

CHARACTER 1 sighs.

CHARACTER 1

Yeah.

PAUSE.

I think I knew that.

Long pause.

But it was worth a shot.

CHARACTER 2

Worth more than a shot.

CHARACTER 1

I agree. I do, if I'm honest, but I can't help wanting more.

CHARACTER 2

And just as much I can't help drinking.

Pause.

I love you. I really do.

CHARACTER 1

I love you too.

CHARACTER 2

Do you need more than that?

CHARACTER 1

I do.

CHARACTER 2

Well, maybe that's not my fault.

CHARACTER 1

Maybe it's not. Maybe it's not mine either. I can't trace all the blame of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, but I'm here with you right now, and I wish I could blame myself for getting you to quit drinking.

CHARACTER 2

Maybe tomorrow night you will.

CHARACTER 1

Maybe, but something tells me we'll have the same conversation we had, but it'll just be a different night.

CHARACTER 2

You're welcome back to my house any time.

CHARACTER 1

This isn't your house.

Pause.

I want to tell you I love you again. I really do, I wish that mattered in the way I want it to.

CHARACTER 2

It matters to me.

CHARACTER 1

Sure, but it's not the same.

CHARACTER 2

It never is, but it repeats every night all the same.

Pause.

CHARACTER 1

Well, we're out of bourbon, and if I drink another bottle I'm afraid I'll never go home.

CHARACTER 2

Probably best I go back to staying away from bourbon anyway.

CHARACTER 1

I'll stay away too. At least the rest of the night.

CHARACTER 2

Glad to hear it.

CHARACTER 1

I hope you write something worthwhile while I'm gone.

CHARACTER 2

I'll do my best.

CHARACTER 1

I expect to hear it come tomorrow night.

CHARACTER 2

I'm sure you will.

CHARACTER 1

Something beautiful?

CHARACTER 2

As beautiful as I can manage.

CHARACTER 1

Sounds nice enough.

Pause.

They look at each other, and after a loving look, CHARACTER 1 leaves the way they came.

CHARACTER 2 sits silently for a while and then goes to the cupboard and takes out a notebook, goes back to their seat.

CHARACTER 2 begins to write, but after a while loses their train of thought and quits.

CHARACTER 2 sits in silence again for an uncomfortable amount of time before

CHARACTER 1 walks back in holding a half a bottle of rye whiskey.

CHARACTER 2 looks up and CHARACTER 1 stops in their tracks trying to find the right words to say.

CHARACTER 1

I forgot I had a half a bottle of rye whiskey in the glove compartment the whole time.

Long pause.

CHARACTER 2

Well if you're drinking...

Blackout.

The End.