



**Sample Pages from
Layers**

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LAYERS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Gary Rodgers



Layers

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Casting

2M 1W + 14 Either, some doubling possible.

LAYER 1: Overly pleasant and cheerful.

LAYER 2: Equally as pleasant and cheerful as Layer 1.

LAYER 3: Serious and intelligent.

CONSCIENCE: Respectable, moral and rather naïve.

ROBIN: A typical awkward teenaged boy who is in love with Mona.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Manipulative, mischievous and unethical.

KNOWLEDGE: Follows Quote and is obviously under her control. He despises Quote and nags her relentlessly.

QUOTE: Gives many physical gestures to Knowledge to direct his movements. She governs him but is quite annoyed by his incessant nagging. She speaks only in quotes.

ART: A regular pot user, rough around the edges, tough and streetwise. She often speaks incoherently or repeats herself as though she is high, however, this is not to be overdone.

CRAFTY: Art's drug buddy, she is equally tough, streetwise, and stoned.

MONA: Typical teenaged girl, has been waiting for Robin to ask her out.

PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE: Pompous and pretentious, she is Sedrick's superior and supposed mentor, though terribly perturbed by Sedrick's lack of experience and expertise.

SEDRICK: Apprentice to Professor Livingstone, longs to become an advanced dimensionality anthropologist. Has endless admiration for Professor Livingstone and Lord Master Hamdenburg.

LORD MASTER FRONZ HAMDENBURG: She is Professor Livingstone's colleague and is equally pompous and pretentious.

WRITER: Nervous and jittery, easily spooked, looks as though he may have fallen asleep at his desk last night while writing a play.

ADVISOR: Confident and usually in control, offers Writer advice and his thoughts regarding his play.

PLANT: An unsuspecting audience member.

All roles can be played by males or females simply by changing pronouns. However, the roles of Robin and Advisor were originally intended to be male, and Mona, female, as she is the love interest of Robin and Advisor. The running time is approximately 35 minutes and there are no set changes. Doubling of roles is possible – in the original production Conscience doubled as Sedrick, Anti-Conscience as Professor Livingstone, and Layer 1 as both Mona and Plant.

Please note, Mona and Plant are written as separate roles, though the script is such that they are played by the same person.

Costume notes from original production:

The Layers: Dressed thematically, jeans and bright shirts: one red, one blue, and one yellow (the primary colors).

Conscience: Dressed very businesslike, skirt and jacket, hair in a bun, glasses.

Robin: Jeans, sneakers and hoodie.

Anti-Conscience: Somewhat dishevelled with messy hair, torn jeans, black leather jacket and sunglasses.

Knowledge: Dressed in Shakespearean/Elizabethan style clothing typical of Romeo, purple velvet breeches and shirt, cloak and hat with feather

Quote: Also dressed in Shakespearean/Elizabethan style, typical of Juliet. It is, however, by no means imperative that Knowledge and Quote dress as Romeo and Juliet and there is no reference to their being representative of that in the script. They are simply to be dressed thematically, which could mean both in soiled coveralls, clown suits, stereotypic pirate garb, etc. The ladder that they used was designed as a balcony but that too is not necessary.

Art: A regular pot user, she has pots of various sizes hanging from her clothes. She wears a sleeveless jean jacket, torn jeans and boots. She has a pot on her head.

Crafty: Very similar to Art, she wears a combat jacket along with torn jeans and boots. She also has several pots hanging from her clothes and another on her head.

Mona: In the original production she was played by Layer I, and therefore dressed as Layer I with an added jacket and purse when returning as Plant.

Professor Livingstone: Long, bright red robe bearing the insignia of the “Academy” to which she belongs. She wears a large brain upon her head.

Sedrick: Also with a brain upon her head, though obviously not as large as Professor Livingstone’s. Though otherwise dressed similar to Professor Livingstone, she does not wear a robe and does not display the “Academy” insignia.

Lord Master Fronz Hamdenburg: Dressed exactly as Professor Livingstone, and also has a very large brain upon her head, noticeably larger than Professor Livingstone’s.

Writer: White collared shirt, sleeves rolled up, black trousers and shoes.

Advisor: Jeans and t-shirt with a wide open plaid shirt on over.

Plant: Dressed as Layer I with jacket and purse.

Set notes from original production:

Set is not to be overly complex. At DOWNSTAGE RIGHT there is a couch or chairs, a bench (or boxes). ART and CRAFTY mainly use this area. At UPSTAGE RIGHT there are 3 wooden boxes painted in a red and orange block pattern. This is where the LAYERS stand/sit when not part of the action. UPSTAGE LEFT there is a ladder with a balcony attached to the top. KNOWLEDGE and QUOTE use this area, QUOTE on the ladder. It is not important that the ladder not look like a ladder, it should look like a prop rather than a real balcony. In front of the ladder there is a black prop box in which props, attached to sticks, are stored and retrieved by KNOWLEDGE when appropriate. DOWNSTAGE LEFT there is a desk on which there is a laptop, coffee mugs and a few typical desk items, such as books, pens and paper. WRITER and ADVISOR are seated at the desk.

Props

- 4 wooden boxes (multi-colored)
- 1 or 2 office chairs
- Office type desk with desk items (mugs, pens, papers etc.)
- Laptop computer (preferably one that can take some abuse)
- Pots
- Cabbage
- Ladder
- Large bag of chips
- Feather boa
- Onion
- Tree
- Magnifying glass
- Skull
- Light bulb

Note: the onion, tree, magnifying glass, skull and light bulb should look like props and not the actual items, they should be larger than life size.

WRITER and ADVISOR are seated behind a desk, both engrossed with what is written on a laptop before them and though they make occasional slight movements, they are otherwise separate from all other action. The LAYERS enter one by one with their first line and take up positions on and around the boxes.

LAYER 1: (enters UR) Presenting Layers.

LAYER 2: (enters UR) Layers?

LAYER 3: (enters UR) Layers!

LAYER 1, 2, & 3: Layers.

LAYER 1: Over. (stands on box)

LAYER 2: Under. (kneels before box)

LAYER 3: In-between... (slides between LAYER 1 and LAYER 2)

LAYER 1: Tiers. (moves DL)

LAYER 2: Levels. (moves DR)

LAYER 3: Strata. (moves C)

LAYER 1: Layers of clothing to keep you warm on blustery winter days.

LAYER 2: Layers on a wedding cake to signify true love.

LAYER 1: Layers of gift wrap in a pass-the-parcel game.

LAYER 2: Layers and layers of roast beef...

LAYER 1: and ham...

LAYER 2: and cheddar...

LAYER 1: and lettuce...

LAYER 2: and mayo...

LAYER 1: all on a submarine sandwich.

LAYER 3: Layers of sedimentary rock hiding eons of historical data, lost civilizations, fossils of species never known to mankind.

LAYER 1: Layers of existence.

LAYER 2: Of life.

LAYER 3: Of stories.

LAYER 1: Shhh, they're coming.

LAYERS retreat UR to wooden boxes. CONSCIENCE enters DR appearing nervous, obviously looking for somebody.

CONSCIENCE: Robin, Robin... ohhh... where is he?

ROBIN enters DR. Surprised to see CONSCIENCE, he makes an awkward attempt to be suave.

ROBIN: Why, hello there.

CONSCIENCE: *(relieved but with a sense of urgency, pulls ROBIN by the arm away from anyone who may overhear)* Oh good, there you are, I need to talk to you. *(looking around to avoid being heard)*

ROBIN: *(surprised)* I'm sorry, do I know you? I don't recall seeing you at rehearsal before. *(sizes up CONSCIENCE with interest)*

CONSCIENCE: Ummm... How can I put this, I'm uhhh... I'm a part of you.

ROBIN: Hmm... You don't seem to be a part of me but, I think we can fix that.

CONSCIENCE: I'm your conscience, dummy.

ROBIN: My what?

CONSCIENCE: Your conscience. I'm your good side, your common sense and your desire to do right. And I need to warn you about a decision you're going to make.

ROBIN: Wait a minute, my conscience? But aren't you supposed to look like me and be really small and sit on my shoulder and argue with a little devil that sits on my other shoulder?

CONSCIENCE: That's only in cartoons. I don't look like you because I am not you, I'm just one of your layers?

The LAYERS give CONSCIENCE, who is noticeably skeptical, a thumbs up.

ROBIN: Oh, OK. So, what's this decision I'm going to make?

CONSCIENCE: Soon some friends of yours are going to have a pot party.

ROBIN: (*emphatically*) A pot party! Well I won't have anything to do with that, smoking pot is illegal... in Canada (*substitute appropriate country*)... unless of course you're really sick and I feel fine.

CONSCIENCE: Oh good.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: (*enters DL*) And just what is going on here?

CONSCIENCE: (*attempting to sound innocent*) Oh nothing.

ROBIN: My conscience was just warning me about a pot party that I am not going to go to.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Oh was she. And since when do you make such decisions without consulting all your faculties, ergo, why was I not asked to weigh in on this debate?

CONSCIENCE: It's not a debate really.

ROBIN: That's right. My mind is made up.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Or is it?

ROBIN: And just who are you?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Why I'm part of you, of course.

ROBIN: Like her?

CONSCIENCE: The decision has been made.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Oh no, I'm not like her. I'm your wild side. I'm your untethered teenaged angst, your lust for rebellion and I'm here to tell you that if you do attend this cordial social gathering...

CONSCIENCE: ...hehem... pot party.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Err... pot party... you are going to hook up with one, Mona Sampson.

ROBIN: (*with obvious excitement*) Mona Sampson! The hot girl from my Chemistry class that I've secretly adored for the past three semesters but have been too shy to ask out?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: That's right. She is going to be there and even though she's not into pot either, because that's illegal... in Canada...

ROBIN: (*simultaneous*)...in Canada. (*they laugh*)

CONSCIENCE: Hehem... (*ROBIN becomes serious again*)

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: (*continuing*) ...she is committed to spending time with her friends. Besides there's nothing wrong with being around people who do pot, just as long as you don't do it yourself, in fact, you'll be a role model for all those potheads to follow.

ROBIN: So... uhh... by "hook-up," what are we talking about here... all the way?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Whoaaa... hold on tiger, keep it in your pants.

CONSCIENCE: (*shocked*) Yes, let's just stick around first base for now.

ROBIN: That's good, that's good... first base is good. I respect women.

The LAYERS giggle.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: So then, I'm to assume you'll be attending this little soiree... Hmmm...?

ROBIN: (*tentatively*) Well, I guess there's no harm in being around pot if... if I'm not using it.

CONSCIENCE: Don't you see what she's doing? She's manipulating you into doing the wrong thing. That's what she does.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Shhh!

CONSCIENCE: Why don't you just ask Mona to hang out after school instead of going to the pot party?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Uuh uuh, no way, it doesn't work like that Goody-two-shoes. It's not a moral dilemma if he's got a way out, you know the rules.

ROBIN: (*walking downstage, speaking to audience*) Oh I'm so confused.

CONSCIENCE: (*aside*) Goody-two-shoes?

ROBIN: I don't want to be around drugs but I sure would like to be around Mona Sampson.

CONSCIENCE: ...who says goody-two-shoes anymore?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: (*as ROBIN looks back at her*) Go to the party, hook up with Mona Sampson.

CONSCIENCE: (*as ROBIN looks back at her*) No no, don't go to the pot party, drugs are bad!

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: (*pulls ROBIN to her side*) This could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

CONSCIENCE: (*pulls ROBIN back to her side*) You'll get opportunities to hook up with Mona. You just have to make them.

ROBIN looks back at ANTI-CONSCIENCE once more.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: (*making curvy lines with her hands to imply a female body*) Hey? Huh?

CONSCIENCE tries to stop ANTI-CONSCIENCE's hands and they wrestle offstage.

CONSCIENCE: (*as they fight*) Stop that.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Let go of me.

CONSCIENCE: Then stop making curvy lines with your hands.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: Make me.

CONSCIENCE: I'm trying.

CONSCIENCE and ANTI-CONSCIENCE exit DR.

ROBIN: (*lamenting with a sigh*) Wow, moral dilemmas sure can be complicated.

LAYER 1: They do have many layers.

The LAYERS surround ROBIN.

ROBIN: Part of me really wants to go to that party but part of me really doesn't.

LAYER 2: Life comes in layers.

ROBIN: It's like, I'm two different people inside.

LAYER 3: Layer over layer...

LAYERS 1, 2 & 3: (*chanting*) ...upon layer, over layer, upon layer, over layer, upon layer...

KNOWLEDGE and QUOTE enter UL. QUOTE directs KNOWLEDGE as to where to stand and obviously controls his movements. KNOWLEDGE looks annoyed. QUOTE positions herself on the balcony. KNOWLEDGE selects props attached to sticks related to QUOTE's lines (under QUOTE's direction) from a box by the ladder and holds them up for QUOTE to present. The first prop he selects is a large onion.

KNOWLEDGE: Oh that's just because you're one of those multi-dimensional characters.

ROBIN: (*slightly startled*) What! I am?

KNOWLEDGE: Why of course you are. You have a bunch of layers.

ROBIN: I do?

KNOWLEDGE: Why yes. You are a deep, thoughtful individual. You contemplate life. That's why you have a conscience and an... (*unsure about name*) anti-conscience.

QUOTE: "Life is like an onion; you peel it off one layer at a time, and sometimes you weep." Carl Sandburg said that.

KNOWLEDGE: (*nagging viciously, quite unlike the tone he takes with ROBIN*) Uhh... Can't you just stay quiet for once? You're giving me a major headache.

QUOTE: "The great art of life is sensation, to feel that we exist, even in pain." Lord Byron said that.

KNOWLEDGE: Uhh... whatever.

ROBIN: I'm an onion?

KNOWLEDGE: You're not an onion.

ROBIN: But she said...

KNOWLEDGE: You're not an onion. Don't mind her, she just says stuff. (*replacing onion in prop box*)

ROBIN: You know, you guys are right. I am a deep, thoughtful individual. I contemplate life. Now I'm going to go to that pot party to contemplate Mona Sampson.

The lights immediately go down with flashing reds and blues. Loud rock music plays. ART and CRAFTY enter DR carrying pots, with pots on their heads, and pots hanging from their clothes. They use wooden spoons to mime sipping from a pot which they pass back and forth to each other occasionally coughing to represent that they are "smoking pot." CRAFTY carries a large bag of chips. ART and CRAFTY dance to the music. The LAYERS, KNOWLEDGE and QUOTE dance and mime a party scene. ROBIN looks out of place.

ART: Wow man, this pot party rocks. I'm so high that... uh... that... hey what happened to the chips?

CRAFTY: (*hiding chips in one of her many pots*) Yeah me too, man, I'm so high that uh... I'm not afraid of heights anymore. (*stands on couch*)

ART: I hear ya man.

ROBIN: (*awkwardly*) Hey guys how's it going?

ART: Dude look, it's Robin.

CRAFTY: Robin?

ART: You know, Robin. He's that multi-dimensional character with all the layers.

CRAFTY: Wow, this must be some high falootin' pot party.

ART: Here Robin, have some pot. (*offers a pot to ROBIN*)

ROBIN: Uh, no thanks, I'm not really into pot.

CRAFTY: Sure you are, you're here aren't you. (*they continue to push the pot up to ROBIN's face, with a lack of coordination*)

ROBIN: No thanks, really.

ART: Come on man, chillax.

CRAFTY: It's just a little pot, man.

ROBIN: (*while attempting to evade ART and CRAFTY, who try to corner him, offering a pot or spoon to his face*) No, I really mustn't... My conscience insists that... You know that's illegal in Canada and it's not good for your health... unless, of course, you're sick... and I feel... (*ART directs ROBIN toward the couch. CRAFTY stands on the couch and places a large pot over ROBIN's head from behind. ROBIN now acts as though he is high, as well, he is not recognizable to MONA, who enters DR and approaches with the LAYERS.*) Whooa... I feel fineeeeeee...

ART: There you go man. How's that?

CRAFTY: Maybe now you won't be so uptight.

ROBIN: Uhhh... I'm kinda lightheaded. (*giggling*) Hey, how about some of those chips... man.

ART: Look everyone, here comes Mona Sampson.

The LAYERS giggle and motion MONA to step forward to join ROBIN, ART and CRAFTY.

ROBIN: (*concerned that MONA should not see him while he is high*) Mona Sampson!

CRAFTY: You mean the hot girl from Robin's Chemistry class that he's secretly adored for the last three semesters but has been too shy to ask out?

ART: That's her.

ROBIN: Oh no, I can't let her see me like this.

MONA: Hi everybody, this sure is a cool party. I'm having a great time, even though I don't share the same social problems that have driven all of you to using pot, especially not like that guy right there. (*gestures toward ROBIN*)

ART: Hi Mona, would you care to try a little pot? (*presents a tiny pot to MONA*)

MONA: No thanks, I'm very firm in my convictions.

ART & CRAFTY: That's cool. That's cool.

MONA: When I make a decision, I stick to it. I'm not like those wishy-washy multi-dimensional characters that can never make up their minds. You know, the kind that say they won't do pot but do it anyway.

CRAFTY: Yeah, I hate those guys.

ART: Me too.

MONA: (*concerned*) So who is your poor friend?

ROBIN: (*with pot on head*) Hi Mona, it's me, Robin. (*Removes the pot from his head. The LAYERS, KNOWLEDGE, QUOTE, ART and CRAFTY all gasp.*) You know, the guy from your chemistry class that has secretly adored you for the last three semesters...

MONA: ...but has been too shy to ask me out?

ROBIN: Yeah, that guy.

MONA: (*awkwardly, obviously hurt, as ROBIN sets his pot on the couch*) Oh uh... hi, I was hoping you'd be here, I thought that maybe, you know, we could, hook up... just first base of course.

ROBIN: Of course.

MONA: But I see you're into other things... I should go.

ROBIN: *(taking her hand as she attempts to pass by toward the audience DR)* No, stay, I'd totally love to hook up with you.

MONA: *(taking her hand back as she fights overly melodramatic tears)* No, I don't think that's a good idea, I think we are just too different for each other. *(MONA exits into audience, crying, takes a seat, and complains angrily with ad-libbed comments such as, "out of my way" and/or "shove over")* Stupid multi-dimensional characters. Say they won't do pot. *(mocking ROBIN's voice)* I'll be a role model. That son-of-a... I never wanted to be in this dumb play anyway. The stupid script sucks.

CONSCIENCE and ANTI-CONSCIENCE enter DR and casually cross to DL.

ROBIN: *(sitting on couch)* Great, I've just lost the girl of my dreams. I thought my wild side said that we were going to hook up.

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: *(laughing)* Well now, lover boy, that was before you did a load of pot.

CONSCIENCE: *(knowingly, to ANTI-CONSCIENCE)* Do you ever work on the up and up?

ANTI-CONSCIENCE: *(to CONSCIENCE, smiling)* Hell no. Come on, I'll buy you a drink.

CONSCIENCE and ANTI-CONSCIENCE exit DL. KNOWLEDGE raises a magnifying glass with a large eye in the middle from the prop box.

QUOTE: "There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact." Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said that.

KNOWLEDGE: Must you just humiliate me at every single party we go to?

KNOWLEDGE and QUOTE exit UL. ART and CRAFTY join ROBIN on the couch.

ART: Hey man, don't take it so hard.

CRAFTY: Yeah, we all have problems.

ART: Tons of problems.

CRAFTY: Just take my bud, Art, here for instance, her ol' man, is a psycho maniac.

ART: Totally frickin'nuts.

CRAFTY: He used to bring down crap on his whole family every single day until one day, he just took off.

ART: Hard times man. Hard times.

CRAFTY: Now she don't even know where he is but he still calls, like out of the blue, just to curse 'em all down til he starts sobbin' and bawlin' into the phone.

ART: Thing to do, is just hang up right away.

CRAFTY: And that ain't easy to do, man, I tell ya.

ART: Not to your own father.

CRAFTY: Nope. But at least he's gone.

ART: Yeah, he's gone, but that ain't like Crafty's problems. They never go away. You know she gets picked on every day at school.

CRAFTY: The bullies are merciless.

ART: They leave notes on her locker.

CRAFTY: Real threatening notes.

ART: And they steal her lunch.

CRAFTY: Look at me, I'm malnourished.

ART: And when she goes home, they bully her in cyberspace.

CRAFTY: I ain't got nowhere to hide.

ROBIN: Wow. That's rough. I guess you girls like pot so much because it helps ease your pain.

PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE and SEDRICK enter from audience and approach SL. PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE leads and is noticeably exasperated with SEDRICK's lack of skill and experience. SEDRICK cannot see what PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE is seeing and walks as though she is completely blinded. She is frightened and confused and shouts as if PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE were very far away. ART, CRAFTY, ROBIN and the LAYERS do not acknowledge their presence and continue their dialogue as if uninterrupted.

ROBIN: But you have to understand, it's a destructive element in your lives and it won't solve problems. It just makes you forget them for a while.

ART: Well, that can't be bad.

LIVINGSTONE: (*with excitement*) Okay Sedrick, it's just a little further.

CRAFTY: Yeah, I like forgetting about my problems.

SEDRICK: (*quite nervously*) I'm coming, Professor Livingstone.

ROBIN: But it's not helping you.

LIVINGSTONE: Focus Sedrick.

SEDRICK: I'm losing you, Professor...

CRAFTY: Ha! Who needs help?

SEDRICK: ...I'm blurring.

LIVINGSTONE: (*curtly*) Sedrick, you are to become an advanced dimensionality anthropologist...

ROBIN: You two need help...

LIVINGSTONE: ...so please, focus! We are almost there.

ROBIN: ...to come to terms with your feelings.

SEDRICK: I... I can't do it Professor... I'm...

ART: Ha! Our feelings.

SEDRICK: I'm just an apprentice.

ART: (*mockingly*) Well, I just feel so torn up inside.

LIVINGSTONE: You can and you will, Sedrick.

CRAFTY: (*playing along with ART in mocking ROBIN*) I feel a void, deep within every fibre of my being.

SEDRICK: I... I can't.

ART: When I look in the mirror, I don't recognize who I see anymore.

SEDRICK begins to hyperventilate as they near SL.

LIVINGSTONE: Settle down Sedrick, you've done it, we have arrived.

CRAFTY: I'm just an empty shell of my former self.

SEDRICK: (*calming a little*) But... but I don't see it Professor Livingstone, everything is blurred.

ART: (*becoming aggressive*) Sometimes... sometimes I feel so angry... I just wanna punch stuff. (*stands and throws a shadow punch*)

LIVINGSTONE: It will be at first, Sedrick.

CRAFTY: (*stands to join in*) Yeah, and kick it too.

ART and CRAFTY shadow box and kick, grunting occasionally. PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE and SEDRICK step onstage.

LIVINGSTONE: You have simultaneously transcended countless planes of existence. You've warped all laws of time, space and gravity.

ROBIN: Come on girls, calm down. (*places his hand on CRAFTY to settle her*)

CRAFTY: Don't touch me!

ROBIN and ART are startled.

LIVINGSTONE: In an instant you have traversed infinite layers of historic and futuristic periods.

SEDRICK: I don't think I'm cut out for this, Professor Livingstone.

CRAFTY: (*sitting, with seriousness*) Y'know, it's like I'm all alone, like I have no one.

LIVINGSTONE: Look around you, Sedrick. What do you see?

ROBIN: You have friends.

ART: Ha! Friends!

SEDRICK: I... I don't see anything Pro... wait... yes...

ART: They're not friends...

SEDRICK: Yes, I see... I see that guy (*points to someone in the audience*)

ART: They're just...

SEDRICK: ...and I see her and another one, and there and...

ART: Drug buddies. (*looks crudely at CRAFTY, who gasps and is obviously angered*)

SEDRICK: (*confused*) They're all sitting in the dark, except these people here. (*indicates ART, CRAFTY and ROBIN*)

CRAFTY: (*offended*) Drug buddies!

SEDRICK: They're sitting in the light on this raised platform. (*the stage*)

ART: Yeah, drug buddies, they just want you for your pot.

SEDRICK: What is it, Professor Livingstone? What does it all mean?

ART: (*eyeing CRAFTY suspiciously, taking chips from her pot*) And they steal all your chips.

LIVINGSTONE: We aren't sure Sedrick, but we believe this platform is called a stage.

CRAFTY: Pot bum. (*pushes ART*)

LIVINGSTONE: ...and here we have some ancient form...

ART: Chip thief. (*pushes CRAFTY back, they push and shove*)

LIVINGSTONE: ...an ancient form of dramatic presentation.

SEDRICK: A what?

ROBIN: Girls, girls, calm down. You're friends... and you need each other... not pot. (*they stop fighting and turn back to back*)

LIVINGSTONE: Thousands of years ago Sedrick, before the advent of in-mind entertainment...

CRAFTY: Don't tell us what we need.

ART: Yeah.

LIVINGSTONE: People went to large rooms called theatres...

ART: Just butt out of our business?

LIVINGSTONE: ...and they watched performers on wooden boxes... (*if not using "boxes" substitute another prop*)

CRAFTY: Take a hike Robin.

LIVINGSTONE: And the audience was present in the very same room.

SEDRICK: That sounds boring, Professor.

CRAFTY: 'Cause you don't know nothing about us.

LIVINGSTONE: (*with excitement*) Oh but on the contrary, Sedrick.

SEDRICK: But it isn't interactive.

ART: Yeah, save your breath.

LIVINGSTONE: Oh but it was, Sedrick.

ART: 'Cause we're hopeless.

LIVINGSTONE: You see the theatre is layered, much like a cabbage.
*(produces a cabbage - in the original production, the LAYERS
retrieved a cabbage from one of the wooden boxes and placed it into
PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE's outstretched hand)*

SEDRICK: *(incredulously)* Really?

CRAFTY: Ain't no fixing us.

LIVINGSTONE: It begins as a seed but in time evolves into a rather
complex, multi-faceted assessment of re-construed perceptual
realization.

ROBIN: But you can't give in like that.

ART: Geeze, there he goes again.

LIVINGSTONE: And as you peel away the coatings... you can throw
them at people. *(throws a piece of cabbage at an audience member,
then another)*

CRAFTY: You know what, Robin?

LIVINGSTONE: Do you follow, Sedrick?

SEDRICK: Not quite, Professor.

CRAFTY: You know what your problem is?

LIVINGSTONE: In time, Sedrick, you will in time.

CRAFTY: You think you're better than all the other characters.

LIVINGSTONE: You see, I may not know a lot about ancient theatre...

CRAFTY: Just because you're all multi-dimensional.

LIVINGSTONE: ...but I'm certain that young thespian is performing the
infamous *Oedipus Rex*. *(places his hand on ART's shoulder)*

SEDRICK: Who was that, Professor?

ROBIN: Look, maybe I can't help, but there is help out there.

CRAFTY: Yeah right.

LIVINGSTONE: Why the most notorious outlaw in all the Wild West;
she killed her own father just so she could marry her mother.

SEDRICK: That is disgusting.

ART: Agghhh... I can't take it anymore... I'm sick of it all. I swear some days I could just do away with the ol' man and take my mother away from all his crap... and then I'd gouge my own eyes out for being so blind. (*drops to knees with her hands over her eyes, sobbing, CRAFTY comforts her*)

LIVINGSTONE: (*smugly*) Hmmm?

SEDRICK: You are so wise, Professor Livingstone.

CRAFTY: Easy Art.

LIVINGSTONE: (*flattered*) Yes, well, I'm no expert, really... Lord Master Hamdenburg will explain more.

SEDRICK: Who?

ROBIN: It can't be that bad?

LIVINGSTONE: Lord Master Fronz Hamdenburg. She's the world's leading advanced dimensionality anthropologist on ancient theatre.

KNOWLEDGE and QUOTE enter UL. KNOWLEDGE carries a small tree. QUOTE assumes position on ladder.

ART: Oh give it a rest, Robin.

KNOWLEDGE: (*exasperated*) If you think I'm just going to keep following you around?

LIVINGSTONE: She just left Oxford about five thousand years ago and should be here any...

KNOWLEDGE: You can just think again.

LIVINGSTONE: ...ah here she is now.

FRONZ: (*enters*) Doctor Livingstone, I presume. (*shaking hands*)

QUOTE: (*peering through the tree held by KNOWLEDGE*) Henry Morton Stanley said that.

KNOWLEDGE: Alright, there, you happy? Now, come on, off the stage! (*QUOTE shakes her head and refuses to leave*) Ugghh. (*walks toward wing and throws tree off left and returns to ladder*) Fine!

ROBIN: You know what you two need, you need an intervention.

CRAFTY chuckles.

LIVINGSTONE: It is good to finally meet you Lord Master.

FRONZ: Yes, yes... I know.

CRAFTY: We don't need anybody's... (*air quotes*) intervention.

SEDRICK: I've heard so much about you, Lord Master Hamdenburg.
(*puts his hand out to shake but FRONZ declines*)

FRONZ: And you are?

SEDRICK: Sedrick, Lord Master.

FRONZ: (*coldly*) Really Livingstone, an apprentice?

LIVINGSTONE: Ummm... my apologies Fronz. Uhh... Academy regulations, I'm afraid. (*SEDRICK looks offended*)

FRONZ: (*reluctantly*) Very well, good to meet you. Now, let's have a look at what you've un-universed?

ROBIN: Please just let me help you.

ART: How can you help?

LIVINGSTONE: This way, Lord Master. (*moves R toward ART, CRAFTY and ROBIN*)

ART: Your ol' man ain't a psycho maniac like mine.

LIVINGSTONE: It's the great play *Oedipus Rex* by Oscar Wilde.

CRAFTY: And nobody picks on you?

FRONZ: (*surveys the actors*) Hmm... yes... interesting, interesting indeed...

SEDRICK: What is it, Lord Master?

CRAFTY: You don't know what it's like to lie in bed all day thinking that there ain't no one in the whole world that would miss you if you weren't here anymore.

ROBIN: What! No! Don't say that.

ART: (*solemnly*) Crafty, man, that's heavy friend!

FRONZ: Well, you are correct in your initial observations.

CRAFTY: Yeah. Well it's true.

KNOWLEDGE: Nooo... not again.

QUOTE directs KNOWLEDGE to take the skull from the prop box.

FRONZ: It is an ancient theatrical event...

LIVINGSTONE: Hmhmmm... (*nods knowingly to SEDRICK*)

ROBIN: You can't think that way.

FRONZ: ...perhaps a grammar school theatre festival entry... (*alter this line to suit your circumstance*)

CRAFTY: Don't go telling me what to think.

FRONZ: ...early 21st century...

CRAFTY: If I want to kill myself then that's up to me.

FRONZ: ...but it is not *Oedipus Rex*.

LIVINGSTONE: Oh?

KNOWLEDGE: Come on then, get on with it.

QUOTE: (*beaming*) Hehemmm... "To be"

FRONZ: No this performance...

QUOTE: "or not to be..."

FRONZ: ...is by the greatest playwright of all time.

QUOTE: "That is the question."

FRONZ: ...Tennessee Williams.

QUOTE: William Shakespeare.

FRONZ: Yes, Tennessee Williams Shakespeare. That was his full name. (*excitedly pointing to ROBIN, ART and CRAFTY*) And this actor is portraying the despondent Henry Higgins.

ART: Come on man, let's split. Robin's just bringing us down.

FRONZ: And here is Willie Loman and she is playing Blanch Dubois.

CRAFTY: Yeah, let's go.

LIVINGSTONE: Hmmp... I would have figured all that out eventually.

SEDRICK: You know so much, Lord Master, if only someday I may be so learned as you.

FRONZ: (*condescendingly*) Yes, well... I doubt that will ever happen, Sedrick. Now, Livingstone, let us chat about how we are going to present this discovery to the academic community. Shall we?

PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE and FRONZ step aside L and mime discussion. SEDRICK sits beside ROBIN on the couch. SEDRICK speaks directly to ROBIN, who, of course, does not acknowledge her but continues to speak as though talking to himself.

ROBIN: (*sighs, to himself*) I just can't do anything right.

SEDRICK: (*sighs, speaking directly to ROBIN as though he can hear her*) I too am beginning to sense some personal inadequacies.

ROBIN: I'm even a failure at being messed up.

SEDRICK: I still can't traverse planes of existence without blurring.

ROBIN: I don't know what I was thinking coming here.

SEDRICK: I swear I must have left my head back in the 25th century.

ROBIN: A girl like Mona Sampson would never go out with me.

SEDRICK: I'll never be an advanced dimensionality anthropologist.

They sigh together. There is an extended pause where no one on stage speaks and there is very little movement, giving the audience the impression that something is wrong. The actors (except for WRITER and ADVISOR) steal nervous glances at each other.

ADVISOR: So, it just stops there.

WRITER: Yeah that's as far as I got. I think I've got writer's block or something.

ADVISOR: Okay... well... what happens next?

WRITER: That's just it, I don't know. I'm stuck.

ADVISOR: Okay. Well, I get it. I mean, it's a play within a play. It's layered. Very clever but where is the story headed?

WRITER: Well, I was thinking Hamdenburg and Livingstone could try to turn the site into a freak show sort of thing, maybe charge dimensionality tourists to see it.

ADVISOR: (*sipping coffee*) Mmm... yeah... that could work. And maybe Sedrick is opposed to that, taking the moral high ground over the

misuse of an anthropological find. (*SEDRICK stands looking proud and poised for adversity*)

WRITER: Our protagonist... resisting corruption, fighting for what's right... (*types wildly*)

ADVISOR: Yeah, that's it. Save the trees and all that.

FRONZ and LIVINGSTONE now take on less authoritative personas. They giggle like schoolchildren at the thoughts of their plan.

FRONZ: Sedrick, we've made a decision.

LIVINGSTONE: You're going to love this.

FRONZ: We've decided to cordon off this site and charge people to come view this ancient theatre.

LIVINGSTONE: We're going to be rich and famous, Sedrick. We'll be the envy of the academic world.

FRONZ: Just think, dimensionality travelers will come from all over to view these ancient ruins.

LIVINGSTONE: Like Stonehenge! Or the pyramids!

FRONZ: We could tie that in, we could make Pyramid hats and sell them at a 2000% markup.

LIVINGSTONE: Think of the money.

FRONZ: The fame.

SEDRICK: Wait! Have you two lost your minds? You can't turn this into some kind of freak show. This is a momentous anthropological discovery that will substantially impact our understanding of ancient human culture. It needs to be studied... not exploited.

LIVINGSTONE: Nonsense Sedrick, you're missing the big picture.

FRONZ: Let's have her killed.

SEDRICK: What!

ADVISOR: Whoa, hold on cowboy. Moving things along kind of quick aren't you?

SEDRICK, FRONZ and PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE freeze.

WRITER: You think?

ADVISOR: Yeah.

WRITER: Don't like the murder idea?

ADVISOR: No no, it's not that. I love it. Every good play needs a little death, but why not have Livingstone and Hamdenburg plot it out first, you know, build some suspense.

WRITER: OK, just let me delete that last bit... oops... too far... let me see... (*reading*) substantially impact our under...

SEDRICK, FRONZ and PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE unfreeze and pick up the scene again.

SEDRICK: (*picking up just as WRITER leaves off*) ...standing of ancient human culture. It needs to be carefully studied... not exploited.

LIVINGSTONE: Nonsense Sedrick, you're missing the big picture.

FRONZ: Livingstone, a word, if you will... in private...

PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE and FRONZ step aside and mime conversation including some hand gestures indicating various means of death.

SEDRICK: I cannot believe those fools would dare compromise the integrity of what could very well be the most significant anthropological discovery of our time. (*to ROBIN*) Wouldn't you agree? Huh? Hello? (*ROBIN is frozen, he has not moved since his last line. SEDRICK panics.*) Professor... Professor Livingstone, Lord Master, come quickly, quickly, it appears to be frozen.

LIVINGSTONE: (*racing to the couch with FRONZ*) What!

FRONZ: Frozen?

LIVINGSTONE: What do you mean, frozen?

SEDRICK: It's not talking or moving.

LIVINGSTONE: Maybe the reception is off. Perhaps a cloud has passed in front of the satellite.

SEDRICK: It's not an image Professor, the reception cannot be off.

FRONZ: Not good, Livingstone. Not good.

LIVINGSTONE: I'm sure we can get it going again. (*looks carefully at ROBIN to determine the problem*)

FRONZ: Nobody is going to pay to see a play that does not play.

LIVINGSTONE: Maybe if we jiggle it a little. (*shakes ROBIN gently*)

SEDRICK: That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard.

LIVINGSTONE: Who are you calling stupid, apprentice? (*stops jiggling and threatens SEDRICK*)

FRONZ: Keep jiggling, Livingstone.

PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE shakes ROBIN even more vigorously.

SEDRICK: It needs to be studied, not jiggled. You mustn't interfere with it in its natural habitat. (*Attempts to physically stop PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE. They move L toward WRITER as they struggle.*)

FRONZ: Keep jiggling, Livingstone. Jiggle. The longer it freezes the harder it will be to restart.

LIVINGSTONE: I'm trying but this imbecile keeps interfering.

FRONZ: Let's have her killed. (*pulls a knife from her boot*)

ADVISOR: No, no, no! Not a knife. (*PROFESSOR LIVINGSTONE, FRONZ and SEDRICK freeze again*) We need something more... futuristic.

WRITER: A ray gun?

WRITER produces a ray gun from the desk. ADVISOR replaces the dagger with the ray gun.

ADVISOR: Yeah. Yeah, a ray gun... cool.

FRONZ: Take this apprentice. (*shoots SEDRICK with ray gun*)

LIVINGSTONE: Nice shot Fronz. (*they high five or slap hands*)

SEDRICK: (*falls over desk, grabs WRITER by the shirt and speaks directly to him as she dies*) Why? Why did you do this to me?

SEDRICK dies. She stays on the floor in front of the desk, not moving much but still not looking terribly dead.

ADVISOR: Wait... so now Sedrick is talking to you? She's stepping outside of the play within a play to talk to the playwright? What is with that?

WRITER: I uhhh... I don't know really, it just sort of happened and I kind of went with it.

ADVISOR: Well it doesn't make any sense, now does it?

WRITER: I was experimenting with ideas... to see if something developed.

ADVISOR: Well then, seeing as we're experimenting, why don't we just break the fourth wall?

WRITER: Didn't we do that with the cabbage?

ADVISOR: OK. (*sarcastically*) Then let's take it a step further. How 'bout some audience participation?

WRITER: You know, that's not a bad idea. (*WRITER types with more conviction while ADVISOR steps toward the audience*)

ADVISOR: (*surprised with himself*) Yeah, it's not, is it? Let's do it.

WRITER: Yeah.

ADVISOR: House lights please. (*House lights come up. ADVISOR ad-libs looking for a volunteer. He points to MONA, who now assumes the role of PLANT.*) You there, yeah you.

PLANT: Me?

ADVISOR: Yeah you, come up here.

PLANT: Uhh... why?

ADVISOR: You're going to be our audience participant.

PLANT: Oh no... I don't know... I don't think so...

ADVISOR: Come, come.

PLANT: I wasn't even paying attention.

ADVISOR: Doesn't matter, now get up here.

PLANT: (*stands and makes her way to stage*) But... OK... alright, I guess... but don't expect much.

ADVISOR: Perfect, we won't. (*to WRITER*) Now what are we going to get her to do?

WRITER: Uhh... She could come to Sedrick's rescue.

ADVISOR: Nooo, too predictable, besides she looks quite dead.

SEDRICK, lying on the floor, looks up briefly, appears relaxed but not dead.

WRITER: We could send her to the pot party.



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