

REMY

(muffled by ice cream)

Whad, I'm dust eading id.

(Some ice cream spills out of REMY's mouth onto the floor. NIA yells, gets a sponge and wipes the floor, then tries to wipe REMY's chin.)

REMY

("ah" noise)

Don't wipe my face with a dirty sponge! That's nasty!

(THEY have a flirty-fight about it. REMY kisses NIA, who pulls away and freezes.)

NIA

What -- the fuck, was that?

REMY

Oh ... well I was just feeling it, my bad.

NIA

Your bad?

(NIA gets a paper towel for herself and REMY.)

REMY

Hey can I get that 'nother -- I mean: may I please have another tiny little ice cream sandwich please? ... I'll eat it like, regular.

(NIA gets REMY another ice cream sandwich and goes to lie down on the couch with her forearm on her forehead, SHE exhales big. REMY sits in the chair.)

REMY

... So like, when's the last time you got kissed?

NIA

Remy, Jesus. I'm assigned to be --

REMY

A mentor -- mentorship, yeah, I know, you're good at it,  
and it's fine, but like. I don't even know if I need a  
mentor, you know?

NIA

(kind of laughs)

No, I really don't know. ... Remy, it's late, maybe you --

**(10. Super Spaceboy.)**

REMY

HEY, YOU WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING STUPID?

NIA

WHAT'S STUPID?

REMY

NOW I AIN'T EVEN TOLD DR. HOLLANDER THIS,  
BUT WHEN I WAS A KID, I USE TO MAKE BELIEVE,  
IT'S STUPID BUT  
I USED TO PRETEND THAT I'D BEEN KIDNAPPED.

NIA

KIDNAPPED?

REMY

YEAH, LIKE, KIDNAPPED BY ALIENS,  
AND THEY WERE DOING THEIR EXPERIMENTS ON ME,  
AND I THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE TRANSFORMING ME,  
I THOUGHT THEY WERE MAKING ME SOMETHING SPECIAL,  
I THOUGHT  
I'M A SUPER SPACEBOY NOW.  
YEAH I'M A SUPER SPACEBOY  
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.  
YEAH.

NIA

YEAH?

REMY

YEAH.

NIA/REMY

YEAH.

REMY

LA DA DA DA.

NIA

Remy, that's not stupid.

REMY

Yeah I know it's not "stupid", but like it was like -- it was in my head. I was just making it up, you know?

NIA

Yeah, I think so. But, a lot of kids make stuff up like that.

REMY

BUT NOW I KNOW WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON.

NIA

WHAT WAS REALLY GOING ON?

REMY

I WAS MAKING IT UP TO MAKE SENSE OF NO SENSE.  
I WAS MAKING IT CRAZY TO MAKE IT NORMAL,  
LIKE I WAS MAKING UP ALIEN MAKE BELIEVE  
TO MAKE IT NORMAL.  
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

NIA

I THINK SO.

REMY

BUT I AIN'T GONNA DO THAT,  
NAH I AIN'T GONNA DO THAT, NOT ANYMORE.  
YEAH.

NIA

YEAH?

REMY/NIA

YEAH, YEAH.

REMY

NA NA NA NA.

YEAH NOW I KNOW BETTER.  
I'M GONNA LIVE MY LIFE NOW DOUBLY REAL.  
I AIN'T GONNA RETREAT INTO FANTASY.  
I AIN'T GONNA HOLD ON TO MAKE BELIEVE.  
I AIN'T GONNA DO MY CRAZY IN THE FAKE WORLD.  
I'M GONNA KEEP MY CRAZY IN THE REAL WORLD.

I'M GONNA KEEP MY CRAZY IN THE REAL WORLD.

(REMY picks up a family photo of  
NIA's.)

REMY  
THIS IS YOU AND DENISE?

(NIA gets up.)

AND HERE GOES YOUR MOM AND DAD?

NIA  
YEAH, JUST --

REMY  
YEAH?

NIA/REMY  
YEAH,

NIA  
YEAH, THAT'S US AS KIDS.

(NIA puts her hand on her head.)

REMY  
You all look happy.

NIA  
We were happy, a lot of the time.

(NIA takes the picture, looks at  
it a while, and puts it back.)

REMY  
... Hey so what happened with your mom?

NIA  
MY MOTHER I THINK SHE MARRIED MY DAD BECAUSE,  
BECAUSE SHE WANTED US TO HAVE A DAD AT ALL.  
BUT IT TURNED OUT THAT SHE DIDN'T REALLY LOVE HIM  
AND SHE GOT BORED AND SHE MESSED AROUND.

REMY  
SHE GOT BORED AND SHE MESSED AROUND?

NIA

YEAH ...

REMY

HOLY SHIT, MAN ...

NIA

AND SHE TOTALED HER CAR,  
I DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED,  
AND THE DOCTORS STARTED GIVING HER  
PILLS FOR THE PAIN.  
AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW  
FOR SURE WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.  
ALL I KNOW IS THAT SHE LEFT US  
WITHOUT EVEN SAYING GOODBYE ...

REMY

IS THAT WHY YOU DON'T LIKE DOING THINGS?

NIA

What?

REMY

SO, IS THAT WHY YOU DON'T LIKE BEING KISSED?

NIA

No, I --

REMY

IS THAT WHY YOU DON'T LIKE CUTTING LOOSE?  
IS THAT WHY YOU WANT TO BE A THERAPIST?

NIA

What?

REMY

IS THAT WHY YOU WANT TO BE A THERAPIST?  
LIKE DID YOU EVER WANT TO BE A DANCER,  
OR LIKE A VETERINARIAN,  
OR AN ATHLETE, OR AN ACTRESS,  
LIKE DID YOU EVER WANT TO BE SOMETHING ELSE  
BEFORE YOUR MOTHER LEFT YOU AND YOUR DADDY --

NIA

No!

REMY

Oh shit, are you crying? Man I was just asking, like, shit.

NIA

... Sometimes I just, I hate them so: much, you know?

REMY

Yeah ... but, like it would be better if you didn't, like you'd feel better about it. Just like, okay so --

NIA

Remy -- sometimes all you have to say is "that must be hard for you" that's all the shit you have to think to say.

REMY

Okay, well "that must have been hard for you." I mean it -- really, that must have been the worst ... but I mean, am I right? Like what if they like ... felt guilty and they thought they were doing the best thing for you. Or maybe they had like chemical imbalances you know? Like, people's heads get sick and you can't really blame them sometimes --

NIA

You can't treat all bad behavior like it's -- diseases. Some behavior is criminal, crime is a thing, Remy.

REMY

Yeah, I know but like --

NIA

No. No "buts", people have to be --

(fails at a few words)

some accountability. You can't explain everything, on mental illness.

REMY

Well, yeah: accountability too. But like you can't change other people right? You can only change yourself so why not take responsibility --

NIA

You're not a doctor Remy. You don't know everything yet.

REMY

You're not either. I mean I don't get you, you want to be a therapist or whatever, but like, how do you know that's what you even want to do? Like it seems like it just --

NIA

I have given everything to get where I am -- you don't tell me what I want, you don't --

REMY

I wasn't telling, just asking, jeez, why you so touchy?

NIA

I am not touchy!

REMY

Listen, I don't keep my shit like it's a police badge -- like double o-seven -- like I'm gonna be something because of it -- like it's a license to be all hung up -- like it's permission to be --

NIA

(pshaws, pokes, and pushes REMY)

Oh, oh -- yes you do: you use it as permission to fucking: get high, to do whatever you want, to fucking walk all over everyone, especially --

(REMY kisses NIA ... REMY then freezes and NIA steps out of the kiss. **11. A Healthy Adult Relationship.** During the song NIA may circle REMY, use him as a prop, dip back in a sec, etc.)

NIA

I'M MODELING A HEALTHY ADULT RELATIONSHIP.  
NOTHING SHADY'S GOING ON HERE,  
I AM COMPLETELY IN CONTROL.  
I'M THE PERFECT EXAMPLE  
OF A WELL-BALANCED INDIVIDUAL.  
NOTHING CRAZY'S BLEEDING THROUGH HERE,  
I'M STRONG AND CERTAIN IN MY ROLE.

AND THERE'S NOTHING THAT I AM FEELING NOW  
THAT'S ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.  
THERE'S NOTHING THAT I AM QUESTIONING NOW  
THAT'S ANYTHING I HAVEN'T QUESTIONED BEFORE.

STILL, COULD IT BE THAT THERE'S  
A KERNEL OF TRUTH TO WHAT HE SAYS?  
AM I MAYBE TOO ENTANGLED,  
TRAPPED IN A PRISON OF THE MIND?  
COULD IT BE  
THAT I'M LETTING MY WHOLE LIFE SLIP AWAY?  
DOOMED TO BE FOREVER HAUNTED  
BY A LIFE I NEVER FIND?

AND THERE ARE SO MANY TIMES I'M THINKING OF NOW,  
RIPE OPPORTUNITIES I REJECTED.  
I'VE NEVER GIVEN IN TO MY DEEPEST DESIRES,  
SO MANY DOTS THAT I'VE LEFT UNCONNECTED,  
STACKING MISS UPON MISS,  
HELL, IT'S ONLY A KISS ANYWAY, RIGHT?

COULD IT BE  
I'M FALLING IN LOVE WITH THIS LITTLE SHIT?  
HE'S SUCH A BABY SUCH A LITTLE PUNK,  
SUCH A CLUELESS LITTLE TROLL.  
STILL, WHAT'S THE HARM  
IN EXPLORING THIS JUST A LITTLE BIT? ...

NIA STOP,  
OR YOU'LL GET CARRIED AWAY BY THE UNDERTOW.  
THIS FICKLE FANCY, LIKE A FIREFLY,  
YOU'LL END UP DYING IN A JAR.  
NIA PLEASE,  
IF YOU DON'T KISS HIM BACK YOU'LL NEVER KNOW,  
SHUT UP NIA YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW,  
THIS ISN'T WHO YOU ARE.

STILL I DON'T WANT TO BE MYSELF ANYMORE,  
ALWAYS MODELING HEALTHY ADULT BEHAVIOR.  
CAN I FIND THIS NEW PERSON WHO I WANT TO BE?  
CAN I DO THIS MYSELF,  
OR WILL I NEED SOME SAVIOR TO HELP ME BEGIN?  
OR CAN THE WOMAN I'VE BEEN BE SET FREE,  
BY SIMPLY MODELING A FREER MODEL OF ME?

(NIA returns to the kiss, thinks  
twice, then pushes REMY away.)

NIA

Remy -- you have to not do that, ever again.

REMY

K ... but like, don't you --

NIA

Remy! ... You have to start thinking about what other  
people might be feeling like, what other people might --

REMY

Hey, that's actually, that's one of the things with the --  
like in the studies they found --



NIA

You have to be able to do it yourself, without drugs ...

(rubs head, drops her hand)

It's late, please go.

REMY

... Yeah... yeah, I better go.

NIA

Yeah.

(REMY readies to go. Opens the door, turns back.)

REMY

But, you know, it's like: you can't be juggling just like, perfectly balanced knives.

NIA

What are you talking --

REMY

Like sometimes you got to be juggling scrap metal, not fancy sharp knives.

NIA

Scrap metal.

REMY

Yeah, scrap metal -- that's what it's really like, 'telling ya, that's for real. I ain't been to college but I know that. Here.

(Remy takes out a rolled ziplock with several pills in it and puts it on the coffee table.)

NIA

Remy --

REMY

Look, you can toss these, or keep'm, or whatever. But -- listen, I'm in control, I know what I'm doing.

NIA

You don't have to prove that to me by --

REMY

I don't need'm ... and like if you want, try one, and if I was right, then give them back to me.

NIA

You know I can't give them back to you ...

REMY

... Well, I'm scheduled a bunch this week, so, I'll see ya.

NIA

Yeah.

REMY

... Just don't drink too much water if you take one, and don't mix, and like: it's helpful if you have someone around for the comedown, I could stop by like --

NIA

Bye Remy.

REMY

Yeah, Bye.

(REMY exits. NIA goes to the bag and examines it.)

(FADE OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 8 - The Swing Rope

SETTING: The swing rope area of the creek.

AT RISE: **12. Naked Eye.** NIA enters. ACTORS B, C, D, & E enter and act out memory and imagination scenes similar to those in previous creek scenes. NIA sometimes interacts with these scenes, fearlessly now, even comically. Towards the end, SHE high-fives JOGGER. She is probably high.

NIA

AM I GOING MAD, OR AM I IRONCLAD?  
CAN IT BE I THINK I WANNA GO SEE MY DAD?  
THIS IS THE BEST IDEA THAT YOU'VE EVER HAD, NIA.  
AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW ...

ROSES AND WINE, DEAD ON THE VINE,  
LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND ME AND TAKE BACK WHAT'S MINE.  
I'LL BE CHOREOGRAPHED KICKING LIKE A CHORUS LINE,  
IT'S TIME I TOLD HIM  
ALL I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY...

AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW,  
FLAMING LIKE A ROCKET IN THE SKY,  
AND IT'S COMING ON LIKE A CRYSTAL BALL,  
LIKE A NAKED EYE.

YEAH, TWISTING MY FATE,  
I'M GONNA STEEL IT STRAIGHT.  
LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND ME NOW, BUDDY JUST YOU WAIT!  
JESUS H. CHRIST,  
DID YOU GET THE LICENSE PLATE NUMBER?  
SHE WAS SPEEDING A SWIFT GETAWAY.

AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW,  
FLAMING LIKE A ROCKET IN THE SKY,  
AND IT'S COMING ON LIKE A CRYSTAL BALL,  
LIKE A NAKED EYE.

(NIA shows signs of fatigue.)

AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW,  
AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW,

IT'S TIME TO LET GO,  
IT'S TIME TO FIND A WAY TO SET IT ALL FREE:

(NIA gets a second wind. ACTORS  
B, C, D, and E exit.)

OVER THE WALL, LIKE A FIREBALL,  
COME ANY CLOSER AND I'LL GIVE YOU MY ALL.  
I'M PADDLING RIGHT OVER THIS WATERFALL,  
SPLASHING ALL THE WATER RIGHT OUT OF MY WAY.

AND IT'S COMING ON ALL SO SIMPLE NOW,  
FLAMING LIKE A ROCKET IN THE SKY,  
COMING ON LIKE A CRYSTAL BALL,  
LIKE A NAKED EYE.

(On the last words of the song,  
NIA jumps on the swing rope.  
During the last few beats of the  
song, ACTORS B, C, D, and E  
return and charge at NIA.  
Blackout should be timed with  
the last beat of music, right  
before ACTORS reach NIA.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT 1)

Act 2

Scene 1 - Traveling

SETTING: A bus to Nashville.

AT RISE: NIA, WOMAN, YOUNG MAN, and YOUNG WOMAN are sitting on the bus. MAN is driving the bus. **13. Leaf on the Water.**

WOMAN

I REALLY GOTTA THINK OF WHAT I'M GONNA SAY,  
SHOULD I SAY IT RIGHT AWAY,  
OR DO IT LIKE THEY DO IN THE MOVIES?  
I REALLY GOTTA THINK OF WHAT I'M GONNA DO  
IF HE DOESN'T LOVE ME TOO.  
I JUST WANT HIM TO PROVE THAT HE'S  
IN LOVE WITH HER.

AND I FEEL LIKE A LEAF ON THE WATER  
FLOATING GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM.  
AND I FEEL LIKE A BUG ON AN ARROW  
HOLDING ON TO A FOOLISH DREAM.  
WHERE WAS MY MIND  
WHEN I DECIDED TO DO THIS?

(NIA goes to the bus bathroom  
but doesn't go to the bathroom.)

YOUNG MAN

I USED TO MAKE AS MANY POINTS AS A COMB,  
BUT NOW I'M GOING HOME,  
I WONDER WHAT'S THE POINT IN BEING FREE?  
WHAT IF THEY ASK ME WHERE I'VE BEEN,  
WHAT IF THEY KICK ME OUT AGAIN  
FOR THE CRIME OF ME BEING ME?

YOUNG MAN AND WOMAN

AND I FEEL LIKE A LEAF ON THE WATER  
FLOATING GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM.  
AND I FEEL LIKE A BUG ON AN ARROW  
HOLDING ON TO A FOOLISH DREAM.  
WHERE WAS MY MIND

YOUNG MAN

WHEN I DECIDED TO LEAP?

(NIA returns to her seat.)

YOUNG WOMAN  
RUNNING AWAY, NO -- I'M BREAKING AWAY,  
AND I'M SO EXCITED FOR A NEW LIFE.  
I JUST WISH THAT I WASN'T SO AFRAID,  
I WISH I WASN'T SO AFRAID  
OF HIM FINDING ME.  
I HOPE HE NEVER FINDS ME.

(The bus stops. WOMAN gets of  
the bus and exits.)

MAN  
Thanks for riding Richfield Lines, miss. Have a nice day.

(Bus resumes.)

I'M TIRED AND I NEED TO REST MY HEAVY LIDS,  
I MISS MY WIFE AND KIDS.  
DO I REALLY NEED THIS EXTRA SHIFT?  
JUST WANT TO BUY A TRIP TO HAPPYLAND,  
BUT THIS WASN'T WHAT I PLANNED -- TO DRIVE ADRIFT  
WASTING TIME BUYING TIME,  
WASTING TIME BUYING TIME.

MAN/YOUNG WOMAN/YOUNG MAN/NIA  
AND I FEEL LIKE A LEAF ON THE WATER,  
FLOATING GENTLY DOWN THE STREAM.  
AND I FEEL LIKE A BUG ON AN ARROW,  
HOLDING ON TO A FOOLISH DREAM.  
WHERE WAS MY MIND  
WHEN I DECIDED TO LEAP?  
WHERE WAS MY MIND WHEN I DECIDED TO LEAP ...  
WHERE WAS MY MIND WHEN I DECIDED TO LEAP ...

(MAN stops the bus.)

MAN  
15 minutes people. Don't go too far.

(EVERYONE gets off the bus. MAN,  
YOUNG MAN, and YOUNG WOMAN exit.  
NIA makes a call. DENISE enters  
and answers.)

NIA

Hi, so --

DENISE

Nia what the hell, why haven't you been returning my calls?

NIA

I've been on a bus. I didn't want to talk about --

DENISE

The bus? Not all day, what's going on, where are you?

NIA

I'm on the bus to Nashville.

DENISE

That kind of bus? Nashville, what the hell's in Nashville?

NIA

... Dad is.

DENISE

(jolts)

Nia -- What the hell are you talking about?

NIA

Look, I didn't tell you, because I knew you'd --

DENISE

Get your ass back here right now. What are you thinking?

NIA

See? Listen -- I knew you'd try to talk --

DENISE

Nia, I said I'd always be there, that I'd always --

NIA

Deedee, just listen: I need you to trust me, I know what I'm -- I need to see him again, my way. I'm almost done with school and I'm always gonna regret --

DENISE

(stuttering)

W-w-what are you gonna regret? What do you think is going to happen?

NIA

I don't know!

(guttural sigh)

But I have to do this. I can't tell it to you any better than that.

DENISE

... You'll never get any peace from that man.

NIA

I don't want peace, just, I need to know that -- hang on, getting another call ...

(NIA checks her phone.)

DENISE

What? Nia don't you put me on hold. Is that him? Have you called him yet, does he know you're coming? Nia! Get your ass back on this phone! Nia!

NIA

I am on the phone.

DENISE

Was that him?

NIA

No, someone else.

DENISE

Nia, does he know you're coming?

NIA

No.

DENISE

(relaxes)

... No.

NIA

No, I don't want him to have time to make up some bullshit.

DENISE

Well ... how are you going to see him? Nia you have to meet in a public place. You can't just show up at --



NIA

(guffaws)

Hey -- he's the one who should want to meet me in a public place. Alright? Alright? ... Deedee -- this is the man who raised us. I can handle this.

DENISE

I just ... I'm worried about you.

NIA

Thank you. I know this must be hard for you, and I'm sorry I didn't talk about it with you before, I just ... I ...

DENISE

I know ... Hey -- you call me one more time right before you see him, then you call me right after okay?

NIA

Yes, okay. I will.

DENISE

I love you so much Nia.

NIA

I love you too, so much.

DENISE

... Talk to you soon.

NIA

Yes, bye Deedee.

DENISE

Bye, call me, bye.

(DENISE hangs up and exits. NIA places another call. REMY answers from offstage.)

REMY

Hello?

NIA

Hi, Remy?

REMY

Hi.

NIA

Remy, you called just now. I'm calling you back.

REMY

Oh, yeah, hey.

NIA

Hi ... well what did you call about?

REMY

Nothing ... just chilling ...

NIA

Remy are you alright?

REMY

Hey are you around?

NIA

No. Actually I'm on the bus to Nashville.

REMY

Oh.

NIA

Remy, I'm going to see my father.

REMY

Oh, no way. Crazy ...

NIA

Remy why did you call me?

REMY

... No reason, just chilling.

NIA

Alright, well ... I have to get back on the bus soon, so...

REMY

Okay.

NIA

Should I call you when I get back?

REMY

What?

NIA

Do you want me to call you when I get back, probably tomorrow, I can call you if you want ... Remy?

REMY

Yeah okay that's cool, see ya.

(REMY hangs up.)

NIA

Remy? Hello? Remy?

(NIA putzes with her phone.)

(FADE OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2 - The Hospital

SETTING: A hospital room.

AT RISE: A masked dummy of Michael is in a hospital bed in a coma. MICHAEL, or Michael's consciousness rather, is masked and out of body, sitting next to his dummy. HE can hear but not see. Sometimes he can "see" NIA, as in his mind's eye, and sometimes not. NIA enters.

NIA

Dad?

MICHAEL

... What?

(NIA goes to the bed and looks over the dummy.)

Who's there? Nurse? Lexi?

NIA

Dad, if you can hear me, move something.

MICHAEL

(jumps up, waves)

Nia? I can hear you. Jesus, Nia? Is that really you? Am I dying? Jesus what's going on?

(NIA claps near the dummy.  
MICHAEL spins around.)

NIA

Dad, I know there's a chance, that you can hear me, so ...  
(forced laugh)  
Looks like this is going to be, easier than I thought.

MICHAEL

What's going to be easier? ... Ah, Nia. Did they call you? Doesn't matter, you came, didn't you? Is Denise coming?

NIA

(stutters)

Djya -- ... well, your neighbor was real nice to me, and your house -- looks nice. They told me what happened.