From Dialogue to Script: Philosophical Forms ad the Spectacle of Theatre

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ABSTRACT

*Montgomery v. The People of the United States* is a project that seeks to adapt Plato’s Socratic Dialogues into modern contexts. A script for a full-length play, *Montgomery* focuses on adaptations for five specific dialogues: *The Euthyphro, The Meno, The Symposium, The Crito,* and *The Apology.* The original play follows a Socrates-like character – Montgomery Madison – that goes from their teenage years to late adulthood, all the while trying to come to terms with complex philosophical issues that we still grapple with today. These issues are inspired by the debates that occur within Plato’s dialogues, though the structure and characterization of several characters within the modern script more faithfully adapt these same components from the ancient text. The script also features a completely genderless cast, with the theme of accessibility that governs this project having a theatrical – as well as philosophical – basis. In this thesis, I explore the way(s) in which Plato, and dialogical philosophy as a whole, make for good candidates for translation into theatrical texts, and how this can make the field of philosophy more accessible and easier to understand.
To my friends, who have spent the past two years listening to me talk about this project.

And to the director, Karissa, and the cast and crew for bringing this show to life for the first time.
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Plato, often regarded as a highly influential developer of Western Philosophy, used a form of philosophy that incorporates dialogues. In each dialogue, a version of Socrates appears and attempts to discern the nature of some philosophical concept. He is joined by several other characters – different in each dialogue – as they debate through various philosophical issues. In addition, some dialogues also tie into very important events in the lives of Plato and the real Socrates. For example, *The Euthyphro*, *The Apology*, and *The Crito* shine a light on Socrates’ last days before his execution in Athens. Respectively, each dialogue philosophically focuses on: what piety is and how it comes to be understood as such, Socrates defending himself against the charges of impiety and corruption of the youth that have been placed against him, and an exchange with Socrates’ friend about what being a good citizen and follower of the law means. *The Meno* is another of these dialogues, as well as *The Symposium*. The central conversation surrounding *The Meno* concerns the nature of virtue, whether or not it can be taught, and – if it can be taught – the methods in which that is possible; *The Symposium* has several characters offering speeches dedicated to Eros, the god of love and desire, and a discussion of the influences and nature of love in general.

Plato’s dialogues are conversations between people who are, most of the time, somewhat familiar with each other. This creates some advantages in the dialogues that some other forms of philosophy do not possess. One such advantage is the ability to establish relationships between characters within the dialogues. Often, but not always, the
characters that appear alongside Socrates in the dialogues were real people in Ancient Greece themselves. By including these characters, Plato is able to create relationships between people and provide a sense of tension throughout the texts. Indeed, though the content can be difficult to understand – we still focus on Plato’s ideas thousands of years later – the structure of the dialogues makes them a little easier to read and understand, and this is due to the conversational style and relationships that appear in the dialogues.

The argument for this thesis has developed side-by-side with the project that inspired it – just as my theatre and philosophy educations developed at the same time as each other – and currently exists as: philosophy can provide different benefits when rooted in discussion, rather than solely focusing on philosophy that is presented in a didactic style. It is worth looking at forms of philosophy – like the dialogical form – that differ from what has been the eminent form for the past few centuries. Though some philosophers, such as Hume or Sartre, have written in both, a lot of modern philosophers that people are exposed to write primarily in this treatise-style. Opening the metaphorical door to other forms of writing can broaden a philosopher’s understanding, introduce them to new concepts, or help them understand complex ideas through a conversation with others, on and off the page. This argument is founded slightly on an opinion I’ve formed through personal experience: how many times has philosophy been created in a vacuum, without people? Without conversation? Many of the ideas that I have had come in the context of the professor and the classmates of the course, the explanation of the class to my friends after the fact. This is not to say that reflection or philosophies thought of in
isolation are detrimental, but that even those moments of reflection can come after conversations with people that cause someone to reflect on their own.

However, philosophy in general has a reputation for not being too accessible to people outside of an audience of educated, white men. Responsibility of this reputation could be placed on people not learning more about philosophy, and relying on the stereotype of a Socrates figure: someone who doesn’t have a “real job” and instead solely thinks about things all day. Indeed, in the lens of someone who has grown up in rural Maine, if I ever heard philosophy growing up, it would not have been in a positive light. However, responsibility can also be placed on philosophy not being accessible in educational spaces; this could have a political origin or some other cause, but the fact remains that not a lot of people learn about the questions that philosophers have been discussing for the past several thousand years, nor are the philosophers themselves learned about. Through programs like the Honors College, more attention was paid to thinkers around the Age of Enlightenment – John Locke, Jean-Jacque Rousseau, and Thomas Hobbes – as well as the occasional reading of a philosopher such as Nietzsche. Still, even these philosophers are just a pinch of how philosophy has developed over the course of centuries.

What, then, is a way that philosophy can become more accessible? The question was one that, while constantly in my brain due to the aforementioned biases that pervade the field of philosophy, became apparent one day while I was thinking about what my future thesis might be. I wondered what it might be like to have an ancient philosopher, like Socrates, live in our world: what would he think? Would his ideas change if he saw
how the world itself had changed? Thus, as with countless philosophical texts before me, my thesis was born through questioning.

As a theatre major at the University of Maine, I’ve been able to read a lot of scripts, both through productions I have been involved in, and in classes that I have taken. I have gotten to read and experience a lot of different kinds of stories, about a variety of people and the different challenges, questions, and joys that occur in a person’s life. Often, these stories center around abstract concepts that we hold dear to us: love, death, patriotism, family, the state of civilization, the history of our world, to highlight a few examples. These scripts unite themes that the playwright wishes to investigate along with an emotional current that pulls the characters through the play’s plot. Essentially, the format of a script can make complicated ideas easier to understand, through the conversations and relationships that characters within a play have with each other.

Thus a realization was born: Plato’s dialogues and the scripts I have been reading in my theatrical education are not that different from each other. Through philosophy, I had been able to read Plato’s dialogues, and through theater, I was able to think of a form that could make these ideas more accessible to others outside of a philosophy education. An idea developed inside my head: I would adapt Plato’s dialogues into modern, vignette-like scenes, with the overarching plot being my own Socrates character that ages and lives in the United States in the 21st Century. Then, at the end of the show, an Apology-like scene would take place, with the character on trial for some kind of crime.

Plato’s dialogues make for excellent candidates for a theatrical translation. This can exist either with keeping the original language – putting on mythic plays for example
– or through some kind of adaptation, as is the case with my own work. Indeed, dialogical philosophy in general sets itself up neatly as an already more accessible form of philosophy than the dominant form for the past several hundred years. Eminent philosophers like Locke, Kant, Descartes, Nietzsche, Marx, and many others developed a treatise style to philosophy that results in a singular voice, a didactic instruction in accordance with how one person believes the world is, or ought to be, run. Some other philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, dabble in both forms: writing essays on singular topics as well as novels and plays, creating dialogues of his own to try and discuss complicated, existentialist ideas; ideas that may not have a simple conclusion, ideas that show irreconcilable differences that exist in the world we live in, that depend on the point of view of the people involved in the conversation. This idea is pushed even further when it comes to theater, as lots of different kinds of people attend performances, including people who may not be exposed to philosophy otherwise. In this way, a performance of a written work, further – a translation from script to stage – can both help improve understanding of a text, and create more access to said text, without the need of enrolling in a course or seeking understanding through other means.

My evidence for this is personal: having experience in productions at the University of Maine, I know that one does not have to be a member of the School of Performing Arts to audition for productions. Theater, and the arts in general, do not require an education in order to partake in its practice. It gets more complicated as you try to work in the field, or decide to study it, but as a baseline, anyone can perform, in any environment. Even further is to see a show, to engage in its ideas as you watch it; this
process is completely independent of someone’s understanding of the theater art form and its complexities.

Still, why a script, instead of some other kind of literary work? The answer, to me at least, seems to be that, like a real conversation – like a dialogue – an audience can see the philosophical conflict(s) between characters resolve on stage in real time. A script takes the everyday conversations between people and creates an expectation of spectacle from them, which can further be enhanced with lights, sounds, and scenic design. All art comes down to interpretation, to perception and reflection, but there are many pieces that a person can emphasize in their interpretation of a performance art, and that makes it great for conversation. Through my thesis, my wish was to create a philosophical work based on Plato’s ideas that could create conversation in the modern day, give people a contemporary way to work through the problems that Socrates and his philosophical descendants thought about thousands of years ago.

Adaptations of ancient myths in general are a popular genre of theater, and this is true at the University of Maine. Anon(ymous), performed at the Cyrus Pavilion Theatre in the Fall of 2021, is a modern adaptation of The Odyssey, reimagined in the eyes of immigration and how restrictive national borders can be. Similarly, the 2017 Maine Masque Production – Eurydice – is a retelling of the myth of Orpheus and the titular character, which makes changes to the original story. Among other things, like the easy way that a setting can be made modern, is the changing of the ending: instead of Orpheus succumbing to his desires and looking back at Eurydice, she calls for him. Finally, in the Spring 2019 semester, there was an Honors student who created an adaptation of a
translation of several myths surrounding the Sumer goddess, Inanna. I got to be in the
production of said adaptation – it was a script for a play – and so their process was, most
likely, similar to my own. Plato’s work, the Socratic dialogues, lend themselves to this
idea of a translative shift from literary form to theatrical experience.

In using the Socratic dialogues and setting them in the modern day, the first step
was to read said dialogues again. In the end, I ended up focusing on five: *The Euthyphro*,
*The Meno, The Crito, The Symposium, and The Apology*. The first scene of the play,
which adapts *The Euthyphro*, is between Montgomery and their parents. This scene
concerns itself with whether or not God, specifically the Abrahamic God, can be all-
powerful and all-good at the same time. In the original dialogue, Socrates and the titular
color character have a lengthy debate about the nature of piety, what it means for something to
be pious, and how something comes to be loved or hated by the gods, amongst other in-
between or related topics. Though the content of the conversation has changed, there are
still several similarities between the scene in my play and the original dialogue. For
instance, Monty’s parents – specifically “C,” the one more adamantly religious and
cought in the discussion with Monty – mirror the character of Euthyphro. In the dialogue,
Socrates addresses Euthyphro as someone who “think[s] that your knowledge of the
divine, and of piety and impiety, is so accurate that, when those things happened as you
say, you have no fear of having acted impiously…” Euthyphro then claims to “not be
superior to the majority of men, if I did not have accurate knowledge of all such
things” (*Euthyphro*, 4e-5a). Euthyphro uses his proposed knowledge of the divine, which
is undoubtedly correct and accurate, to defend his belief that what is pious is what is dear
to the gods (Euthyphro, 7a). In contrast, the parents – with their holy text of the Christian
Bible – believe they are also right. In other words, they use the Christian Bible as a
source of validation for their beliefs, and consider it to be truth: “[‘H’]: Well, we do know
Matthew 5:5 tells us ‘blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth’” (Bolduc 8).

The other similarity between this scene and its original dialogue is the structure in
which the arguments play out. For example, here is a segment of The Euthyphro, where
the titular character and Socrates are trying to discern the nature of piety:

**Socrates:** Then, my noble Euthyphro, according to what you say, some of the
gods too think some things are right or wrong and noble or disgraceful, and good
or bad, and others disagree; for they would not quarrel with each other if they did
not disagree about these matters. Is that the case?

**Euthyphro:** You are right.

**Socrates:** Then the gods in each group love the things which they consider good
and right and hate the opposites of these things?

**Euthyphro:** Certainly

**Socrates:** But you say that the same things are considered right by some of them
and wrong by others; and it is because they disagree about these things [8a] that
they quarrel and wage war with each other. Is not this what you said?

**Euthyphro:** It is.

**Socrates:** Then, as it seems, the same things are hated and loved by the gods, and
the same things would be dear and hateful to the gods.

**Euthyphro:** So it seems.

**Socrates:** And then the same things would be both holy and unholy, Euthyphro,
according to this statement.

**Euthyphro:** I suppose so.

(Euthyphro, 7e-8a)

Socrates guides Euthyphro – through a series of questions – to the point of a
contradiction, confusing the latter character and causing him to reevaluate his arguments.

In this case, what is pious can’t be what is loved by the gods, because the gods
themselves aren’t in agreement in what is loved and what is hated, which means that
something could be both pious and impious at once. In comparison, here’s a selection
from Act 1: Scene 1 of my play:

**Monty**: But how can God watch all of us, take care of all of us? There are so many people in the world who suffer in so many ways! I mean there are the poor, the starving, the homeless…

**Claire/Cole**: It’s like your mother/father said, we don’t know God’s plan for everyone on Earth.

**Hugo/Hannah**: Well, we do know Matthew 5:5 tells us “blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

**Monty**: But when will they “inherit the earth?” I’m sure that lots of poor people have lived and died since Jesus’ time, but none of them were able to inherit the earth.

**Hugo/Hannah**: Well…

**Claire/Cole**: In the kingdom of heaven, no one suffers, regardless of how poor or hungry they were in this life.

**Monty**: But then why say “the meek” will “inherit the earth,” if they’re just going to live blissfully in heaven anyways? And, another thing, what about the people God neglects, or the Catholic Church at least.

**Claire/Cole**: Neglect!?

(Bolduc 8-9)

The scene then goes on, with Monty explaining that there are types of people in the world that the Catholic Church seems to not care for, and argues that God may not be both all-powerful and all-good, and is instead one or neither of those options. In the end, the characters of Monty and Socrates ended up developing some differences – one is a teenager in the twentieth century and the other is an adult in Ancient Greece – but, in this scene, they interact with their opposition in similar ways. Both texts include a contradiction that exists within another character’s arguments, though one concerns piety and the other concerns the nature of God.

The content of the dialogue, then, has been changed because it seemed to me that a discussion of piety would not be something that people in the Western Hemisphere
discuss in their everyday lives. Indeed, a discussion of piety as it pertains to a pantheon of
gods – each with their own beliefs – is not mirrored well in the monotheistic religions
that exist as majorities in the West. Because of this, and partially because I figured it
would be a good starting point to use something I was familiar with, I changed the
scenario of the dialogue to a teen-aged Monty questioning Catholic ideals that I myself
questioned as a child and eventual teenager. The other reason is that, as Socrates was
charged with atheism I wanted to include a scene where someone could argue that
Montgomery is atheist. This charge, like the one at the end of the play, is left ambiguous,
as Monty claims to not be “sure about [believing in God] yet,” but that is left to the
interpretation of any individual audience member (Bolduc 13).

The next dialogue to appear in my play is *The Meno*, and appears as a debate
between Monty and their rival in the play, Alex. In this case, the original text centers on
the nature of virtue, with Meno, Socrates, one of Meno’s slaves, and a fellow Athenian –
Anytus – also later having a discussion of whether or not virtue can be taught. They also
cover that, if it can be taught, the methods in which it is or can be done so. In the original
draft of my own script, this subject matter was kept, but I was writing a scene between
two law students (Montgomery and Alex) and the scene felt very artificial, and eventually
I came up with the idea of discussing a specific virtue instead: justice.

This scene, with context in the real world, was written during the summer of
2020, when there were protests across the country against the racial inequalities that
people of color face in the U.S., specifically when it comes to interactions with law
enforcement officers and the justice system as a whole. With that in mind, I wanted to, in
a way, make a statement about what a Socrates-like character would have to say about justice in a world like ours; not necessarily a Socrates from Ancient Greece who is walking down 5th Avenue, but instead a Socrates who was born in the ‘80s or ‘90s. This Socrates grows up in the West, thinking and developing as the world itself develops, and I wondered what that person might have to say about the virtue of justice.

That being said, there are still similarities between *The Meno* and Act 1: Scene 2 of my play. Both arguments start off with trying to define what their respective topic means, as well as instances of it. For example:

**Meno**

Why, there is no difficulty, Socrates, in telling. First of all, if you take the virtue of a man, it is easily stated that a man's virtue is this—that he be competent to manage the affairs of his city, and to manage them so as to benefit his friends and harm his enemies, and to take care to avoid suffering harm himself. (Meno, 71e)

**Alex:** Whatever. Being just is conducting yourself in such a way that you help your friends while also caring for yourself, and producing good. (Bolduc 18)

Like the previous scene and dialogue, the structure of the arguments within the modernly-adapted scene mirrors that of the original text. The content is different, as Monty goes on a long monologue about the various ways that people of color are discriminated against in the United States, but the two texts are structurally related.

Additionally, the character Alex was inspired – and derives their name from – the character that appears later in *The Meno*: Anytus. Later appearing in the Socratic Dialogues as an accuser of Socrates during his trial, Anytus appears in *The Meno* to argue that virtue can be taught. In response, Socrates lists several examples of parents who were
good and their children who were not, and if virtue could be taught, why wouldn’t
parents teach their children (Meno, 93c-94e)? There’s an allusion that Anytus, or his
family, is one such example, and Anytus leaves with the following words for Socrates:

   **Anytus:** Socrates, I consider you are too apt to speak ill of people. I, for one, if
   you will take my advice, would warn you to be careful: in most cities it is
   probably easier to do people harm than good, and particularly in this one; [95a] I
   think you know that yourself.
   (Meno, 94e-95a)

In contrast, here is Alex’s final line in their first appearance in the script:

   **Alex:** You know my family has been in civil service for generations and that my
   mom is the Attorney General. We’re dedicated, patriotic, hard-working
   Americans, and you publicly accusing us of being racist is not appropriate, nor is
   it accurate. You think you’re so superior Monty? How is insulting one’s family –
   and talking about me behind my back earlier – a decent or moral thing to do?
   Everyone already knew that you were condescending, Monty, but now they get to
   see that you’re a disgusting, immature brat too.
   (Bolduc 24)

The character Alex, like Anytus with the other accusers in *The Apology*, goes on to be the
driving force behind Montgomery’s possible downfall at the end of the show.

There is another trait from *The Meno* that is incorporated into this play. This
attribute is actually present throughout several of Plato’s dialogues, but in *The Meno*
specifically, Socrates makes an allusion to the attractiveness of the titular character: “One
might tell even blindfolded, Meno, by the way you discuss, that you are handsome and
still have lovers…. You have also, I daresay, [76c] made a note of my weakness for
handsome people…” (Meno, 76b-76c). As we will later see with *The Symposium,*
Socrates’ romantic tension with several of the characters in Plato’s dialogues is included
as a plot point in the play, and a character trait that Montgomery shares with their source
material. In the play, Monty contends with a student of theirs, Taylor Johnson, who is convinced that they are in love with Monty and have their affection in return. The true depth of their relationship is left ambiguous and up to the audience to decide, and is a key factor in determining what kind of person Montgomery is.

This is seen directly in the third dialogue to appear in the play, *The Symposium*, which is adapted into the fourth scene of the first act. In this scene, Montgomery has gathered at their house with several of their students, and – after eating and beginning to drink some more – they engage in a discussion about what they think love is. Each character shares their own opinion, with some interjections from the other characters, as they get progressively more intoxicated. At the end of the scene, Taylor – one of the students – confesses their feelings for Monty, and a kiss occurs between them later. Each character in the scene resembles a character who also appeared in *The Symposium*. Comparisons can be made to each one’s speech on what they think love to be, but the most significant or perceivable parallels are in the characters Avery and Taylor, so emphasis will be placed on these two.

Avery is based on Aristophanes, an Ancient Greek playwright and a character in *The Symposium.* Aristophanes tells a long, complex story about how Zeus splits “original humans” into pieces, and these pieces long to come back together, thus creating the phenomenon of wanting a soul mate (*Symposium*, 189c-193e). Here are a few lines from a translation of the original text:

> Each of us, then, is but a tally of a man, since every one shows like a flat-fish the traces of having been sliced in two; and each is ever searching for the tally that will fit him. All the men who are sections of that composite sex that at first was
called man-woman are woman-courters; our adulterers are mostly descended from that sex, [191e] whence likewise are derived our man-courting women and adulteresses. All the women who are sections of the woman have no great fancy for men: they are inclined rather to women, and of this stock are the she-minions. Men who are sections of the male pursue the masculine, and so long as their boyhood lasts they show themselves to be slices of the male by making friends with men and delighting [192a] to lie with them and to be clasped in men's embraces; these are the finest boys and striplings, for they have the most manly nature. Some say they are shameless creatures, but falsely: for their behavior is due not to shamelessness but to daring, manliness, and virility, since they are quick to welcome their like. Sure evidence of this is the fact that on reaching maturity these alone prove in a public career to be men. So when they come to man's estate [192b] they are boy-lovers, and have no natural interest in wiving and getting children, but only do these things under stress of custom; they are quite contented to live together unwedded all their days. (Symposium, 191d-192b)

In comparison, the contemporary character of Avery tells an elaborate tale concerning the Garden of Eden and how sexual desire comes from the biting of the apple through Eve, instead of multi-limb humans scaling Mt. Olympus to attack the gods. Post-ejection from the Garden of Eden, human sexuality is created. From this creation, humans feel the urge to try and be closer to their origin, and so people enter relationships. For example, here's a part of the story that Avery tells their companions during the modern scene:

Avery: No response? Okay, I believe that our individual souls were once combined with another but then separated, like how Adam was once one man in the Garden of Eden and then Eve was made from his rib, and so that we all have a true soulmate. I think as punishment for what happened in the Garden, God promised to separate all future souls born from Adam and Eve. So from then on, we need to find our other half to feel “whole,” people talk about love like that, right… I think gay people are the truest iteration of Adam – pure masculinity, that one – and lesbians are the reincarnation of Eve before they bit into the apple, because they didn’t really have sexual desire for each other before then, right? That then makes straight people the product of Adam and Eve’s relationship post-apple or ejection from the Garden or whatever. (Bolduc 41)
Both characters have more that they say that their counterpart does not, but I wanted to
give Avery a sarcastic, humorous story concerning a mythology that most people would
understand due to the story of Adam and Eve being common in the cultural mythos of the
United States. The character Avery is also a playwright, with the other characters finding
out about a publishing of Avery’s play at the beginning of the scene. Aristophanes was
also a playwright, and a sarcastic satirist, linking Avery’s defining personality trait with
the original character. As such, Avery serves as a modern adaptation of Aristophanes, and
upholds the original character’s role in the adapted text.

Another character that is incorporated from the dialogue into the script is
Alcibiades, who is adapted into the character Taylor; Taylor is a student of Montgomery
who is in love with them, which the other students are somewhat aware of, but Monty
claims to not be aware of it themselves. This is a bit of a departure from the dialogue, as
Alcibiades and Socrates exchange words over the potentiality of their relationship, which
Socrates acknowledges but in a sarcastic fashion (Symposium, 213b-213d). Monty
claiming to not be aware was a slight change I made in order to set up to question
Montgomery’s morality, as the confusion (or Monty potentially lying) creates a gray area
in their relationship with Taylor. Whether or not Monty genuinely has feelings for Taylor
is a big question in the second act, one of many that surround Monty’s character as they
try to achieve their dreams.

In the dialogue, Alcibiades enters the scene much later than the other characters,
and upon seeing Socrates offers a speech in his honor (though it also comes across as
Alcibiades: An excellent orator, perhaps—pronouncing one of the usual discourses, no one, I venture to say, cares a jot; but so soon as we hear you, or your discourses in the mouth of another,—though such person be ever so poor a speaker, and whether the hearer be a woman or a man or a youngster—we are all astounded and entranced. As for myself, gentlemen, were it not that I might appear to be absolutely tipsy, I would have affirmed on oath all the strange effects I personally have felt from his words, and still feel even now. For when I hear him [215e] I am worse than any wild fanatic; I find my heart leaping and my tears gushing forth at the sound of his speech, and I see great numbers of other people having the same experience. (Symposium, 215d-215e)

Taylor: For starters, the person I love doesn’t notice me. This person sees me as someone inferior to them, someone who is not even on their radar save to teach before being set loose onto the world. This person seeks wisdom and the true form of Beauty, trying to move past the physical and mental representations of it, but I cannot move past this person in the slightest. That battle, that struggle to connect to another human, and the pain that causes, that’s love; (Bolduc 47)

Their content, though different from source to adaptation, still bears a reverence for their respective Socrates. Alcibiades praises Socrates’ ability to affect the very souls of the people who hear his words, and he himself can’t help but respond to Socrates and his speeches to the point that he cries. Taylor, on the other hand, is stuck in love with this person who is so grand that they seek to transcend the mind and body, to the point that it causes them pain – yet still – Taylor cannot move on from the love that they feel for Montgomery. Both are struck with the grandeur of their Socrates: the attempt to transcend particularisms to understand the world of Forms, the way that they – both Socrates and Montgomery – prioritize no person ahead of the Good.
The Crito, another dialogue that’s adapted, is not like the other dialogues discussed so far. As opposed to a direct adaptation of the events that occur in the dialogue, both the characters of Crito and Socrates are adapted themselves, and their friendship is the basis of the two characters Quinn and Monty, respectively. Though in a later version of the script I would like to include some of the content from The Crito, the ancient text currently exists in the show through the relationship that Quinn and Monty have with each other; part of this is seen in the way that Crito and Quinn view their respective counterparts:

CRITO: I have often thought throughout your life hitherto that you were of a happy disposition, and I think so more than ever in this recent misfortune, since you bear it so easily and calmly.
(Crito, 43b)

Quinn: …it wasn’t until I met you that I realized people could just choose to live life anyway that they wanted to. You taught me to take a deeper look at the life I was living and change it to fit who I wanted to be, to find the truths I had been waiting to discover all along.
(Bolduc 78)

In The Crito, the titular character has no problem communicating his feelings about Socrates’ upcoming execution with the philosopher. Ultimately, I felt as though their friendship was an incredibly close one, where one of them could say to the other “And moreover, I think you are abandoning your children… you seem to me to be choosing the laziest way; and you ought to choose as a good and brave man would choose, you who have been saying all your life that you cared for virtue” (Crito, 45d). I wanted to create a relationship that, while modern, still had a sense of closeness between the characters, and it’s true that Quinn does not hold back when it comes to being honest with Monty: “If
you want my advice, it seems like you’ve gotten a little too lost in the clouds, a little too lost in your pursuit of knowledge, and you forgot to acknowledge the fact that you exist with other people around you that you need to take care of” (Bolduc 80). Quinn’s character comes from the character of Crito, and so does the relationship between Monty and Quinn come from Socrates and Crito

There is also a bit of Monty’s personality that I got from something that Socrates says in *The Crito*: “… So we must examine the question whether we ought to do this or not; for I am not only now but always a man who follows nothing but the reasoning which on consideration seems to me best.” (Crito, 46b). Monty, like Socrates, is a philosopher first. The pursuit of wisdom, the battling through language and logic to try and reach a higher form of expression, the debating with everyone they come into contact with, Socrates’ determination and argumentativeness is something I definitely wanted to incorporate into the character that I was adapting from him.

Finally, there’s *The Apology*, which has ties to various things in the show. This dialogue is greatly changed in the play, and doesn’t necessarily make an explicit translation into the show. Act 2: Scene 4, the “courtroom” or “Senate” scene as it has frequently been referred to throughout the process, is a modern translation of the trial which serves as the setting of Plato’s *The Apology of Socrates*. Much has been changed: in the play, the setting is not a trial so much as it is a hearing for Monty to be allowed on the Supreme Court. This was done for several reasons, one such being that I didn’t think that someone like Socrates, a well-known philosopher and figure in his own time, would be put on trial and subsequently executed for charges of impiety and corruption of the
youth in this time period. I wanted to make Monty a well-known figure, but not just in the spheres of academia in which philosophy exists, but to both the American public within the show and the audience observing it. The gravitas of the Supreme court served, I think, a decent parallel to the stakes of the scenario which unfolds in *The Apology*, and matched the drama that I think the scene needed within the context of the whole script.

Another change is the shift in power of the scene in comparison with *The Apology*. In the original dialogue, only one of three accusers – Meletus – is able to explain their charges and defend them against a questioning Socrates. In the adapted scene, there is one primary accuser – Alex – and he speaks a lot more than Meletus did in Plato’s dialogue. Montgomery is not able to provide a long or fulfilling defense of their position, which is a stark contrast to Socrates’ lengthy defense that makes up the majority of the original text. Further, Montgomery’s powerlessness in this scene could be opposite to Socrates’ own manipulations that occurred throughout his historical trial. Instead of backing down and gaining the possibility of exile, Socrates alternatively sticks to his beliefs. Despite his then defense, and his talents as a philosopher and public speaker, this decision ultimately leads to the punishment of execution. In the face of this, however, Socrates still has some semblance of power in this choice: the choice to defend rather than give in. Montgomery’s physical life is not at risk in the modern scene, but their future is very much not up to themself, and is instead in the hands of the audience that is watching the story unfold. To match this shift in power, I thought it important for Monty to also not be able to explain themself until later, so as to highlight the importance of the audience’s own thoughts on Monty’s innocence or guilt and the powerlessness of Monty.
Some lines or ideas from *The Apology* make it into the show, and one moment is Montgomery’s monologue in Act 1: Scene 3. In this scene, Quinn is trying to convince Monty to go out for a night of fun with them, which Monty opposes. At some point, Quinn attempts to drag Monty out despite their protesting, in which Monty responds by saying that this so-called boring life they’re leading is completely up to them, because “the unexamined life is not worth living” (*Apology*, 38a). This line was purposefully included because it’s quite a famous quote – it’s the first thing I learned about Socrates through the Honors College my freshman year – and I thought that, among many moments that Montgomery has to establish their character, this moment – with this line – was a pretty powerful one. There is very little else that Monty loves more than the pursuit of wisdom, the chase to find answers to complicated questions that come up in every person’s existence. Nothing else matters, except that these ideas are shared with others and, in the context of the show, written for others to read, wonder, and discuss.

Initially, the question for this thesis was whether or not the script appeared to be a true adaptation, or if it was somehow less than that and instead serves as more inspired by the source text. There are two reasons why this question was eventually changed: the first being that, are these two things actually separate? There was inspiration from the Socratic dialogues to adapt them into a modern setting, the inspiration and the act of adapting could be inherently tied to each other. Further still, it could also serve as a kind of spectrum, and an adaptation falls somewhere between a glancing image and a direct copy of the source material. The second reason is that this was not the question I set out to answer when this idea of adapting Plato’s Socratic dialogues came to me two years ago. It
was only through a conversation with my advisors, with James Brophy, and with several other people that led me to remember why I set out on this project to begin with: I wanted to see what differences might exist in a Socrates that’s alive today, I wondered if Plato’s ideas might change if he were alive in 2000, 2010, 2020, or as just as any part of the current time period. Even further, through that initial desire – through the act of questioning – comes the topic of this theory: the act of adaptation from dialogue to script, from literary form to live performance. Dialogical philosophy has a lot of benefits to it, and one such quality is the opening of a person’s eyes who may be untrained to philosophical reading, writing, and thinking. The ability to see ancient conversations for a single instant on stage, aided by the spectacle and ephemerality of theater or the performing arts as a whole. Through this thesis, I sought to achieve both questions: what a modern-day Socrates might look like, and how the ancient dialogues – as a literary form, as a philosophical style – make for great candidates of theatrical translations themselves. At the end of the day, though we may not have the same content in our conversations as we might in Ancient Greece, the types of conversations that we have with the people around us in our everyday lives can still be very much the same. That is why Plato’s Socratic dialogues are an interest to me, and how they inspired the creation of this play.


Montgomery v. The People of the United States

*Playwright’s Note:*

This show is designed so that every role is gender neutral. Any character can be played by an actor of any gender or non-binary actor, as the gender of every role is nondescript. Monty isn’t male-identifying nor female-identifying, and neither are any of the other characters. That being said, because of the views that Monty’s parents express, it would make the most sense to have them be a cisgendered-heterosexual couple, though the exact gender of each individual person can also be decided by the director.

Because the show is gender-neutral, they/them pronouns are used for everyone, but that does not mean an actor has to say they or them when referring to another character. The pronouns can shift to match the actor of the character portraying it, for example: If Quinn is played by a woman, Monty might refer to Quinn using she/her pronouns, instead of they/them. Of course, if Quinn were to be played by a non-binary actor, then they/them pronouns would be used, or whatever pronouns that person feels comfortable with. In rehearsal, it can be helpful to refer to some of the characters with different names as their common letter, such as “H,” “C,” and so on.
Cast List:

Montgomery Madison
Hugo/Hannah “H” Madison
Cole/Claire “C” Madison
Alex Sylvester
Quinn Higgins
Taylor Johnson
Avery
Riley
Jordan
Elizabeth/Elias “E” Fitzpatrick-Madison
Lincoln/Lynn “L” Hawthorn
Prologue:

Lights up on stage, showing an amphitheater-like set up: on three sides there is seating – almost like a jury bench – but in the USR and USL corner there are voms exiting the stage. The play space lies in the center, and in the beginning it is set up like a small dining area.

There should be four people in each bench/riser, with Hugo/Hannah, Claire/Cole and two people SR; Alex, Taylor, and two people SL; and Quinn, Lincoln/Lynn, Elizabeth/Elias, and the final person C. Everyone is dressed in all-gray robes, and once the lights are up, the twelve people simultaneously stand and form some sort of line in the center.

**Quinn:** This is the story of one person:

**Chorus:** Montgomery Madison

**Quinn:** In their rise and fall from grace, in:

**Hugo/Hannah, Claire/Cole:** Childhood –

**Alex/Taylor:** School –

**Elizabeth/Elias, Lincoln:** And beyond.

**Quinn:** Witness the defense of Montgomery Madison, and judge for yourselves the condition of humankind.

**Chorus:** The case of Montgomery v. The People of the United States of America begins.
Act 1: Scene 1

The chorus return to their seats; Hugo/Hannah and Claire/Cole slip off their robes to reveal plain, present-day clothing – maybe a little dated because they’re older – and they move to the dining area that lies in the playing space.

As the image stills, the lights change from an overhead, intense lighting to a more natural look. Hugo/Hannah and Claire/Cole sit at the table idly for a moment, then the sound of someone entering.

Claire/Cole: Monty? Is that you?

Hugo/Hannah: Of course it’s Monty, who else would it be?

Montgomery: Yeah, it’s me.

Montgomery “Monty” Madison enters from the apartment door, briskly making their way from one side of the stage to the other. They could be looking for something, or trying to avoid talking to their parents, etc. They are scattered.

Hugo/Hannah: How was school today?

Monty: It was fine.

Hugo/Hannah: Oh, really? That’s not what I heard –

Claire/Cole: Hugo/Hannah.

Monty: Huh? What’s up?

Claire/Cole: Nothing! Why don’t you have a seat? We haven’t seen you all day.

Monty: No, sorry, I can’t stay; I have a Student Senate meeting to get to, there’s a fundraiser coming up for these dogs that help veterans –

Hugo/Hannah: Sit down, Montgomery.
Monty slowly pulls a chair out from the table and sits between their parents.

Silence.

Monty: What’s going on?

Claire/Cole: Monty…

Hugo/Hannah: We need to talk.

Silence. Claire/Cole switches between looking at their spouse and their child.

Monty: Okay, well, that was great. Good talk. Sorry, I have to go now, can we do this tonight when I get back?

Hugo/Hannah: We got a call from your principal today.

Monty, who had been getting up from the table, stills on their way to the door.

Hugo/Hannah: She had some interesting things to say about your activities at school.

Slowly, Monty turns back to both of their parents.

Monty: Huh, I wonder why.

Hugo/Hannah: Indeed…

Monty: Does she need me to do something for her? I’ve been working with some of the teachers // for this fundraiser…

Hugo/Hannah: No, I don’t think she needs you to do anything, in fact I think she mentioned the opposite.

Monty: Oh…?

Claire/Cole: Hugo/Hannah, can we just –?
Hugo/Hannah: The principal called today to let us know that you have been discussing

God with your fellow classmates, saying – hold on, let me remember how she put

it – “that God couldn’t possibly exist.”

Monty: Well that’s not exactly how I said it–

Claire/Cole: Monty!

Monty: But I could see how she got there.

Claire/Cole: You’re admitting it? Monty, this is not okay! Why would you say something

like that?

Monty: Well, I didn’t say God couldn’t exist, I only said –

Hugo/Hannah: It doesn’t matter what you exactly said, you were spreading around those

ideas at school. A good // school

Monty: A Catholic school.

Hugo/Hannah: And what’s that supposed to mean?

Claire/Cole: Monty… honey, what are you talking about? We’re Catholic.

Monty: I… I just mean, that it’s a Catholic school.

Claire/Cole: Right, that’s why we pay lots of money for you to go to it.

Monty: No I know, but I just don’t see how // God can…

Hugo/Hannah: What don’t you see?

Monty: I just mean that I haven’t // experienced…

Claire/Cole: Come on Monty, spit it out!

Monty: I don’t really believe in the God that you guys and the school talk about!

Silence.
**Hugo/Hannah:** You don’t believe in God? That doesn’t make any sense. How could you not? We raised you right, you should know he’s everywhere, he’s everything, he watches over us and protects us, and in return we worship him; worship his goodness and hope that we are strong enough to resist sin!

**Monty:** No, I know that’s what we do, but honestly it seems like, well I’ve been thinking…

**Claire/Cole:** It seems like… what? That you’ve lost your way!?

**Monty:** No!

**Claire/Cole:** That you’re losing God!?

**Monty:** Mom/Dad…

**Claire/Cole:** How could this be happening?

**Monty:** Mom/Dad, please calm down, it’s not that big of a deal! Lots of people don’t believe in God // but that’s not…

**Claire/Cole:** But you’re not lots of people, Monty! You’re our child, and we’re trying to // protect –

**Monty:** I know that, I’m trying to say // that…

**Hugo/Hannah:** Don’t speak over us.

**Monty:** Please, you’re not listening to me, I’m trying to say // that it’s not that…

**Claire/Cole:** I don’t care what you’re trying to say! We’re trying to help you, to save you. What you’re thinking is dangerous! And spreading it around your school!

You could get in trouble, you could get kicked out, you could make us look like fools!
Monty: Because that’s our biggest concern…

Hugo/Hannah: Listen, just because you think you know better // than us doesn’t mean…

Monty: But I don’t!! I don’t think that, I don’t think I’m better than you guys, at all.

Pause.

Monty: Please, just hear me out. I’ve been thinking a lot about God recently – you know, we go to Mass twice a week, I hear about him all the time – but something just, doesn’t feel right. In school we learned that God is almighty, that he is powerful and good and all-knowing. He watches us, takes care of us, and we pray to him both in celebration and in times of need.

Claire/Cole: Yes, all of that is true. So what is the problem?

Monty: It’s just that… it doesn’t make sense.

Hugo/Hannah: Monty, this is just a… a crisis of faith! Sometimes religion can be confusing, it’s practically impossible to know God’s will, so it makes sense that sometimes you can be a little confused.

Monty: But how can God watch all of us, take care of all of us? There are so many people in the world who suffer in so many ways! I mean there are the poor, the starving, the homeless…

Claire/Cole: It’s like your mother/father said, we don’t know God’s plan for everyone on Earth.

Hugo/Hannah: Well, we do know Matthew 5:5 tells us “blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”
Monty: But when will they “inherit the earth?” I’m sure that lots of poor people have lived and died since Jesus’ time, but none of them were able to inherit the earth.

Hugo/Hannah: Well…

Claire/Cole: In the kingdom of heaven, no one suffers, regardless of how poor or hungry they were in this life.

Monty: But then why say “the meek” will “inherit the earth,” if they’re just going to live blissfully in heaven anyways? And, another thing, what about the people God neglects, or the Catholic Church at least.

Claire/Cole: Neglect!?

Hugo/Hannah: God doesn’t neglect anyone, he cares about everyone!

Monty: What about Jewish people?

Hugo/Hannah: What?

Monty: What about Muslims? People from other religions? Are they going going to heaven?

Claire/Cole: Don’t be ridiculous.

Monty: How is God caring for them if, for example, they’re poor, or discriminated against? We know they haven’t inherited the earth, and it’s not like they can be cared for in heaven, you just said it yourself.

Claire/Cole: But we’re not talking about // the Jews or the Muslims…

Monty: Well what about gay people? Or just people from the LGTBQ+ community in general?

Claire/Cole: Well they’re sinners.
Hugo/Hannah: Claire/Cole.

Claire/Cole: It’s the truth! It’s what we’re all taught; and listen, I respect gay people as people, but they’re sinners! My problem is with the sin, not the person.

Monty: But how is God caring for them?

Hugo/Hannah: Well we’re all free to choose our actions, and some people choose to sin.

Monty: But people don’t choose to be gay.

Hugo/Hannah: Well…

Monty: There’s no scientific evidence that suggests people choose to be gay, but animals – including people – nonetheless have homosexual tendencies.

Hugo/Hannah: Well! We’re not animals.

Monty: Aren’t we?

Claire/Cole: We have free will. Animals don’t. Maybe gay people don’t choose to be gay, but they choose to act on it.

Monty: But again, that’s not the point: how does God care for them?

Claire/Cole: Monty! Enough of this, you should know God cares for everyone.

Monty: How does God care for them? If God is this all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing, divine being that created the universe and everything in it, why do gay people exist? If God is a being that we can pray to and he can look out for us, why doesn’t he? Why doesn’t he help everyone?

Hugo/Hannah: He can’t help everyone, he // helps us!

Monty: So then he’s not all-powerful?

Claire/Cole: Don’t be blasphemous!
Monty: But you just said…

Claire/Cole: Is this what you’ve been doing at school? Spreading slander about how God doesn’t care about people, how he isn’t our creator and protector? Our Lord and savior?

Hugo/Hannah: Why don’t we all take a step back…

Monty: Well then God can’t be all-good.

Hugo/Hannah: Monty!

Claire/Cole: Dear Lord.

Monty: Is God all-powerful or all-good?

Hugo/Hannah + Claire/Cole: Both!

Monty: He can’t be! We just established that he can’t!

Claire/Cole: We established nothing of the sort!

Monty: Mom/Dad said that God can’t help everyone, and you both have said that God doesn’t go out of his way to help all the suffering people on the planet or people who are not Catholic, which means God doesn’t have power over all, right?

Hugo/Hannah: Can’t and doesn’t are two different things.

Monty: Right! So does God refuse to help those people, or can he not help them?

Hugo/Hannah: I don’t see what you mean.

Monty: If God refuses to help those people because they’re not Catholic, he’s not all-good. Someone or something that is good would help people no matter what. Or, if he can’t help everyone, then he’s not all-powerful.

Silence.
Claire/Cole: You’re wrong.

Monty: Huh?

Claire/Cole: You said that if God refuses to help those people, then he’s not all-good, but that’s not true.

Monty: How do you mean?

Claire/Cole: If God refuses to help those people – like sinners, as we’ve discussed – it must be because they’re not good. If God refuses to help people who are bad or do bad things, then his not-helping-them is still morally good. It makes sense that God would not aid people who would do bad things, as that would contribute to evil in the world.

Monty: So then I shouldn’t help people?

Hugo/Hannah: Monty, that’s twisting our words.

Monty: They said that God won’t help people who are bad or who do bad things, and if God won’t do it, doesn’t that also mean I shouldn’t? We follow God, don’t we?

Hugo/Hannah: You should help people no matter what, Monty.

Claire/Cole: Of course you should help people! Haven’t we taught you anything?

Monty: So then… I shouldn’t follow God’s example? Are you saying that I should act better than God?

Claire/Cole: Montgomery Madison you stop this business *right now* or so help me God!

Monty: But you just did a bad thing! You took the Lord’s Name in vain! Does that mean I shouldn’t help you anymore, dad/mom? All people do bad things, in a variety of
different ways, does that mean we shouldn’t help anyone? Why does God even help us at all then?

**Hugo/Hannah:** Monty, give it a rest.

**Claire/Cole:** We’ve already said, Monty, that you should help others no matter what.

**Hugo/Hannah:** Also that’s from the Old Testament, we’re Catholic, we have a new covenant with God through Jesus.

**Monty:** I’m glad you brought that up.

**Hugo/Hannah:** Oh boy.

**Claire/Cole:** Monty this is enough, we need to get back on to the topic at hand. You need to suppress these thoughts, you can’t be getting in trouble at school because of this.

**Monty:** But why can’t you understand? It’s not that I don’t believe in God – I’m not sure about that yet, I’m still learning – it’s just that I don’t think God exists as he’s been described.

**Claire/Cole:** It doesn’t matter, we’re your parents; you have to listen to us, and we’re telling you to drop this nonsense. We’re telling you to listen to what the school has to say.

**Hugo/Hannah:** I don’t want any more phone calls about these… thoughts and questions you’ve been having. If you have doubts you should consult a priest, someone who knows more than we do.

**Claire/Cole:** That’s right, maybe they can help you! And maybe we can all go, it’ll be fun!
Monty: Unlikely.

Pause.

Hugo/Hannah: Monty, do you promise to leave this stuff alone? Please don’t talk about this anymore, especially not at school.

Claire/Cole: We’re just trying to give you a good future.

Monty: I... I don’t know. I’ll think about it.

Monty exits the stage. Hugo/Hannah and Claire/Cole – as the lights dim – return to their section of the amphitheater-like seating, put on their gray robes, and sit.

Lights out.
Act 1: Scene 2

Lights up, and the scene has changed. The set should look like a kind of study room, or a room large and comfortable enough for plenty of students to study, hang out, and chat in. Monty sits at a table, and they are with Quinn, who is out of their gray robes and in something trendy. At another table CR is Alex, who is dressed professionally and surrounded by other ensemble members.

Quinn: Hey Monty, can I borrow your notes from lecture?

Monty: Yeah sure, can you wait a second though? I’m studying for this Constitutional Law exam and I need to focus.

Quinn: Don’t even get me started about that exam. I’m so stressed just thinking about it.

Monty: Why are you stressed? All you have to do if you fail is name drop your parents.

Quinn: That’s not funny, you know I would never do that.

Monty: Neither of us can control what you do with your wealth and privilege.

Quinn: Oh like you’re some poor – come on – you can afford this place just as much as I can.

Monty: You’re right, or, whatever. Now go away, I’m studying, so if you could just leave…

Noise from the other group of people in the room is suddenly loud. There’s laughter, then Alex stands.

Alex: Man, Professor Grant is such a hard-ass. You’d think that someone who’s been practicing law for so long would at least know how to interact with students, or maybe even just retire and let someone born in the last fifty years do it.
There’s some laughter.

Alex: No, seriously! All he does is stand up there and confuse us, he is impossible to understand! One second he’s talking about the importance of freedom of the individual, then describing the various ways that people go about limiting their own freedom through government. Does he not see how contradictory social contract theory is?

Monty and Quinn share a look.

Quinn: God, what a dick.

Monty: That’s not even what Professor Grant was talking about, do you think anyone over there even notices how wrong Alex is?

Quinn: No, they’re all too busy worshipping their royal highness. Now there’s a person who abuses their power and influence.

Monty: Totally.

More laughter.

Alex: I mean, did you guys see the way he singled me out in there? I tried giving him examples of what I think justice is, but he completely shut me down! His teaching style is totally unprofessional.

Hushed whispers.

Monty: Unprofessional? Did he just say that Professor Grant was unprofessional for trying to teach his students?

Quinn: Sounds like it.

Monty: Unbelievable.
As Monty and Quinn talk, the talking from the other group gradually quiets down.

Alex is listening to what the duo are saying.

**Quinn:** Again, like I said, what a dick.

**Monty:** You’d think someone who has parents that well-known could afford a decent education, or at the very least a tutor to help him since he’s clearly struggling.

*Alex slowly stands.*

**Monty:** I mean, how well do you think Alex is doing in class? Struggling to understand even just the concept of social contract theory is not a great sign of making it much further into law school. That’s undergrad-level stuff.

*Alex begins walking over to the duo; everyone in the room is watching them.*

**Quinn:** Monty, uh, I think Alex can // hear you…

**Monty:** Do you think Alex’s parents know? God, my parents are hard to deal with but to have famous parents and then very clearly not do well in school… it’s pretty embarrassing.

**Quinn:** Monty!

*Alex has reached them.*

**Alex:** My family is none of your business, Madison.

**Monty freezes.**

**Quinn:** Hey, Alex! How have you been? I heard that you have some legendary study methods and I was wondering if I could // get some…

**Alex:** Shut it.

*Snickers from crowd.*
Quinn: Hey, that’s not very nice…

Alex: I said shut up, Higgins! So, Monty, you think you know me so well, do you?

Monty: Well, uh, no – I guess I don’t.

Alex: Exactly, so why don’t you scurry back to whatever poor, southern town you came from and leave the actual work to people like me – since, you know – I have all this power and influence.

Monty: Actually, I don’t come from a poor, southern town, I lived in a city…

Alex: Oh, is that so? Well with a trashy name like Montgomery Madison I had to assume that you came from some back-road, dirt-eating county in Alabama, or Tennessee, or some other garbage state that is so far removed from having an impact in America that it can’t even be brought to the forefront of my mind.

Monty: What a long-winded way of saying you can’t think of another state.

Silence.

Alex: What did you just say to me? Just who the hell do you think you are?

Monty: Who do you think you are, Alex?

Alex: Is this some kind of riddle now? Should I write this down?

Monty: No, just: who do you think you are, Alex? You claim that you know more than Professor Grant about justice, so who are you? Are you someone who knows what justice is?

Alex: Yeah actually, I do, I gave several examples in class. If you were listening you’d know that.

Monty: Can you list them again for me?
Alex: Why? You can take your own notes.

Monty: I can, but I’d like to hear it from you again.

Alex: Why should I?

Quinn: It sounds to me like you can’t think of anything and that you’re wrong… if that’s the case I’m sure we’d love to hear an apology.

Alex: Whatever. Being just is conducting yourself in such a way that you help your friends, while also caring for yourself, and producing good.

Monty: That’s a definition. You gave me a definition of justice, I asked for examples of it.

Alex: Well “help your friends” is an example.

Monty: Okay… I guess that works. But why is it good?

Alex: It’s good because you’re helping them, Monty, don’t act like a child.

Monty: So it’s good because it’s good, according to your definition of justice? To quote you from earlier, “does he not see how contradictory that is?”

Quinn: Technically that’s not contradictory, it’s circular.

Monty/Alex: Quinn. / Shut up.

Alex: Okay, I get it, I get your point.

Monty: Do you?

Alex: Yes, Monty.

Monty: So what is justice?

Alex: I…
Monty: Because I think Professor Grant’s point in even addressing justice is that in Constitutional Law it has to be something that can be applied to all people, no matter their demographics.

Alex: American justice does apply to everyone, no matter their demographics.

Quinn: In whose world?

Alex: This one, Quinn! Madison just said it! We join society for collective freedom and justice, and in America we have a robust justice system that outlines how people can be just, or imprison those who are unjust by breaking our laws. Also, in terms of politics, we have checks and balances, like how the judiciary branch keeps the executive and legislative branches in check.

Monty: I agree.

Quinn: No you absolutely do not, I’ve heard you talk about this.

Monty: I agree – Alex is right – that is what I said. Justice is a part of our society.

Alex: So maybe you were right about me trashing Grant, but I’m still right.

Quinn: I actually don’t think you are…

Alex: You know, do you ever contribute anything to conversations, or do you just have zany one-liners from the sidelines?

Quinn: I happen to think my zany one-liners are quite entertaining, thank you for asking.

Alex: Moron.

Monty: You’re still wrong, Alex.

Alex: Really, Montgomery? Just let it go, do you have to argue everything to death?
Monty: I said you were right about collective freedom and justice, but you weren’t right by saying that American justice applies to everyone.

Alex: This is getting old, I’m leaving.

Monty: How does justice apply to everyone?

Alex: Seriously, Monty? We’re upperclassmen at one of the most prestigious law schools in the country, I don’t need to explain to you how justice works.

Monty: No, you don’t, in fact it would be pretty condescending.

Alex: Exactly.

Monty: But explain it to me anyway.

Pause.

Monty: What have you got to lose? There’s no way someone like you would be wrong to someone like me, especially in front of all these people, right?

Pause.

Alex: As I said before, justice is applicable for all because we follow laws, see? Laws are created by the legislative branch – which we elect representatives for – and enforced by the executive branch – which we elect representatives for – and the judicial branch determines and interprets the laws through the courts, going all the way up to the Supreme Court; even constitutional issues are defined, then redefined over time. In this way, laws are for everyone, created by everyone, and must by followed by everyone.
Monty: So justice is applicable to all because everyone in some way participates in the creation of laws, follows the laws, and the laws that we create see everyone and everything equally?

Alex: Essentially.

Monty: Our laws see everyone equally.

Alex: That’s what I said, yes.

Monty: I agree, justice is the laws that we follow and those laws in their definitions should and do apply to everyone, principally speaking.

Alex: Okay, cool, so I win.

*Alex begins to leave.*

Monty: But are they enforced that way?

Alex: I don’t see what you mean.

Monty: It’s not that hard of a point Alex, who enforces our laws?

Alex: Well, police officers for criminals, who then go to court and have cases with due process. Inspectors for OSHA if it’s job safety, there’s lots of different people that enforce the laws.

Monty: Exactly, there are lots of people – and lots of different kinds of people – and I don’t think I have to be too blunt in saying that I think we all know that the laws are not enforced the same way for everyone in the United States.

Alex: I don’t think we all know that.

Monty: There are people of color all over this country who are afraid of the police because they can be corrupt, they can be racist, they can be
Alex: Now hold on!

Monty: Police officers kill people and say that they’re “enforcing the law” // and…

Alex: You’re going way too far!

Monty: And where in “the law” does it say that that’s the role of a police officer?

Alex: You’re talking about something else entirely now. I’m leaving.

Monty: No, I’m making my point that justice does not look the same for everyone in this country, and also showing that maybe you don’t know as much about justice as you might think. People of color in general have so many struggles that white people never even have to consider.

Alex: Oh please, leave the virtue-signaling at the door. You’re pretty privileged yourself, Monty, it’s not like you know anything about being in poverty.

Monty: You’re right, I do have privilege provided to me by my economic status, but that doesn’t negate that other people are struggling with these issues. Is the only child of the Attorney General really going to huff and puff about this?

Alex: Don’t bring my family into this, just because you’re jealous of me doesn’t mean…

Monty: Believe me, I’m not jealous of you, and yet, you’re still not getting it, this isn’t about you and me.

Alex: Then what on Earth are you talking about, Montgomery?

Monty: I’ll say it again: People of Color are treated differently in this country because of their race. The complex part is the way in which these prejudices affect the lives of those they are against. Black people are treated differently in media than white people: when they’re not being portrayed with blackface or as caricatures of their
own people or culture, they’re being referred to as a “thug” or “young man,” even when the Black person is just a child. In comparison, a white person around the same age might be called just that – a kid. In the work place, or even in school, it’s harder for people of color to find employment or be considered “acceptable” if they don’t meet with “professional” standards; the same of which are usually just anti-Black, like hairstyles for example. Black people are also targeted by mass incarceration, which was a strategy started by the United States after the Civil Rights Movement of the ‘60s and only increased during and after the War on Drugs in the ‘80s. The truth of the matter is that white people can do cocaine their entire lives and not be afraid of the consequences that come with that, but God forbid if a Black person were to consume any, the racist policies and sentencing laws that we have in the U.S. would make sure that they’d never be a free human being again. Which also begs the question: are any of us – especially People of Color – even free to begin with? Hell, in some states, Black people can’t even go for a jog without being accused of a crime or killed.

**Alex:** None of that is true and you know it. Mass incarceration – if it exists – is only because there are lots of people who break the laws, and I think we can all agree that people who break our laws should be punished. It is not the fault of the system in place if that’s the case, citizens should just follow the laws. White people also go to prison for drug usage, Monty, so what you’re saying is just misinformed.
**Monty:** I mean I disagree with you, because Black people are sent to prison for much longer and much more often than white people, but even if I secede that point, there are other ones I can make too. Indigenous people, for example, still fight for their rights to their lands every day. The United States, which has a history of genocide and of limiting the rights of these same people, constantly tries to decrease the size of reservations and also tries to build things like oil pipelines that would have adverse affects on those lands.

**Alex:** Native Americans are citizens of the U.S. and would enjoy the benefits of those developments, not to mention that an oil pipeline – which you specifically mentioned – is not likely to leak like most people think.

**Monty:** That’s not the *point* though, Alex. It’s not about pipelines just like it’s not about us. We’re talking about how the systems of this country don’t look at all citizens equally, especially when it comes to someone’s race!

**Alex:** And I’m telling you that I disagree! Sure, maybe racists exist and that means that some Americans may be racist, but the existence of a few bad apples doesn’t poison the whole tree. The U.S. is not racist and neither is its criminal justice system. Criminals go to jail, and that’s that.

**Monty:** I would say that your parents must be so disappointed that you refuse to learn anything new, but they might even be the ones that taught you your way of thinking. The fact of the matter is, Alex, how are you supposed to know what justice is if you are completely ignorant to the struggles of everyday people in American society? You and your family are part of the problem, Alex.
Alex: You know my family has been in civil service for generations and that my mom is the Attorney General. We’re dedicated, patriotic, hard-working Americans, and you publicly accusing us of being racist is not appropriate, nor is it accurate. You think you’re so superior Monty? How is insulting one’s family – and talking about me behind my back earlier – a decent or moral thing to do? Everyone already knew that you were condescending, Monty, but now they get to see that you’re a disgusting, immature brat too.

*Alex exits. There are murmurs among the ensemble, and then they slowly trickle out.*

Quinn: Why did you even bother arguing with them like that? You just made a whole scene in front of like, all of our classmates.

Monty sits.

Monty: I don’t know – I don’t know why I did that – Alex was just talking and talking, it was driving me crazy. For someone who lectures so damn much, Alex isn’t even that smart.

Quinn: Well you better hope you’re as smart as you think you are, because Alex is not going to rest until your reputation is sent straight to Hell.

Monty: Well then I guess it’s good that I don’t believe in Hell. Now, I better go, I have exams to study for. Good night, Quinn.

Monty exits.

Quinn: Night, Monty.

*Lights out.*
Act 1: Scene 3

Lights up. Monty is alone in a living-room-esque space; they are working. The space should be neat(-ish), but only because it’s so empty. Whatever clutter is there is stacks of paperwork.

After Monty sits writing for some time, there’s someone at the door.

Monty: Who is it?

Quinn: It’s me.

Monty crosses to the door and opens it.

Monty: I don’t know who “me” is, please leave my home.

Quinn: Oh come on, I haven’t seen you for like a whole week.

Monty: Some adult friends can handle distance, you know that right?

They laugh. Quinn enters, looking about the space.

Quinn: Wow Monty, you’ve always been witty and bitter but I don’t think I’ve ever seen you this bad. Again, though, I haven’t really seen you.

Monty: Well, you know, I’ve been busy.

Quinn: No kidding, what have you been up to?

Monty returns to their couch, surrounded by papers, and Quinn sits opposite them.

Monty: I’m grading papers and just, working on my own stuff, you know?

Quinn: “Grading papers,” for real?

Monty: “For real,” for real. There’s a lot of them and I happen to be a pretty strict professor. Long papers and not a lot of time between due dates.
Quinn: So you’re watching your life pass you by because you’re grading some 1L’s paper about why they think America is the greatest country in the world.

Monty: Oh my God no, I would never do that.

Quinn: You wouldn’t?

Monty: No, I’d dock my students 20 points just for saying that America is the greatest country in the world.

Quinn: Monty!

Monty: I’m kidding – well – as long as they provided adequate reasoning at least.

Who says I’m watching my life pass me by, anyways?

Quinn: Me, I say that; oh, and don’t forget your parents, your other friends…

Monty: My parents would say anything for me to drop this modern, 21st century lifestyle I’ve adapted, it’s an affront to their religion.

Quinn: Okay, well… true, but like I said // I’m worried about you…

Monty: Yeah, yeah, I know. But listen, it’s just because the end of the semester is approaching and I want to make sure that all of my students are prepared for their exam. They really are good students.

Quinn: Yeah you’re a dedicated professor and an even more dedicated academic, I get it.

You’ve been living the same old shtick for like five years now, loosen up a little on that philosophical throttle.

Monty: My “philosophical throttle” – that’s funny by the way – is perfectly fine in its current gear.

Pause.
Quinn: I’ve expended all of my knowledge about cars. I’m not even sure if what you said is an appropriate response.

Monty: Neither do I. Anyway… how can I help you, Quinn?

Quinn: We’re going out tonight.

Monty: We are? That’s so weird…

Monty begins searching for something.

Quinn: What is?

Monty: I didn’t realize I’d given you my schedule, are you going to give it back?

Quinn: Very funny, you know, you should try stand-up with a wit like that; that is, you could try it if you ever left your apartment.

Monty: Now who’s trying to have some wit?

Quinn: Come on! Let’s just go: stop grading those papers, they’ll be here when you get back; we’ll go out to a bar, have some drinks, dance a little, maybe find someone to go home with…

Monty: Someone? You want me to find someone?

Quinn: I want you to find anyone.

Monty: I’m not a shut-in!

Quinn: Could’ve fooled me.

Monty: Listen, I go out, I meet people. I hang out with friends sometimes.

Quinn: When, Monty? I’m your best friend, and I hardly ever see you these days. We’ve known each other for years, and you’re not around anymore. Why are you working so hard?
Monty: Well maybe I hang out with people other than you.

Quinn: Nice try but you’re not pushing me away on this one. Come on, it’s just one night. *One* night. Drinks, dancing, flirting, then you can come back and grade the rest of your papers.

Monty: I don’t know, Quinn…

*Quinn turns to face an imaginary person.*

Quinn: I’ll have him back home by midnight at the latest, you don’t have to worry Mr. and Mrs. Madison.

Monty: Quinn!

Quinn: Ugh, fine! Try to talk me out of it, I know that’s what you’ve been waiting for anyway.

Monty: What?

Quinn: Let’s debate it.

Monty: That’s still going to be a waste of my time.

Quinn: Oh my god! Just frickin’ explain to me why you want to stay home so badly.

We’ll start there.

Monty: Okay.

Quinn: Okay…?

Monty: Well, give me a minute.

*Pause.*

Monty: I want to stay home because working on my papers or my students’ papers makes me happy, and it makes me think. I have so many ideas about – just… well
– so many things, and I want to write about them. Things about our society, things about myself and my life, things about what it is to be good and how we even know that, I want to write about all of these and more. And my students have ideas of their own, and those are so interesting to read too. I’m teaching them but I think they’re also teaching me, it’s a cyclical relationship of learning. Not to mention, if I do these quickly and efficiently, I can hand them back to my students and I can do a better job as a professor.

Another pause.

**Quinn:** Hmm… I see.

**Monty:** You do?

**Quinn:** I do.

**Monty:** Great, so… I guess I’ll get back to it? Oh, maybe we could talk about some of these ideas some more? Unless you’re mad and want to leave…

**Quinn:** I said I see your point, but I haven’t offered my own opinion yet.

**Monty:** I thought I said we weren’t debating.

**Quinn:** We’re not, you also just said that maybe we could talk about some of these ideas some more.

**Monty:** Very clever, Quinn.

**Quinn:** I’ve learned it from the best.

**Monty:** Stop. I’m hardly the best.

**Quinn:** The fact that you think I’m serious reveals more about your ego than you think.

Fine, I’ll stop, but only because I want to get back to the point. You say that you
want to think and write and record your ideas, and that you want to see what your
students are thinking and be a good professor to them, all of that makes sense.

**Monty:** Thank you.

**Quinn:** But have you ever heard of maybe not doing that?

**Monty:** That’s your response to my explanation?

**Quinn:** Dude, if you have an idea, just open your Voice Memos, take thirty seconds to
talk into your phone, and move on with your life. You can write at any time.

**Monty:** Right! I can write at any time, and I choose *now* to be the time that I write.

**Quinn:** No! Because clearly you don’t have a healthy balance of work and play, we’re
going out.

**Monty:** I’m sorry, did you just say “work and play?”

**Quinn:** I did and I regretted it instantly.

**Monty:** Good.

**Quinn:** But again! That’s not the point! The point is, is this what you’re going to do for
the rest of your life? Just stay in, think about things, write them down, and grade
papers?

**Monty:** Well I have to leave my apartment to go teach, don’t I?

**Quinn:** But what about *love*, Monty? What about falling in love, or actually *having*
experiences? You can’t just think the entire world into existence, you have to go
experience it! You have to have the sensations of living in order to accurately
reason them out.

**Monty:** Well…
Quinn: I’m not done! And, if you fall in love, will you have children? You know it would be very sad for your family to exist for thousands of years – I mean, all of history has happened to have you live at this point in time – just for you to not have kids and have your bloodline end just because you were busy thinking.

Monty: Are you abstinence-shaming me?

Quinn: That’s not a thing, and you’re not abstinent, I refuse to believe that.

Monty: It sure sounds like you’re trying to shame me.

Quinn: Come on, Monty! Just admit I’m right.

Monty: What?

Quinn: Admit it! Please, please, please, please, please, please, // please, please, please…

Monty: You’ve got to be kidding me.

Quinn: Say that I’m right.

Monty: How am I supposed to know if you’re right?

Quinn: Well, do you agree with me, or not?

Monty I…

Quinn: Please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, please, // please, please, please…

Monty: Okay! Okay! Stop it! Please, stop, for the love of all that is holy, just stop.

Quinn: I thought you didn’t believe in God?

Monty: So not the point, Quinn.

Quinn: You took the words right out of my mouth, Monty. So, drinks, you in?

Monty: It’s just that I… these papers…
Quinn: For fuck’s sake, Monty, leave the stupid papers!

*Quinn grabs Monty’s arm and starts dragging him towards the door.*

Monty: Quinn! Stop!

Quinn: You’re going out to have drinks with me, this is not healthy Monty, it’s that simple.

Monty: Let me go!

*Monty wrests their arm from Quinn’s grip.*

Monty: This is the life I’m choosing for myself, okay! I choose this life: the one that concerns itself with the dealings of justice and of what is good, I choose to look at how we as humans treat one another and the origin of virtue. I want to lead a life of examination because the unexamined life isn’t worth living. I would rather be shut up in this apartment all day with my thoughts and ideas than go out to some dirty bar with a bunch of random people creating a “dance floor” in the middle of it and calling it a good life. There are so many issues in life, there are so many injustices and there’s so much vice, what’s the point of it all? For me, there’s no better way to spend my life than to try and understand all of that, to try to understand what my place in this world might be. I want to test the limits of my understanding and to also have the opportunity to teach others to think in the same way that I do! I’m teaching the minds of the philosophers of tomorrow, Quinn, that’s important work. Maybe that means I don’t do something “important” by your standards, but if one of my students figures out something I can’t, then that’s important enough for me. At least with teaching I get to choose
the legacy I get to leave behind. This may not be the life that you want me to lead, Quinn, and that’s fine – you are free to choose whatever life you want – but stop assuming that I’m going to blindly follow you in order to have a good time. There’s more to life than that for me.

Prolonged silence. Then, Quinn begins clapping slowly.

After a moment:

Quinn: Wow, that was impressive. Been saving that little speech of yours for a while now, huh?

Monty: You’re impossible.

Quinn: No I’m completely serious! No wonder you never leave the house, you must’ve been practicing that one for ages.

Monty: I’m serious too, Quinn.

Quinn: Oh I know, don’t get me wrong, I definitely got “serious” from that. I mean, come on, that was Oscar-worthy! You should be proud, Monty, that was excellent.

Now, how come you went into philosophy with an acting talent like that?

Monty: Very funny.

Quinn: Well, I guess that means you really are serious then. Guess I’ll see you around.

Quinn walks to the door. Suddenly, they turn, running across the room to mess up Monty’s piles of papers.

Monty: Quinn! What the hell!
Quinn: Whoa, buddy, you seem a little stressed. I think having a drink or two is just the thing in order to calm you down. And just think, when you come back, you’ll be so relaxed that you can get right back into your work.

Quinn begins to exit.

Quinn: Not that I’d assume you’d just follow me blindly or anything like that.

Quinn exits.

Pause.

Pause.

Monty reaches for their wallet, a purse, or a jacket.

Monty: Wait up! I’m coming!

Lights out.
Act 1: Scene 4

Lights up on a kitchen/living room set up; the former is devoid of plates/food because of washing up, while the latter has Jordan, Riley, and Avery lingering in it.

At the top of the scene, Professor Monty and another student, Taylor, are in the kitchen putting plates/kitchenware in the sink.

Monty: Thanks for helping me with the dishes, Taylor, you didn’t need to do that.

Taylor: It was nothing, Professor Madison, I’m glad I could help!

Slight pause.

Taylor: So what brings us here tonight?

Monty: Well, I had some good news I wanted to share with my students, and thought I could treat you all to dinner.

Taylor: That’s nice of you.

Monty almost drops a cup, Taylor catches it. Their hands meet for a moment, then their eyes. For a moment, neither of them pulls away, then Monty turns away.

Monty: Well, yes, thank you for saying so. You know, I think these dishes can wait until later. Let’s go join the others.

Monty and Taylor move from the kitchen into the dining room.

Taylor: Thanks for helping take care of the dishes you guys, you were a real help.

Avery: What? It’s not our fault that all of the dishes were scooped up by strong-of-character individuals and the rest of us were left with nothing to do but talk to each other while we waited.
Monty: Alright, alright, no bickering tonight. Taylor, thank you for helping with the clean-up. Moving on, what were you all talking about?

Riley: We were discussing Avery’s good news // about the…

Avery: Riley! It’s not a big deal, really.

Monty: Oh? Avery has good news?

Avery: It’s nothing. I’m sure you’ve already heard.

Jordan: How would they already know? Who would they hear it from?

Avery: I don’t know, someone else – a different professor – could’ve told them.

Taylor: What professor would you tell other than Professor Madison?

Monty: Please, I feel like I say this every time, but you can call me Montgomery.

Jordan: Wouldn’t this conversation move faster if someone were to just tell Professor – uh, sorry – Montgomery the good news?

Monty: I agree. If it’s good news it should be shared so we can all celebrate it.

Avery: Fine! Fine. I was hoping to not make it a big deal, but I guess I messed that up by telling Riley and Taylor first. My play was accepted by a publishing company!

*Some light clapping/cheers.*

There’s obviously still some working out to do and some deals to be made or whatever, but hopefully you’re looking at a soon-to-be-published playwright.

Everyone: Congratulations! That’s wonderful! Amazing! Good for you!

Avery: I have to admit though, despite my attempted humility I was suspecting that this dinner was a celebration of that, was I wrong?

Monty: Actually, the truth is I had some good news of my own to share with you all.
Riley: And it had to happen at your house?

Monty: I wanted to treat you all to some dinner and an evening of celebration and discussion.

Taylor: Well it is really… interesting seeing what your house looks like.

Monty: I hope you don’t read too much into my or Elizabeth’s/Elias’ decorating. Neither one of us actually spends a lot of time here nor have we ever been apt at interior design.

Jordan: Of course not, Professor, and thank you again – from all of us – for inviting us for a lovely dinner and evening.

Monty: You are most absolutely welcome, but enough about that, what is on anyone’s mind that we might talk about?

Avery: Weren’t you just about to tell us something?

Monty: Right! Yes, well… I’ve recently been informed that the current administration is seriously inquiring into my being on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Everyone: What!? For real? Seriously? Amazing!

Monty: I was just informed a few days ago, and if nothing goes wrong I could be officially nominated – and have to go through a confirmation hearing – by the end of the semester.

Taylor: Why now? It’s not like any of the judges are ill.

Monty: Rumor has it that one of the judges is retiring.

Jordan: To have a professor go to the Supreme Court, it’s a little unfathomable.

Taylor: You don’t like being a professor, Montgomery?
Monty: It’s not that at all! It’s just… you try doing the same thing for more than a decade and see how you feel.

Jordan: A toast, then! To our esteemed professor.

Throughout the next few lines, glasses are gathered and drinks poured.

Riley: Oh! We can’t forget Avery and their play!

Avery: Stop! I shouldn’t have mentioned it!

Taylor: To Monty and Avery!

Glasses clink, everyone drinks.

After Taylor finishes their first drink, they immediately move to refill their glass.

Taylor: So professor, what’s it like being young, successful, fit //…

Riley: Taylor…

Taylor: And married?

Monty: Well, I don’t know about young, or fit for that matter //…

Taylor laughs.

Monty: But I am glad to say that I am happily married and am blessed to have the children that I do. I can’t imagine a life without my little nuclear family.

Riley sits between Monty and Taylor; interrupting their moment.

Riley: Satisfied, Taylor?

Avery: Knowing Taylor, there’s no such thing as satisfaction.

Jordan nudges Avery.

Avery: What?
**Jordan:** That’s rude.

**Avery:** Whatever.

*Jordan nudges Avery again.*

**Avery:** Dude!

**Jordan:** Quit it with the attitude, “dude.”

**Riley:** So what are we supposed to discuss, Montgomery?

**Monty:** Oh, anything that we want! It doesn’t even have to really be all that professional, tonight is supposed to be a celebration after all.

*Pause.*

**Taylor:** What if we talked about… love?

*Riley chokes on their drink.*

**Jordan:** You good?

**Riley:** Yeah, yeah, I’m good.

**Avery:** I don’t really have a problem with that topic.

**Riley:** Hmm, I don’t know… couldn’t we talk about something else?

**Jordan:** It would be interesting to hear people’s different interpretations of love.

**Monty:** I think this is an excellent topic! How about this, why don’t we take turns describing what we think love is, and then maybe that’ll lead to some more general discussion?

**Riley:** Ever the professor.

*Jordan gets up to fill their drink. Avery joins them.*

**Monty:** Would anyone like to go first?
Avery pushes Jordan forward.

**Avery:** Jordan, you’re usually so well-spoken, why don’t you go first?

*Jordan tries to nudge, or push, Avery again, but they go sit, moving out of range.*

**Jordan:** Sure, I guess I’ll go first.

Love, for me, is devotion to another person; honoring the commitment that you make to someone else and spending your lives together, or at least for as long as possible. I like to think that love brings out the good in us, love can bridge gaps between people and foster kindness. Love inspires us to create, to admire, even to sacrifice.

This applies to all kinds of love; romantic, platonic, the love between a parent and a child. Like, those stories of moms being able to lift cars if their kids are trapped under them? Even if it is some kind of biological impulse or response, it’s their love for their kid that causes them to do that.

Love for someone’s community might cause someone to enter civil service: to be a law enforcement officer or a politician, or something like that. A love for true justice could cause someone to be an activist in some circumstances. Love for one’s country can lead people to join the armed forces, which is also a sacrifice for something that they love, but also for someone else to appreciate what they love.

So, I guess I would sum it up as love motivates us to be virtuous.

*Brief silence as everyone thinks.*

*Taylor refills their drink.*
Monty: Yes! I would say that was good. Does that inspire anyone else?

Some more silence.

Avery: Alright, alright. I have something. I believe in soulmates.

Pause.

Avery: No response? Okay, I believe that our individual souls were once combined with another but then separated, like how Adam was once one man in the Garden of Eden and then Eve was made from his rib, and so that we all have a true soulmate. I think as punishment for what happened in the Garden, God promised to separate all future souls born from Adam and Eve. So from then on, we need to find our other half to feel “whole,” people talk about love like that, right?

Jordan: So then love has something to do with the divine, and isn’t so much a virtue?

That’s… different.

Avery: Exactly right, maybe I don’t agree with you. Anyways, you haven’t even heard the best part.

Some light groaning. Everyone but Avery goes to refill their drink.

Avery: I think gay people are the truest iteration of Adam – pure masculinity, that one – and lesbians are the reincarnation of Eve before they bit into the apple, because they didn’t really have sexual desire for each other before then, right? That then makes straight people the product of Adam and Eve’s relationship post-apple or ejection from the Garden or whatever.

Jordan: That makes no sense whatsoever.

Taylor How much have you had to drink?
Riley: Also that’s so binary, like… what?

Silence.

Avery: You guys are no fun. Why do I even hang out with you?

Monty: It was a good attempt, Avery, and a fascinating story. Maybe you could write another play about it.

Avery goes to refill their drink.

Monty: Alright, who’s next. What about you, Riley, you’ve been quieter than the others tonight.

Taylor: So have you, Monty. It’s a little mysterious…

Taylor leans into Monty, who simply stares at Taylor. Riley stands abruptly.

Riley: Alright, I’ll go. Love is not just supernatural, but divine.

Avery: Hey, I already said that.

Riley: Yours doesn’t count.

Avery: Rude.

Riley: Can I continue? Cool. Previously it’s been mentioned that love gives way to virtue, and I agree, but that is because love itself is virtuous. So far we’ve been talking about the instrumental value of love – whether its for finding a partner, creating virtue, or improving our health – and instead I think that love is itself a virtue, that can then also lead to virtuous things.

Taylor downs their drink in one go. They go to fill it again.
Riley: Love itself is what creates the virtue of justice, the virtue of moderation, the virtue of courage, and the virtue of wisdom. Love is the origin of all things, and love is also divine.

We all experience love, in some way, and we access it through ourselves and that causes us to desire different things, but all of the objects of our love is beauty. Beauty itself is also divine, and different aspects, variations, or expressions exist in possibly all things. Everything is meant to be loved in some way, despite maybe its instrumental benefits to us. Sometimes love can be painful, but there are some people who pursue love like that, and just because it might hurt us a little doesn’t make the love any less, it just makes it different.

I don’t know, I guess that’s it.

Monty: Very interesting perspective, Riley.

Jordan: It’s definitely appealing, in some way…

Avery: I still think mine is better.

Pause.

Taylor: I want to hear what Monty thinks…

Riley: Taylor, that’s enough. It’s Professor Madison.

Taylor: Riley! Didn’t you hear what Monty said before, we’re supposed to call them “Montgomery!”

Avery: Don’t think we haven’t noticed you calling them “Monty,” Taylor.

Taylor: What?

Avery: You know, you’re both acting weird.
Riley: No we’re not.

Jordan: You kind of are.

Taylor: It’s because…

Riley: Montgomery! You haven’t explained to us what your definition of love is.

Monty: Oh, okay, I suppose I’ll go next then.

I think that Riley made some really great points. Love perhaps may be a universal thing, something that affects everyone indiscriminately. What’s interesting, then, is the different ways that people go about pursuing it. If the object of love is beauty, then the question is why do people go about pursuing beauty? Actually, I guess we also have to ask what beauty truly is.

In my opinion, beauty is not just the object of love – it is not the end of something – it is the means by which things are done. People who pursue beauty in the physical sense are doing so that they can find fulfillment through a relationship, or are trying to succeed in their biological imperative to have children and pass their genetic information onto the next generation. The children are the end, but the beauty is the relationship, it is the means towards that specific end.

Jordan goes to refill their drink.

There is also the beauty of the mind, where the result may be the capacity to carry wisdom, or to be virtuous, but the true beauty is the learning of information and the formation of knowledge that leads to the resultant wisdom. These two kinds are not mutually exclusive, and some people can seek beauty in both its mental
and physical forms. Both of these paths, however, coincide with the singular form of Beauty.

*Avery goes to refill their drink.*

For philosophers, the goal is to move from loving beauty in physical representations, to loving mental representations, then to loving knowledge itself, and finally being able to see the singular, true form of Beauty itself, with no need for representations. To me, that seems to be what love is.

*Silence.*

**Avery:** I feel like Montgomery has showed us up, yet again.

**Monty:** Not at all!

It’s important for everyone to have their own thoughts – to know where they come from – and to able to defend those thoughts against others. We didn’t do much defending just now, but we did see what everyone else thought and if we were to continue the conversation that would be where we head next. Unfortunately, it is getting late, so this will probably have to wrap up soon.

**Taylor:** Speaking of which, professor, where are Elizabeth/Elias and your kids?

**Riley:** Who was speaking of that?

**Monty:** Well we had our own, private celebration the other day, and Elizabeth/Elias knew that I wanted to celebrate with some my students as well, so they went to Elizabeth’s/Elias’ parents for the night.

**Avery:** Fascinating

**Jordan:** Is it?
Avery: No.

Riley: Why do you ask, Taylor?

Taylor: Huh?

Riley: I said “why do you ask?”

Taylor: No reason.

Monty goes to fill their drink, with Taylor quickly following. As Monty is fill their drink, Taylor brushes up against them. Monty pauses where they are as Taylor lingers.

Jordan: That’s right, we forgot.

Avery: Forgot what?

Jordan: Taylor hasn’t gone yet.

Monty and Taylor break from their moment.

Avery: Oh, I’m… not interested.

Jordan: Avery!

Avery: Fine, Taylor, let’s hear it.

Taylor: I’m sorry?

Riley: Your speech… Taylor… what is your speech?

Pause.

Taylor: Hmmm, I’m not sure I have a definition of love that’s much different from what’s already been discussed. But I suppose I would say, in order to maybe spark some different thoughts in this conversation, that love can be a particular person.

Avery: Wait, I already said that, too. Love is soulmates. You’re all just copying me.
**Jordan:** Again, yours doesn’t count. That’s what you get for treating it like a joke.

**Avery:** That’s rude.

**Taylor:** Thanks for interrupting yet again, Avery, but yeah we all love things – and it could be physical or mental or philosophical – but when that love is directed towards a person, in body, mind, and soul? True, soulmate love, that is what makes up so much art, so much poetry, so many different love songs. Loving somebody is something that so many people look for, and sure they might have types or standards, but it’s a connection with another human being that drives so many of us.

And when you love a specific person… well they become all that you think about. Especially when that someone is wise, thoughtful, caring, attentive, and so many other good and virtuous things that you’d have to make up new words for them in order to try and be original.

**Riley:** Okay, Taylor, I think we get it. That’s enough.

**Taylor:** What are you supposed to do, then, when it seems like that person will never desire you? When that person seems to have their own life figured out, like if they’re already married, and it looks like they’re leaving you behind. It makes that love turn secretive, shameful, something to hide instead of shining like the bright light that it is. The love is purifying, it’s electric, but forced to hide in the darkness of secrecy.

_Avery goes to refill their drink._

_Taylor turns to Monty._
Taylor: And sure the love could be taboo, but none of that matters because love is divine – like Riley said – and if it is so heavenly, what could be wrong with it? For starters, the person I love doesn’t notice me. This person sees me as someone inferior to them, someone who is not even on their radar save to teach before being set loose onto the world. This person seeks wisdom and the true form of Beauty, trying to move passed the physical and mental representations of it, but I cannot move pass this person in the slightest.

That battle, that struggle to connect to another human, and the pain that causes, that’s love; but love is also the relief that someone feels when that connection finally occurs. Love is both divine and mortal, pleasure and pain, vice and virtue, love is simply everything. It is the only thing that matters, none of the details or context can change that.

Riley, panicked, goes to refill their drink and chugs it.

Avery’s eyes dart between Taylor and Monty, waiting for someone to say something.

Excruciating silence.

Monty: Well said, Taylor, well said. I’m speechless, that was pretty passionate. It seems like you’re quite smitten with someone, and have thought about it for some time now. You know, I find it’s always better to be up front about your feelings for someone, and to maybe tell them in private. It’s important to think about their feelings too.

Avery struggles to contain their laughter. Taylor stands and leaves the room.
Riley: Alright, I think that’s enough for me. It’s getting pretty late now, and I wouldn’t want to impose on you any further. I think I’m gonna head on home, thanks for dinner!

Riley exits.

Avery: Well it seems like, with this last speech, the evening drew to a close awful fast. I guess that means I’ll leave too. Thank you Montgomery, and congratulations on your good news!

Monty: Congratulations to you too!

Avery begins to leave. Jordan begins to follow. As they leave, their discussion fades out.

Avery: Who could’ve guessed that that would’ve happened, this evening was so exciting!

Jordan: I know, that was insane!

Avery: So, are you coming with me?

Jordan: That depends, do you have any remarks about that?

Avery: I just seem to remember you saying that you weren’t that into me…

They’re gone.

Pause.

Monty sits for a moment, and then slowly starts collecting things around them (i.e. dishes). Eventually, Monty stands and picks up a thing or two, but then stills. They sigh and slouch on the couch.

Taylor re-enters, visibly drunk, they’re alone with Monty.

Monty: Taylor, you’re still here?
Taylor: Yeah, I… am very drunk.

Monty: I’m pretty intoxicated too, I guess that’s what happens you drink that much that quickly,

Taylor trudges over to Monty, who stands.

Monty: Would you like me to get you an Uber? If I can find my phone I can just…

Taylor: I’m so tired of this!

Taylor kisses Monty.

After a moment, Monty breaks up the kiss, stands for a moment, then wordlessly moves further into the house.

Blackout.
**Interlude:**

*Lights up. The three jury sections are occupied by their usual occupants, minus Quinn.*

*The nine chorus members – once again in their gray robes – stand and move to C, forming a line with a gap in the middle; someone is missing.*

*Quinn enters in their gray robe and takes the final position C.*

**Chorus:** Who is Montgomery Madison?

**Claire/Cole:** Is Montgomery blasphemous?

**Hugo/Hannah:** Misguided?

**Alex:** Overconfident?

**Taylor:** Smart?

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Is Montgomery faithful?

**Lincoln:** Good enough?

**Quinn:** Most importantly: is Montgomery right?

**Chorus:** The case of Montgomery Madison v. The People of the United States of America will now take a brief recess.

**Quinn:** Go, with this in mind: just who is Montgomery Madison?

*Lights out.*

*Intermission.*
Act 2: Scene 1

Lights up. The space is still Monty’s living room.

At first, the stage is empty, but after a moment there is the sound of someone entering. Elizabeth/Elias enters.

Elizabeth/Elias looks around the room, sorting through several items, before crossing to some furniture and looking at some of the scattered papers that lay on the furniture, as well as the floor. They seem to settle on one paper out of the bunch and begins to read it.

Another moment, then the sound of someone else entering. It is Monty.

Monty: Hello? Liz/Eli? Are you home?

No response. Elizabeth/Elias keeps reading.

Monty: Elizabeth/Elias? Are you here?

Elizabeth/Elias looks up from her reading. Monty sees them.

Monty: Hey, you’re here. What’s going on?

Elizabeth/Elias: This paper is interesting, it’s discussing whether knowledge is gained through recollection or through new understanding.

Monty: Yes, the paper has to do with the proposed immortality of the soul; it’ll take some more reading to see how sound the arguments are.

Elizabeth/Elias: Interesting…

Monty: You understand it.

Elizabeth/Elias: Is that a question, or a statement?

Monty: A statement, I would never question your abilities.
Elizabeth/Elias: That’s a relief to hear.

Silence.

Monty: Is something wrong? I thought you were going to be home late.

Elizabeth/Elias: You were expecting me to be home late?

Monty: Is that a question or a statement?

Elizabeth/Elias: A question.

Monty: I think I’ve already answered it.

Elizabeth/Elias: That’s true enough. Where are the kids?

Monty: I dropped them off at your parents’ house, they wanted to spend the weekend there, remember?

Elizabeth/Elias: I remember.

Monty: Right, well, have any dinner plans?

Elizabeth/Elias: Well it’s just the two of us tonight.

Monty: Right.

Elizabeth/Elias: How come you’re home so early?

Monty: What?

Elizabeth/Elias: You expected me to be home late, and that’s true I suppose, but I also expected the same of you.

Monty: You did…

Elizabeth/Elias: A question or a statement?

Monty: I’m not sure.
Elizabeth/Elias: You told me you were going to stay late to grade papers and prepare lessons for your classes.

Monty: Oh yes, that’s right, well it went faster than I expected, and I decided to put some of it off until later.

Elizabeth/Elias: That’s not like you.

Monty: No, it’s not. I guess Quinn has rubbed off on me somewhat.

Elizabeth/Elias: Isn’t that interesting.

Monty: The world would be a far worse place with two Quinns in it.

Elizabeth/Elias: That’s true.

Monty: So… dinner?

Elizabeth/Elias: Dinner.

*The two begin making their way to another room, but Elizabeth/Elias stops.*

*Monty exits.*

Elizabeth/Elias: Where’s your bag?

Monty: What was that?

Elizabeth/Elias: You said you didn’t finish grading your papers and decided to finish them later, did you mean finish them tomorrow?

Monty: Uh, no, I’ll do them tonight I think.

Elizabeth/Elias: Then where’s your bag?

Monty: I dropped it off by the door, why?

Elizabeth/Elias: Just curious, I didn’t see you walk in with it after all.
Elizabeth/Elias crosses to where Monty first entered. They begin to search their bag.

Monty enters.

Monty: So I was thinking that we could make… hey, where did you go?

Elizabeth/Elias: Just a second!

Elizabeth/Elias closes the bag and returns to Monty and the pile of papers.

Monty: What were you doing?

Elizabeth/Elias: Nothing, just looking for something.

Monty: Over by the front door?

Elizabeth/Elias: That’s where I was, wasn’t I?

Monty: What could you have been looking for over by the door?

Slight pause.

Elizabeth/Elias: One of my shoes went missing the other day, I think one of the kids grabbed it or something. I’ve been looking ever since.

Monty: Oh, well, okay. Maybe we can look together? Four eyes would be better than two.

Elizabeth/Elias: That’s true enough. I’ve already looked in the hallway. You can check the dining room and kitchen and I’ll check the living room?

Monty: Weren’t you already looking for something in the living room when I got home?

Elizabeth/Elias: I had just started when I came across that paper, and then you came home.

Monty: Right, okay. Yeah that works for me, we’ll discuss dinner after, I guess?
Elizabeth/Elias: Perfect.

Monty goes to the dining room. Elizabeth/Elias retrieves Monty’s bag and resumes looking through it and the stack of papers. They are not looking for shoes.

Monty: So some people stopped by about the nomination.

Elizabeth/Elias: Oh yeah?

Monty: Yeah, they were just asking me questions about where I grew up – people I knew – hey, do you remember that Alex that I went to law school with? I guess they’re a senator now and they’ll be a part of the hearing.

Elizabeth/Elias: Interesting…

Monty: I suppose they wanted to know if there was anything scandalous in my history that I would confess to without the evidence of a background check, testing my integrity or whatever.

Elizabeth/Elias: And did you pass?

Monty: Pass?

Elizabeth/Elias: The integrity test.

Elizabeth/Elias hears Monty on their way to the living room, They stash their bag under the couch.

Monty: Liz/Eli, is something the matter? You’re acting… cold.

Elizabeth/Elias: Cold.

Monty: Are you repeating me now?

Elizabeth/Elias: Is there anything worth saying otherwise?

Monty: You know what? I take it back, that was a pretty heated comment.
Elizabeth/Elias: Are you cheating on me?

Silence. Uncomfortable silence.

Monty: What?

Elizabeth/Elias: I’ve had my suspicions for a few weeks now, but I haven’t been able to find anything yet // and I’m so…”

Monty: You haven’t found anything “yet?” What’s going on Elizabeth/Elias, why are you asking me this?

Elizabeth/Elias: You’ve been distant for a while, which to some degree I’m used to because you’ve always put the work first, and I get that, I do that too, but something is different.

Monty: It’s finals season, you know I get busy…

Elizabeth/Elias: We’re both busy this time of year, but I’m here // ready and willing…

Monty: I’m sorry that I can’t be in two places at once!

Elizabeth/Elias: I’m not asking you to be in two places at once, Monty, I’m asking you to be in one.

Monty: Well sometimes it’s really hard to be in one place at once too.

Elizabeth/Elias: What does that even mean, Monty?

Monty: It just means that I’ve been busy at work, okay? What’s got you feeling this way? It can’t just be that I’ve been a little more distant lately.

Elizabeth/Elias: You’ve had a lot of appointments with one of your students lately.

Something… Jackson?

Forming the name slowly with her mouth. Testing it out.
Tyler? Tyler Jackson?

**Monty:** I don’t have a Tyler Jackson in any of my classes.

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Well, what is it then?

**Monty:** I don’t even know who you’re talking about.

**Elizabeth/Elias:** I think you do.

*Pause.*

**Monty:** I have a… Taylor Johnson in my class. Could that be who you’re talking about?

**Elizabeth/Elias:** The name seems similar enough to what I remember.

**Monty:** To what you remember?

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Yes, to what I remember; they were in your office with you last Thursday, at around 6:00 p.m.?

**Monty:** They were?

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Is that a question or a statement?

**Monty:** A statement.

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Were you not actually in your office last Thursday at 6:00 p.m.?

**Monty:** Well, we could probably assume I was there, since that is where I am a majority of the time.

**Elizabeth/Elias:** My thinking exactly.

**Monty:** I didn’t have any plans with Quinn, nor was I out meeting anyone else; if you didn’t know where I was, I’d guess I was at my office then.

**Elizabeth/Elias:** Do we have to make a guessing game out of this, or do you actually not know your own schedule for last week?
Monty: You know I don’t keep planners.

Elizabeth/Elias: I do.

Pause.

Monty: Right, well, dinner? It kinda looks like we’re low on food to make a whole meal with, but I’m sure we can…

Elizabeth/Elias: No.

Monty: No?

Elizabeth/Elias: No, you misunderstood me.

Monty: I misunderstood your “no,” as in the one saying no to dinner or have I misunderstood you more generally?

Elizabeth/Elias: Is it like you to misunderstand your spouse?

Monty: Do we have to make a guessing game out of this, or are you going to pretend like you don’t know who I am?

Elizabeth/Elias: Do I know who you are?

Monty: Elizabeth/Elias… if this is about your suspicions…

Elizabeth/Elias: This is about my suspicions: my “no” wasn’t to your dinner, it was a declaration of me not wanting to change topics towards dinner. I say “no,” because while I do understand and accept that you don’t have a planner, I don’t accept the situation we now find ourselves in.

Monty: “The situation we now find ourselves in,” which is?

Elizabeth/Elias: I keep a planner.

Small pause.
Monty: You do keep a planner, that’s true. I know this about you and I accept you anyway? That can’t be what this is about.

Elizabeth/Elias: Your skills of deduction are impeccable.

Monty: I’m not sure when you decided that we could speak to each other this way after several years of respectful marriage, but I’d love a copy of the memo from that meeting.

Elizabeth/Elias: I keep a planner, Monty, and we had a dinner scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Thursday of last week.

Pause. The longest one yet.

Monty: We had a dinner scheduled.

Elizabeth/Elias: Yes.

Monty: And you came to my office.

Elizabeth/Elias: Yes.

Monty: And I was unavailable, because I had a student in my office with me.

Elizabeth/Elias: That seems to be the conclusion we’ve both come to.

Monty: Elizabeth/Elias… is that what this about? Why haven’t you come talk to me sooner?

Elizabeth/Elias: Because…

Monty: Why didn’t you just knock on my door, or call me? I was right there.

Elizabeth/Elias: Because…

Monty: Because…?

Elizabeth/Elias: Because you haven’t answered the question yet.
Silence.

Monty: I haven’t answered the question?

Elizabeth/Elias: Yes, the question.

Monty: What question was that again?

Elizabeth/Elias: Jesus Christ…

Monty: You didn’t ask me a question.

Elizabeth/Elias: Don’t play dumb, Monty // I…

Monty: I’m not playing dumb, Elizabeth/Elias.

Elizabeth/Elias: I asked you a question, why else would we be talking about this?

Monty: Now that’s a question.

Elizabeth/Elias: Monty!

Monty: I don’t know what you want from me!

Elizabeth/Elias: I want the truth!

I want you to tell me the truth. I don’t want you to dance around it, or use that brain of yours to avoid the question through mind games or more questions. I want to have a conversation with you, Monty, as a person, not as a philosopher. And before you say that you bring your work with you everywhere you go and it’s impossible to set it aside, I understand that. My work is stressful too Monty; we’re both trying to make the world a better place, but I also don’t want to be around my job every second of every day. The people that I work with, they’re facing death, Monty. Guilty or innocent, they’re facing execution by the state, and that’s hard for me, but most definitely harder for them. I want to be able to escape all of
that, for just a few minutes a day, and talk to you, the real you. I want to see the
you that you don’t show anyone but yourself.

After all of this time it still feels like I don’t know you at all. I want to know you,
but at the same time there’s a part of me that wishes I never met you to begin
with. I want the truth Monty, that thing that you’ve been searching for all of this
time? Give it to me. Let me have it, let me bathe in the light that is your truth –
the only truth that matters – but if I don’t believe you, I’m walking out the door. If
I’m not convinced by what you have to tell me, I’ll leave right now; I’ll choose
the shadows of loneliness over the poisoned light that living in a lie would bring
me. Tell me what happened. Tell me the truth. Right now.

*No one is moving, no one is breathing. Long pause.*

_Monty:_ I… I don’t know what to say.

_Elizabeth/Elias:_ Say anything, Monty! Say the only thing that matters! No more
thinking, no more comments, no more questions! Tell me what happened! Did
you have an affair!? Did you cheat on me with a student!? Who is Taylor
Johnson!?

_Silence._

_Monty:_ No.

_Silence._

_Monty:_ No, I didn’t have an affair. No, I didn’t cheat on you with a student. Taylor
Johnson is just a student in one of my classes. That’s all, there’s nothing else, no
other comments to make. No games to play, no questions to ask. No stories to tell.
The two stare at each other. Both are waiting for the other to do something. No one is moving, no one is leaving.

Silence.

Finally, Elizabeth/Elias moves towards Monty, but stops.

Monty: I love you.

Elizabeth/Elias: I…

Pause. Elizabeth/Elias turns around.

Elizabeth/Elias: Is that a question or a statement?

Monty opens their mouth; nothing comes out.

Elizabeth/Elias: I don’t believe you.

Elizabeth/Elias exit. They are gone.

Lights out.
Act 2: Scene 2

Professor Montgomery Madison’s office. The space should be nice, with plenty of philosophy and law books either somewhat scattered or on bookshelves. There should be some pictures, or souvenirs of Monty’s time with their family, but the space is more professional than personal.

Monty sits at their desk, on a computer (checking their email, writing something, etc.) when there’s a knock at the door.

Monty: Come in!

Taylor enters.

Monty: Mx. Johnson, how can I help you?

Taylor: Oh, uh, you actually emailed me, Professor…

Monty: I did?

Taylor: Yes.

Monty: Now why could that be…?

Taylor: Is it because of…?

Monty: Ah yes! It’s about your paper.

Taylor: My paper? I…

Monty: Well we had a paper assignment in class last week, or was it two weeks ago?

Taylor: Last…

Monty: Last week? That’s what I thought.

Taylor: Professor…
Monty: Your rough draft was pretty good, I don’t have many comments to offer you before submitting your final draft.

Taylor: Well that’s good.

Monty: The only advice I guess I would offer is to maybe organize your thoughts a little more. At some points later in the paper, you refer to earlier parts of the paper quite a bit, even though there’s more information between them. I’d recommend maybe bringing the latter part of the paper closer to the former, so the reader doesn’t have to go back and reread to follow your points.

Taylor: Organization, bringing latter part to the earlier, got it.

Pause.

Taylor: Is that all?

Pause.

Taylor: Actually, there’s something I was hoping to talk to you about.

Monty: Mx. Johnson…

Taylor: You can call me Taylor, professor.

Monty: Mx. Johnson.

Pause.

Taylor: About that night…

Monty: I’d prefer to keep this conversation on your academics.

Taylor: I’m sorry for… for… steering the conversation to another place.
Monty: Apology accepted, it’s not a big deal. As for your paper, like I said before, that’s pretty much the biggest comment I have. I marked some other things on your draft, so here.

*Monty hands Taylor their rough draft.*

Taylor: So…

Monty: So that’s pretty much it.

Monty: Please, let me know if there are any other problems, you can schedule an appointment with me at any time or come to my office hours, which are in the syllabus, posted outside, or on the class webpage.

Taylor: I guess I didn’t realize that by keeping this conversation on academics we were actually ending the conversation.

Monty: Is there anything else you wanted to talk about, academically speaking?

Taylor: No, I guess not…

*Pause.*

*Taylor stands and moves to the door to leave.*

Taylor: Professor?

Silence.

Taylor: I’m sorry about the dinner party; the drinking, the speech, and the…

Monty: Really, Mx. Johnson, there’s no need to // rehash…

Taylor: I’m sorry about what I said, I really shouldn’t have done that out in front of people like that, and I should *not* have been as drunk as I was. It was completely inappropriate and I apologize.
Silence.

Monty: Well, thank you for the apology.

Taylor tries to leave again – the door opens – but they close the door and turn around again.

Taylor: I just… I just have to say… that I’m not sorry for the way I feel though.

Monty: Mx. Johnson!

Taylor: It’s true, and I have to follow the advice that you gave me!

Monty: Excuse me?

Taylor: You said at the party // to…

Monty: I said nothing to prompt this.

Taylor: You did! You said that it’s always better to tell someone how you feel, because if you didn’t you would regret it in the future.

Monty: I have to be honest, Mx. Johnson, I have no memory // of that.

Taylor: It’s Taylor! Taylor Johnson, I’ve been one of your students for years!

Monty: That’s exactly the point, you’re one of my students. We can’t pretend like this could ever be a thing, sorry if you thought otherwise. Now, I can’t have this conversation anymore, I will see you in class.

Taylor: But we haven’t even had the conversation!

Monty: Goodbye.

Taylor: I just have to say // that…

Monty: Mx. Johnson, you’ve already said…
Taylor: I risked everything for this! You know, Avery and Jordan won’t even talk to me anymore, unless you count them talking about me as talking to me. Riley – my best friend – is so mad at me because I’ve embarrassed them at a social event with our Professor.

Monty rises.

Monty: Hold on, people are talking about this?

Taylor: Well, no, I…

Monty: Who exactly knows about what happened that night?

Taylor: Just the people who were there, I think…

Monty: Taylor.

Taylor: Oh so now you use my name?

Monty: It’s just that…

Taylor: You’re worried about your nomination, right? Not about the implosion that is happening right in front of your eyes.

Monty: I have no obligation to help the implosion that resulted in the dissolution of my marriage.

Pause.

Monty: I wish I could be bigger than I am, I wish I could be a true teacher and help you, but I find it hard to find any sympathy for you in this moment.

Taylor: I wish you could be bigger too. I wish you could actually live up to the honor and praise that I gave you that night. I wish you could forget about that nomination –
forget about doing damage control of your precious image – and focus on a student who is clearly struggling.

**Monty:** I never claimed to be the most honorable, the most wise man in existence.

**Taylor:** Clearly.

**Monty:** Excuse me?

**Taylor:** You’re saying that you had no clue at all? About how I felt?

**Monty:** I’m saying…

**Taylor:** According to Riley, it was pretty obvious.

**Monty:** Oh, well, if they say so, it must be true.

**Taylor:** How dare you.

**Monty:** How dare you? Accusing me of knowing about your feelings towards me.

**Taylor:** And what about after the kiss?

**Monty:** After the…

**Taylor:** When we kissed?

**Monty:** What about after?

**Taylor:** Well I’m just saying that I woke up at your house the next morning.

**Monty:** In the *living room*.

**Taylor:** Yeah well, I was not as dressed as I was at the beginning of the night.

**Monty:** I don’t know what you’re implying, *Taylor*, but I don’t like it.

**Taylor:** Well it’s not like I can confirm or deny anything, *Monty*, my memory of that part of the night is pretty blurry. Yours?

*Pause.*
Monty: The same.

Taylor: I’m only meaning to suggest that there’s something here, between us.

Monty: And I’m telling you that there isn’t… there could never be.

Taylor: So I just… imagined everything?

Monty: If that is what you think. I’m aware of the risks that can sometimes present themselves in teaching, and I also know that sometimes feelings are… misguided

Taylor: Misguided?

Monty: What else am I supposed to say? I know that I did not say or do anything publicly to make you think that I was available for something completely inappropriate.

Taylor: Exactly, you did nothing “publicly.”

Monty: Taylor.

Taylor: You definitely made yourself seem available in private.

Monty: I did nothing of the sort!

Taylor: You did!

Monty: I did not!

Taylor: What was the invitation to your house for dinner then? I mean, it’s already kind of weird that you invited just the four of us, but you even invited me alone a few times! And all of these meetings in your office when you could’ve been going home to your family!

Monty: If you were uncomfortable you should have just said so. I guess I clearly overstepped, and so I’m sorry for that. But you should know that I offer to many
of my students the ability to be in my office with me, it’s the point of office hours actually.

**Taylor:** How could I have ever said anything to the legendary Montgomery Madison? You have to know we all worship you, with all of your published papers and fancy conventions and interviews. But that’s not it! The fact that you allow students to spend so much time with you just means that I’m probably not the only one who’s felt this way.

**Monty:** So let me get this straight, you’re saying that I, what? Emotionally manipulate my students?

*Pause.*

**Taylor:** That… that is what I’m saying… yeah.

**Monty:** Unbelievable.

**Taylor:** It’s not unbelievable though! I’m sure if we asked a lot of your current or past students a lot of them would agree!

**Monty:** I can’t help how others feel about me; if they develop an attraction to me, that is on them, not me.

**Taylor:** How can you say that, and yet give so much of yourself to your students, so much so that it looks like you barely spend time with the people who are supposed to love you most.

**Monty:** Don’t you *dare* bring my family into this!

*Another pause.*
Monty: What were you hoping would come of this, Taylor? Were you hoping that I
would say “that’s so sweet, I’m married, but ask me again in a few months and
see if anything’s changed?” Were you hoping I would throw my entire career
away for a student who’s been practicing philosophy for less than a fifth of my
life?

Taylor: I don’t know what I was hoping for, but it wasn’t this.

Monty: Well then, I’m sorry to disappoint you.

Taylor: You’re cruel.

Monty: To some, apparently, that is true.

Taylor: And I finally see you for what you are.

Monty: Have you stopped to consider, Taylor, that maybe all you ever saw was an
illusion of your own making?

Taylor: Oh, gaslighting, great. You know, can I ask you something, Monty?

Monty: It’s Professor Madison to you.

Taylor: Why didn’t you notice sooner?

Monty: Why didn’t I…?

Taylor: Notice. Why did I have to kiss you to get you to notice my feelings for you?

Monty: Well, I, I guess I was just naive…

Taylor: Everybody at that party noticed, I even delivered that speech to you for crying
out loud.

Monty: I didn’t realize, or I guess…

Taylor: You guess? You guess? Why all the guessing?
Monty: Watch how you speak to your professor, Mx. Johnson

Taylor: Oh I think we are well passed the formalities now, Monty.

Monty: Excuse me, I think you should go…

Taylor: No! Everyone at that party realized what I was saying to you, except for you that is. Why?

Monty: Taylor…

Taylor: Why!? Why didn’t you realize when literally everyone around you suspected something?

Monty: Of course I noticed!

Pause.

Monty: You think you were subtle? Your puppy-dog eyes and your pouting lips, you think that was you being coy, or seductive? Do you think it wasn’t obvious when you were always touching me, brushing up against me, or that moment in the kitchen before your drunken speech about love? You think any person with an IQ over 50 wouldn’t eventually figure it out?

Taylor: Don’t try to paint me out as the bad guy, Professor.

Monty: Oh, I’m sorry. Is trying to seduce your married professor suddenly a good thing to do these days? Sorry if I missed the extinction of morality, I was a little busy separating from my spouse.

Taylor: All I’m saying is, there was a reason that was so easy to have happen.

Monty: I’m glad you’re not denying it, Taylor, shame isn’t something you seem to be very familiar with.
Taylor: Actually, Monty, I’m not alluding to my “seduction,” of you as you call it, though I’ve already said how you facilitated it...

Monty: I didn’t!

Taylor: I’m referring to this, right now. This display of hostility and coldness that is always hiding underneath your surface. That wit has to come from somewhere, right, Professor? Why wouldn’t it come from some kind of inner hostility that you keep beneath your calm exterior, a facade that hides the shadows underneath? I can’t even stand the sight of you like this for a few minutes, I can’t imagine what it must’ve been like to live with you for more than a decade.

Monty: I think this is an interesting turn of events, considering that you were in love with me not even an hour ago.

Taylor: You know, that’s a great point, Monty. I did come here hoping to talk about my feelings for you, maybe get some kind of closure. I thought that, despite some of the things that others have been saying about you I would come here and see what you had to say. I thought that it couldn’t be true, Professor Montgomery Madison is a good person who is in pursuit of wise knowledge, and they’re such a great teacher to all, there’s no way there’s a wickedness or a vice in them. But now I see how wrong I was.

I’m officially ending our relationship. This isn’t right, the way that you treat people isn’t right, and I was so wrong about you; you use people as tools in order to put on this act of a benevolent teacher, bestowing knowledge to all who are
willing to come and bow before your throne of lies, but I want no part in it anymore. My only hope now is that you someday get what’s coming to you.

Monty: Interesting perspective, please see yourself out.

Taylor hurriedly exits.

Monty returns to their desk.

Lights out.
Act 2: Scene 3

Lights up. Monty is in a nice hotel room, or an apartment that has been hurriedly moved into. They are not at home, that’s the point. Monty should be surrounded by papers – either preparing for his upcoming interviews, or continuing to do schoolwork – when there’s a knock at the door.

Monty doesn’t respond. There’s another knock at the door.

Monty: Who is it!?

Quinn: It’s me! Let me in.

Monty: What do you want?

Quinn: Now, is that how you talk to your best friend? I brought donuts.

Monty goes to open the door; Quinn enters.

Monty: Where are the donuts?

Quinn: Huh? What donuts?

Monty: I hate you.

Quinn: No you don’t.

Monty: Why are you here, Quinn?

Quinn: I stopped by your house the other day.

Monty: Oh?

Quinn: Yeah, it was pretty surprising to hear from Elizabeth/Elias that you didn’t live there anymore.

Monty: It’s pretty disappointing to hear how certain they are about our relationship.

Quinn: I bet.
Pause.

**Quinn:** How’d you let it get this bad, Monty?

**Monty:** You’re saying that like I did something.

**Quinn:** Didn’t you?

**Monty:** The only thing I’m guilty of is ignoring someone’s unwanted advances towards me. I can’t help how Elizabeth/Elias reacted to that, I never did anything to warrant this distrust in me.

**Quinn:** Hmmmm…

*Slight pause.*

**Quinn:** This “Tyler” person?

**Monty:** Taylor.

**Quinn:** Right, Taylor, yes. The student who got a little too hot for teacher, and got burned by the flames.

**Monty:** Very funny.

**Quinn:** I’m not trying to be.

**Monty:** You’ve always been pretty naturally charismatic.

**Quinn:** And what about you? Aren’t you the one who could always stir people into a frenzy with just a few carefully picked words? I’ve always hated that about you. You could get anyone to join your cause, if you really wanted to, if you weren’t so caught up in this abstract truth you’re chasing.

**Monty:** Not this again… Didn’t you already give me this lecture, like, twenty years ago?
Quinn: I’m surprised you remember that night, considering how much you ended up drinking.

Monty: Of course I remember it, it was one of the first times that someone asked me why I was living my life the way I have.

Quinn: Well, the way you love to talk, I’m sure it’s because you’ve always just told people, they didn’t need to ask.

Monty laughs.

Monty: Very good; you have plenty of observations in your arsenal, as always.

Quinn: What am I supposed to do with all of this history that we share, except use it against you through cleverly-crafted comments?

Monty: Understand me more than anyone? Support me because you know where I’m coming from?

Quinn: Wow, I think this is the first time I’ve heard you say something that could be considered even twenty-percent romantic.

Monty: I mean it, Quinn. It suddenly feels like, now that I’m about to get one of the most important jobs in my entire life, once I’m finally going to make it – prove everyone who ever doubted me wrong – everyone in my life is abandoning me.

Quinn: Do you think that’s because you abandoned them first?

Monty: I don’t understand where everyone is getting this idea that I’m so cold, so distant, so evil. Have I ever been that way?
Quinn: I wouldn’t call you “evil,” Monty. I don’t really believe in good or evil. You’ve just changed. You’ve always had your head in the clouds, but something has been different about you these past few years.

Monty: Why didn’t you ever say anything?

Quinn: I’ve been busy with my own life, you know? I can’t be around you 24/7 like we could in school, I thought Elizabeth/Elias could handle you.

Monty: It’s great knowing that you consider me to be someone who needs to be handled.

Quinn: Stop the moping, we both know it’s insincere.

Monty: Ouch. Maybe I’m not the only one that’s changed.

Quinn: Of course I’ve changed. That’s the point of living.

Pause.

Monty: You know, I’ve always envied you.

Quinn laughs.

Quinn: No, you haven’t.

Monty: It’s true!

Quinn: No, you may have been jealous of my parent’s wealth, but you have never envied me.

Monty: I have! Listen to me…

Quinn: Oh, here we go.

Monty: Listen. You’re right, I’ve been chasing something for a long time, and as much progress as I’ve made, as many students as I’ve taught, it sometimes feels like I’m
no closing to actually understanding anything at all. But you, the way you live
life, there’s something about it.

**Quinn:** My simmering-under-the-surface instability?

**Monty:** You live so… assuredly. You have no problem at all changing between higher
thinking and just… going out to live your life. You’re not dumb, you’re not an
airhead – though you certainly try to make yourself seem like one – you just like
to have fun when you’re not busy. You’ve been able to have a life that is both
successful and fun. I thought my life was like that, but now that I’m here…
everything just seems so different. We seem so different.

**Quinn:** We’ve always been different, that’s the reason why we’ve been able to help each
other grow for so long. You never would’ve gone out to find Elizabeth/Elias if it
wasn’t for my intervention.

*Monty shoots Quinn a look.*

**Quinn:** Sore subject? Understood. But, you know Monty, you’ve changed me too. I used
to be so blasé about life, everything was easy for me – even school – which I
watched so many people fail out of. My parents made everything easy, and it
wasn’t until I met you that I realized people could just *choose* to live life anyway
that they wanted to. You taught me to take a deeper look at the life I was living
and change it to fit who I wanted to be, to find the truths I had been waiting to
discover all along.

**Monty:** I’m glad I’ve helped at least someone then.

**Quinn:** I thought I said to quit the moping? God, you’re insufferable.
Monty: Well, according to one of my students…

Quinn: This Taylor Johnson?

Monty: Yes.

Quinn: Listen, Monty. Yes, you definitely have manipulated people in your life.

Monty: Have I?

Quinn: Yes! Absolutely. You didn’t have an objection to me calling you charismatic, able to whip anyone to any cause that you chose, why should this be any different?

That’s a form of manipulation.

Monty opens their mouth to speak, but they hesitate.

Quinn: I don’t know all of the details; only you, Taylor, and your other students understand the relationships you’ve had with them. It’s not completely outside the realm of possibility that you’ve fucked up in a big way: there are professional lines that shouldn’t be crossed, not for professionalism’s sake, but for the student’s sake. They’re kids, and even if they’re in the early-20s, they’re still a lot younger than you, and are easily influenced. You’re smart, and have a lot of authority, it’s a lot for someone who’s never met someone like you before. I can definitely see where Taylor, or any student who might say this, is coming from.

You needed to be more careful.

Monty: I understand.

Quinn: But I’m not finished.

I wasn’t going to bring this up, I wasn’t sure if you would get it, but I’m hoping you’re beginning to understand there’s a lot of different kinds of wrong in the
world. You said earlier that the only thing you’re guilty of is not pursuing a relationship with this student. The thing is, Monty: inaction is a kind of action, and from the sounds of it – from both Elizabeth/Elias and this student of yours – it sounds like your inaction towards the people in your life has really come back to bite you in the ass. If something did happen, why not tell Elizabeth/Elias about it, why let them stew with the idea that you’re a cheater for so long?

If you want my advice, it seems like you’ve gotten a little too lost in the clouds, a little too lost in your pursuit of knowledge, and you forgot to acknowledge the fact that you exist with other people around you that you need to take care of.

Monty: Quinn, I get it… Please…

Quinn: I’m still not done.

You’ve also helped a lot of people in life. I know the things you’ve written about: LGTBQ+ rights, the rights for BIPOC across the Western World, Indigenous rights across the globe; you’ve spoken out and donated and done a lot to contribute to what you consider justice to be. That’s really admirable, and that’s not even discussing the hundreds of students you’ve taught in your career. You’ve influenced a lot of minds, Monty, a lot of philosophers who have done great things in their own right, and they will continue to do so. Yeah, you might’ve fucked up along the way, and done some bad things that have probably gotten you some bad karma, but that doesn’t completely negate the good you did either.

Those lives were changed for the better, there’s no taking those positive changes
away. Two seemingly-opposite truths can exist at once, and that's the truth of the matter.

Pause.

Monty: You know, I’m not sure if I agree with you on that, but…

Quinn: So not the point, Monty.

Monty: I know.

Long pause.

Quinn: The question you should be asking is: what are you going to do about it now?

Lights out.
Act 2: Scene 4

Lights up. Monty sits at a modest/nice table in the center of the space, this is all there is. Monty should be surrounded by the Chorus, who are in their jury benches/risers. Lincoln/Lynn, Alex, Quinn, and Elizabeth/Elias should be C. Monty doesn’t actually look at them, instead – when responding during the hearing – Monty responds directly to the audience. The chorus reacts to what Monty says and generally has their own plan for the proceedings.

Lincoln/Lynn: Dr. Madison, thank you for joining us today.

Monty: The pleasure is all mine.

Lincoln/Lynn: Today, we gather here to consider the nomination of Montgomery Monroe Madison for the Supreme Court of the United States. After four days of deliberation, it seems that this committee is ready to make a decision on this appointment. Are there any last questions, concerns, clarifying points, or anything of the like before we commence voting?

Alex: I’d like to be recognized to speak.

Lincoln/Lynn: Yielding time for the senator from Delaware.

Alex: Dr. Madison, I’d like to know more about your position as a professor. You have just left your role at your university in order to pursue the Supreme Court, have you not?

Monty: Uh, yes, that’s true.

Alex: You seem hesitant to answer, Dr. Madison.

Monty: Is that a question?
Alex: Is that a response?

Monty: I’m simply a little confused to the line of reasoning behind the question; I was told that the committee would be doing its background research before this, and that question seems like it would be pretty easy to answer.

Alex: Do not presume to know the reasoning behind this committee.

Lincoln/Lynn: Senator Sylvester.

Alex: As a professor, were there any unique qualifications or challenges in that field that makes you think you would be a good fit on the Supreme Court?

Monty: Certainly, having to field both legal and philosophical questions from students is a great defense of all sorts of logic and positions to be held. Because of that, I don’t just have a firm grasp on my own understanding of law and the opinions I have, but also know more about how young people are thinking about issues that might come in a case to the Supreme Court.

Also, I might add briefly that though I have taught full-time for the past few years, I have my J.D. and also practiced law for a few years before becoming a professor.

Alex: Noted. Before, you mentioned how young people are thinking about issues and how you come to understand that as a professor. Do you mean to suggest that you would form your opinions on a case based on what some prospective students might think of it?

Monty: I mean to suggest that public opinion is an influence in politics, not that I would make my own opinions that of another’s.
Alex: The Court is above politics, professor, I’m sure you know that.

Monty: That is true, but the Court is filled with justices that are human, and can sometimes have agendas of their own.

Alex: It sounds to me as though you are advocating for justices creating policy.

Monty: I’m advocating for nothing of the sort.

Lincoln/Lynn: These questions are getting into the realm of speculation, and the time for that – if it ever has a place here – has long since passed. Will the senator from Delaware yield their time back?

Alex: You know I won’t.

Monty seems confused.

Alex: Dr. Madison, how would you describe your relationships with your students while you were a professor?

Monty: I’d like to think that my students learned a lot from me, and that they thought I was a good professor. I’ve never received any complaints nor have my class rooms ever been empty or wanting of students.

Alex: So you would say that you’re a good professor, both in terms of teaching-ability and in relation to your students.

Monty: I would say, yes, that’s the case.

Alex: Would you agree – or disagree – that you are close to your students?

Monty: Close?

Alex: Are you friends with your students?

Monty: It’s a bit more complicated than that.
Alex: Is it?

Lincoln/Lynn: Senator.

Monty: I certainly do not go out of my way to become close friends with my students, though – I’m sure anyone in this room can imagine – having a student for several years can lead to something that might resemble a friendship.

Alex: So yes.

Monty: I suppose, yes.

Alex: And would you say that any of these close friendships resulted in anything… more?

Monty: Excuse me?

Alex: Would you like me to repeat the question?

Monty: I hardly think that // this is appropriate…

Alex: It is in the interest of this committee to clarify a few… problems that arose with your background check?

Realization.

Monty: And is it the interest of the committee to be doing this just before the vote, on national television, instead of denying me the hearing in the first place?

Alex: You do not ask the questions here, Dr. Madison. You answer them.

Lincoln/Lynn: Do not forget who is in charge here, Senator Sylvester.

Alex: Of course, excuse me.

Lincoln/Lynn: So you yield your time back?

Alex: Dr. Madison has not answered my question.
 Lincoln/Lynn: Dr. Madison, please respond to the senator’s inquiry.

 Monty: Uh, of course. The inquiry being…

 Alex: Have your relationships with your students ever fallen into the realm of inappropriate behavior between a professor and their student?

 Monty: You’re asking, uh, well…

 Alex: Have you ever slept with a student, professor?

 Lincoln/Lynn: I’ll remind the senator from Delaware to watch their language.

 Monty: No, I’ve never slept with a student.

 Lincoln/Lynn: Can we move on?

 Alex: I have here a testimony from one Mx. Taylor Johnson, regarding an inappropriate relationship with their professor, as well as a specific interaction that occurred between you and them this past year. That would be you, wouldn’t it?

 Monty: Mx. Johnson…

 Alex: A student of yours, one you had for several years, in several classes, isn’t that correct?

 Monty: That is correct.

 Alex: So the professor outlined in this testimony, who manipulated one Taylor Johnson into emotional distress and public humiliation, as well as sharing a quote-unquote romantic interaction, that would be you too, correct?

 Monty: It may be my name that was spoken, but it was not me who did those things.

 Alex: So there’s another Professor Montgomery Madison running around, is that what you’re saying?
Monty: I mean that one is responsible for one’s own actions.

Alex: So you don’t deny the manipulation?

Monty: No! I do; that previous comment was just an aside.

Alex: So you deny the accusation, and that means Taylor Johnson lied.

Lincoln/Lynn: It seems this line of questioning has run its course, Senator.

Alex: I formally request more time to question Dr. Madison before we adjourn.

Pause.

Lincoln/Lynn: You may proceed.

Alex: So you say that Taylor Johnson is lying, isn’t that right, Dr. Madison?

Monty: That is correct.

Alex: You have recently experienced a separation with your spouse, have you not?

Pause.

Monty: Yes.

Alex: Would you mind sharing with us what the reason for that separation was, or still is?

Monty: I would, but I don’t really see how this is relevant to the job I would be performing as a Justice of the Supreme Court.

Lincoln/Lynn: I also fail to see the relevance of this question, does the Senator from Delaware yield their time?

Alex: They do not. As a justice, Dr. Madison has a moral obligation to the principles of justice that govern this nation; if Dr. Madison does not conduct their own personal life in a way that satisfies these principles, how can we expect Dr. Madison to conduct said principles on the federal level?
Lincoln/Lynn: Please answer the question.

Monty: That… question being?

Alex: What was the reason that you and your spouse separated recently?

Monty: We had irreconcilable differences.

Alex: Regarding?

Monty: I find it hard to believe that the American principles of justice care this much about the differences between two people who consented to spend their lives together, then both consented to leave and hope for a better life apart.

Alex: You’re refusing to answer, then?

Pause.

Monty: My… spouse and I… had different interpretations of what it means to teach.

Alex: Meaning?

Monty: We had different ways of conducting ourselves.

Alex: If you’ll allow me, Dr. Madison, I think I can fill in the blanks of this story. It seems to be the case that your spouse and you had different ways of thinking in response to conduct when interacting with students, is that it? I’ll remind you that you are under oath.

Monty: Something like that.

Alex: And so, Dr. Madison, if even your own spouse cannot trust you in regards to how you form relationships with your students, how do you expect the committee before you to do the same?
Monty: The committee has the ability to perform background checks for this exact reason. The committee is made up of individuals who can reason not only with me, but with each other; strange that only one person seems to be speaking for the committee.

Alex: Stranger, still, that the person being interviewed is instructing the committee on how it runs; must you always teach, professor?

Monty: Must you always be someone who needs to be taught, Senator?

Lincoln/Lynn: This is enough, are you finished, Senator?

Alex: Quite.

Lincoln/Lynn: Thank you for coming today, Dr. Madison. With the conclusion of today’s questioning, this meeting is adjourned.

Good luck, Dr. Madison. You’ll need it.

Lights out.

End of Act II.
Interlude: Part 2

The Chorus is all seated, except for Quinn who is standing center. Alex, Claire/Cole, and Hugo/Hannah are sitting SR. The students – Riley, Taylor, Jordan, and Avery – are sitting SL. Elizabeth/Elias and Lincoln/Lynn are sitting in the center section.

Chorus: The voting for Montgomery begins now.

Quinn takes a step forward.

Quinn: Now is the time for all of us to decide whether or not Monty is guilty or innocent.

Though whatever “guilty” and “innocent” means is up to you, what we’re deciding right now is if Montgomery Madison is a fit person to hold this position on the Supreme court.

All of the characters will slowly stand on their lines, and Alex, Elizabeth/Elias, and Taylor will join Quinn in the front.

Alex: Is Montgomery Madison a good person?

Elizabeth/Elias: If you were in my shoes, would you have trusted Monty?

Taylor: Was it all in my head? Did I make up our whole relationship?

Riley: Was Monty a good professor?

Jordan: What does it even mean to be good?

Lincoln/Lynn: Should Montgomery be rejected from the Supreme Court over this? Does someone’s character matter when considering them for a job?

Hugo/Hannah: Are you convinced by anything that Montgomery has said?

Avery: Do you disagree with them?
Claire/Cole: Where did Monty go wrong?

Elizabeth/Elias: Just who is Montgomery Madison?

The characters still in the risers sit once again, while the other four stay standing downstage. Alex and Taylor move to the SR podium – guilty – and Elizabeth/Elias moves to the SL podium – innocent – while Quinn stays center.

Quinn: Now, each of you, think carefully about everything that you’ve heard throughout this journey. Each of you possesses a paper and a pencil, once you’ve reached a decision, fill out your slip of paper and deposit it into one of these podiums. The one to my right symbolizes Montgomery’s guilt, while the one on the left is his innocence. You may begin; decide now, is Monty guilty or innocent? Your choice carries great weight in Monty’s life, your vote has the capacity to fundamentally change what Monty’s life will look like after this moment. Please, choose wisely, vote with your heart, your mind.

Thank you.

Once the audience has completed voting, by submitting their ballots into the podiums, Taylor and Elizabeth/Elias should open the podiums, retrieve the votes, go backstage and begin counting them.

The lights begin to fade, and all of the characters leave the stage.

Blackout.
End:

Monty stands alone in an empty room, all lights (and eyes) are on them. It is the end: either Monty makes it or they don’t.

Monty: They’re counting the votes now, as I speak. It feels as though the walls are closing in around me; it feels impossible that this is what it’s come down to, but here it is… I can practically see it now: Alex, who I genuinely thought I would never see or hear from again, is trying to convince the Senate that I am unfit candidate for the Supreme Court. If Alex can’t get the result through legitimate means, it will come as no surprise to anyone that senators can be bought, or threatened, or find that piece of legislation they’re hoping to pass will miraculously come through. Such is politics, a field of betterment for the people and yet has become a field just for the individual: the person in charge. I didn’t know it then, but this must be what I’ve been working towards my entire life. The getting in trouble in school, the debating between classmates, the arguments with Quinn; all of my youth was spent trying to answer questions that no one seemed to have an answer to. I then spent my adult years instructing others how to follow suit, and yet the question remains: just where did I go wrong? Though I was pursuing knowledge, something lay beyond me the whole time, and so maybe Quinn is right in the end. Maybe the thing I needed most in the end was the ability to connect with more people, the ability to leave my tower and have connections with others. It seems that Elizabeth/Elias was trying to tell me the same thing all along, so why didn’t I see it? It doesn’t matter. Now that I know, I
will do better, I have to, there’s no other way around it. This is not the end for me, it can’t be.

That being said, it’s pretty clear that Alex has torpedoed my reputation on national television, using the kindling of rumors about my supposed-affair with Taylor and igniting them for the world to see. Truth has no importance in this world. Were things always this way? If social interaction leads to multiplicity of truth then maybe isolation is the answer? Or maybe the only rule that can exist over all is the one that is agreed upon by none? But then, who am I to suggest that? What kind of system does that advocate for? What idea of freedom does that carry with it?

Wait, the voting has finished, the results will be announced soon. No matter what it is, it’s coming – hurdling towards me – right now.

The verdict?

Lights out.

End.
Epilogue: Guilty

Quinn stands front and center for the audience to see, the other Chorus members are in their typical seating.

Quinn: The life of Montgomery Madison can be considered a tragic one. Pursuing a truth that they will never find, deprived of the legacy they discovered they so truly wanted; their family has left them, and they will never know what it’s like to be successful through teaching the minds of tomorrow ever again. After not getting their nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States, Monty never again considered joining the realm of politics. Worse, Montgomery left their fields of teaching, philosophy, and law, and even I – Quinn Higgins, best friend of Monty – lost track of them a few years later. Truth be told, the story of Montgomery Madison ends with the death of their nomination, there isn’t a happily ever after, there isn’t even an after.

Monty did get a legacy, but only among the elite of their previous fields. Many philosophers and legal scholars look at the meteoric rise of Montgomery and think to themselves: how did someone so successful, so determined, fail so quickly and then disappear into complete and total obscurity? Monty has become a cautionary tale, where putting yourself in the clouds of philosophical beauty is now forever connected with the fiery danger of losing yourself and straying too close to the Sun.
So be warned, lest you find yourself in a very similar situation to one

Montgomery Madison. Be sure to take stock of yourself, your values, and the

people in your life. Just who are you standing for?
Quinn stands front and center for the audience to see, the other Chorus members are in their typical seating.

Quinn: The life of Montgomery Madison certainly faced enough trials and tribulations. Ever in pursuit of some kind of truth to their own existence, Montgomery struggled to find an answer to even a single one of their questions. Faced with this difficulty, Montgomery slowly withdrew from the world, thus risking their career, their family, and their legacy. The latter is something that Montgomery thought they cared about more than anything else in the world, but through the intervention of yours truly, Montgomery sought to get their family back.

After being approved to the Supreme Court of the United States, Monty went back home and tried to fix their relationship with their spouse. Despite Monty realizing what they truly wanted, too much damage had come between their and Elizabeth’s/Elias’ relationship, and Monty’s family remained fragmented. Still, Monty was appointed to the Supreme Court, and in this position Monty was able to fulfill their dream of influencing the minds of tomorrow in the most grand of ways: through the legal doctrines that govern the United States of America.

That being said, the life of Montgomery Madison was by no means perfect, as everyone can see. Montgomery almost lost everything, and even if they were still successful in getting on the Supreme Court, their reputation was tarnished forever, and for good reason. The only reason Monty wasn’t consumed by their self-induced isolation and obsession with absolute truth was because at the last
second, Monty became aware of the issue and wanted to grow, to improve.

Monty, in the end, was able to learn of their mistake and wanted to fix it, and in my opinion? That’s what’s important.

*End of play.*
AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

Connor Bernard Bolduc was born in Waterville, Maine on August 7th, 1999. Raised in Bowdoin, Maine, Connor graduated from Mt. Ararat High School in 2018. A dual-degree student in theatre and philosophy, Connor also minored in legal studies. Connor is the president of Alpha Psi Omega, and a member of Phi Sigma Tau. Connor has also served as a council member of student organization Maine Masque, and worked in the Philosophy Department as a Levinson Ambassador.

Upon graduation, Connor plans to join the workforce, pursuing one of his many passions in either philosophy or theater, and hopefully plans to move to Boston, Massachusetts. Down the line, Connor hopes to get his MFA in either playwriting or acting, and become a professor.