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Chimeric Ideals

by

Carter Hoffer

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the
University Honors Program

Department of Theatre
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The members of the Honors Thesis Committee appointed
to examine the thesis of Carter Hoffer
find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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ABSTRACT

Chimeric Ideals

Carter Hoffer

Director: Joseph Stollenwerk, Ph.D.

What comes next, and how do you move on from something that seems all-encompassing? These are just a couple of the questions author Carter Hoffer asks within his original play, *Chimeric Ideals*. Inspired by a nation rife with gun violence and no plan to reign it in, *Chimeric Ideals* follows the story of Percy, Adam, Jed, and Henry immediately after the most traumatic experience of their young lives, exploring the difficulty of healing in a world where mental health is a taboo subject, and its' sufferers sometimes refuse to admit to even having a problem. Originally conceived as a short play in 2017, and sadly still relevant today, the author urges audiences everywhere to ask themselves what they can do to be part of the solution, rather than "But young? Youth? That is long ago. We are old folk." -*All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Keywords: Play, Gun Violence, PTSD, Mental Health, Therapy

Artist's Statement

Chimeric Ideals is a play nearly 4 years in the making. My senior year of high school I wrote what I consider to be the original concept to this play for my home state's one-act play competition, in the form of a fifteen-minute one-act play that was then known as *Chasing Juliet*. It was heavily focused on school shootings, and the lack of any sort of restriction on the second amendment. This was the launching point of my interest in social issues theatre, something that has influenced large amounts of my writing since my first play all those years ago.

When I first began to write *Chimeric Ideals*, I wanted to keep the main focus of the play on the school shooting from *Chasing Juliet* and the second amendment issues that came with that, as well as adding in a new element to my play: mental health. However, this required a significant amount of new research in order for me to ensure that the mental health issues I was portraying in my play, specifically PTSD, were portrayed properly. Because of this, I found numerous different scholarly articles that helped me to learn more about the side effects typically associated with PTSD and I used these side effects as a base to each of my characters. By doing this, not only was each of my characters' mental health issues correctly portrayed within the play, but the play itself also had an elevated aspect of realism thanks to these real-life issues.

I also spent some of my research time focusing on how other plays, many of which had won numerous awards, handled the various social issues that they addressed. Through these plays I was able to gain a better understanding of my own writing and how I could properly frame the story that I was telling in a way that really honed it in on what was important to me. Because of this I realized I had a problem, my first draft was just too busy. Trying to focus on both gun violence issues and mental health issues was

turning my play into a bit of a muddled mess, so I knew I had a decision to make when it came time for me to create a second draft: I would have to choose one or the other to become the focal point of my play. This led to a complete overhaul of the original play, including the most expansive part of my revision process, an entire new framing to the play.

Where my original draft had used a lecture on the amendments of the United States in order have gun violence be the focal point in the play, my second draft of *Chimeric Ideals* has Mr. Walker teaching his students *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a book that allows for more conversation about mental health issues, and also the frailty and futility of life. This really helps to inform the twists and turns that happen throughout the play, giving the audience context to the story that is unfolding before them. That, coupled with the audiences own personal experiences living in a world where mental health is a taboo subject, allows for one very simple question to spring forward to their minds: When mental health is pushed to the side, how big can the consequences grow before anyone cares?

CHIMERIC IDEALS

A Play in Two Acts

by

Carter Hoffer

Characters

Percy Holmes: Late teens, a student at Breckenridge Academy. Unsure of the world around him and struggles to adjust to big changes

Adam Woodson: Late teens, a student at Breckenridge Academy. Unknowingly the glue of his friend group

Jed: Late teens, a student at Breckenridge Academy. Always fun-loving and happy, with a massive smile plastered on his face. Played by the same actor as Henry

Percy's Mom: Mother to Percy. Supportive and loving, but worried she isn't always doing enough. Played by the same actress as Adam's Mom

Adam's Mom: Mother to Adam. Confident and caring, she's always there for Adam, and seems to know just what to say. Played by the same actress as Percy's Mom

Henry: Late teens, a student at Breckenridge Academy. Recently confined to a wheelchair, sometimes struggling to adjust.

Mr. Walker: A teacher at Breckenridge Academy. Full of big ideas

Various Students of Breckenridge Academy, News Reporter: Ensemble characters

ACT ISCENE 1

SETTING: PERCY's Bedroom

AT RISE: A rather large room for a high schooler's bedroom. There is a bed to one side, occupied by a big unmoving blob. Towards the center of the room are JED and ADAM engrossed both simultaneously in a lively game of *Madden* and in their conversation.

JED:

No, you just don't get it! This movie is gonna be the best of the entire series! All the lead-in movies, all the post credit scenes, all the world building, this movie is where it finally pays off!

ADAM:

You said that last time Jed.

JED:

Yeah, but I *really* mean it this time!

The blob stirs and sits up, it's PERCY

PERCY:

Could you guys be any louder?

Almost immediately ADAM scores. He makes sure EVERYONE knows it

ADAM:

AND ANOTHER ONE! Man Jed, I think you've somehow gotten worse since the last time we played.

JED:

That doesn't count, Percy distracted me!

ADAM:

Maybe. But he wasn't distracting you the first 4 times I scored.

JED just grumbles and continues to praise his movie

JED:

ANYWAYS. The budget for this one, is like, massive. I'm talking largest budget ever for a movie, but with all these massive stars there's no way around that. And it's not like they won't make their money back, I've heard that it may be nominated for an Oscar in *every category*. That's literally never-

PERCY:

-Jed.

JED:

Yeah Percy?

PERCY:

If we promise to go to the movie with you, will you *please* shut up about it for the rest of the night.

JED gives a happy little nod and turns back to the game. He finally scores and immediately is in ADAM's face

JED:

YES! YES! LET'S GO BABY! I told you Percy was just distracting me.

PERCY finally gets out of his bed, walks over and turns the game off

JED:

Hey! Why did you turn it off? I was gonna win!

PERCY:

Sure, and Adam's gonna take Abby Stewart to prom at the end of the year.

ADAM:

Hey!

PERCY:

It's getting late and we still need to do our reading from *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

JED:

Oooooor, we can go and see the movie tonight and worry about some dusty old book, another time.

ADAM:

Are those the only two options?

Pillows come flying at ADAM from both directions

ADAM:

Kidding! Kidding. Damn. Since when do you do your homework Perce?

PERCY:

Since always? When haven't I done my homework?

JED:

Calculus.

ADAM:

American Government.

JED:

Chemistry.

ADAM:

PE.

JED:

Lunch.

PERCY:

Oh fuck off.

ADAM:

Why *are* you actually doing your homework for this class?

PERCY:

Because it's a good book!

ADAM and JED are dumbstruck

Oh come on, is it really that unbelievable that I enjoy one book?

JED:

Astronomically so.

ADAM:

You are the school's resident Jock™.

PERCY:

Fine. But I like Mr. Walker. *And* I feel bad if I don't do what he expects of me.

ADAM:

Whoa, reading AND human feelings? Stop the presses, I think something's happened to Percy.

JED:

Mrs. Holmes! Your son! He's been replaced by aliens!

PERCY grabs an arm of each boy and painfully twists it behind their back

ADAM and JED (ad libbed):

Okay, okay, we'll stop. I'm sorry. Ouch. Fuck. Etc.

PERCY:

That's what I thought.

JED:

Either way, I didn't realize that we were having a reading circle tonight so I didn't bring my copy over.

ADAM:

Maybe we can get all tucked up in bed and listen to Percy read. What do you say Perce?

PERCY:

Why do I hangout with you two?

JED:

Because Adam's sister is cute.

PERCY:

Oh yeah, I guess she is pretty cute.

ADAM:

You little-

*PERCY grabs ADAM narrowly saving Jed's
hide from a fresh tanning*

JED:

You think she'd wanna come to the movie with us?

PERCY:

You better stop or else I'll just let him pummel you.

JED:

Fineeee.

*There's a brief pause as ADAM is released
and the tension spreads. ADAM however has
decided to spare JED*

JED:

So? Movie?

ADAM:

I'm game.

JED:

Perce?

PERCY:

I'd love to, man, but I've just gotta get this reading done. There's no way I'd have time to do both tonight.

JED:

You never have time.

PERCY:
What?

JED:
I said you never have time.

PERCY:
What's that supposed to mean?

JED:
It means that unless you plan it, you're not gonna want to do it! Sometimes, I feel like I live in the world according to Percy.

PERCY:
The world according to... we're breaking out metaphors now? I think all those movies have finally gotten to him Adam.

JED:
Oh fuck off why don't ya?

ADAM:
Guys-

PERCY:
-This is my house, if anyone's going to fuck off, it's you, and the door's right over there.

JED:
Right over there?

PERCY:
Right over there. And don't let it hit you on the way out.

JED:
Whatever, come on Adam.

JED storms towards the door, only slowing when he realizes that ADAM hasn't immediately followed him

Well?

ADAM:

Just give me a second, I'll be right down.

JED exits

PERCY:

Don't stay on my behalf, if you want to go, go.

ADAM:

Don't play the victim card, it doesn't fit you.

PERCY:

So what, you think he's right then?

ADAM:

I... y'know Perce, he might be.

PERCY:

Wow. What a couple of friends you guys are.

ADAM:

Don't. Jed cares about you so much man, if he didn't he wouldn't have even brought it up.

PERCY:

Yeah, whatever. Why don't you just get out of here?

ADAM:

I'm going to. Jed and I are gonna go to that movie, but I still want you to come with. Please?

PERCY just shakes his head

Alright, but Perce? Don't read too much into this okay? Jed'll get over it. And we're still your friends.

ADAM exits. PERCY grabs his book

PERCY:

Fuckers.

SCENE 2

SETTING: MR. WALKER's classroom.

AT RISE: Students sit in various rows of desks, all facing MR. WALKER. MR. WALKER sits casually at his desk, surrounded by stacks of notes, piles of books, and papers in various states of being graded. He holds a copy of *All Quiet on the Western Front*. PERCY walks to the back of the class and sits. ADAM and JED enter the classroom, and though reluctant, take a seat in the desks next to PERCY.

PERCY:

Hey.

ADAM:

Hey.

Beat

JED:

Hey.

Beat

PERCY:

How was the movie?

In spite of himself, a smile slowly begins to spread across JED's face

JED:

It... was FANTASTIC! The cinematography, the direction, the acting-

ADAM:

-He jizzed his pants a couple of times in the theatre.

The three boys laugh. It's healing and wholesome

MR. WALKER

Alright class, conversations to a stop, books out, and to the Western Front we go. Now, in a book about WWI, why do you think that the author focuses so heavily on the human experience? Why write a story when he could have just taught us about the war, and while we're on the subject-

MR. WALKER continues to lecture, and try as they might, the boys aren't able to keep their conversation from cropping up again throughout

JED:

Perce, seriously though, you have to see this movie. You *have* to.

PERCY:

Was it really that good?

ADAM:

It honestly was. It was killer. One of the Top 10 movies I've ever seen.

PERCY:

Damn, even better than *Talladega Nights*?

ADAM:

Nothing is better than *Talladega Nights*, BUT if you throw Will Ferrell into this movie, I think it'd be as close as you can get.

PERCY:

I mean, if it's that good, I think you're right Jed.

JED:

You mean...

PERCY:

I mean, that the three of us are going to have to go and see this movie before it leaves theatres.

Immediately JED begins to beam. The happiness is short-lived however as MR.

WALKER has taken notice of their side conversation

MR. WALKER

Boys. Perhaps one of you three could answer the question that we have been struggling with.

ADAM:

Could you repeat the question?

A giggle ripples through the class, but MR. WALKER quells it simply

MR. WALKER

I would like one of you three to show me an example of humanity in the portion of the reading that was assigned for today.

JED and ADAM are terrified, but PERCY just stands and delivers:

PERCY:

There was actually a part, just at the end of it that really stuck with me: “But young? Youth? That is long ago. We are old folk.” We’re only like 20 pages into this book and I had already forgotten that this guy, he’s only our age.

JED:

Yeah! Uh... what he said.

MR. WALKER:

Well put Mr. Holmes. Well put indeed. Mr. Woodson? Mr. Young?

Beat

ADAM:

I don’t have anything to add, but could I go to the bathroom?

MR. WALKER:

Yes, Mr. Woodson, you may go to the bathroom.

ADAM exits

MR. WALKER (To the class):

Now, the lines that Mr. Holmes has brought to our attention is the first time that we're introduced to the idea that these soldiers have had their youth stolen from them because of this war...

JED:

Alright, you were right.

PERCY:

What?

JED:

You were right.

PERCY:

About?

JED:

About staying home to read that book. Because we would've been fucked just then otherwise.

PERCY:

Bet you're happy I stayed home now.

JED:

Hahaha, a little bit.

The two sit and listen to MR. WALKER lecture for a while. Jed turns to PERCY desperately wanting to start a conversation, but entirely unable to do so. PERCY notices

PERCY:

Hey, is something wrong?

JED:

No. No. Everything's cool.

Beat

I really need your advice though.

PERCY:

Of course man, what's up?

JED:

It's uh... it's about prom.

PERCY:

Yeah? I thought we were gonna talk about prom when we went to my place later, why bring it up now?

JED:

You're right, we are. But, uh, I just need you to help me out with something before tonight, okay?

PERCY:

Okay? Just so you know though, you're kind of weirding me out with how much you're dancing around it all.

JED:

Sorry, so, you know Jenna.

PERCY:

Jenna? Like, Adam's sister Jenna? Yeah of course I do, why?

JED:

You're not making this easy, you know that?

PERCY:

Making what easy? I don't see what you're getting at-

A Light Bulb

Wait a second. You don't mean...

JED just nods

Oh... damn.

JED:

Yeah... I don't know what to do Percy.

Beat

PERCY:

You like Jenna, yeah?

JED:

Very, very much so.

PERCY:

Then I think you've just gotta do it man.

JED:

Really?

PERCY:

Really. Look, I know that we joke about Adam's sister a lot. And I know that he doesn't like us doing that, but if you talked to him about it, and you were straightforward and honest, he's not going to hate you for it. We're all friends, he'll understand.

JED:

Okay... okay... good to know. If I brought it up tonight, you'll be there for me, right?

PERCY:

Of course I will! And I'm gonna make sure that you get to take her to prom, alright?

JED:

Alright, thanks Percy.

PERCY:

That's what friends are for.

ADAM enters, interrupting MR. WALKER's lecture

ADAM:

Sorry. Hey guys, what'd I miss? Why's Jed have that stupid grin on his face?

JED:

Just excited about prom.

ADAM:

Shit, are we still gonna talk about that tonight?

PERCY:

Yeah, we have a lot of things we're gonna need to figure out before prom night.

ADAM:

Shit you're right, we still have to trick some girl into going to prom with Jed.

JED and PERCY share a look and stifle a laugh

What?

MR. WALKER:

Is there something you boys would like to share with the class?

PERCY:

Nope.

ADAM:

Nuh-uh.

JED:

Actually, since you asked, can I go to the bathroom?

MR. WALKER (Sighing, To the class):

You all are aware that you can go to the bathroom *in between* classes, correct?

Some nods here and there, a couple of hardly audible yes' are heard

JED:

So?

MR. WALKER (Reluctantly):

Go. And make it quick.

*JED hops up and rushes out of the room
before MR. WALKER can change his mind*

ADAM:

That kid has a bladder the size of a cashew.

PERCY:

Isn't the saying usually a pea?

ADAM:

Sure, but it's funnier to make fun of his nuts using nuts, isn't it?

PERCY:

Fair enough.

*The two finally begin to pay attention to MR.
WALKER's lecture*

MR. WALKER:

Now, it's an interesting thing to consider how little of the book actually takes place on and describes the battlefield. What do you think that means?

STUDENT 1:

The author wrote a boring book.

MR. WALKER ignores this answer

STUDENT 2:

Does it mean that the war is an afterthought to the narrator?

MR. WALKER:

Not quite, but you're on the right track.

PERCY:

It means that the narrator thinks the most important thing to tell us is the way that he feels and thinks. He doesn't want us to fall into the trap of only caring about the war in the same way that he thinks the Kaiser and other world leaders care about.

MR. WALKER:

Very good Mr. Holmes. The narrator is so focused on the time that he spends outside of the war because-

A gunshot is heard, however it is faint, quiet, almost imperceptible. MR. WALKER pauses, but convinces himself that he must have imagined it

Because that time is where he is able to be himself, or at least as much of himself as he can be. That time-

A second gunshot, this one significantly louder. MR. WALKER pauses again, and this time a general sense of unease spreads through the class.

STUDENT 1:

Mr. Walker, what was that?

MR. WALKER

I'm not sure.

MR. WALKER walks over to the door, and just as he's about to open it, a third gunshot rings out. This time it is unmistakable and panic spreads like wildfire

Everyone stay calm. We need to stay calm, and quiet. Under your desks, now!

The students rush to follow MR. WALKER's orders, silent tears streaming down their faces. Bullets continue to be heard outside of the classroom, are they getting closer? PERCY and ADAM are holding each other when they remember:

ADAM:

Jed.

Oh God.

PERCY:

Percy, what do we do?

ADAM:

PERCY stands

Percy, what are you doing?

PERCY runs to the front of the room, ADAM can't stop him

Percy!

MR. WALKER tries to tackle PERCY but he too misses. Another gunshot, deafeningly loud, almost certainly right outside the door. But PERCY is determined. He gets to the door; but before he can open it, it is kicked open. Everyone screams. BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

SETTING: A hospital room

AT RISE: The stage is sparse. PERCY lies in a bed sleeping fitfully, with ADAM standing nearby. PERCY's MOM occupies a chair in the corner of the room.

PERCY:

No... no, Jed!

ADAM:

Percy!

PERCY'S MOM:

Shh, Adam, honey, he's still sleeping.

ADAM:

What? Oh. Well, why? The doctor said he would be up by now.

PERCY'S MOM:

I know they did, but if he's still sleeping we should let him sleep.

PERCY:

Jed, why are you doing this?

ADAM:

What's he talking about?

PERCY'S MOM:

I... I don't know.

PERCY:

Put it down Jed!

ADAM:

Put it... you don't think?

There is no response

ADAM:

Mrs. Holmes if he thinks that Jed did this-

PERCY'S MOM

-We don't know that-

ADAM:

-We won't know! But if he thinks that Jed did this we have to wake him up!

PERCY'S MOM:

And do you think what he's going to find out when he wakes up is actually any better?

This shuts ADAM up. No one should have to bear that bad news. PERCY, unfortunately, wakes up anyways

PERCY:

JED!

He looks around and sees ADAM

Adam! Thank God, it was all just a dream! Where are we? Why are we in a hospital?

ADAM says nothing

Adam, what's happening?

ADAM:

It wasn't a dream, Perce.

PERCY:

What? You mean the shooting...

ADAM nods

Why... Why would he do that?

ADAM (Reluctantly):

Why would who do what?

PERCY:

Jed, why would he...

PERCY'S MOM:

Sweetie, what do you think Jed did?

PERCY:

Mom? You're here too?

PERCY'S MOM:

Percy, what do you think he did?

PERCY:

Well he... he shot me-

PERCY searches his body for a bullet wound, but finds none.

I got shot, why can't I find where I was shot? You said it wasn't a dream!

ADAM:

It wasn't but Perce-

PERCY:

-If I didn't get shot, why am I here? And... and why isn't Jed here with us?

Beat

WHAT AREN'T YOU GUYS TELLING ME!

PERCY'S MOM:

You need to calm down-

PERCY:

-Don't tell me to calm down! I'm not calming down until-

ADAM:

-Perce if you don't calm down, we can't tell you anything. Calm your ass down, and I'll tell you everything, okay?

PERCY'S MOM:

Adam, you don't have to-

ADAM:

Okay?

PERCY:

Okay... okay.

ADAM:

Now, ask me a question.

PERCY:

What happened?

ADAM:

Nope. Narrow it down.

Was there a shooting?

PERCY:

Yes.

ADAM:

Did I get shot?

PERCY:

No.

ADAM:

Why am I here?

PERCY:

You hit your head when the police breached the classroom to get us out.

ADAM:

... Was it Jed?

PERCY:

No.

ADAM:

Thank God. Where is he then?

PERCY:

ADAM and PERCY'S MOM share a look

Where's Jed?

ADAM:

He's just a room over.

PERCY:

So he's fine then? Why are you guys acting so weird about this if we can literally walk over to him? Help me up.

PERCY slowly starts to break down, understanding what has happened but unwilling to admit it

Why are you guys looking at me like that? Just help me up. Adam? Adam, please... Why won't you help me up? Mom-

PERCY'S MOM:

Percy... Jed's hurt. Really bad, and... and the doctors don't know what's going to happen to him.

PERCY:

But-

ADAM:

Think. You know he didn't make it back from the bathroom. As far as I can tell he was on his way back from the bathroom when...

Despite the hope still radiating in his eyes, all the fight has left PERCY

PERCY:

When can I go home?

PERCY'S MOM:

The doctor said that they wanted to keep you overnight, but I can bring you anything you need, and we'll leave first thing in the morning, okay?

PERCY manages a slight nod

PERCY:

Can you go get my book? And maybe some food?

PERCY'S MOM

Of course sweetie, we can do takeout from Elm Avenue Diner, your favorite.

PERCY:

Thanks mom.

PERCY'S MOM:

Do you want anything Adam?

ADAM:

No, that's fine, you don't have to-

PERCY'S MOM gives him a look that makes it clear such an idea won't slide

ADAM:

A burger, fries, lots of ranch.

PERCY:

LOTS of ranch.

PERCY'S MOM:

You've got it boys, I'll be right back.

But before PERCY'S MOM can leave DOCTOR enters. The tension in the room immediately rebounds. A slight shake of the head. DOCTOR and PERCY'S MOM exit

SCENE 4

SETTING: A Hospital Room

AT RISE: It is the middle of the night. PERCY lies wide awake in the hospital bed, still reeling from the news from earlier. ADAM is asleep in the chair. They are illuminated by the gentle glow of a TV displaying news coverage of the shooting.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.):

Breaking News from our exclusive coverage of the Breckenridge Academy school shooting. We have just received word that the shooter has been cleared by doctors at Riverbend Medical Center. They will be held overnight for observation, following which the authorities will take them into custody. The trial will be-

PERCY turns the television off and attempts to get himself out of bed.

ADAM:

Where do you think you're going?

PERCY:

I didn't know you were awake.

ADAM:

Does me being awake change where you're going?

PERCY:

Just go back to sleep Adam.

ADAM:

Sorry man, I'm not really tired.

PERCY:

Adam. Go. Back To. Sleep.

ADAM:

Perce, I don't know what your plan here is. You're not gonna be able to get to them. Just because they're not being taken into custody tonight doesn't mean there's no police here right now. You wouldn't even get close.

PERCY:

So? I'm going, and you better not try to stop me.

ADAM:

You know I can't let you do that.

PERCY finally stands, ADAM blocks the door

What are you hoping to get out of this?

PERCY:

It doesn't matter, now move.

ADAM:

No.

PERCY:

Move.

ADAM:

I'm not moving.

PERCY:

FUCKING MOVE!

*A small tussle that PERCY doesn't have
much of a chance in*

FUCK.

ADAM:

Percy, man, you need to lay back down. You're still hurt.

PERCY:

I can't do that.

ADAM:

Why not?

PERCY:

Because I can't just let them get away from here. I gotta avenge Jed.

ADAM:

Avenge him?! Percy you're not a fucking super hero. Do you recognize how ridiculous you sound?

PERCY:

You just don't get it.

ADAM:

No, I do get it. You want to walk out that door, march down the hallway, and kill someone. Straight up murder them.

PERCY:

Just like they did to Jed.

ADAM:

And they're gonna go to jail for it. Forever.

PERCY:

You don't know that.

ADAM:

I do know that. And even if I wasn't 100% sure that they would go to jail for the rest of their life, I still wouldn't let you leave this room.

PERCY:

Clearly you don't care for Jed like I do then.

ADAM:

Don't. That's bullshit. Don't you put this on him. Don't you use his name to justify this stupid bullshit. Stop and fucking think Perce. Do you honestly believe that Jed would have wanted you to do this? Lay back down and go to bed, okay? We'll go home tomorrow, and...

PERCY:

And what?

ADAM:

I don't know.

PERCY:

Great. At least you've thought this all through then.

PERCY slowly makes his way back to the bed

What a stupid fucking world.

SCENE 5

SETTING: A Hospital Room

AT RISE: It's early morning and the hospital has slowly begun to come alive again. PERCY is packing the few belongings that he has in order to leave. ADAM and PERCY'S MOM stand nearby.

ADAM:

It was weird Mrs. Holmes, I've never seen Percy act like that before.

PERCY'S MOM:

Thank you Adam, I'll make sure to keep an eye on him. Could you bring Percy's backpack out to the car for him please?

ADAM:

Of course.

ADAM takes the bag from PERCY and exits

PERCY:

I can carry my own bag. It's just a concussion. It's not like I was shot.

PERCY'S MOM:

Percy!

PERCY:

Kidding! Geez, lighten up a bit would ya?

DOCTOR enters

DOCTOR:

Good morning! How are we feeling today?

PERCY:

I'm okay, just a shooting pain in my head.

PERCY'S MOM gives him an elbow

DOCTOR:

It's alright ma'am, it's a common reaction from trauma survivors.

PERCY:

See? I told ya to lighten up.

DOCTOR:

I just have a quick checkup for you, and then you should be free to go.

DOCTOR gives PERCY a typical physical check-up

Looks like you are all good to go. We'll want to have you in for a check in a couple of weeks, but don't hesitate to come in earlier if you feel like you need it.

PERCY'S MOM:

Of course, thank you so much doctor.

DOCTOR exits

All good to go?

PERCY:

Yeah, but I haven't seen my copy of *All Quiet on the Western Front* anywhere. I thought you were going to bring it here when you came back, but I don't see it.

PERCY'S MOM:

I couldn't find it anywhere, could it still be at the school?

PERCY:

The school? Why would it be... Oh. Yeah, I guess it's possible.

PERCY'S MOM:

Do you want to stop there on the way back? We could see if we could get in-

PERCY:

No.

PERCY'S MOM is surprised by the quickness to PERCY'S reply

Sorry, I just... I just want to go home. We can get it some other time.

PERCY'S MOM:

Of course. Home.

PERCY and PERCY'S MOM exit. They re-enter into PERCY'S room. PERCY immediately goes to his bed and sprawls out

on it. PERCY'S MOM stays away from him, but is clearly hesitant to leave him on his own.

Do you want to do anything tonight hun?

Beat

We could go out to eat tonight if you want. Anywhere you want to go!

Beat

Percy, I'm sure that you don't want to talk about it, but I need you to know that you can talk to me if you want to.

PERCY:

Why does everyone want to talk to me? I'm fine! I don't want to talk, and I don't want to go anywhere! I just want to be left alone, but guess what, that's the only thing that nobody is willing to give me! So maybe let's just leave me be? Okay?

PERCY'S MOM turns to leave

PERCY'S MOM:

If you need anything you know where I am.

Beat

I love you.

There is no response. PERCY'S MOM exits. PERCY slumps back into his bed. He turns on his gaming system, but barely allows the game to start before he turns it back off. He wanders over to a bookshelf, slowly pulling out and putting back every book on it. He goes back to his bed and turns out the lights. He eventually falls into a fitful sleep. JED enters

JED:

What're ya sleeping for? I thought we were going to the movie! You didn't lie to me, did you?

PERCY:

Who the- Jed? No, it can't be.

JED:

What do you mean it can't be? God, you can be so weird sometimes. Are we going or not?

PERCY:

Yeah. Yeah, of course! Just let me get dressed and we can go. It'll only take a second.

JED doesn't say anything, he just slowly crosses the room and exits

Wait! Jed! Where are you going? Jed!

PERCY rushes to follow JED but is stopped by an invisible wall at the door. He's unable to get through

JED! Come back, man! You can't leave me again! Come back!

The door slams shut in PERCY'S face, and he's thrown into the center of the room

What the hell?

PERCY rushes over to the door and throws it open, only to come face to face with PERCY'S MOM, now holding a box of pizza

PERCY'S MOM

Oh, hi honey, did you hear me coming?

PERCY:

Umm... yeah... yeah I did. Is that pizza?

PERCY'S MOM:

Yeah! Yeah, it is. I figured you might want something to eat so I went and grabbed us a pizza to share. If that's okay?

PERCY:

Could you just leave me a piece or two? I'm kinda tired right now.

PERCY'S MOM:

But you were just... yeah, I can do that, let me go grab a plate for you. Do you want anything to drink?

PERCY just shakes his head. PERCY'S MOM exits and eventually returns with two slices of pizza on a plate. She sets it on his desk

Here you go hun. Do you need anything else?

PERCY:

No. Thank you.

PERCY'S MOM exits

I love you.

SCENE 6

SETTING: ADAM'S Bedroom and the family car

AT RISE: ADAM is laying in his bed, deep in sleep. It is, however, a very fitful sleep.

ADAM (While asleep):

Jed... Jed... Where are you going? Come back! Don't leave us!

ADAM jolts awake, only calming down after finding that he is in his room

Another nightmare... Ugh. Fuck this shit.

ADAM slowly crawls out of bed and begins to get ready for his day

ADAM'S MOM (From offstage):

Adam, are you up yet?

ADAM:

Yeah mom! How much time do I have?

ADAM'S MOM:

About 15 minutes until we have to leave!

ADAM:

Shit. Do you think I have time to shower?

ADAM'S MOM:

Probably not hun. I'm sorry, I should have woken you up earlier.

ADAM:

No, no, it's alright, I'll just have to skip for today, it's no big deal. Though my therapist might not see it that way. Now, where did I put my deodorant?

ADAM digs through various piles on the floor of his room, looking for a way to quell the stench of day old teenage boy. Eventually he stumbles across a bottle of spray deodorant and drenches himself in it. ADAM'S MOM enters

ADAM'S MOM:

You ready? My god, what did you spray in here?

ADAM:

You're so dramatic, it's just a little bit of deodorant.

ADAM'S MOM:

You keep telling yourself that, I'm gonna go find something to plug my nose with.

ADAM:

Oh, shut up. I can drive myself if it's that bad.

ADAM'S MOM:

In your dreams mister.

ADAM:

C'mooooon Mom. It's not like I haven't driven before, I've only been doing it for years.

ADAM'S MOM:

I know that. I just want to be there for you today.

ADAM:

But-

ADAM'S MOM

-Let me rephrase. I want to be there for you IF you need me to be. Now get your butt to the car, or we're gonna be late.

ADAM:

Yes ma'am.

ADAM and ADAM'S MOM hop into the car

Alright, let's get this bitch rolling!

ADAM'S MOM:

Language! And aren't you forgetting something mister?

ADAM:

Phone. Wallet. Keys. Emotional support parent. Nope, I think I have everything I need.

ADAM'S MOM:

Keep this up and I'll tie you to the roof. Now put your seatbelt on.

ADAM:

Oh, that's what you meant! I guess I can put that on.

ADAM throws on his seatbelt and off the pair go. There is an uneasy silence between the two, and the longer it goes on the more concerned ADAM begins to look

ADAM'S MOM:

Whatcha thinking about hun?

ADAM:

Hmm? Oh, nothing serious. You know me! Just the mysteries of the universe: Life, Death, Multi-Universe Theory, Girls, the usual.

ADAM'S MOM:

Are you nervous?

ADAM:

That obvious?

ADAM'S MOM:

A little bit.

ADAM:

It's just... what if... I don't know what's going to happen today. And... that scares me. A lot. I don't know what's gonna come out of me when they start asking me all of these questions about school and Jed... What if they put me away Mom? What if I'm so fucked up that they send me away and I never get to leave again?

ADAM'S MOM pulls the car over

ADAM'S MOM

Adam, Adam hunny. They're not going to send you away forever, I can promise you that.

ADAM:

Because I'm not fucked up?

ADAM'S MOM:

Because even if you are a little fucked up, that's okay. Everyone's a little bit fucked up sweetie. And you know what? There isn't a thing wrong with that. The world can be really, really rough on everyone, and it's okay for it to be too much for you sometimes. That's what I'm here for. That's what the therapist is here for. That's what Percy is there for. We get through this world together Adam, and I don't ever want you to forget that, you hear me?

ADAM:

Yes ma'am.

ADAM'S MOM:

Good, now let's get this show on the road again, shall we?

ADAM nods and ADAM'S MOM puts the car into drive, the world a little more manageable than it was before

ADAM:

Y'know, I don't think I've ever heard you swear before.

ADAM'S MOM laughs

ADAM'S MOM:

And don't you expect to hear it again.

SCENE 7

SETTING: PERCY'S Room

AT RISE: It is the morning after Scene 5. PERCY sits in the middle of his floor surrounded by books, video games, movies, anything that could have occupied his time. He has clearly not gotten a wink of sleep throughout the night. The plate of pizza sits cold and uneaten, not even a nibble taken from it. A knock at the door

PERCY'S MOM:

You awake honey?

There is no answer, PERCY'S MOM enters

Oh Percy, did you sleep at all last night?

PERCY:

Yeah mom, I did.

This is obviously a lie

PERCY'S MOM:

I have to go to work, are you going to be alright by yourself today?

PERCY:

I'll be fine.

PERCY'S MOM (Cont. from above, overlapping PERCY'S line):
Because I can call in. They would understand if I couldn't make it today.

Beat

Alright, I'm going to head out then. If you have any problems or if you decide to leave the house to hang out with Adam and J-

A pause, she almost said JED

OR... anyone else, just give me a call. Please?

PERCY:

Okay.

PERCY'S MOM:

You can still go of course.

PERCY:

Okay.

PERCY'S MOM:

I just want to-

PERCY:

-Okay Mom.

PERCY'S MOM:

I love you.

There is a long pause before PERCY replies

PERCY:

I love you too.

PERCY'S MOM exits, closing the door behind her. PERCY returns to his task of finding something to occupy his time other than sleep. He eventually settles on the TV

again, turning it on. It is already tuned to the news

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.):

Thank you for that. Now for an update on the Breckenridge Academy shooting. Just earlier today the last of the students wounded in the attack were finally released from the hospital. That brings the final count of fatalities for the attack to 4. A memorial will be held-

A loud clunk is heard just outside of PERCY'S door. He immediately jumps to his feet and creeps towards it, ready to attack. It slowly creaks open

ADAM:

OW! What the hell are you doing Perce!

PERCY:

Adam? What the fuck are you creeping around my house for? Why are you even here?

ADAM:

I mean if you don't want my love and affection I can always take it somewhere else-

PERCY:

-I don't mind that you're here, I mind that you broke into my house and scared the shit out of me.

ADAM:

If you need to change your underwear let me know, I'll turn around. And it's not breaking in if the door's unlocked. I'm pretty sure that's the law anyways.

ADAM glances around the room

Dude, your room is a mess, what the hell have you been doing?

PERCY:

It's just been a long night.

ADAM:

Ahh, I feel that. I get that way sometimes too. Nothing wrong with that.

PERCY:

Of course there's not.

ADAM:

However, there is something wrong with watching the news in this day and age. What are you 47? Turn on the game or something.

PERCY:

I don't want to watch the game.

ADAM is dumbfounded by this revelation

ADAM:

Alright, but do we have to watch the news? I can't imagine my therapist would be thrilled to see me obsessively watching coverage of my near-death experience.

PERCY:

Your therapist?

ADAM:

Yeah? I told you Mr. Walker suggested I start seeing one when you were in the hospital.

PERCY:

I must not have heard you, because I don't remember that. Mr. Walker was at the hospital?

ADAM:

Yeah, he was checking in on all the students. He came to see you too, but you were still knocked out when he swung by.

PERCY:

Sounds like my luck.

ADAM:

Eh, it happens. I'm sure he'll talk to you tomorrow.

PERCY:

Tomorrow? Why tomorrow?

ADAM:

Because we're back in school tomorrow?

PERCY:

I'm sorry, what?

ADAM:

You didn't forget already did you?

PERCY:

Well, clearly I did.

ADAM:

Clearly. They're restarting classes tomorrow, some stupid half-day bullshit.

PERCY:

I see.

ADAM:

Is something wrong?

PERCY:

What on earth makes you think that?

ADAM:

You just seem nervous that's all.

PERCY:

Oh fuck off.

ADAM:

Perce, man, there's nothing wrong with being scared, or nervous. We went through alot. It's a lot to handle. Especially to go back to where everything happened, my therapist says-

PERCY:

Woah, woah, woah, hold up. Your therapist? Since when did you start going to a therapist?

ADAM:

I mean, right after we were in a building that four of our classmates, including our closest friend, were mowed down by a crazed asshole?

PERCY:

Damn, down boy, no need to attack me.

ADAM:

Well why do you sound so condescending about it then? There's nothing wrong with seeing a therapist.

PERCY:

And I never said that there was.

ADAM:

Well I don't exactly feel supported by you man. Honestly, I feel like you want to make fun of me over it.

PERCY:

We make fun of each other for everything, so, yeah. Maybe I do. You got a problem with that?

ADAM:

Yeah, I do, because right now, my *only* friend left in the world is making fun of me for the only thing keeping me from killing myself!

The room is dead silent

PERCY:

You what?

ADAM:

Don't make me say it again.

PERCY:

When were you going to tell me?

ADAM:

I don't know...

PERCY:

Were you even going to tell me?!

ADAM:

Of course I was going to tell you!

PERCY:

Then when!

ADAM:

I don't know! Okay? I don't know! Do you know how fucking hard this shit is? Do you think I want to tell my best friend that he's not enough to keep me here? That sometimes I just lay in my bed and wish that when I wake up I'll be with Jed again? Do you think that's something I ever wanted to tell you? WELL?

PERCY:

No...

ADAM:

No! No I don't! But I was going to anyway! Because you're my best friend Perce, and because I know that you can help me through this. But you're not gonna be able to help me if you're making fun of me. Okay?

PERCY:

Okay. I'm sorry Adam.

ADAM:

I know. And it's not your fault, you didn't know-

PERCY:

-No, I didn't-

ADAM:

-But now you do.

PERCY:

Now I do. You're right though, I can help you through this, I promise that I'm here for you.

ADAM:

Why do you think I'm friends with you? You're the most dependable person I know man, I'd trust you with my life.

PERCY:

Literally now, eh?

The two look at each other for a long moment before they slowly dissolve into laughter

ADAM:

God, you're just terrible you know that?

PERCY:

So I've been told, but one of us has to be.

ADAM:

Your poor mother.

Beat

PERCY:

So what do we do now?

SCENE 8

SETTING: MR. WALKER'S Classroom

AT RISE: It is the first day back to school since the shooting. MR. WALKER is lecturing to a very jumpy and unattentive class. The seat between ADAM and PERCY is noticeably empty.

MR. WALKER:

Now, originally today I wanted to discuss *All Quiet on the Western Front's* thematic use of trauma as seen through the narrator of the book and how this helps lead to the disillusionment of the war for him. This may hit home a little harder than normally in my classes due to some... unforeseen circumstances. Due to this I wanted to take this opportunity to remind everyone that my classroom is and always will be a no judgement zone, and that it is perfectly acceptable for your emotions to come through when discussing anything, and that it is just as acceptable to not want to join in on our

discussions for the same reason. With that being said, I would also like to open the floor to anyone who would like to take this time to talk about how they feel and about what happened.

MR. WALKER waits for someone to take the opportunity and run with it... Somebody... Anybody...

Alright, why don't I just get us started then. I was re-reading some of the book last night when I came across this quote that I believe will resonate a bit more with some of you now. On page 86, "How can a man take all that stuff seriously when he's once been out here?" They are, of course, referring to their eventual return to civilian life after the war has finished. However, this is far and away a universal human experience. Everyone, at some point in their lives, has seen something that made them question humanity. Be it war, poverty, racism, death of any sort, it's easy to lose sight of the things that make life worth living when our perception of the world around us has been rocked to its' very core. In the book, we see the soldiers dealing with it in some not so healthy ways. The subject at hand is broached by many of them, but it's always snuffed out before anything positive can come of it. I don't want that to happen to any of you, so please, if you feel so inclined, I would love to hear what you have to say.

Another opportunity for the class. A long pause, it seems no one will be taking this opportunity either, until...

STUDENT 1:

The world just seems so different now. Like those things that we always hear about on TV, it seems much more realistic that it can happen to us because it already has.

STUDENT 2:

Yeah! I've been on the edge of my seat all class just to be ready in case something happens. I never used to think like that before, and now that's all that I can think about.

STUDENT 1:

It also feels like my parents just don't get it.

MR. WALKER:

How so?

STUDENT 1:

Well... you know how the narrator goes home for leave and he sees his family and all the people that are still in the town? It's like that. They think they understand what's happened to us, but what we've been through is so far beyond what they could possibly even think of that it just hurts more than anything else when they try to help us.

MR. WALKER:

Does anyone else feel that way as well?

An overwhelming majority of the students nod their head, including ADAM

I thought as much. Which is why me and some of the other teachers have decided to create a support group for you students. We will meet once a week on Wednesdays at 5pm right here in my classroom. I hope to see each and every one of you there, even if you feel like you don't need it.

PERCY:

Why would we come if we don't feel like we need it?

MR. WALKER:

Well, you could do it to support a friend or a classmate, to see what's going on and if you'd like it, or maybe you just want to see my smiling mug outside of school hours. Whatever the reason, I want everyone to know that they're more than welcome to swing on by.

The school bell rings, all of the students begin to pack up and file offstage

Mr. Holmes, could you stay after for a second? There's something that I wanted to talk to you about.

PERCY:

Ummm... okay?

ADAM gives PERCY a look, but PERCY waves him away. ADAM and the other students slowly finish exiting and PERCY approaches MR. WALKER

Am I in trouble or something?

MR. WALKER:

Trouble? Oh goodness of course not. I just wanted to talk with you. I came by your hospital room when this whole mess began, but you were unconscious at the time so I wasn't able to check in on you.

PERCY:

I know. Adam told me.

MR. WALKER:

I had figured as much. How is Mr. Woodson?

PERCY:

Good. He's going to therapy though, so I guess maybe not.

MR. WALKER:

Do you think that him being in therapy means that he can't be doing fine?

PERCY:

I don't know. But usually when you go to therapy, it's not because you're happy.

MR. WALKER:

Fair enough, but enough about him, how have you been Mr. Holmes?

PERCY:

Fine, I guess.

MR. WALKER:

You guess?

PERCY:

Yeah? I mean, I'm not sure what you expect from me with everything that's happened.

MR. WALKER:

Do you trust me Percy?

PERCY:

Yes... Wait, did you just call me Percy?

MR. WALKER:

Do you trust me?

PERCY:

In a way that every student trusts their teacher, sure.

MR. WALKER:

Then can you tell me the truth please Percy?

PERCY:

About what?

MR. WALKER:

About you, and how you're feeling.

PERCY:

Do you think I'm lying to you?

MR. WALKER:

I think that you're deliberately avoiding the subject entirely.

PERCY:

Why would you think that?

MR. WALKER:

Forgive me if I'm a little crass, but one of your two best friends just died, and you're acting like you don't need any sort of help whatsoever.

PERCY:

And because of that you have to play hero? You gonna swoop in and save the day with your happy-go-lucky support group? Huh?

MR. WALKER:

Not necessarily, I just wanted to make sure that you're handling Jed's-

PERCY:

-Don't you say his name.

MR. WALKER:

What?

PERCY:

Don't you dare say his name. Acting like you knew him. You were just his teacher, that's it! And you're just my teacher too! So stop acting like you want to be my therapist and go talk to those idiots who think they can get the help they need from you.

MR. WALKER:

Percy-

PERCY (Overlapping him):

-Because I don't need some self-righteous fuck to help me make sense of my best friend being killed literally minutes after I talked to him. I don't need you to tell me that it wasn't my fault. I don't need you to tell me that it should've been me instead. I don't need you to tell me that I would do anything to be back with him again, because I've been telling myself that over and over again. Every fucking night since I woke up in that hospital bed I've thought each and every one of those thoughts. And maybe next time I'll act on it-

PERCY comes to an abrupt halt, acutely aware of everything that he has just told his teacher

MR. WALKER:

Percy did you just-

PERCY:

-I have to get to my next class.

PERCY exits

SCENE 9

SETTING: PERCY'S Room

AT RISE: PERCY and ADAM sit on the floor, talking shop about their upcoming quest for prom dates.

ADAM:

So, what are your thoughts on me asking... drumroll please... Abby Stewart to prom?

PERCY:

You really think you'd have a chance with Abby Stewart?

ADAM:

What's that supposed to mean?

PERCY:

It means that you don't stand a chance with Abby Stewart and that I wanted you to realize that for yourself rather than me just telling you.

ADAM:

Oh come off it, I could totally ask Abby Stewart to prom.

PERCY:

Sure you could ask, but there's no way that she says yes.

ADAM:

Maybe not, but if I don't ask she doesn't even get the chance.

PERCY:

She doesn't need the chance. Why don't you set your sights a little bit lower, huh?

ADAM:

Like who?

PERCY:

Like literally anyone that you've actually talked to before?

ADAM:

I can't do that!

PERCY:

And why not?

ADAM:

Because that's too easy! What if someone actually says yes this year! Then I would have to get a tux, and flowers, and condoms. There's just no way I could afford all that! And if I can't afford all that I skimp out on the condoms, just the flowers and the tux you y'know because I don't need condoms-

PERCY:

-Because you don't get laid-

ADAM:

-Because going raw is cheaper. And then guess what happens.

PERCY:

What?

ADAM:

My penis falls off!

PERCY:

I'm not so sure that I follow your thought process on that one.

ADAM:

Where could you possibly have gotten lost?

PERCY:

Somewhere between going raw and losing your penis.

ADAM:

How can't you see the correlation?

PERCY:

Maybe I just need a step-by-step.

ADAM:

Then a step-by-step you shall get. So me and this girl, say Abby Stewart-

PERCY:

-Not Abby Stewart-

ADAM:

-Not Abby Stewart. We go to prom, we have fun, we go to a hotel, as you do.

PERCY:

As you do.

ADAM:

Then the fooling starts, the clothes are gone, and then we get to the hmmm-hmmm.

PERCY:
The hmmm-hmmm?

ADAM:
The hmmm-hmmm. But oh no, guess what no condom means?

PERCY:
You two pump chump it?

ADAM:
I catch an STD.

PERCY:
Oh, the humanity.

ADAM:
And you know what an STD means?

PERCY:
No penis?

ADAM:
No penis!

Beat

PERCY:
Still seems like a bit of a stretch.

ADAM:
Whatever, Jed would've understood right away.

PERCY:
Yeah... yeah he would've.

ADAM:
What's wrong?

PERCY:

Nothing.

ADAM:

C'mon man. I'm not an idiot. You don't hide your emotions well at all.

PERCY:

Oh what do you know?

ADAM:

Honestly, not a ton. But I can read you like a fucking book, so spill it.

PERCY:

It's just... All this talk about prom, it reminds me of Jed.

ADAM:

Why does that remind you of Jed?

PERCY:

What do you mean why? Obviously it's...

ADAM:

Obviously it's what?

PERCY:

You weren't there...

ADAM:

What do you mean I wasn't there?

PERCY:

I forgot. You had left to go to the bathroom. It was just the two of us, we were talking about prom dates.

ADAM:

What are you-

PERCY:

-It was that day.

ADAM:

That day? You mean the shooting?

PERCY gives a solemn nod

What did he say?

PERCY:

We were talking about who he wanted to go to prom with.

ADAM:

Okay?

PERCY:

He was so scared of asking her, and not in the way that he always is with girls. He was scared to ask her because of you.

ADAM:

Percy, what are you talking about? You're not making any sense.

PERCY:

Jed... he wanted to ask you...

ADAM:

He wanted to ask me what Percy?

PERCY:

He wanted to ask you if he could bring Jenna to prom.

ADAM:

I'm sorry, what?

PERCY:

He wanted to bring Jenna to prom.

ADAM:

Jenna? Like my sister Jenna?

Another nod

And were the two of you ever going to tell me about this? Or was I supposed to find out on prom night when he just showed up with my sister?

PERCY:

He had wanted to bring it up before, but like I said, he was too scared. We were going to talk to you about it that night. That's why he didn't bring it up til you had left for the bathroom.

ADAM:

FUCK.

PERCY:

What does it even matter? It's not like he can take her anymore.

ADAM:

You think that's why I'm upset? How shallow do you think I am?

PERCY:

Well, why else-

ADAM:

-He was *scared* of me. Scared, Perce. Our best friend. All over some prom date? And *that's* the last thing he thought about. And then nothing. Do you realize how much bullshit that is? He could've fucking gone with her. I wasn't going to care. Jenna probably would've gone with him too. I saw the way she looked at him when he used to come over all the time. It's just all bullshit.

Beat

Y'know it could've been me. Wish it would've been.

PERCY:

Don't say that.

ADAM:

Why not? I heard you say that exact same thing.

PERCY:

No I didn't.

ADAM:

Yes, you did. You think I didn't stay behind and listen when you and Walker talked? I was worried for you, and I was right to be apparently. Because apparently both of us wish it would've been us instead. So what's to stop us from just fucking doing it now, huh? It was just pure bullshit luck that it wasn't me already. Maybe next time I'm not the one that gets lucky. Or the time after that. You can only get lucky so many different times. And even if you get old and die you still fucking die! So we may as well just die now. I'm sorry Perce. I've just gotta go home.

PERCY:

You can't just say that and leave!

ADAM:

Why not? It's not like I mean it. I'm not going to go off myself.

PERCY:

Yeah but I-

ADAM:

Perce, I'm fine, I promise. At least I will be. You don't need to worry about me. I'll see you tomorrow.

ADAM grabs his schoolbag and exits

PERCY:

No. No you won't.

PERCY grabs a rope hidden in his closet and begins to fashion it into a noose as the lights fade down to black. ADAM opens the door

ADAM (In blackout):

Hey did I forget- PERCY!

END OF ACT I

ACT 2

SCENE 1

SETTING: A Hospital Waiting Room

AT RISE: PERCY'S MOM and ADAM are sitting in chairs, anxiously awaiting news about her son. DOCTOR enters the room.

DOCTOR:

I'm looking for Percy's mom?

PERCY'S MOM:

That's me! Is he going to be okay? Please tell me he's going to be okay, I can't live without my baby.

DOCTOR:

He's going to be fine. It was touch and go for a while, he was without oxygen for a long time. Any longer and he might have suffered permanent brain damage. It was lucky that his friend managed to get there when he did. You saved his life son.

ADAM just sits in his chair, unaware of the praise he is receiving

We want to keep him here for a few days, monitor the situation and his health, but we'll need your permission to do that.

PERCY'S MOM:

Yes of course.

DOCTOR:

Sign here.

PERCY'S MOM:

When can I see Percy?

DOCTOR:

As soon as he wakes up I'll send a nurse to bring you to him. Oh, and Mrs. Holmes?

PERCY'S MOM:

Yes?

DOCTOR:

We may be able to help with his... injuries, but Percy needs more than that. I'm sure you know that already though.

DOCTOR exits. Beat

ADAM:

Percy isn't going to want that kind of help.

PERCY'S MOM:

Do you think I don't know that already?

ADAM:

Sorry.

PERCY'S MOM:

No. No, it's alright. I didn't mean to snap like that, it's just... these things are hard Adam. That's my son in there.

ADAM:

And he's my best friend.

PERCY'S MOM:

I know.

Beat

I'm going to run outside quick, you have my phone number right? Give me a call if the nurse comes out.

PERCY'S MOM exits, not waiting for an answer

ADAM:

I guess I'll be here then.

ADAM checks his phone, reads a magazine, wanders the room, and does just about everything else an antsy teenager would do in a hospital waiting room. He checks his phone again. Hardly any time has passed.

ADAM:

Well, this is going to be a problem.

HENRY enters and parks his wheelchair across the room from ADAM. He looks eerily familiar

HENRY:

Can I help you?

ADAM:

Fuck, sorry, you just look alot like a friend of mine.

HENRY:

Mhmm.

Beat

ADAM:

My name's Adam by the way. What's yours?

No response

ADAM:

You do have a name, right?

HENRY:

Obviously.

Beat

ADAM:

... Are you going to tell me it?

HENRY:

If I do, will you leave me alone?

ADAM:

I mean, I guess.

HENRY:

Henry.

ADAM:

What was that?

HENRY:

I said my name is Henry.

ADAM:

Nice to meet you Henry. Whatcha here for?

HENRY (To himself):

You can't be serious right now.

(To ADAM)

I thought you were going to leave me alone.

ADAM:

Sorry, I'm just really nervous. I'm waiting to see my friend. He... uh... he had some problems and we had to bring him here, and now I'm here. Alone. Well, not alone because his mom is here, but she left so-

HENRY:

-Look, whoever you are-

ADAM:

-Adam.

HENRY:

Adam. I don't care about your problems. Honestly, I don't. So, I'm not sure why you feel like talking to me *about* all of your problems.

ADAM:

I guess I just figured if I started talking and I kept talking, you would want to talk to me.

HENRY:

And you thought that would work?

ADAM:
Are you trying to tell me that it didn't?

Beat

HENRY:
What's his name?

ADAM:
Percy.

HENRY:
Whatever's wrong with him, I hope he gets better.

ADAM:
You and me both.

PERCY'S MOM enters

PERCY'S MOM:
Still nothing?

ADAM:
Not yet, they're sure taking their time with it.

*PERCY'S MOM sits off by herself to wait,
ADAM moves across the room to HENRY*

HENRY:
I'm sorry, that wasn't meant to be an invitation.

ADAM:
I never took it as one. I'm just hoping you don't move.

HENRY:
You're lucky I don't want to move myself.

ADAM:
I guess I am.

Beat

So, you ever gonna tell me what you're here for?

HENRY:

Jesus, you're persistent. Haven't your parents ever told you that it's rude to pry.

ADAM:

Yeah, but that doesn't mean I have to listen to everything they say. They think I'm a little shit sometimes too.

HENRY:

I think I'd have to agree with them.

ADAM:

It's just a gift I guess!

NURSE enters

NURSE:

Mrs. Holmes?

PERCY'S MOM:

That's me!

NURSE:

You can see your son now.

ADAM:

That's me too, see ya around Henry.

SCENE 2

SETTING: PERCY'S Hospital Room

AT RISE: PERCY lays in the hospital bed. PERCY'S MOM and ADAM enter with NURSE

NURSE:

I'll be just outside of the room if you need anything.

NURSE exits

PERCY'S MOM:

Oh Percy, honey, I'm so glad you're alright! I was so scared that we were going to lose you.

PERCY has yet to even look at his mother

ADAM:

How are you feeling?

This too, only warrants a shrug

PERCY'S MOM:

Is there anything that we can do for you hun? Something you want from home? A book maybe? Or your homework?

PERCY:

I want to go home.

PERCY'S MOM:

We can't go home, not tonight.

PERCY:

Why not?

ADAM:

Why not? Percy you-

PERCY'S MOM cuts him off

You just can't. Doctor's orders. But I'm gonna spend the night with you if it's okay with your mom.

PERCY'S MOM:

Of course it is. You can stay in the chair, just like last time.

PERCY:

I don't want him to stay.

ADAM:
What?

PERCY:
I said-

ADAM:
-I heard what you said. What do you mean you don't want me to stay.

PERCY:
It means I don't want you to stay. I thought that was pretty obvious.

ADAM:
Percy, I'm your best friend.

PERCY:
Not anymore you're not.

ADAM:
Why? Because I saved your fucking life? Because I didn't *let* you kill yourself?

PERCY'S MOM:
Adam!

ADAM:
I hope that I'm wrong. God help me I do, but at this point, I don't think I am. So go ahead, tell me that I'm wrong. Tell me what I possibly could have done to you to make you hate me.

PERCY doesn't answer

That's what I thought. Fuck you.

ADAM turns to leave

PERCY:
It's crazy how easily you can take the high road when not even three hours ago you were telling me how much you want to die, and that it's only luck that you're here and that we may as well all just die now. What the fuck was I supposed to think about that, huh? And

then you were just going to leave? After that? I thought you were going home to kill yourself! You had thought about it! Said so yourself. You thought about it, I thought about, and if you were going to do it then dammit I wasn't going to be left alone!

ADAM:

And now what? Now you *want* to be alone? Because that makes so much sense, now doesn't it? Whatever, see if I care.

ADAM exits

PERCY'S MOM:

Percy...

PERCY:

What do you want?

PERCY'S MOM:

I want to help you.

PERCY:

Well, isn't that nice? Now, if only you *could* help me.

PERCY'S MOM:

Percy!

PERCY:

Look, I know that you mean well, but you don't know what I'm going through! So as much as you want to, you can't! And you're just gonna have to deal with it!

PERCY'S MOM:

You think I don't know that? That's the only thing that's been going through my head since this whole thing began! The only thing that has given me any sort of comfort is that Adam has always been there with you. Because *he* knows what it's like. And now you've thrown him out too. So who do you want helping you Percy?

PERCY:

I don't need help.

PERCY'S MOM (Soft, motherly):

I hate to point out the obvious kiddo, but you do. I'm going to find Adam, and you're going to apologize and work things out.

PERCY says nothing, simply rolling over in the bed to avoid his mom. PERCY'S MOM exits

SCENE 3

SETTING: The hallways of the hospital and HENRY'S Hospital Room

AT RISE: ADAM exits PERCY'S room, storming into the hallway. He nearly runs into HENRY

ADAM:

That son of a- Woah, shit. Sorry, are you alright?

HENRY:

Jesus Christ. Yeah, I'm fine. What are you doing running around a hospital like that?

ADAM:

Nothing.

HENRY:

Nothing? Alright.

ADAM:

It's... it's not actually nothing. My friend, he's... I don't even know where to begin.

HENRY sighs

HENRY:

Come on, I've got the time.

*HENRY leads ADAM to his hospital room.
It's surprisingly home-y*

ADAM:

Woah, how long have you been here?

HENRY:

Too long.

ADAM:

Fair enough. You've got this place decked out.

HENRY:

It almost makes it worth not being able to walk.

ADAM:

Sorry.

HENRY:

It's fine, you get used to it, or so I'm told.

ADAM:

What happened?

HENRY:

It's a long story.

ADAM:

I've got the time.

HENRY:

You're never going to give up, are you?

ADAM:

Haven't yet.

HENRY considers

HENRY:

Fine. It was a couple of weeks ago now. I was just at school, in the bathrooms. I had just finished washing my hands when I heard a gunshot. I didn't know what to do! Should I stay in the bathroom? Should I make a run to my classroom? Me and this other kid, we finally decided we were going to run for it and...

ADAM:

And?

HENRY:

And then the gunshots got closer. And closer. And then the door opened. I tried to save him, I threw the kid to the ground and jumped on top of him. We got shot a couple of times. I thought they had all hit me. My back was on fire. The bathroom door closed again and I tried to get up, to get off the kid, but I couldn't. I couldn't move anything below my waist. I was so scared. I thought I was going to die. But the kid I was with, he helped roll me off of him, he sat me up, stopped my bleeding. Even though he had clearly been shot too, he wouldn't stop to help himself. And then we sat there and we waited. And waited. Until finally the police came in. They took us to the hospital. I passed out somewhere along the ride, and the next time I woke up I was here. I tried to find the kid that helped save me, but no one would tell me anything. It wasn't 'til later that they finally admitted he had died.

HENRY looks up at ADAM

What's wrong with you?

ADAM:

Where did you go to school?

HENRY:

Breckenridge Academy, why?

ADAM:

What was the kids name?

HENRY:

Why are you being so hostile about this?

ADAM:

Just tell me!

HENRY:

Jed! He told me his name was Jed! Will you calm down now? You're scaring me.

ADAM:

Jed saved your life?

HENRY:

Yes. Why are you so invested in this?

ADAM:

Jed was my friend. One of my best friends actually. The guy I was visiting. Me, him, and Jed did everything together. Ever since... the thing... Percy and I have been off. Not off, we've been suicidal. Which is why I'm here, because Percy... Percy attempted.

HENRY:

Oh damn.

ADAM:

Yeah...

HENRY:

What are you gonna do?

ADAM:

What can you do? He just kicked me out, he clearly doesn't want me there. And even if he did, I can't help myself, how am I supposed to help him?

HENRY:

You don't.

ADAM:

I don't?

HENRY:

You don't. You can't expect that much out of yourself. You can't walk into every room and force yourself to help the people in it. That's asking far too much of yourself and you don't deserve that.

ADAM:

I can't just let him suffer though!

HENRY:

I didn't say you had to let him suffer. But you're not doing any good by forcing yourself to help him at all costs. You need to be there for him.

ADAM:

That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard, there's no difference between being there for him and helping him.

HENRY:

Of course there is. You just admitted that you don't know how to help him. But that's because you're thinking too big. Just be there for him Adam, that's all he needs.

ADAM:

Maybe...

HENRY:

Do you not believe me?

ADAM:

I don't know what to believe anymore.

HENRY:

I'm here, right now, because Jed was there for me.

ADAM:

Yeah, but he was literally there for you.

HENRY:

And he's still there for me now. I'm not perfect. I'm not even okay. Losing the ability to walk has been the hardest thing that I've ever faced. Right away, I didn't even want to keep living. I thought, what's even the point anymore. But I couldn't throw away the life that Jed had given me. He helped me through those first few days, and because of that, I've found so many other things that make life worth living.

ADAM:

Like what?

HENRY:

Like the things that you don't notice right away. Right outside the window of this room, there's a nest of birds, and I get to wake up to their beautiful song every morning. The sunlight, streaming through that same window and warming the room to that perfect nap temperature. My parents, and all of the time and effort that they've put into making our home as accessible to me as they possibly can. The world cares about each and every one of us so much, we just need someone to be there to help us get to the point that we can see it.

ADAM:

I guess I better get back to Percy then, shouldn't I?

HENRY:

That's entirely on you, but if I were you. I'd want to be there.

ADAM:

Thanks Henry. For everything. I'll see you around school, right?

HENRY:

Depends on how unlucky I get.

The two laugh. ADAM exits

SCENE 4

SETTING: PERCY'S Hospital Room

AT RISE: PERCY sits in his bed, he is alone. ADAM enters

PERCY:

Took you long enough.

ADAM:

What's that supposed to mean?

PERCY shrugs

You still hate me?

Another shrug

That's fine. You can hate me if you want. But I'm gonna be here, either way.

PERCY:

Okay.

Beat

And now what?

ADAM:

Whatever you want.

PERCY:

And if I want to be left alone?

ADAM shrugs

Hey, I'm the one that'll be doing the shrugging here.

ADAM:

Maybe.

PERCY:

Little shit.

Beat

Adam, I'm sorry about earlier. You didn't deserve that. It's just... I've been going through so much lately. Well, *we've* been going through so much lately, and I was just so bogged down by it all. My entire life was being strangled by thoughts of death and it really got the better of me. When I thought that you were going to leave too, I panicked. I didn't even think about it, I just grabbed that rope and... and...

ADAM:

Hey, it's alright, it's alright.

PERCY:

I'm really glad you stopped me. I just needed some time I guess. I'm gonna need a lot more of it too, but I've started at least, and I'm really happy with that.

ADAM:

I am too Perce. We're gonna make so much progress in the next few days, months, years, hell over our entire lives. You and me, together.

PERCY:

Together. If you can handle me.

ADAM:

Oh please, you act like you're impossible to deal with.

PERCY:

I certainly don't make it easy.

ADAM:

Not even close, but I never expected it to be easy. If life was easy, we wouldn't appreciate it enough.

PERCY:

Two near death experiences and you start turning into some kind of philosopher?

ADAM:

That was hardly philosophical.

PERCY:

What was it then?

ADAM:

I'm not sure.

PERCY:

Even you don't know what you're talking about, forget turning into one, you're already a tried and true philosopher.

ADAM:

Oh fuck off.

*The two share a laugh, it is pure, a beacon
of hope*

You have any of your shit in here yet?

PERCY:

No, Mom went off looking for you, and she hasn't come back yet.

ADAM:

Damn, I wanted to kick your ass in some video games.

PERCY:

You can't kick my ass in *any* video game.

ADAM:

Wanna bet?

PERCY:

Prove it then. Go find my mom, bring back my gaming system, and I'll kick your ass all night long.

ADAM:

You're on.

ADAM exits, off to find PERCY'S MOM, a bright and genuine smile on his and PERCY'S faces

SCENE 5

SETTING: MR. WALKER'S Classroom

AT RISE: MR. WALKER'S weekly support group meeting has just finished a few students are milling around, including HENRY. ADAM enters pulling along a rather irate PERCY

PERCY:

Adam, I told you I don't need no stinking support group. I'm so much better now, all thanks to you! Now let's get out of here before Mr. Walker sees us and we get stuck here!

ADAM:

Oh stop being such a weenie. There's someone that I need you to meet.

PERCY:

But what if I don't want to meet them? I'll turn and run right now, and don't think I won't, I know I'm faster than you.

ADAM:

If you do that I'll tell Abby Stewart that you want to take her to the prom but you're too scared to ask her yourself so you sent me to do it.

PERCY:
You wouldn't dare.

ADAM:
Try me.

PERCY can tell that ADAM is serious. He stays put (for now). ADAM manages to wave down HENRY who crosses to the two boys

Percy, meet Henry. Henry, Percy.

HENRY:
Nice to meet you Percy, Adam's told me a lot about you.

PERCY:
And Adam has told me next to nothing about you.

HENRY:
With how much he talks? Adam, I am heartbroken.

ADAM:
Oh shove it. We've known each other for like, two weeks.

HENRY:
That's two weeks worth of things you could've told dear Percy here!

PERCY:
Knowing Adam, he probably spent those two weeks talking about himself, so it's probably more like one hours worth of things he could've told me about you.

ADAM:
Well, I guess my work here is done, I'll see you two around.

PERCY:
Oh calm down.

HENRY:
We're just messing with you.

I noticed.

ADAM:

So, how'd you meet Adam, Henry?

PERCY:

HENRY:
It's your fault actually. I was going on my nightly stroll around the hospital the night you came in for... for your thing, and the kid was just this nervous wreck, so he was stammering on and on and I just couldn't get him to shut his mouth. Then later on when he stormed out of your hospital room he basically ended up in my lap-

-Adam! You're cheating on me?

PERCY:

Hush it. Keep going Henry.

ADAM:

HENRY:
There's not much else, we went back to my room and we had a bit of a heart to heart.

ADAM:
Okay, but guess why Henry was in the hospital Perce.

PERCY:
Well that's a bit of a loaded question, isn't it?

ADAM:
Fair point, Henry, could you...

HENRY:
Yeah. I can. I was shot, in the same shooting that your friend Jed was killed in.

PERCY:
Wait, how do you know Jed? Did you tell him about-

ADAM shakes his head

HENRY:

Jed saved my life that day. We were both in the bathroom when the shooting started, and we were there for each other after-

PERCY:

You were with Jed when he died?

HENRY:

I mean, we were both alive when we were driven to the hospital, but-

PERCY:

-Did he say anything?

HENRY:

He just kept on telling me that everything was going to be okay.

PERCY is disappointed by this answer

ADAM:

Perce, Jed spent the final moments of his life being there for someone that he didn't even know. I know that may not be what you wanted to hear, but I thought it was important for you to know.

PERCY:

Yeah, no you're right. That really was our Jed. I miss him.

ADAM:

I miss him too, but I wanted to make sure that you remembered him the way that he would want to be remembered. We're going to grow old, and maybe even apart, but when you look back at your time here, i want you to remember the happiness that we all felt. And I want you to remember our new friend, Henry.

HENRY:

Your new friend? I barely know you and I just met him.

ADAM:

Yeah, but that doesn't mean we can't be friends.

HENRY:

I guess. Y'all are on thin ice though.

PERCY:

Eh, you learn to love us. That's how it always is.

ADAM:

Yeah, just ask our parents!

PERCY:

So, you guys want to get out of here? I don't much feel like talking to Mr. Walker today.

HENRY:

You and me both, he's been eyeing us this entire time, let's book it.

The three boys exit

SCENE 6

SETTING: JED'S Gravesite

AT RISE: It is prom night. Months have passed since HENRY, PERCY, and ADAM, met, and now all three stand around JED'S grave dressed and ready for a night of partying

HENRY:

It's cold as shit, I can't feel my legs.

PERCY:

You can't ever feel your legs, now hush it, or we'll leave you out here.

HERNY:

You would never.

PERCY:

Try me.

ADAM:

Both of you, shut up. Hey Jed, I'm sorry it took this long for us to all make it out to see you. It's, uh, not an easy trip to make if I'm being entirely honest. Really weighs on the brain if you can believe it. But we all made it. We met Henry, he's great, we're glad we had the chance. I wish you could've been able to meet him under different circumstances, I know the two of you would've been really close friends.

HENRY:

I know we would've too. Thanks for everything you've done for me Jed. I may not have known you very long, but you saved my life. Not only that but you kept me going even after you had gone. You changed my entire worldview, and I owe you the world for that.

PERCY:

I've had a really rough go of it man. I miss you *so* much. Every single day I think of you and all the fun that we've had together. I think of the memories that we've shared and all the ones that we missed out on. Like tonight. But you're still here with us for it. Maybe not in person, but I can still feel you. Plus, we have something for you, a little something to make your prom night special.

ADAM:

Percy told me about how you wanted to take my sister to prom, and I need you to know that there's *no one* who I would have wanted to take her more than you. You were the best person I ever had the privilege of knowing, and I'll be damned if you don't get this one thing from me.

ADAM pulls out a necklace and wraps it around the headstone

This is the necklace that Jenna was planning on wearing to prom tonight. I had talked to her about you and how you wanted to take her, and she told me to bring this to you. She wanted you to have it man. I wish you were here to hold it.

*PERCY and HENRY console the crying
ADAM*

PERCY:

Guess what though. Adam actually did it. He asked Abby Stewart to the prom and for some godforsaken reason, she said yes.

HENRY:

We're assuming she felt bad for him.

PERCY:

Or it's possible it was just so shocking to her that she forgot the word no existed, but either way, he pulled it off somehow. Maybe she felt bad for him because of you, so thanks for that maybe. We also can't keep her waiting much longer, or she might come to her senses.

ADAM:

Right, right. We love you Jed. We'll come visit you again soon, okay?

PERCY:

See ya man.

HENRY:

Later Jed.

*PERCY and ADAM help push HENRY
offstage. The necklace shines brightly on the
gravestone*

END OF PLAY