

AFTERLIFE SHOES

Tim Wilson

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHARLIE, eighteen

LES, eighteen

DICK, nineteen

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT ONE:

Scene One: 12:45 AM. A party.

Scene Two: A few minutes later. Outside the party and in Dick's car.

Scene Three: An unknown time later. Inside Dick's car.

Scene Four: A short time later. The afterlife.

Scene Five: A short time later. The afterlife.

Scene Six: A short time later. The afterlife.

Scene Seven: A short time later. Inside Dick's car.

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

The stage is black as the curtain rises, but the sounds of a crowded party can be heard. It is late in the summer after CHARLIE, DICK, and LES graduated from high school, and the party is at a house of one of their friends. The time is 12:45 AM. After a few moments, the lights come up dimly on CHARLIE, DICK, and LES at center stage. DICK is in the middle. They each hold a beer in their hands. Although nothing else can be seen, the sounds of the party continue to be heard in the background. They are all a bit drunk.

CHARLIE

How much longer are we gonna stay? I told my mom I'd be home by one.

LES

(Sarcastically.)

More like, you told Jesse you'd call her at one.

DICK

Jesus, Charlie. You're leaving for Colorado tomorrow to live with the bitch. Can't you just spend ONE night with your friends without cutting it short for your fucking wife?

CHARLIE

Does she have an engagement ring on her finger? Look, I told my mom I'd be home by one. She's getting up early tomorrow to help me finish packing. I don't want to have to listen to her bitch about how late I got back.

LES

Weak.

No shit.

DICK

Just because you treat your mother like shit doesn't mean we all do, Dick.

CHARLIE

Fuck you!

DICK

Let's not get into this. C'mon, Charlie-  
(Trying to conceal comment from DICK and speak only to CHARLIE.)  
Dick could use a while to sober up.

LES

(Overhearing. Defensively.)  
I can drive. Let's go now!

DICK

(To LES.)  
~~You're right. Let's wait a while.~~  
(To DICK.)  
How 'bout you stop drinking? No sense in us getting killed on our last night together.

CHARLIE

I said I'M FINE!

DICK

(To CHARLIE.)  
Let's give him a little while. Actually, I told my mom I'd be home pretty early, too.

LES

You guys are a couple of pussies! I can't believe you've graduated from high school and are still coming home when your parents tell you to!

DICK

LES

ASK us to.

DICK

Whatever! You're still tied to mamma like the doctor never cut your umbilical cord!

CHARLIE

Calm down, Dick.

DICK

Let's just get the fuck out of here. You've both gotta get up early tomorrow to ditch me here.

LES

You know it's not like that. I don't know whether we should leave now and risk death at the hands of a drunken Dick, or stay here and listen to him whine. Charlie?

CHARLIE

You know my vote's for leaving.

DICK

Fuck you both. Let's get outta here.

(Turns upstage and hollers.)

Later, everyone. Say good-bye to Charlie and Les. I'd like to stay, but they've got to leave. It's their last night home, and they want to make sure they're in when their mommy's told them to be.

(LES and CHARLIE shake their heads. ALL THREE finish off their beers as they begin to walk out of the light. The lights fade.)



Scene Two

The stage is black. Only the voices of the characters are heard for entire scene.

CHARLIE

Are you sure you're okay to drive?

DICK

You've ridden with me when I've been more drunk than this, and it's never seemed to bother you. Or are you worried that you'll get killed on the night before you start your precious fucking Ken and Barbie life with Jesse?

LES

Knock it off, Dick.

(Two car doors are heard to open and close. An engine starts and tires squeal almost immediately afterwards. Sounds of the inside of a fast-moving car are heard throughout the rest of the scene. One person sarcastically claps hands.)

Nice one. I'm impressed. Too bad I'm a guy. You might've actually gotten lucky.

(Brief pause.)

How many times HAVE girls actually been impressed by you driving like a maniac while they're in the car?

DICK

Fuck off, asshole.

(Car radio is turned on. A station is briefly searched for, and then left to play during the following dialogue.)

LES

Always follow up the maniacal driving and poor taste in music with such romantic lines?

CHARLIE

Cool it, Les. He's just--LOOK OUT!

DICK

Shit!

(Squealing tires are heard, followed by sounds of impact--metal crunching, glass breaking, etc. All other noises cease. The stage is dead quiet.)

Scene Three

Lights slowly come up on the center of the stage. Two rather ordinary looking benches are center stage, one behind the other. LES is bent over the center of the front bench from behind. his head resting on the bench. DICK is sitting on the stage left end of the front bench, slumped over with his eyes closed. CHARLIE is in a similar position on the stage right end of the front bench. Just as the lights finish coming up, the three boys begin to stir--opening their eyes and sitting up with confused looks. LES sits back on the rear bench.

DICK

What the fuck?!

(Begins checking himself for broken bones, blood, etc.--  
finds none.)

What happened?!

LES

We wrecked. Nice going, Dick.

DICK

What?! You were the one who was in such a fucking hurry to get home.

CHARLIE

You're not going to get out of this one that easily, man. You blew it.

DICK

Fuck you, too. I wasn't the one who wanted to leave the goddamned party!

(CHARLIE and LES exchange a look.)



DICK (Cont'd)

Where are we, anyway?

(Looks out to side and front of car.)

I can't see shit.

LES

I think we're dead, Einstein.

DICK

Dead?

CHARLIE

Dead.

DICK

Shit.

(Pause.)

So what happens now?

LES

I'm sure we'll find out soon enough.

(Short pause.)

Did you guys make it to church last week?

(CHARLIE and DICK exchange looks.)

DICK

Don't EVEN say that was my fault, too! You wanted to go fishing as much as I did.

LES

(Laughing.)

Fishing?!? Nice timing!

CHARLIE

Let's just drop it.

(Long pause.)

You really think we're dead?

LES

Either that or somebody slipped some killer anti-alcohol into my drink. I'm as sober as a preacher on Sunday. Besides, whatever that shit is outside the windows, it isn't anything I've ever seen on highway 147. I guess you got your wish, Dick. Charlie and I won't be leaving tomorrow morning anymore.

CHARLIE

Jesus, Dick!

LES

Kinda ironic, isn't it? Charlie and I have been saying you were going to get yourself killed ever since you got your license. Who would have thought you'd manage to take us with you?

DICK

Shut up, Les. I'm a good driver and you know it.

LES

You WERE a FAST driver.

DICK

I was a GOOD fast driver.

CHARLIE

(Quietly)

You got us killed.

(Sinks into HIS own thoughts.)

DICK

Well, it's not like I MADE you guys ride with me.

(Pause.)

LES

Where are we, anyway? You guys are the religious ones...unless it's good fishing weather, that is.

DICK

Very funny, asshole. Where the fuck are we?

LES

I don't know, but my guess is that it might be wise to watch your mouth wherever we are. Limbo, maybe? Just waiting for processing for eternal bliss or eternal damnation?

(CHARLIE reaches into his back pocket, pulls out his wallet, and looks at a picture inside.)

DICK

I guess we'll see. Maybe we'll stay here forever.

LES

Perish the thought! I'd rather eat brimstone than be stuck in this car with you guys for eternity. Why couldn't you have driven a nice big station wagon?

DICK

Excuuuse me. You never complained before.

LES

I wasn't dead then. I could always look forward to getting OUT of your car.

CHARLIE

(Still looking at picture. To HIMSELF.)

This is hell.

LES

I wouldn't say it's THAT bad.

CHARLIE

(Snapping out of HIS own thoughts.)

Huh?

LES

What makes you think this is Hell?

CHARLIE

(Looking back at the picture.)

Well, it sure isn't Heaven.

Purgatory?  
LES

Yeah, maybe.  
CHARLIE

So, who's going to be here the longest?  
DICK  
(LES and CHARLIE look at each other, and then both turn their eyes to DICK.)  
What?!

LES  
(Mocking DICK.)  
What?! Me?! Not me?! I'm an angel! I've never taken the lord's name in vain, killed God's creatures for sport, missed church...

CHARLIE  
Had sex with more people you weren't married to...

DICK  
Now, hold on just a goddamned minute. Les has got me beat on the sex thing, and it's not like you haven't been out spotlighting right along with me, Charlie. Just because I'm a better shot doesn't mean you haven't made the effort.

LES  
Uh, guys, I think we're just proving that, if this is Purgatory, we're going to be each other's company for a long time. I guess it could be worse.

DICK  
Too bad we don't have a couple of six packs.

LES  
You're missing the point. Aren't we supposed to be improving our moral character here? I don't think beer is an acceptable substitute for holy water. Otherwise, I would have attended church much more regularly.



Look who's talking, now.

Oops.

Sorry.

(Looking upward.)

DICK

LES

DICK  
When WAS the last time you went to church?

LES  
(Thinks for a moment.)  
About five years ago, I guess.

DICK  
And you think I'M going to be here for a long time.

LES  
Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I never accepted Jesus Christ as my saviour, but I don't see any little red men with pointed tails and an appetite for high temperatures hanging out anywhere. Actually, I'm a little curious as to what all of this is. I always called it my own personal catch-22, ya' know? I wanted to know what was going to happen to me after I died so that I would know how I should live, but the only way to find that out would be to kick off, in which case it would be too late to matter. I guess I never really bought the afterlife theory-figured I'd find out when I died. Of course, if I was right, I'd never know.

DICK  
Thank you, Les.

LES  
Hey, I'm just trying to pass the time. Sue me.

DICK  
I'd love to. Know how to get to the nearest judge?

**LES**

We just went through this. It's quite possible that the nearest judge  
is a "he" with a capital "H."

(Lights fade.)



Scene Four

The stage is dark. A small, crisp circle of light comes up on CHARLIE, who is standing at stage right, peering around in all directions as if looking for something, but not being able to see much at all.

CHARLIE

Dick?! Les?! Anyone?!

(Lights down on CHARLIE and up on DICK, who is standing center stage, looking around in a similar manner.)

DICK

Charlie?! Les?! What the fuck's going on?!

(Lights down on DICK and up on LES, stage left.)

LES

Hello?! Hello?! God?! Jesus?! Dick?! Charlie?!

(Pause. Continues to look around, sees nothing, then stops and begins speaking upward.)

Whoever up there is in charge of running this whole afterlife thing, do ya' think you could pick it up a bit? Frankly, I'm getting kind of bored.

(Lights down on LES and up on DICK, who is still looking about in all directions.)

DICK

Charlie?! Les?! Where are you guys? What the fuck?!

(Lights down on DICK and up on CHARLIE, who is now talk-

ing to himself. He has his wallet out again and is looking at the picture in it.)

CHARLIE

~~What'd I do to deserve this? I didn't want to die. My life was going so well. I guess you'll be living in Colorado by yourself, Jesse. I'm sorry.~~

(Lights down on CHARLIE and up on DICK, who is now pacing around his pool of light, frantically looking about. He is scared.)

DICK

Charlie?! Les?! Where the fuck did you guys go?!

(Lights remain up on DICK and come up on LES as well. The two can hear each other, but they can neither see each other nor tell from which direction each others' voices are coming.)

LES

(Looking around in an effort to ascertain where DICK's voice is coming from.)

Dick? Is that you?

DICK

Les?!

(Excitedly looking around trying to figure out where LES's voice is coming from.)

Where are you?

LES

(Sarcastically.)

K-Mart. Aisle 3. How the hell do I know? Where are YOU?

DICK

Where's Charlie? What happened? Where are we?

LES

~~Which came first, the chicken or the egg?~~ I don't know! We wrecked, we died, we sat in the car, and now we're here. So far, this whole afterlife thing hasn't been too impressive.

(During this last line, the lights have come up on CHARLIE. He, too, spends the first few lines trying to determine from where the others' voices are coming. DICK and LES have by now resigned themselves to not knowing.)

Les? CHARLIE

Charlie? DICK

Dick? CHARLIE

Aunty Em? Toto? LES

What's going on? CHARLIE

No clue. DICK

LES  
Discovering the relative dullness of life in the afterlife.

(Pause.)

CHARLIE  
Do you think we're here for good, wherever this place is?

~~LES~~  
~~I certainly hope not! I'd die of boredom--oops!~~

DICK  
(Looking upward.)  
Hey! God! What the FUCK's going on?!

LES  
Good, Dick. Earn those brownie points!

CHARLIE

Cool it, guys.

(Pause. To HIMSELF.)

I can't believe we're dead. Dead! I didn't want to die! I liked living.

(Looks down at picture in wallet.)

I LOVED living. ~~Why, God? What did I do?~~ . . . What am I going to do without her? What's she going to do without me? (~~Why, God?~~)

DICK

(He is hurt.)

Jesus fucking Christ, Charlie! Would you forget about your fucking girlfriend and be glad you're with us.

LES

(Looking upward.)

Don't pay any attention to his language, God. He's from Jersey. ~~He can't help it.~~

DICK

Fuck you! You can both burn in Hell for all I care.

LES

With that kind of language, you'll be joining us there.

DICK

Great! So I get to spend eternity listening to Ken miss Barbie and taking abuse from you. I'm already in Hell.

CHARLIE

Sorry, Dick.

(Pause.)

LES

So, what ARE we supposed to do? Sit on our asses and wait for St. Peter to finish his lunch break?

DICK

Look who's talking now.



LES

Yeah, well he isn't MY god, and he doesn't appear to be yours, either, unless I'm forgetting about some chapter in the Bible about the Afterlife Waiting Room.

(Looking upward.)

Hey! Whoever up there is in charge of this whole thing--it sucks! Let me burn for all I care--I probably deserve to more than either of these two guys...well, more than Charlie, at least.

DICK

Hey!

LES

~~Hey! Dick!~~

(Returns attention upward.)

Anyway, God, or whoever you are, this is pretty lame. We didn't hear any bells or trumpets or anything when we crashed, the accommodations so far have been somewhat less than luxurious, and you've insisted on sticking me with a guy from Jersey of all places!

DICK

Enough with the "Jersey" cracks.

LES

Shut UP. I'm not done.

(Again returns attention upward.)

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, I grew up with these guys. They've got their faults, but they're my two best friends in the world, right? No argument there, but this arrangement just isn't going to hack it. We're all pretty decent guys. We're not saints. We're not mass murderers. So, what's up? This isn't Heaven, and I don't think it's Hell. Is that the point? Almost makes me wish I'd lived a more sinful life!

DICK

Lighten up, Les. At least we're still together. The three musketeers, right?

(No answer.)

Right?

CHARLIE

It's a little hard for me to jump up and down for joy over this whole death thing, Dick.

LES

It wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't so ~~damned--I mean darned~~-dull!

(Pause.)

DICK

Do you guys think we'll ever SEE each other again?

LES

No telling. I still don't know what we're doing here! Purgatory?

DICK

I thought that's what the car was.

LES

Maybe that was just afterlife bureaucracy--people die all the time, and it probably takes a bit of red tape to keep it all straight--who's dead, who's alive, who's Christian, who's Muslim--all that stuff. We weren't in the car all that long. Maybe this is Purgatory. I wonder why we can still hear each other. Maybe its cheaper to keep us all together instead of putting us in solitude.

CHARLIE

Cheaper?

LES

I don't know. I was going to take micro- and macro- freshman year, but didn't have a slot for divine economics until junior year. Didn't know I'd need it any sooner.

CHARLIE

Surely they don't use money up here.

DICK

I hope not. I left my wallet in the car!



LES

Just speculating.

DICK

You think maybe we're supposed to be figuring something out? Have some sort of revelation or something before we move on?

LES

It's a possibility. Any ideas? Let's get this show on the road.

DICK

How do you know the next place won't be worse? What if we can't see or hear each other there?

CHARLIE

That would suck.

LES

Depends on what else was going on. I mean, staying here forever would be pretty bad. No beer, no women, no music. And I imagine we're not going to get tired or hungry or anything either. You guys are my best friends and all, but there is more to life, and the afterlife, too, I hope, than that.

DICK

(Sarcastically.)

Thanks a lot, Les. I'm glad our friendship means so much to you.

CHARLIE

He's right, Dick. There is more to life than just friends.

DICK

Yeah, there's Jesse. Right Charlie?

CHARLIE

Apparently not anymore.

LES

That's not what I meant, anyway.

(Pause.)

LES (Cont'd)

We're not making any progress here.

(Looking upward.)

How about a little help, big guy?

(Howling wind and thunder begins to be heard. THE BOYS have to shout to hear each other over the noise. THEY are confused. As the following brief dialogue occurs, the sound of the wind and thunder increases and the lights slowly begin to fade to blackout.)

DICK

Charlie?! Les?!

CHARLIE

What's going on?

LES

A little excitement at last!

DICK

This isn't a fucking game, Les!

LES

What?

DICK

This isn't a FUCKING GAME!

LES

It beats that boring shi--whoa! What's going on?

CHARLIE

I feel like I'm about to puke!

DICK

JESUS!

(The stage is now black. The sounds of the thunder and wind drowns THEM out completely. The sound continues.)

Scene Five

The sound of thunder and wind lasts for a few seconds and then begins to subside as the lights come up. There are still three circles of light, but the characters are standing in different ones than in the previous scene. DICK is now standing in the stage right light, LES is standing in the center stage light, and CHARLIE is standing at stage left. The sound of wind and thunder is completely gone when the lights are completely up.

LES

What the fuck happened now? Charlie? Les?

DICK

Les? Is that you?

CHARLIE

I'm over here.

LES

Charlie!

DICK

What?!

CHARLIE

Shut up, Dick!

LES

Sorry, Charlie. What the fuck's going on?

DICK

Hold it, guys. Dick, are you there?

LES

I'm here.

CHARLIE

Whoa! Hold on. Dick, did you not just ask yourself if you were here?

LES

No. I was just answering...wait a minute! Who was that? I know that voice!

DICK

(Exasperated.)

It's me--Charlie! Les, why did you answer for Dick?

CHARLIE

I didn't!

(Looks upward.)

God, whatever's going on here, I'm going to have to give you a low score for clarity, although it does beat the hell out of wherever we were last time. I feel weird. I feel like Dick looks--pretty awful--must be Hell.

LES

You're starting to sound like Les!

CHARLIE

Who IS that?

LES

It's me--Dick!

(During the last few lines, DICK has started to examine himself--looking at his hands, his arms, his body as a whole, as if he doesn't recognize it.)

DICK

Uh, guys.

CHARLIE and LES

WHAT?!!!

DICK

I feel weird, too. But I think I know why.

CHARLIE

Well?!

DICK

We're not ourselves.

LES

What? Who are you?

DICK

Look at yourselves.

LES

What?!

DICK

Look at yourselves. Apparently I'm Dick.

LES

I'M Dick!

DICK

Look at yourself!

(Pause.)

Look familiar? Dick, I think you're Les.

CHARLIE

I'M Les!

DICK

I think you're me.

CHARLIE

Well, I look more like Charlie.

DICK

Right. I'm Charlie, but <sup>by</sup> look ~~and sound~~ like Dick. Dick looks ~~and~~  
~~looks~~ like Les, and you <sup>are</sup> Les, but look ~~and sound~~ like me.

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CHARLIE

(Looking upward.)

Like I said, this isn't particularly clear, but it certainly is different. The Bible missed a book about messing with people's minds.

LES

Wait a minute. Let me get this straight. Charlie, you sound like me.

DICK

Right.

LES

And Les, you sound like Charlie.

CHARLIE

Right.

LES

And I sound like you.

CHARLIE

The boy's quick.

LES

Fuck off, Char...Les! What the hell are we supposed to do now?

CHARLIE

Whatever it is, I hope it doesn't take long. I'd hate for Charlie to have to go around looking like YOU for very long--not to mention, I don't much care for the idea of YOU in MY body. Just keep your hands off me, okay?

LES

Shut up, asshole!

DICK

Enough, guys.

(Pause.)



CHARLIE

Either of you two feel...different?

LES

Wouldn't you feel different if you were stuck in Les's body?

CHARLIE

No, idiot, I would feel quite fine. I AM Les, remember?

LES

Well, it sucks to be you, doesn't it?

CHARLIE

Shut up, Dick. I'm trying to be serious here. My stomach feels like it's got a huge knot in it.

DICK

I know the feeling.

CHARLIE

Well, you should. It's your body.

DICK

I think you're feeling me missing Jesse.

CHARLIE

You've gotta be kidding!

DICK

That's how it feels, man.

CHARLIE

Does that mean you don't feel like that anymore?

DICK

(Thinks for a minute.)

No, I guess I don't. All my thoughts about her are, well, academic now. I don't have any emotions about it. The funny thing is, I actually feel sort of...relieved--almost happy.

CHARLIE

That's because Dick is so damned happy that he was fortunate enough to take the two of us with him when he died.

LES

Fuck you, Les.

CHARLIE

Hey, Dick, I don't know how the point system works up here, but as long as you're in my body, do you think you could back off the profanity? Just in case.

LES

Fuck-fuck-fuck-fuck-fuck!

CHARLIE

Richard Martin Fulster, ladies and gentlemen. The modern mature man. Jesus, Charlie, this stomach thing really sucks. Isn't there anything I can do about it?

DICK

Well, I used to feel that way sometimes when we had to be apart for a long time--

LES

More than twenty minutes?

DICK

Shut up, Les.

CHARLIE

That was Dick!

DICK

Whatever. Anyway, I could usually look at her picture in my wallet and feel at least a little better.

(DICK becomes lost in thought as HE remembers such times. CHARLIE checks HIS pockets looking for "his" wallet, finds it, opens it up and looks at a picture in it. A pained look crosses HIS face. DICK snaps out of his thoughts.)

DICK (Cont'd)

But that's only made it worse since we've been up here.

CHARLIE

~~Thanks a lot.~~

(Replaces wallet.)

LES

I wonder what's going to happen next?

DICK

Wait a minute. Dick, you're starting to talk like Les, too.

LES

I was just curious!

DICK

Exactly.

CHARLIE

All I've got to say is I hope we don't get zapped around again like that. I would NOT want to wind up in Dick's body.

LES

Like I'm fucking privileged to be in YOUR body.

CHARLIE

Profanity, Dick.

LES

Aw, fuck off.

DICK

C'mon, Dick. Lay off the cussing. We've all been friends for too long for you two to be at each other's throats all of the time. Can't you just be happy that the three of us are going through all of this shit together?

CHARLIE

Great, Charlie. Now you're starting to sound like Dick. I at least can finally see why you were so unhappy about being here. How do you think Jesse is doing without you?

DICK

I don't know. I imagine she'll be okay eventually. I guess she's pretty sad. She's a good girl.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

LES

Now look who's sounding like who.

CHARLIE

You're just pissed because you're finding out what it's like to be a real man--a lifetime too late for you to change.

LES

More like I'm pissed because I'm stuck in a woman's body, and I'm afraid I won't be able to get out.

DICK

Nice one!

LES

(Looking upward.)

Okay, God, we've had enough of this. What's the fucking point?

CHARLIE

Language.

LES

Yeah, yeah.

DICK

It does kinda suck that we can't see each other.

~~CHARLIE~~ CHARLIE

It REALLY sucks that I get to miss Jesse for you.

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(Rumbling of thunder and blowing wind gradually begin to fade in.)

DICK

Here we go again.

(Sounds get louder.)

CHARLIE

(Looking upward.)

Please don't put me in Dick's body.

LES

Fuck you!

(Sounds get even louder as lights fade to black. After a few seconds, the sound slowly fades out.)



Scene Six

Lights come up on center stage. A stool sits in the middle of the pool of light. An envelope rests on the stool. LES is standing next to it. HE has not noticed the envelope, but is instead busy looking himself over.

LES

(To HIMSELF.)

Hmph. It looks like I'm me again.

(Looks upward.)

Thanks! I don't quite know what that was all about, but I've got to give you a thumbs up for originality.

(Looks back down. Looks upward, grinning.)

And thanks for not sticking me in Dick's body!

(Looks back down and notices envelope on stool. Picks it up.)

What's this?

(Reads name on envelope. Looks upward.)

Whoa! This letter is for Dick. Did you get a little mixed up when you were zapping us around? I mean, that's okay. I'll just wait for you to fix it.

(Sets envelope back down. Waits. Looks upward.)

Well?

(Eyes envelope. Returns attention upward.)

You gonna zap us back around or what?

(Pause. Eyes envelope again. Picks it up, opens it, and removes letter. Reading aloud.)

Dear Mr. Fulster.

(Glances upward again, a little guiltily.)

We have had an extremely large number of highly qualified applicants to our school this year. Although we are pleased to be attracting such quality, we unfortunately do not have room in next years class to admit all of these applicants. We were very impressed with your application, but unfortunately cannot offer you a spot in next year's class.

(Pause.)

LES (Cont'd)

Good luck on your future academic pursuits.

(Drops hands to HIS sides.)

Shit! Dick didn't even tell me he'd applied.

(HE refolds letter, puts it back in envelope, and returns it to the stool.)

Shit!

(Lights fade. Come back up almost immediately on the same set. LES is gone and CHARLIE now stands next to the stool. He, too, is looking over HIMSELF.)

CHARLIE

(To HIMSELF.)

Hmph! No more Dick.

(Pause. Looks upward.)

What's going on here?!

(Plops down on stool, realizes HE is sitting on something, and leans forward to pull out envelope. Examines it.)

What the hell is this?

(Opens envelope and takes out piece of paper. Unfolds it and looks it over.)

What the...? Shit! This was from the fifth grade! How did it get here?

(Looks upward.)

I guess you know what you're doing, but this isn't my essay. This is Les's.

(Pause.)

'Tis not mine to question, right?

(Begins reading.)

What I want to be when I grow up, by Lester Thompson.

(Laughs to himself.)

Lester! Thank God we changed that!

(Goes back to reading.)

When I grow up, I want to be a learner. I do not know if money can be made that way, but that is what I want to do. I want to finish school and keep learning things until I die because that is what I like to do. I want to learn about everything, but my mom says one life is not enough to do that, so I guess I will have to just learn about some things. I do not know yet what those will be, but I have plenty of time before I go to college to decide.



CHARLIE (Cont'd)

(Laughs quietly, refolds paper, and returns it to envelope.  
Shakes head in amusement.)

Once Les, always Les.

(Lights fade. Come back up almost immediately on the  
same set. CHARLIE is gone and DICK now stands next to  
the stool.)

DICK

Charlie?! Les?! Fuck!

(Looks upward.)

I didn't even get to say good-bye!

(Spies envelope. Puzzled.)

Mail?!

(Picks up envelope.)

What the fuck?! Barbie writes Ken and it gets delivered to me!

(Muttering.)

That goddamn ball and chain won't even leave him alone when he's  
dead!

(Viciously tears open letter and removes its contents.

Begins reading it aloud sarcastically.)

Dear Charlie. I miss you! I know it's only been a couple of weeks,  
but it seems like we've been apart forever.

(Stops reading and rolls eyes.)

Give me a fucking break!

(Continues reading.)

I've been counting the days until you get here, and cannot decide if a  
week is an eternity or no time at all. By the time you get this, you'll  
probably be packed and ready to go. Actually, you'll probably be out  
partying with Dick and Les and leaving the packing to your mother.

(Laughs to himself at her accuracy.)

Tell them I'm sorry, okay? I wish I didn't have to take you away  
from Dick and Les, but there was just no way I could pass up this job.  
I know we've been over this a thousand times, but it can't start  
another argument if it's in a letter, right?

(Pause. DICK is no longer being sarcastic. Continues  
reading.)

DICK (Cont'd)

I love you, Charlie. It would kill me to think I had ruined the friendship you had with those two. You can make them understand, can't you?

(Pause.)

I love you and can't wait to see you. Tell Dick and Les that I miss them, too, and make sure they're planning to come out and visit, okay? I'll see you soon! Love, Jesse.

(Refolds letter and returns it to envelope. Talking to himself.)

They fought about this?

(Shakes head.)

I guess those two really are in love.

(Returns envelope to stool as lights fade.)

Scene Seven

The set is the same as Scene Three. Two benches, one in front of the other. DICK is on the stage left end of the front bench. CHARLIE is on the stage right end. LES is in the middle of the back bench. THEY have just reappeared in the car when the lights come up. They are a bit dazed, but are getting used to being tossed around in this manner.

DICK

Charlie? (Looking at CHARLIE.)

CHARLIE

Huh? (Looks up.)

DICK

Les? (Turns to look at LES.)

LES

Uh-huh.

DICK

We're back.

LES

That was weird.

CHARLIE

Tell me about it.

(Pause.)



LES

I guess you got the knot back, huh?

CHARLIE

It's actually not nearly as bad as it was. Still a bit uncomfortable, but I'll be okay with it.

LES

Man, that REALLY sucked.

CHARLIE

Dick, you really are glad that we all died together, aren't you?

DICK

I was. I'm not anymore. I was just thinking about myself--didn't stop to put myself in your shoes. I was so pissed that you guys were taking off, ya' know? I thought you were leaving me forever.

CHARLIE

You know we weren't.

DICK

I do now.

CHARLIE

What I was going to say was that I think you were kind of right. I guess I am going to miss Jesse, but I would have had to miss you two if we'd all gone off.

LES

I hate to ruin this little party, but this is where I get off.

DICK

What?! You don't even know where we are.

LES

It just is.

(Pause.)

I don't want to wax too sappy here, but this may be it. I mean...I may never see you guys again. I hope that's not the case. For all the

things I said about wanting to see some excitement, I didn't really want to not see you guys. Three musketeers, right?

LES (Cont'd)

(Edges toward stage left end of bench. Extends hand over the back of the front bench to shake CHARLIE's hand.)

Charlie. I hope everything turns out okay for you and for Jesse. With a little bit of luck, we'll all see each other again some day.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Les.

LES

(Shaking DICK's hand.)

And Dick. I really will miss you. I hope they're not too rough on a guy just because he's from Jersey and can't say two complete sentences without using the word "fuck."

DICK

Yeah, yeah. Fuck you, Les.  
(They both laugh.)

LES

Well. That's it, I guess.  
(He is reluctant to leave, but knows he must.)  
Good-bye, then. See ya' around!  
(Gets up from bench and exits to stage left.)

CHARLIE

See ya'.

DICK

Later, Les!

(Long pause. BOTH BOYS are pensive.)

CHARLIE

Well. This is my stop. Dick?  
(Extends hand. THEY shake.)

DICK

You think this is it?

I don't know.

CHARLIE

I guess we'll find out, huh.

DICK

Yeah.

CHARLIE

(Pause.)

Good luck, man.

DICK

Same to you.

CHARLIE

(Stands up.)

See ya'.

DICK

Later.

(CHARLIE exits to stage right. DICK sits quietly by himself for a few moments. It is then HIS turn to go. HE takes a deep breath, looks around the car one last time, stands up, looks apprehensively off to stage left, and then exits there. The lights remain up on the benches for a few moments and then slowly fade to black.)

CURTAIN

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