

**BLANCHE DUBOIS IN PURGATORY**

The George Bernard Shaw-Tennessee Williams Smackdown  
In One Act

by

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*If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword and the mandoline, my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself.... [T]he philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. This Life Force says to him "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I have made a special brain -- a philosopher's brain -- to grasp this knowledge for me as the husbandman's hand grasps the plough for me. And "This", says the Life Force to the philosopher, "must thou strive to do for me until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work."*

Don Juan, "Don Juan in Hell"

-George Bernard Shaw  
Man and Superman

C A S T

"Claude Rains"

Danny O'Dwyer

Blanche DuBois

SCENE: Twilight, somewhere in Eternity.

A mostly bare stage is dimly lit by only a couple of spots. Near one awaits a chair with a small table beside it.

"CLAUDE RAINS" shuffles in wearing slippers and a loose bathrobe over a t-shirt and pajama bottoms. He carries a clipboard in one hand and a mug of coffee in the other as he speaks into a Bluetooth-like device.

RAINS

I'm beginning to regret I ever got Ernie the job in the first place. He does nothing now but complain about it. But I warned him. "Secrets of the Dead" indeed. It's more like "Equivocations of the Dead." Even dead they lie. They hem and haw and hedge their bets, they dissemble, they misrepresent -- they lie. But then, honestly, their familiarity with the truth is so fleeting and tenuous they scarcely know themselves when they're lying. I once had Mr. Archibald Leach traipse through here....Yes, him -- humanity, thy name is liar -- and all he could do was reel off the roll call of women he'd pawed at. Deluded! All of them. And even after you've done your best to reassure them that that's not what this is all about -- as though anyone had the slightest interest in judging their...

(With squeamish disgust)

human peccadilloes -- even then they posture and rationalize and obfuscate. They lie. I tell you, the truth is like kryptonite to every single one of them.

(The theme from "The Big Bang Theory" is suddenly heard. He sighs heavily as the song clamors to its end.)

No, that's just the start of my shift. It's something different every day. The "humor" around here is lethal. We'll have to catch up later....It's a deal....Yeah, see you then.

(The song "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" is heard and RAINS sets his mug down on

(Cont'd)  
the little table in order to consult  
his clipboard.)

RAINS (Cont'd)  
(Unamused, shaking his head to the  
heavens)  
Yes, very droll.

(DANNY O'DWYER, a man of 50 or so and  
elegantly dressed for a 1940s stage  
performance, enters tap dancing rather  
automatically as he moves towards RAINS  
in a daze, as though just staggering to  
consciousness. Finally "awake," he  
stops near RAINS and confusedly takes  
in his surroundings.)

DANNY  
(As the music fades)  
Where am I? What--

RAINS  
Just think of this as Buffalo.

DANNY  
(Incredulous)  
New York?

RAINS  
Don't worry, it's perfectly normal to feel disoriented.  
Everybody arrives here a little confused.

DANNY  
In New York?

RAINS  
No, not New York.

(DANNY sways about the stage trying to  
take it all in, as RAINS patiently lets  
him slowly pull the memories together.)

DANNY  
I remember -- what do I remember? Oh, yeah, I was dancing  
on a stage...  
(Taps a couple of times)

DANNY (Cont'd)

Doing my act as part of a show they'd put together for the patients in some kind of hospital... an insane asylum. Well, they made us promise not to say anything like that in front of the patients. A "mental health facility." The patients seemed to like my dancing well enough. I always get the crowd going with my superfast scissor steps in that last chorus of "Jeepers Creepers." Then...

(More taps, and a little horror)

No. No. Now I remember...

(Grips his chest)

An awful pain right here. My heart. I must have collapsed on stage.

RAINS

(consulting his clipboard)

Left ventricular myocardial infarction.

DANNY

(Letting go of his chest; doubtfully, eyes drawn to the Bluetooth device)

Are you a doctor?

RAINS

You have no need of a doctor, Mr. O'Dwyer.

DANNY

(nervously)

I don't?

(Letting go of his chest)

How did I get here anyway? Is this a hospital?

(RAINS placidly watches DANNY fumble for an explanation.)

I don't remember an ambulance. Am I still in the asylum -- mental health facility. That's it. I'm in some institutional back room waiting for... waiting for... waiting... I can't remember. I must've blacked out for quite a while... can't seem to think.

(Feeling himself)

But I feel okay now.

(A long last befuddled shred of resistance -- before turning to RAINS in a moment of realization)

No.

RAINS

Sorry, Mr. O'Dwyer. I wasn't trying to keep you in suspense or add to your anxiety and discomfort, but we're trained to let folks figure it out for themselves. And I confess, it's one of the few satisfactions I get in this job, seeing human beings come to a realization of the cold hard fact. It's so unlike your kind. Of course, some adapt to death more readily than others.

DANNY

Death?! I'm...?  
 (Feeling himself again)  
 But I can't be.

RAINS

I'm afraid it's the only thing you can be at this point.

DANNY

(Trying not to believe)  
 I'm really...?

RAINS

Yes. That flesh-and-blood ticker of yours was only going to put up with so much tap dancing. Surely something vaguely along these lines must have occurred to you at some time in your life. As with any story, any show. "The End."

DANNY

I guess. It just doesn't seem real.

RAINS

I understand. Or rather, I should say at least, I hear that all the time.

(DANNY endeavors to digest this.)

DANNY

Who are you?

RAINS

Think of me as a facilitator. Your facilitator.

DANNY

Are...are you an angel?

RAINS

Have you ever met one?

DANNY

(Hesitantly)

Not that I know. That's why I ask. Who else but an angel would I meet --

(Looking around)

here?

(Fearfully)

Wait, don't answer that. I don't wanna see any demons or devils. I just had a heart attack, for chrissakes.

RAINS

Relax, Mr. O'Dwyer. You're as safe as being dead can make you.

DANNY

(Nods, unconvinced)

I guess maybe I was expecting to see loved ones, you know, family and friends who'd gone before me.

(Pause)

What are you if not some kind of angel?

RAINS

Let's just say the Universe outsources everything -- what needs to get done here no less than its tap dancing.

DANNY

What needs to get done here?

RAINS

I help get you through the Afterlife. For "The End" has not, in fact, quite yet been written for you. As of this instant, the last tap remains untapped.

DANNY

(Distracted)

Like my grandmother. I was hoping to see my grandmother again.

RAINS

Long gone.

DANNY

My father?



RAINS

Long gone, too.

DANNY

What do you mean long gone? If this is the Afterlife, somebody I know should be around.

RAINS

That's what I'm here for -- to explain your situation to you. Nothing more, nothing less.

(With a touch more gravity)

You are about to extinguish yourself, Mr. O'Dwyer. Forever. Like all those who have passed before you.

DANNY

Extinguish myself?

RAINS

I can't tell you what it "feels" like. I don't know. Though of course in the end you feel nothing -- I can assure you of that -- because very shortly you will simply no longer be. Anything. You will cease to exist as completely as your father and grandmother.

(Indicating the stage)

This is just the last flicker of consciousness before you fade into nothingness. The Universe has its order, however, and in this case the order dictates that you get one last chance to know something.

DANNY

Know something?

RAINS

A final page will be illuminated before the light fails and darkness falls once and for all, I like to tell people. Think of it as the last paragraph of reality you get to read before going blind. Choose with some care, but don't fret yourself into a dithery mess.

DANNY

I'm not sure I understand.

RAINS

The Universe allows you to know, to learn one thing, one unit of information, before it shuts down your capacity to know and understand for good.

(Pause)

RAINS (Cont'd)

I'm prohibited from giving examples.

DANNY

What's a "unit" of information.

RAINS

That's really for the Universe to decide. I do suggest that anything you can phrase into a fairly straightforward question is likely to be answered.

DANNY

So I get the answer to one question and then sputter out like a wet match? Or is it more like the bang of exploding fireworks?

RAINS

Again, as I told you, I don't know what it feels like. Look here, are you going to start arguing that something about this is "unfair"?

DANNY

Maybe. Yes, unfair -- that's exactly what it feels like. Unfair. To have one's whole existence reduced to one question.

RAINS

(A soft, good-natured laugh)

All the horrors of human existence -- including all the hair-raising afterlives imagined by human beings -- and an answered question is too great an indignity to bear? Really, Mr. O'Dwyer. You make it sound as though knowing something is the worst fate that could befall mankind.

DANNY

(Chastened)

Well, something about it's not right.

RAINS

(Precisely)

It is the Universe's orderly solution to the erratic and wholly unstable human mind -- a remarkable emergent phenomenon of a remarkable physical organ, I grant you that, a mind that actually can know something. Well, you can't very well just douse an intelligence like that with a bucket of cold water. Any more than one can safely leave its incendiary embers lying around unsmothered forever.

(DANNY appears to be logically  
absorbing this, with difficulty.)

DANNY

If I'm just going to fade away into nothingness, what does  
it matter what I know or don't know?

RAINS

(I-don't-know-and-I-don't-care)

I can't answer that for you.

DANNY

And what if I want to know everything?

RAINS

Oh, we do get the occasional smart-aleck who wants to know  
"everything": an Aristotle or an Einstein who's desperate  
to know all the fine detail of the Universe's operations;  
or the Louella-Parsons-Hedda-Hopper-type, preoccupied with  
all the intricate debris of human lives, so much flotsam  
and jetsam sent adrift, as it were, by those operations. I  
can only take the request and pass it on for consideration.  
But you run the risk of losing your one chance to know  
something. That is, finding out that your request to know  
everything has been denied ends up being the last thing you  
ever learn.

DANNY

(Disappointed)

Oh.

RAINS

(Cheerfully)

Besides, what makes you think you're even capable of  
understanding everything anyway?

DANNY

Can't you make me understand?

RAINS

And if it were possible, do you honestly think you would  
still be you.

DANNY

(Thinking)

I don't know.

RAINS

Exactly. Not understanding would appear to be who you are. Indeed, if you already understood how to understand everything, how would you be distinguishable from the Universe at all? Really, Mr. O'Dwyer --

(Checks clipboard)

Danny. You're making this all much more complicated than it needs to be. Just stick to who you are. What do you really want to know?

(DANNY labors over this cognitive task.)

DANNY

(Finally)

It's just a stab in the dark, isn't it, this business of being who you are -- who I am. Or at least that's how it feels.

RAINS

(A little too condescending)

You see -- now you're starting to be honest with yourself. You may even have already learned something on your own, without having to ask.

DANNY

(Suddenly resentful)

Oh, yeah? And what's the gatekeeper to all the wisdom of the universe doing with a clipboard?

RAINS

First of all, this process is not about me. But if you really want to know more, feel free to make that your last question. Second of all, I am not a gatekeeper -- as I said, it's better to think of me as your facilitator. Again, if you want to know more, you are in a position to find out more. Third, "wisdom" is the kind of loaded human idea we don't have much truck with around here. Yet again... just ask. Lastly, this --

(Indicating the clipboard)

-- is simply a matter of style.

(Walking over to show Danny)

It's not an ordinary "clipboard." It's more like what you would call a, what? -- a touch screen. See.

(Manipulating images on the clipboard's interactive surface to demonstrate how it functions like an electronic device)

RAINS (Cont'd)

Well, not you. Looking at these dates, I see I'm getting a little ahead of you with the term "touch screen."

DANNY

(Awed by the display -- then aghast at some item on the "screen")

You have a record of that? That was just a, a, a youthful indiscretion.

RAINS

Like the National Security Agency, we have a record of everything, and can access anything. Unlike the National Security Agency, there is no self-interested human being to spoil the pristine bureaucracy of it all. If a quark pops into existence over here, or a star goes nova over there, or --

(Indicating the item on the clipboard)

-- some youth is "indiscreet," that's simply the kind of thing that leaves a record. There's no sensible way of even talking about somehow bringing any of that to... what? Justice? An idea even more charmlessly human than "wisdom."

DANNY

(Thoughtfully)

Then why is my human desire to know something involved at all here?

RAINS

(As if to make a notation on the board)

Again, if that's what you'd like to know...

DANNY

That whole line is very convenient for you, isn't it? You dangle the "Universe" and all its secrets like bait, then force me to make a decision as to what morsel of knowledge will be my last meal, what scrap I am destined to choke on. It's really just a neat way for you to bring the whole discussion to an end, isn't it?

RAIN

Again, Mr. O'Dwyer, none of this is about me or my convenience.

DANNY

Nor mine, if I may say so.

(RAINS shrugs indifferently and they appear to be at an impasse.)

RAINS

(Sighs)

I'm trying to help you, Danny. We need to get you to that finish line at your pace and in your fashion. Being no kind of angel, all I can really do is remind you that you are the subject, the observer and the observed, the process, the alpha and the omega. I don't think you'll be unhappy when we're all done here and I let you go on your way. Well, not me exactly.

(Disgusted, under his breath)

Now I am beginning to sound like an angel. Lazy, worthless creatures.

(DANNY has already returned to contemplating his assignment.)

DANNY

(Lacking resolution)

I know what I wanna know. I wanna know if I ever made anyone genuinely happy. You know, with my dancing, my talents on the stage.

RAINS

(A witheringly dry irony)

How altruistic.

DANNY

No, no, wait. I wanna know who loved me, really loved me. No, who knew me best, yet still loved me most? Has anyone ever been honest with me about that? About loving me?

RAINS

(Strained delicacy)

I've heard it said that it sometimes happens a human being just wants the reassurance of being told what they feel they already know.

DANNY

Wait, wait, let me think. I know there's a better way of saying what I'm trying to get at.

(Suddenly they hear a street vendor's mournful cry of "FLORES! FLORES PARA LOS MUERTOS!")

RAINS

(Frantically searching his clipboard)

What the --

(Calling out to no one in particular as  
the vendor's cries continue)

Hey, we're getting stacked up here! Not done yet!!

(To a bewildered DANNY)

I hate it when this happens.

(The fading voice of the vendor casts  
BLANCHE DUBOIS adrift on the stage.  
Dressed in simple 1940s style and  
carrying a purse, she is less confused  
than DANNY was, her movements self-  
consciously ethereal.)

BLANCHE

Sometimes there is Purgatory so quickly.

RAINS

(To DANNY, "you see")

Some do catch on right away.

(To BLANCHE)

Though technically this isn't Purgatory. Close enough.  
Closer than anybody normally guesses right off the bat.

BLANCHE

(Eying the theater distastefully)

I knew it couldn't be Heaven.

(Uncertainly, taking in the audience)

And I imagine Hell is worse.

DANNY

(Surprised)

But you knew you were...?

BLANCHE

I know I've left something... heavy behind. Something that  
felt like a life. And yet here "I" am. Released from all  
those earthly sensations into...

(To RAINS)

What do I call this unearthly realm, this otherworldly  
state I find myself in? If not Purgatory, what then...  
Mr. Rains?

(Taking a step toward him)

You are Mr. Claude Rains, aren't you?

DANNY

(Inspecting RAINS, dubiously)  
The movie actor?

RAINS

(To BLANCHE)  
Is that who I look like to you?

BLANCHE

Most definitely.

RAINS

Perhaps you've been influenced by the heavenly fantasies of too many old Hollywood films.

BLANCHE

No doubt. It certainly seems like -- I've always felt you -- he would be in charge of a place like this, whatever it's called. He always has that divine superiority, an authoritative elegance...

(Assessing RAINS's casual wear disapprovingly)  
In his speech and his attire.

RAINS

You expected a dress code in the Afterlife?

(With sweeps of her puzzled gaze, she compares RAINS to the well-dressed DANNY, to tragic effect.)

DANNY

Aw, I'm just passing through, like you.

BLANCHE

(To RAINS, sadly resigned)  
Well, one sometimes holds on to an illusion less out of expectation than a highly developed sense of esthetics, Mr. Rains. I'm just a little surprised that you are left to greet us... so casually.

(Hopefully)  
Or maybe you're here just to put us at ease before our meeting some higher order of, of... being.

RAINS

(A faint, wry smile)  
Angels? Fairies? Elves?



BLANCHE

Is it that ridiculous a thought? Is it too much to hope to know something of the Face of --

RAINS

You'll get an opportunity to know whatever it is you want to know --

(Consulting his clipboard)

Miss DuBois. But for now, I'm afraid, it's just me. And Mr. Danny O'Dwyer here, of course.

BLANCHE

(Slightly disappointed)

So you are in charge here. The "Afterlife" you called it. Is that the formal appellation?

RAINS

I'm not exactly "in charge" of anything. And don't worry about what this place might be called. It doesn't matter.

DANNY

You won't be here long. That's what he says. You're only here till you boil down your whole life to one question, one measly question filtered from a whole lifetime of questions, and just when there's nothing you can do about it, nothing you can do about anything, no matter what they let you find out, no matter what you think you're gonna learn from the "Universe," 'cause once you get your answer you're over. Gone. Kaboom! And don't think he doesn't know everything about you. He's got it all written down on that clipboard of his, your whole damn life -- even though he claims none of that matters, says it doesn't make any difference at all, but then why are they keeping track of a lot of stuff that shouldn't mean anything anymore anyway. So you better figure out and quick what the hell you what to know about some stupid thing that's gonna give you 15 seconds of peace of mind -- 'cause you sure can't change it -- before you just, just go up in smoke, I guess. Like a book being closed and thrown on a bonfire.

(He finally falls silent, brought to heel by RAINS's steely glare.)

RAINS

(To DANNY)

If I may.

RAINS (Cont'd)

(To BLANCHE)

My apologies. I fear that Danny may be painting too stark a picture of the matter -- perhaps in an overearnest and very late go at a second career. In any event --

(Consulting the clipboard)

Blanche, just in case the message has gotten a little garbled in translation -- and lest you think we handle things around here in any old slapdash manner -- normally of course we never do this in pairs -- let me assure you that it's all very simple. You are about to leave the Universe completely and forever. But as you make that exit, all consciousness coming to its final...

(Gesturing with his fingertips)

...evanescent end, you will get the chance to indulge that hallmark of your strain of biological intelligence, curiosity. You are being given a pass to know something.

BLANCHE

Something? Anything?

DANNY

(Daring to interject, with trepidation)

A "unit" of knowledge. Not everything.

RAINS

(Reins DANNY in with a glance)

As I explained to Danny, it's easiest -- it's best to formulate what you want to know into a single specific, straightforward question.

(BLANCHE dutifully, thoughtfully takes all this in.)

BLANCHE

(A sardonic, philosophical smile, almost a laugh)

So this is how it all ends for us curious little monkeys. Some meager, unnourishing sop of information in exchange for our souls. And here I was, naturally enough I suppose, as these things go, thinking I was right at the very moment of liberation, more than ready to step into a whole new life.

DANNY

(Surprised)

Here?

BLANCHE

No. Just before this... misstep.

DANNY

How did you... get here?

BLANCHE

I was about to be released from the hospital after a long illness.

RAINS

(Glancing at the clipboard)  
Hospital?

BLANCHE

(Defensively)  
Actually, a kind of sanitarium, if you must know.

RAINS

Sanitarium?

DANNY

(To BLANCHE)  
I told you he has it all on --

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)  
The loony bin then! There -- happy now?  
(More composed)  
It was my last day after months in that snake pit. But I had made friends, and the staff and other... inmates were giving me a small going-away party. Ha! "Going away," indeed. There were grapes, bunches of grapes on the buffet table. Unwashed grapes. I don't know how long I lingered.  
(Working to remembering)  
There had even been some entertainment at the going-away party. Singers, comic skits...  
(Holding her head, as though it ached)  
...someone... tap dancing. Yes, I remember tapping, mad tapping, tapping that seemed to continue even after the poor mad tapper had collapsed on stage, tapping that only Mr. Edgar Allan Poe could do justice.  
(The headache lifting)  
Quoth the tainted grapes, Nevermore.

(DANNY hesitates, then taps out two weak taps with his shoes.)

BLANCHE (Cont'd)

(A delayed realization)

You?

(DANNY nods and she responds with a short half-hearted laugh as he smiles wanly; she turns slightly flirtatious.)

How funny to find ourselves together, again, here, keeping our destined appointments with... Mr. Claude Rains. But that was days ago, wasn't it? When you... departed? I know I lay very ill for what seemed an awfully long time.

RAINS

(Snidely, to the heavens)

The scheduling is one of the marvels of this place.

BLANCHE

Time isn't what it used to be?

RAINS

(Mildly surprised by her wit)

You might put it that way.

BLANCHE

(Gripping herself, chilled)

What a chill has suddenly come over me. Maybe someone has just walked on my grave. Or maybe what makes me shiver is just the thought of somehow actually standing free of time, at last -- the clock being at least one devil I've finally escaped.

RAINS

(Toying with her, he stomps the floor)

Can we get some heat up here!

BLANCHE

(Alert but unfrightened)

But maybe there are devils of a netherworld yet to contend with.

DANNY

(Begins softly, nervously tapping)

Let's not start down that road...

RAINS

(Smiles mischievously)

What is that saying, something about well-intentioned people paving a road they never think they'll have to use?

BLANCHE

(Studying RAINS)

You smile as though you might have some familiarity with the Lord of the Flies.

RAINS

Lords. I don't mind Lucifer, and Mephistopheles is a real charmer. But that Beelzebub!

BLANCHE

(Still eyeing RAINS critically)

I don't doubt something very like them exists.

DANNY

(Afraid, tapping more intensely)

We're startin' down that road.

RAINS

(To no one in particular)

Boy, you complain about the Universe's cornball sense of humor -- then you meet somebody with no feet at all.

DANNY

No feet?!

BLANCHE

(It dawns on her)

Oh. You've mixed a metaphor, I believe. Or decapitated an allegory.

RAINS

(Shrugs)

No feet, no head...

(Indicating his domain)

The home of the hellish figure of speech.

DANNY

(Muttering to himself anxiously as he taps)

No head, no feet...

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)

I used to teach English, you know.

DANNY

(As RAINS checks his clipboard)

I told you -- they know everything around here.

BLANCHE

(Straining as if to read the clipboard)

Literature, actually. Endeavoring to instill in young minds an appreciation for Blake, Dickinson, Whitman...

(More equivocally)

Pearl S. Buck. I don't suppose you have catalogued on that tablet of yours just what a waste of time much of that was. A well-nigh impossible, Sisyphean task. And yet... made enduring, all of my patient searching and efforts as a teacher rendered worthwhile by the merest chance of a reward, the privilege of glimpsing that rarest blossom, an innocent and sensitive youth's first awakening to the beauty of the world. Well-nigh possible even in a strapping, football-playing --

RAINS

(Stomps the floor again)

You can come and get her now!

(Having fallen silent during BLANCHE's monologue, DANNY resumes tapping furiously.)

BLANCHE

That's not funny! Though I would've preferred to go to the devil rather than be mocked.

RAINS

(To DANNY, somewhat impatiently)

Are you trying to ward off demons with all that tapping?

(DANNY reverts to a very soft tapping.)

BLANCHE

And why not? Why shouldn't we resort to any trick in the book to keep the -- yes, the demons at bay. Demons of every color and stripe, born of the Universe's malice and out to sap whatever may remain of our human strength, our courage.

RAINS

The only demons here are the ones you bring with you -- and they will exit the world when you do.

BLANCHE

(As DANNY taps louder and louder)

All the more reason to tap... tap... tap out the last message of hope in an all-devouring void.

(Snapping at DANNY)

Will you please stop that damn, godforsaken racket.

(DANNY stops tapping. She tries to compose herself.)

My nerves.

(She makes for the chair and sits.)

I haven't been well.

DANNY

(Innocently)

Offhand, I'd say you've been dead.

(BLANCHE suddenly thinks to examine herself, with awe, which leads DANNY to inspect himself as well.)

Sounds kind of creepy when you say it out loud, huh?

BLANCHE

(Marveling at her body)

"For in that sleep of death what dreams may come...."

DANNY

(Impressed)

You're a regular poet.

BLANCHE

(A short, soft snort of derision at herself)

My iambic pentameter is on loan from Mr. William Shakespeare.

(DANNY nods uncertainly; pause)

That I should be called a dead woman -- when I have all of these treasures alive inside me.

DANNY

(With a wave of his hand)

My agent wrote me off for dead a long time ago. You saw the kind of charity gig he's been booking for me.

BLANCHE

(Nods sympathetically)

And yet now that we've "departed," how much presence we still seem to have. Just ghostly memories on the other side now, I suppose, if not actual ghosts.

(Remembering)

But then memory is always a haunting, isn't it? The mind ever more rickety a house, ransacked and eventually abandoned. I know. I've just spent months in a fluorescent-lit, institutional-white-and-gray ghetto of just such ramshackle domiciles wandering the corridors. But in the end, what do we have to cling to but our ghosts. Indeed, how not to let the ghosts roam at will, ransacking, ransacking...

DANNY

Nothing to be gained by living in the past, I always say. That's yesterday's reviews. On the other hand, at this juncture I don't guess there's any point in living for the future either.

BLANCHE

Sounds like Purgatory.

(She looks to RAINS, who responds with a gracious gesture of concession at the use of the term. She turns back to DANNY.)

No ghosts for you then.

DANNY

Well... a clumsy time for regrets, at any rate.

(BLANCHE nods with sad understanding.)

BLANCHE

I was once married, long ago. When I was very young.

(RAINS gazes at his clipboard, as if reading along with her)



BLANCHE

To a sensitive, delicate young man. A kind and innocent soul, a lover of poetry...

RAINS

A "homosexual."

(Looks up to see a discomforted BLANCHE  
and attempts to mollify her)

Merely invoking the finest clinicians of the era.

BLANCHE

(Smoothing her own ruffled feathers)

A young man of great beauty who appreciated beauty in others, celebrated it, in his own shy and diffident way. The marriage was something of a farce of course. How could it not be? I told him it didn't matter, even joked about it: Wasn't sleeping with one's husband a form of incest? Weren't we much more -- weren't we the deepest of friends, soul mates? But then one night I quite inadvertently happened upon him and another man... in bed.

(Pause)

We never spoke of it. Acted as though it had never happened. Until one evening, out dancing, in a moment that I could neither anticipate nor contain, the bitterest resentment flared up in me, scorching even what I loved most, and I said to my young husband on the dance floor, "I know. I saw. You disgust me."

(Pause)

The boy -- for he was really no more than a boy -- the boy killed himself that night. Shot himself with a gun.

(To the others, plaintively)

It had been brutally cruel of me -- a deliberate, unforgivable act of cruelty.

DANNY

I guess I'd be feeling "haunted" too.

BLANCHE

You understand!

DANNY

Sure. Anybody can see it'd be as troubling as any memory could be. Miss...?

BLANCHE

Oh, do call me Blanche. I speak of ghosts, but of course that is just the stunted poet in me. Still... here, now...

BLANCHE (Cont'd)

I can't help but feel closer to the spirit of my husband than I have ever felt before.

RAINS

As I explained to Danny, Ms. DuBois, although your loved ones can be said to have in some sense passed this way, they are long gone -- without leaving behind so much as a whiff of ectoplasm.

BLANCHE

So it's too much to expect to know if he was ever able to forgive me?

RAINS

I didn't say that.

BLANCHE

Then perhaps it's possible that in his brief passage through this shadowland he found some way to forgive me. I would so very much like to know if he did.

RAINS

I think you seriously misapprehend what's on people's minds during their fleeting period of consciousness here.

BLANCHE

Not his mind then. His heart. What was in his heart?

RAINS

(Shrugs, rolls his eyes)

Very well then -- his heart. What's in people's hearts by the time they get to this point tends to be who will forgive them -- not the forgiveness they should be extending to others.

BLANCHE

Oh.

(Glumly)

The quality of forgiveness, unavoidably it seems, as unstrained and capricious as mercy itself. Everywhere you turn here, Shakespeare: "It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven..."

(More brightly, full of compassion for herself)

Then I will just have to let it fall -- and forgive myself, if no one else will.

RAINS

(A little bored, to DANNY)

This place sees a lot of that kind of thing.

DANNY

A lot of what?

RAINS

A lot of what I guess you'd call "soul-searching," ending up with some expedient self-deception or other.

BLANCHE

If forgiveness is expedient, then it is the expedience of God's grace.

RAINS

(Playfully)

Who?

BLANCHE

And where would we be without faith in some power greater than ourselves, a power capable of forgiveness?

RAINS

You'll have to ask more formally if you want an answer to that question.

(To DANNY)

Very neat and expedient.

BLANCHE

(Scoffing)

I never claimed that there was anything "neat" about the human heart.

RAINS

(Consulting the clipboard)

No, no you haven't. And yet somehow, always, it all gets tied up in the end with some pretty bow, like forgiveness. Or love.

BLANCHE

(Half-accusatory, half-despairing)

I suppose you think even God Himself is some trick, some unreliable artifact of the human heart, a desperate ruse we perpetrate upon ourselves.

RAINS

(Ready to touch the clipboard "screen")

Shall I put a question mark on that and make it your final inquiry?

BLANCHE

No! No. I want to know something more than merely whether there's a God or not. Don't think I don't see the games you're playing -- you obviously know much more than we do and have us at a disadvantage. I'm sure you could answer that question yourself if, if --

RAINS

(An equivocal gesture)

If it were in my job description --

BLANCHE

But I don't just want the dry reality of information. I want something that lifts me, elevates the way I feel, a change that takes who I am to a higher level. I want magic.

RAINS

You've come to the wrong place. This is the Afterlife, not Disneyland.

(Waves off this small anachronism as

BLANCHE and DANNY exchange puzzled looks)

You hopped off the streetcar at Elysian Fields, a graveyard, not an amusement park.

DANNY

Like we had any choice?

RAINS

(Impatiently, to them both)

You have a choice: What piece of truth are you missing that you think would make you... whole, complete -- satisfied, if not happy?

BLANCHE

If I knew that -- that would be magic.

RAINS

Now you're getting it.

DANNY

(To a perplexed BLANCHE)

I think he's saying "knowing" is kind of magical.

RAINS

Or at least important. As far as the agenda at hand goes.

BLANCHE

Why?

DANNY

(Agreeing with BLANCHE)

Yeah, why? Especially when it's just the end of the road -- a real dead end.

RAINS

(To them both)

You just have to formulate that into a question and formally submit it.

DANNY

Yeah, yeah, we get it. There's still something that doesn't seem quite right about the whole thing.

BLANCHE

I tend to agree with Mister...

DANNY

O'Dwyer -- Danny.

(To RAINS)

The point is, this is a lot of rigamarole for one pretty lousy send-off.

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)

Yes, Danny makes some sense, don't you think?

RAINS

Would you both prefer to have had everything come to an unequivocal end at that sanitarium, a heavy black pall silently dropping on your lifeless bodies, blotting out consciousness instantly and forever?

(They consider the scenario.)

BLANCHE

I'm not sure any of this was what Dr. Nathanson was warning me about when he said I had to learn to trust to my deepest inner resources when steering between the bleak and the fantastical.

DANNY

(Baffled)

Good advice... or at least professional sounding.

BLANCHE

Oh, Dr. Nathanson was a veritable saint. And the only doctor in that entire sanitarium who wasn't a quack. He was really trying to help people. A true lifesaver. The others would just as soon gouge out a goodly chunk of your brain as look at you. As it was, I was lucky to get out of there with only a couple of electroshock treatments.

DANNY

That serious, huh?

BLANCHE

Navigating between Scylla and Charybdis always is.

(A quizzical look from DANNY)

The bleak and the fantastical.

(He nods)

Words to guide me on my way into the Land of the Iguana.

DANNY

Uh...

BLANCHE

(Laughs softly)

No, that seemingly unhinged statement was not some residual consequence of the electroshock therapy. I was set to travel to Mexico upon my release from the sanitarium. Puerto Vallarta. A cousin of one of the nurses has a small hotel on the beach there and I was going to work for her.

(Replaying the grammar)

Had a small hotel. No. Has a small hotel?

(To RAINS)

Oh, dear. What to make of verb tenses in a place without time?

RAINS

Well... it will in any event all be the past for you very soon.

BLANCHE

Right. Anyway, I was going to be a kind of hostess-concierge for the American tourists, the proprietess's principal clientele.

DANNY

I bet you'd be good at that.

BLANCHE

(Flirtatiously)

Oh, I dare say I've had some practice flimflamming those susceptible to a little feminine grace and charm.

DANNY

(Good-naturedly)

I dare say.

BLANCHE

Not that I care to speculate how much remains of those graces and charms. Especially in these circumstances.

DANNY

Oh, tons, Blanche -- don't doubt that for a second.

BLANCHE

Thank you, Danny. It's been a long time since anyone favored me with idle flattery.

DANNY

Not just idle flattery, Blanche. You're obviously a lady of real quality.

BLANCHE

A lady destined for the tropical heat, American tourists -- and iguanas -- of some dirty little backwater in Mexico. I understand they even eat them down there. The iguanas, that is -- not the American tourists. Though I did hear a story once, from a madwoman.

(Briefly casts an eye toward RAINS)

More pertinently, of course, I was destined for the Land of the Iguana. Really, I have to concede it's with some relief that I find myself here instead. In such captivating company.

DANNY

(A little flustered)

Me? You! Tons of grace and charm.

BLANCHE

Oh, Danny, you're taking advantage of what easy prey even dead women are to a compliment. It's part of your manly charm.

RAINS

(Surprised by BLANCHE, as DANNY beams  
with a blush)

Are you flirting?

BLANCHE

(No less coquettishly)

Flirting? Perhaps my little jest about having my way with  
the tourists of Puerto Vallarta has been misunderstood. I  
haven't given a serious thought to such things in years --  
and am more out of practice than I would like to admit

RAINS

(Consulting his clipboard)

Uhhh...

BLANCHE

(Nervously forestalling him)

Well, there was that young orderly at the sanitarium, but  
you can't possibly be counting that utterly  
inconsequential... dalliance.

RAINS

I'm not "counting" anything.

BLANCHE

It was in fact the decidedly undesired attentions of a man  
that resulted in my being carted off to the sanitarium in  
the first place.

RAINS

(Reading)

"Nervous collapse terminating in a psychotic break with  
reality."

BLANCHE

But it was true -- all true. I was... violated by my  
brother-in-law. My little sister Stella's husband Stanley.  
A Neanderthal of a man. And on the very night of the birth  
of their first baby, with Stella in the hospital. But not  
even my own sister would believe me. Who wouldn't "break"  
with reality?

(Indicating the clipboard)

But then you know all that. Every sordid detail of it.



RAINS

I see you hadn't arrived in New Orleans in the best of shape to begin with.

BLANCHE

Far from it. Destitute, abandoned, run out of town on the hot griddle of gossip if not the proverbial rail.

DANNY

Gosh, you've had it rough. No wonder you ended up... where you ended up.

BLANCHE

(Nods; then a more cheerful philosophy)

But, you know -- I forgive Stella. I even forgive Stanley. I decided to bear no grudge against them or "reality," even if I can't be their friend -- least of all with reality.

(A pause to verify her feeling)

Yes, I forgive them all.

(Triumphantly, to RAINS)

You see -- even I, even here in limbo, can give a thought to forgiving those who have wronged me.

RAINS

Maybe you're just... flirting with some imagined Day of Judgment? The idea that somewhere, someone in authority will think better of you for your "goodness."

BLANCHE

(Again confirming her feeling; earnestly)

No...no, I'm not. However impure my heart, it is still a real heart, that feels, feels genuinely and deeply for others who have been trapped, like me, on the other side of this...

(Looking about)

darkness. The dark side of the darkness.

(Reeling on RAINS)

Can you say the same? Do you even have a heart?

RAINS

(A little exasperated)

As I've tried to impress upon Mr. O'Dwyer, this process is not about me.

BLANCHE

Why not? Why shouldn't you have to explain yourself? Why do you get to stand there and expect us to just accept the, the rules? What rules, whose rules? Why should we believe a single word you say?

DANNY

Yeah, who are you to say the process isn't about you?

RAINS

(Just beginning to be flustered)

Perhaps you are confusing me with the Universe. I never meant to convey any such thing.

DANNY

But you keep speaking for the Universe.

RAINS

If you feel I haven't fairly represented --

DANNY

How would we know that. Apparently, you're the only part of the Universe we get to deal with now. Like this business about being allowed to know only one thing.

BLANCHE

Yes, if the Universe can let us know anything, surely it can let us know everything. At the very least, and only to avoid saying stingy, I'd say the Universe is being ungracious, perverse, by drawing the line at one thing.

RAINS

I didn't --

DANNY

(to BLANCHE)

He says you couldn't understand it all. Something about being a human being.

RAINS

(Bobbing his head equivocally, as if having been partially misinterpreted)

Mmm --

BLANCHE

Who else is in a position to even talk about understanding if not us?

RAINS

Human understanding that --

BLANCHE

We may be a long way from being made in God's image, but -- well, precisely for that reason, whose process is it but ours? We arrive at understanding only because we do...

(Looking around her)

...emerge from darkness.

RAINS

The dark side of darkness, I believe you --

BLANCHE

It's our curse, yes, and all the more reason to resist relinquishing our power to shed some small light on the world.

RAINS

A joy to the world, I'm sure --

BLANCHE

And if nothing else, there's always the flickering, incandescent comfort of hoping to understand.

RAINS

(Eager to wrap up)

Well, then, consider this going out on a high note: You're heading straight into understanding -- knowing something that you didn't know before. Now, I don't want to rush either of you -- and I certainly don't want to encourage you to do anything rash -- but it's only fair to point out that you probably shouldn't overthink this whole thing. It's been my general observation that people are much more at peace leaving here when they haven't been distracted by the generalities of philosophy.

BLANCHE

Because we are only the tiniest of details in the Universe?

RAINS

(Indignantly)

I didn't say that.

BLANCHE

Frankly, Mr. Rains, there's not much you are saying that's at all helpful.

DANNY

(Nodding in agreement)

You've done nothing but confuse me since I came tapping in.

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)

Maybe you're not cut out for this type of work.

RAINS

I assure you, talking about me is definitely not going to help!

(Silence, BLANCHE and DANNY taken  
aback.)

BLANCHE

(Finally laughing)

But here we are, talking. To you, about you. The Universe certainly does display a peculiar... focus at times, doesn't it?

(Exasperated, RAINS moves to the table,  
downs the last of his drink, slams down  
the mug, and turns to his clipboard  
with almost hostile officiousness.)

RAINS

Down to business then, anybody? You, Mr. O'Dwyer, any thoughts about your future --

(Indicating the clipboard)

As brief and tangled with your past as it is.

BLANCHE

(Shaking her head dolefully at RAINS)

No, not right for this line of work at all, I'd say.

(DANNY shakes his head in agreement.)

DANNY

(It suddenly occurs to him)

Hey, if I just stay here talking and never make up my mind, does that mean I get to live forever?

BLANCHE

(Gaily)

Surely others will be showing up. Who knows who we'd get to meet!

DANNY

Fred Astaire!

RAINS

(Not liking the turn of this)

This is not a cocktail party! You may find such merriment all very entertaining, but it won't get you any closer to where you have to go. If you're going to be clever, maybe you should give a thought to a clever end to all this.

(Holding up the clipboard)

(Silence.)

BLANCHE

You rather like the sound of your own voice, don't you, Mr. Rains?

(With great effort, RAINS restrains himself.)

Not that I can say I blame you. It's a lovely voice. Still...

DANNY

There's a kinda -- what's the word, Blanche? A kinda bullying thing he has going on.

BLANCHE

I think you're right.

(Reassessing RAINS)

A bit of a bully.

DANNY

Not that he doesn't finesse it with a certain style.

RAINS

(Witheringly)

Glad to see you've recovered from your tapping terrors, Mr. O'Dwyer.

(DANNY immediately sobers, leaning back fearfully as RAINS steps towards him.)

Boo!

(Startled, DANNY emits jittery taps. RAINS blithely turns away from him.)

RAINS (Cont'd)

Bully you? Why bother? I'll leave that to your shadow.  
 (Under his breath)  
 Scared of his own ghost.

BLANCHE

Take my word for it, Danny, never depend on the kindness of strangers.

(To RAINS)

Really, Mr. Rains. You might restrain yourself just a little and refrain from indulging your less than divine sense of "humor."

RAINS

It's the devil in me.

BLANCHE

(Calming DANNY)

More of the same, I'm afraid.

(To RAINS, reproachfully)

Not everyone has had the experience I've had with your sort.

RAINS

(Contained rage)

My sort. What do you know of my sort? What sort have you conjured in that little brain of y--

BLANCHE

The sort with little patience or sympathy for human frailty.

RAINS

(Pulling himself up indignantly)

Maybe if you'd had to bear witness to what I've--

(Breaks off, brandishing the clipboard;  
 gathers himself, reestablishing  
 authority)

Miss DuBois, Mr. O'Dwyer. Let's start over, shall we. If either of you feels that I've been incomprehensible and haven't represented the situation --

DANNY

"Fairly." You said "fairly represented" earlier. How would we know fair? I already told you it doesn't sound fair at all to me.

RAINS

I perhaps misspoke earlier. I only meant that my assignment is nothing if not to be comprehensible.

BLANCHE

Comprehensible? To a human being?

RAINS

Of course.

BLANCHE

"Of course"? Here? Why there's barely a "comprehensible" here, much less an "of course." To a human being.

RAINS

I'm sorry if I seem to be failing you.

(Recalibrating his approach)

You have both lived long lives relative to the average across the exhausting sweep of homo sapiens sapiens' frolic on Earth -- billions of variations on a theme. And now it is time to snuff out -- um, extinguish your individual variations and the Universe, however peculiar you may find it, does these things in a very particular fashion. You aren't being treated any differently from the billions who have gone before you. Just as you can't be born without taking your first breath outside the womb, you cannot truly and finally die without some last bit of knowledge being imparted to you. I say "bit." I know it's not precise -- I'm certainly not referring to the digital definition of a "bit" as used in your Computer Age -- of which you know nothing of course, the Age of Computers still being in its inchoate infancy during your lifetimes, and so not "your" Computer Age at all, but that of your species -- but a "bit" is still a useful term for that unit of knowledge, however you want to think of a bit, or a unit, of knowledge, that will be "infused" into your last spark of consciousness.

DANNY

(To BLANCHE)

You ever go see Abbott and Costello at the movies?

BLANCHE

(Uncertain where this is leading)

Yes.

DANNY

You seen that routine of theirs, "Who's on first?"

BLANCHE

(Vaguely familiar)

"Who's on first?"

(All at once)

Oh, yes! "Who's on first?"

(Now struggling to recall it, smiling)

"What's the guy's name on first base?" "No, What is on second."

DANNY

"I'm not asking you who's on second."

BLANCHE

"Who's on first."

DANNY

"I don't know."

BLANCHE and

DANNY

(Together, though not in perfect unison, DANNY taking the lead)

"He's on third, we're not talking about him."

(The two laugh.)

DANNY

Great routine, really funny stuff.

(Sobering right up)

That's the feeling I'm getting with this guy. Only it ain't so funny.

BLANCHE

(Nodding, pained)

After a while, even with Mr. Abbott and Mr. Costello, one doesn't want a clarification. One simply wants it to stop.

RAINS

(A little confused by them now, and starting to dither)

And if a bit, or a unit, is still too vague, as I have suggested before, just posing a question, you know, the kind of simple question that has a conceivably concrete answer -- not necessarily as concrete as "yes" or "no" --



RAINS (Cont'd)

Though that's certainly an acceptable category of question and bound to be answered, it just seems a waste of, well, waste hardly seems appropriate, but not getting the most out of your opportunity, perhaps, though that shouldn't really influence your decision at all, if a simple "yes" or "no" is what you want and, I guess, a little bit is all you need. A real "bit," as in zero or one.

(The other two stare blankly at the uncomfortable RAINS.)

BLANCHE

(Sighs; to DANNY)

As I say, never depend on the kindness of strangers.

DANNY

"Stranger" doesn't begin to capture the mystery.

BLANCHE

(Again sizing up RAINS)

It does make you wonder.

DANNY

You got that right -- "it."

RAINS

It?

DANNY

It.

RAINS

Grammatical gender as... what? Insult?

DANNY

(Pleased with himself, he taps twice)

If the tapless shoe fits...

(Faintly mystified, RAINS looks down at his slippers.)

BLANCHE

It's just that it's not at all obvious, Mr. Rains, what you might be.

RAINS

(Less confident than with DANNY)

I am your facilitator.

BLANCHE

Facilitator? To facilitate...

RAINS

Yes.

BLANCHE

(Indicating the stage)

This?

RAINS

Yes.

DANNY

But what do you have to be to get into this racket?

BLANCHE

Yes, what sort of creature is a facilitator?

RAINS

As I've said, your time would be better spent thinking less about me and more about your --

BLANCHE

After extolling the curiosity of our species yourself, Mr. Rains, you can't be surprised that we're curious about you.

RAINS

For all intents and purposes I'm exactly what I appear to be to you, whatever suits you. An angel, a devil, Claude Rains...

BLANCHE

But were you human at some point? Did you have a life on Earth -- ending up here and somehow qualifying to be promoted to this other station in existence? Or is this a demotion? Has working in Purgatory left you deaf?

DANNY

(As RAINS touches his earpiece)

Yeah, that's what I was wonderin'.

RAINS

It's not a hearing aid. It's a decorative communication device, and like the clipboard, strictly an expression of style. Now, please, what possible bearing could any of this have on the question at hand? If you want to know --

DANNY

There he goes again. There it goes again.

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)

But what do you know?

RAINS

What I know is of no consequence, except as it helps to inform you of your last option.

BLANCHE

A very odd attitude it seems to me, considering the priority given to knowledge in this place. Do you know everything and just dish it out piecemeal? Or do you really not know much of anything at all?

RAINS

(Defensively)

I know what I know.

BLANCHE

Oh, dear. I do believe you've been wearing that... human camouflage too long.

DANNY

Or not long enough.

BLANCHE

Who's to know?

DANNY

Not him, I'm beginning to think. It's all just some kinda cat-and-mouse game. And who knows how it all ends?

BLANCHE

A cat-and-mouse game, Mr. Rains?

RAINS

I assure you, everything I've told you is true.

BLANCHE

Maybe you've been deceived.

RAINS

What sense would that make?

BLANCHE

It doesn't have to make sense. You of all people must see that. But your answer makes me think you don't actually know.

RAINS

Listen, you're free to believe me or not, but there's no point in not believing me. You'll find out the truth of that soon enough, and nothing is risked except by refusing to believe that you might learn one other last truth about life.

DANNY

(To BLANCHE)

I think maybe you're right, Blanche. They just tell him to say all this and he doesn't have any more idea what's really going on than we do.

RAINS

That's preposterous.

BLANCHE

(To RAINS)

Tell me -- if you can -- is there someone with one of those things...

(Pointing to the clipboard)  
filled with everything you've ever said and done?

(RAINS is unable to answer.)

Someday will you die?

(Clearly disturbed by the question,  
RAINS remains frozen.)

DANNY

He doesn't know.

BLANCHE

So it would appear.

RAINS

(The best he can muster)  
I have been doing this forever.

BLANCHE

Undeniably a long time. Such as time is around here.

RAINS

And I expect to go on doing it forever.

BLANCHE

Well, there you go, Mr. Rains. Great expectations.

RAINS

(Weakly)  
And I have an existence outside this place -- there are others of us. We're not being deceived by anybody or anything.

BLANCHE

Splendid.

(A deep breath, summoning her strength)  
What do you say, Danny?

DANNY

What?

BLANCHE

What are we to do? What can we do but believe Mr. Rains. After all, he does make an excellent point. We don't appear to have anything to lose by choosing some last pearl of knowledge, if not wisdom, to string on the remaining strand of our lives.

DANNY

Like you say, I guess we got no choice.

BLANCHE

No choice but to choose.

(A wistful pause; to RAINS)  
I'm tired, Mr. Rains.

RAINS

I'm beginning to know the feeling.

BLANCHE

(Smiles)

As I told Dr. Nathanson, wherever I go, whatever I do, I have no choice but to take Blanche DuBois with me. And I'm sure you appreciate, Mr. Rains, what a pill she can be. So it's all probably well and good that our lives, as ineffable as they are to us, are finite enough to fit on a clipboard. When all is said and done, we are lucky not that we are curious and can learn and know -- but that our knowing, at last, comes to an end. Great expectations, indeed.

(BLANCHE stands, purse in hand.)

I know what I want to know.

(RAINS and DANNY wait expectantly.)

I want to know if my husband ever did forgive me.

RAINS

You realize that's just a "yes" or "no" question?

(BLANCHE nods)

And if he didn't? Aren't you asking a question you're sure you already have the answer to? You expect the reassurance of knowing he loved and forgave you. Is bitter disappointment really the last thing you want to know?

BLANCHE

(Shrugs)

In truth, I'm not at all sure what I'm expecting. Perhaps Lord Byron had it right -- sorrow is knowledge and those who know the most must mourn the most deeply.

RAINS

(Consults his clipboard)

But then Lord Byron was a Romantic and Romanticism is all about feeling hurt, isn't it?

BLANCHE

I gather what you really mean to say is there's no place in this sterile emptiness for anything like feeling at all, only knowledge -- even as the emptiness itself would seem to confirm Byron's inkling that "the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life." In any case, all I can be sure of is what I want to know. And I've told you what that is.

RAINS

Very well.

(Marks the clipboard with a fingertip)

BLANCHE

In the end, all I have is me. And when I no longer have me, that's something I will definitely never know.

DANNY

I've decided too.

RAINS

Yes, Danny?

DANNY

Has anybody -- no, have I ever affected anybody for the better, in any way that really mattered, that changed their lives for the better? That's what I want to know.

RAINS

Is that it? Sure?

DANNY

Definitely.

(BLANCHE walks to DANNY and takes his arm, as RAINS marks the clipboard.)

BLANCHE

A wonderful question, Danny.

(To RAINS)

Are we done?

RAINS

Done. You'll receive your answers as you pass on from here.

(BLANCHE looks upstage and to the wings for the proper exit.)

You'll know which way to go.

BLANCHE

(To DANNY)

Shall we? As Mr. Shakespeare undoubtedly meant to say, "All's well that ends."

(DANNY inhales, heaving his chest out,  
holds it... nods.)

If only we had met at another time. In another world.

(DANNY nods. BLANCHE gently,  
lightheartedly starts to lead him  
offstage.)

If you hadn't died on that stage I would have gone mad.  
Again. But, thankfully, there was another world entirely.  
For a few precious moments.

(DANNY stops short and turns to RAINS.)

DANNY

Can I change my mind?

RAINS

(After consulting his clipboard)

Yes. If you like.

DANNY

I've decided I do want to know everything. Or at least try  
to. Everything from the atom to the farthest reaches of  
the -- the cosmos. To here. And every twist and turn of  
the human heart and mind along the way.

RAINS

You understand the risk you're taking? Your request may  
not be able to be fulfilled.

DANNY

I understand.

(RAINS scrutinizes DANNY, then blandly  
accepts this and marks it down.)

RAINS

Very well.

(DANNY now turns to lead BLANCHE  
offstage.)

DANNY

(To BLANCHE)

Always been something of a gambler.



BLANCHE

We have to be, don't we?

(They exit. Spent, RAINS exhales and returns to the business on his clipboard. Suddenly footsteps and the strains of Amy Winehouse's "Rehab" are heard: "THEY TRIED TO MAKE ME GO TO REHAB BUT I SAID NO, NO, NO!" RAINS, panic-stricken, turns to see who is approaching from offstage.)<sup>1</sup>

RAINS

Oh, dear lord. What fresh Hell is this?

THE END

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<sup>1</sup> In production, the song may be any music associated with the kind of celebrity nobody would want to have to deal with -- e.g., "Hail to the Chief."