

**COMPLETE AND TOTAL**  
*by Greg Vovos*  
(a play about heroin and young people)

**CHARACTERS:**

**ERIC HUNTER:** A smart and talented young man of about 17. He has a great future ahead of him, but he has a drug problem standing directly in his path. Eric would prefer not to be around large groups of people.

**THE MIND:** The lone part of Eric's brain that still functions strictly on a sober level. He's smart, relentless, and will not give in. He's a picture of what Eric used to be before the drugs took hold.

**MADISON HUNTER:** Eric's younger sister of about 15. She's wise beyond her years, full of energy, and cares deeply about her brother. She's the extrovert of the family and embraces what life has to offer.

**HANNAH STRUMMER:** A lost soul with a bit of angelic grace to her. She's broken and addicted. She's Eric's age.

**BOBBY MADDEN:** Also addicted. Somewhat of a wild card. He's looking for a buzz -- any buzz -- and he always finds new ways to score.

**NOTE ON THE VOICEOVER:** The lines that are listed as THE MIND (VOICEOVER) can be played in darkness to help convey the mystery and to aid in buying time during scene changes. Or, if you prefer to use a live actor's voice rather than a recorded voiceover, please do.

**SETTING:**

Wherever The Mind tells us, but mostly we find ourselves in the environs of Eric's life as he becomes addicted to heroin: his bedroom, a party, the woods, prison, etc. Less is more when it comes to set pieces. The time is present day but we do go back and forth a little.

**SYNOPSIS:**

Eric is a young man with a great future ahead of him, including a chance to attend Harvard; however, his drug addiction is escalating and heroin is becoming the number one priority in his life. The only people who are truly there to help him are his younger sister Madison and The Mind, the sober part of his brain that still believes Eric's future has value. But it remains to be seen if Madison and The Mind are up to the task of helping Eric defeat the powerful narcotic.

**NOTE:** This play was commissioned by the Willoughby Fine Arts *Theater for Healthy Living* program to tour to high schools and be performed by young people to warn students of the growing heroin threat that faces our country today.

It was awarded the *Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for Playwriting for 2014.*

**To produce this play, please contact playwright at [gregvovos@yahoo.com](mailto:gregvovos@yahoo.com)**

## **COMPLETE AND TOTAL**

*Either in darkness or in a dim light that promotes unease and worry, we hear...*

### THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

I once knocked my sister down a flight of steps. I'm admitting this now not because I'm proud, but because it's what prompted me to come clean -- metaphorically speaking, of course. Obviously, I wish it never happened. And I can't stop thinking of all the ways it didn't have to...

But I'm a heroin addict. You can't know or fathom what that truly means unless you're one yourself. But trust me, it's a powerful force with the chaos potential to destroy worlds.

So today, I want to offer support for my sister...before I lose focus. Because here's the thing about me, there's two me's...

*Lights up reveal THE MIND, standing in a gobo light that projects prison bars onto the stage floor. The Mind is a young man somewhere near twenty. It's hard to say because his struggles have aged him. And he appears both weary from his battle to defeat the drug, but emboldened by his stubborn will to live.*

*Behind The Mind, sleeping on a narrow bench, is ERIC.*

### THE MIND

First, there's the sober me who's communicating with you right now. And even I'm getting weak. And second, there's the addict me (*The Mind points to the sleeping Eric behind him.*)...And we're both at constant war with each other. The sober me -- let's just call me The Mind -- is fighting for survival against the other me -- Eric, who does anything he can just to get high, which translated means kill us.

We're currently engaged in a truce because of the whole prison thing, but that doesn't mean he's not going to try to destroy me when the opportunity presents itself. But I have a nobler and much more difficult goal than he: I am trying to save his life. How? By getting him off the smack. My problem is that heroin is a nasty, savage beast, that once it sinks its talons into you, as it has Eric, it refuses to let go. Most people can't survive. I won't even quote the statistic to you because it's too depressing. But trust me, you wouldn't take that bet. The scary part is...it just takes once. Once to get hooked, once to go to prison, once to die. And if you survive "the once" as Eric and I

have, it only gets worse by the day. Every injection, every pill, every high he chases makes me, the sober part of his mind, smaller and weaker. But I'm not going to let Eric go down like that. Because even though he's just a step above road kill whenever he's using, he wasn't always like that. He was a good person -- talented, he cared about people, and he had something to contribute to the world -- himself.

But when I think of Eric, I don't think of this guy behind me who's sleeping like a baby, I think of this...

*Eric rises from the bench and moves into another area of light, removed from The Mind, where he sits and prepares to shoot himself full of heroin. Eric looks very much like The Mind, but he doesn't seem of this world, he searches but his gaze lacks focus.*

...I think of a guy slumped in a chair, his arm tied off, as he searches for a useful vein to spike. And it becomes difficult to remember the good guy he used to be. The guy our little sister Madison counted on.

*MADISON, a girl of 15 -- confident, full of energy, ready to take on the world -- crosses the stage. The Mind watches her exit.*

And when I think of her, I know I can't give up on Eric -- on myself -- because that would be a complete and total waste. And also because...Eric can still be human. He can.

*(Yelling at Eric)* YOU CAN STILL BE HUMAN!

*Eric finishes his business and exits, leaving The Mind alone.*

So I want to take you back to a time just before Eric turned into the jailbird and addict he currently is, a time when we still had a chance.

*Lights fade to black, and trippy music colors the scene change.*

*As lights come back to full, Eric seems better, livelier. We're back in time before all the usage, and he seems younger. The Mind is with him, and even he looks healthier.*

*Eric no longer has his heroin gear, but instead holds a Gatorade bottle. He pours whiskey into it.*

THE MIND

Really? Do you need that now?

ERIC  
Lay off.

THE MIND  
How are you going to finish your application if you're drunk? Pretty sure Harvard's unforgiving when it comes to mistakes on essay--

ERIC  
I'm not filling it out right now.

THE MIND  
You have to eventually.

ERIC  
I have other things on my mind. Like how I'm going to function at this party tonight.

THE MIND  
And how is getting wasted before you even get there going to help?

*Eric takes a drink.*

ERIC  
A couple swigs of this and suddenly I have character. I can talk.

THE MIND  
That's not how it works.

*KNOCKING on the door.*

MADISON (*from offstage*)  
Eric! Eric!

*Eric quickly hides the bottle of whiskey. Madison saunters in.*

MADISON  
Were you talking to someone?

THE MIND  
Just himself.

ERIC  
No.

MADISON

I thought I heard -- doesn't matter. Mom wants to know if you finished your Harvard app yet?

ERIC

Uh...finished? No.

THE MIND

Uh...started? No.

MADISON

Well, get going. If you get in, it'll make it easier for me, and then we'll be there together! That would be so awesome!

ERIC

I'll do it when I do it, Madison. End of story.

THE MIND

Cut the girl a break. She's just looking out for you.

MADISON

Why is your Gatorade brown?

THE MIND

Busted.

*Eric pulls some folded-up papers out of his back pocket and hands them to her.*

ERIC

Here. I read your story.

MADISON

*(So excited and nervous that this sounds like one long sentence.)*  
Already? What did you think? Did you like it? Is it too long? Did it make you sad? I think it's a really sad story. Don't you? Did you cry?

ERIC

Well...

MADISON

I knew it. I knew you wouldn't like it.

ERIC

No. It's good.

MADISON

Then what? I based the flashback on that time when you pulled me from that quicksand stuff. Remember? I love that memory.

ERIC

Yeah...no...it was great reliving that. It's just...there's just something about the ending, that's like...I don't know...It's not truthful.

MADISON

Not truthful? What does that even mean?

ERIC

It just means that...Look, I like the writing, but I'm not sure you truly understand the pain of your characters.

*Madison sulks.*

THE MIND

You're a real prince, you know that? And by prince, I mean jerk-off.

ERIC

Don't look that way. You're still young. You can't be expected to truly understand pain.

MADISON

I'm only two years younger than you!

ERIC

Two years from now you're going to be a completely different person.

MADISON

And I suppose you're an expert on pain?

ERIC

I wouldn't say I'm an expert, but I am a little more intimate with it than you. *(Takes a drink.)* Cheer up. You have plenty of time to learn more about pain. Trust in life and all its dismal possibilities.

THE MIND

Can you try not to depress the child?

*The Mind pats Madison on the shoulder, but, of course, she does not react. Because as is the case with all characters in this play, no one but Eric is aware of The Mind.*

*Eric pushes The Mind away and throws an arm around his sister.*

ERIC

Believe me when I say this, you're an incredible writer. You're just expecting too much of yourself right now. I mean, jeez, if I could do half the things you can when I was your age, I'd be totally stoked. Seriously, you're my idol.

MADISON

Whatever.

ERIC

I'm serious. Now...don't be so glum...

*She cracks a smile and finishes their old rhyme routine...*

MADISON

...Okay, chum. (*Indicating the notes he made on her story.*) Your fixes are good though. Thanks.

ERIC

I'm glad you're pleased. Now go play with your dolls or something.

*She gets close to her brother. Indicates the spiked Gatorade...*

MADISON

I really wish you wouldn't drink that. It's bad.

*She gives him a kiss on the cheek; it's sweet and sad at once.*

Now finish your application. We have a bright future of pain AND happiness ahead of us.

*She exits.*

THE MIND

That girl is too smart.

ERIC

She's too hopeful.

THE MIND

Nothing wrong with that.

*Lights shift. In the darkened light...*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

Even though I always felt like I was searching for something, I never knew what it was until it came to me on its own. Like...I knew I was...lacking. I knew that I didn't feel right around people. I knew I didn't fit in. But...I didn't know how to change that.

*As lights come back to full, sound comes in waves. Party time! Kids SCREAM, music BLARES, and something BREAKS. Eric and The Mind sit on a curb.*

THE MIND

Guess that alcohol didn't do the trick.

ERIC

It got me to the party, didn't it? That's something.

THE MIND

Sitting on a curb by yourself? That's more like nothing.

ERIC

You're right. I don't know what I was thinking.

*Eric stands to leave when HANNAH shows up. Hannah is a sweet girl, angelic almost, but somehow broken.*

HANNAH

Is this curb taken?

THE MIND

(*Shocked*) Is she talking to us?

*Eric stares at her, speechless.*

Say something, you idiot.

HANNAH

Do you mind if I sit here?

ERIC  
Uh...no.

*She sits.*

HANNAH  
It's so loud in there. And just like...I don't know. I'm Hannah.

THE MIND  
Hannah. A palindrome. Hannah. From the Hebrew meaning "grace of God." I could use some Hannah right now. But don't tell her that. She'll think you're a nutjob. Crap! Stop drifting. Tell her your name.

HANNAH  
I said, I'm Hannah.

ERIC  
Right, yeah...um...I'm...

THE MIND  
Crap! What's our name? What's our name??

HANNAH  
You're Eric, right?

THE MIND  
Yes! I knew that!

ERIC  
Yeah.

HANNAH  
We have English together. Ms. Wolfe.

ERIC  
Yeah...uh...apparently I'm struggling with the language right now.

HANNAH  
(*She laughs.*) Maybe because you don't talk enough.

*Eric just shrugs; he doesn't know what to say.*

THE MIND

Say something, you doofus. Tell her she's beautiful. Wait! No! I don't think you can say that to girls anymore. It'll make her feel objectified. But, dang, she is beautiful.

HANNAH

Do you want me to leave or something?

THE MIND

No! Don't leave. I'm just an idiot. But you're angelic. Please--

ERIC

Angelic.

HANNAH

What?

ERIC

You're angelic.

THE MIND

Tell me you did not really just say that.

*Hannah smiles.*

HANNAH

That's really sweet.

*Eric turns away, hiding his embarrassment.*

So why aren't you inside?

THE MIND

Don't say anything stupid.

ERIC

I don't know. I don't even know why I came. Anytime I come to things like this with all these people, I just feel like there's this secret, and I'm the only one who doesn't know it. And if you don't know the secret, you don't know anything. It's stupid.

THE MIND

Oh, Lord. She's going to think you're a freak show.

HANNAH

I know exactly what you mean.

*They look at each other. She scoots closer.*

THE MIND

Does she want us to kiss her?

ERIC

*(To The Mind)* I don't know.

HANNAH

What?

ERIC

Nothing.

*Hannah pulls out a joint.*

HANNAH

You want to get high?

ERIC

Oh...uh...sure.

THE MIND

Seriously?

HANNAH

I like a buzz but alcohol is so much work. I'd much rather get stoned or something.

THE MIND

Or something?

*Hannah lights it, takes a hit, and passes it to him. He takes a hit, passes it back to her.*

ERIC

It's good.

HANNAH

It'll do for now.

*A VOICE FROM OFFSTAGE is heard.*

BOBBY (*offstage*)  
Hey, Hannah!

THE MIND  
Well, that's that. Party's over. Kiss the angel goodbye.

BOBBY (*offstage*)  
Hannah!

ERIC  
Is that your boyfriend?

HANNAH  
No, just some weirdo that gets really good drugs.

*BOBBY enters. He's like a tumbleweed that spreads highs.*

BOBBY  
Well, what do we have here?

*Bobby takes the joint.*

Don't mind if I do.

*Bobby takes a big hit.*

Who's this guy?

THE MIND  
None of your effing business, douchebag.

HANNAH  
Eric.

BOBBY  
You a cop, Eric?

HANNAH  
What do you want, Bobby?

BOBBY  
The question's not what do I want, it's what do I have? Check it out.

*He pulls out a pill bottle.*

Want a sample?

*Hannah takes a few pills without answering. She crosses herself in prayer, then swallows the pills.*

THE MIND  
Let's bounce.

*Eric gets up to leave.*

But be polite. To the girl.

ERIC  
Nice talking to you, Hannah. See you around.

BOBBY  
What's the matter? Don't you like to get high?

ERIC  
I'm already high.

BOBBY  
So, get higher. You can never be too high, am I right?

HANNAH  
Go 'head. They're harmless.

ERIC  
What are they?

BOBBY  
Who cares?

THE MIND  
Any normal person would care, dill rod.

BOBBY  
Relax, I got 'em from my doctor, they're fine. It's amazing what you can score when you speak the language. "Hey, doc, my L5-S1 disc pain is radiating down to my legs. Don't you have anything to ease my discomfort?"

*Bobby laughs, very proud of himself.*

HANNAH

Come on. Trip with us.

ERIC

Why not?

THE MIND

Why not?? I'll tell you why not. You don't know these people! You don't know what these pills are or what they can do to you!! And you're just going to put them into your body without thinking??? What the hell is--

*Bobby hands Eric a pill. Eric swallows it.*

BOBBY

Get ready to soar.

THE MIND

Hey...what's...what's...where am I going?

*The Mind wanders off and exits. Lights shift.*

THE MIND (*Voiceover*)

It's important to remember that things happen in steps. And each step gets bigger and bigger as you gain momentum. It's like a baby learning to crawl, to walk, and then finally to run.

*POUNDING on the door. Lights to full and we see Eric passed out in his chair. The Mind sleeps on a pile of dirty clothes. Madison comes in.*

MADISON

Eric! Wake up! Eric!

*Madison pulls the blanket off Eric and shakes him.*

ERIC! GET UP!

ERIC

(*To Madison*) What day is it?

MADISON

What do you mean, what day is it?

*The Mind sits up, half awake.*

THE MIND

It feels like there's a gremlin feasting on my brain.

ERIC

Go away.

MADISON

You have to take me to my audition in fifteen minutes so get up!

*Bobby enters.*

BOBBY

Morning, Madison, you look as fetching as ever.

MADISON

Well, you look grosser than ever. God, you've been here like every day this week. Don't you have a home? *(To Eric)* Fifteen minutes!

*Madison leaves.*

BOBBY

Sweet girl. Let's go. Hannah texted me. Her parents are gone all day so we can party over there.

THE MIND

They can party over there. You need to take your sister--

ERIC

Party with what? I got no cash.

BOBBY

No worries. Ol' Bobby to the rescue once again. Check it out.

*Bobby holds up a pill bottle.*

THE MIND

What does he have?

ERIC  
What is that?

BOBBY  
Codeine. Nice to have in an emergency. Like now for instance.

ERIC  
Are those yours?

BOBBY  
I don't know. Is my name Franklin J. Hunter?

*Bobby laughs.*

THE MIND  
Those are your dad's. He can't take those.

ERIC  
Put those back. They belong to my dad.

BOBBY  
If he didn't want you to have them, he shouldn't have left them in the medicine cabinet. It's his own fault.

THE MIND  
This isn't funny, Eric. You can't steal that medication.

BOBBY  
Come on, this is a gift from the gods. We gotta get these while the getting's good. They ain't cheap.

ERIC  
I don't think this is a good idea.

BOBBY  
You got something better to do than hang out all day with the lovely Ms. Hannah whilst getting geeked out on codeine? I think not. Here, have one right now. I know I will.

*Bobby swallows a pill.*

THE MIND  
Don't let him do that. Your dad needs those! Now get this waste-case out of here and drive Madison to her audition.

BOBBY

*(Holding out a pill)* Come on. You'll feel better.

*Eric hesitates.*

Dude, they're just codeine. It's no big deal. And if it's the moral issue you're worried about, forget it. I stole my grandpa's heart medication right after he had bypass surgery. And you know what, he just got more from his doctor.

ERIC

I don't know.

BOBBY

Look, it doesn't take a licensed psychiatrist to tell that you got some weird crap going on up there. *(Pokes at Eric's head)* And if I were your shrink, I'd be prescribing you any pill I could.

THE MIND

Just a public service announcement to remind you that this sponge-brain is not a licensed psychiatrist. He's a drug addict.

BOBBY

Listen, Eric, you and me, we're a lot alike.

THE MIND

You're nothing alike.

BOBBY

And I know you go through most of the day feeling like complete and total crap. But these pills make life a little more livable. Take one.

THE MIND

Dude, regardless of what I think of this scumbag, you have to drive Madison to her audition. And you can't do that high on codeine.

ERIC

You're right.

BOBBY/THE MIND *(simultaneously)*

Of course, I'm right.

*Bobby puts a couple pills to Eric's mouth.*

THE MIND

No, I'm right! I'm right!!

*Eric swallows a pill; the other falls unnoticed to the ground.*

ERIC

You're both right. (To Bobby) I can't drive.

BOBBY

No problemo, Hunter Man. I got you covered. You just sit back and enjoy the ride.

*Bobby, Eric, and The Mind exit through the door.*

THE MIND

What about Madison? You can't just dog her like that.

*The guys are gone. From offstage we hear Madison say...*

MADISON (offstage)

Eric! Eric!

*Madison enters and sees the empty room.*

Eric? What the -- Eric!

*She looks around but sees no one. Welcome to the ghost town.  
She spots something on the ground, picks it up. It's a pill.  
Lights shift.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

It's hard to say what's worse: letting your family down, lying to them, or stealing from them. But what I do know is that the first time you lie to someone and they go for it, it's really powerful. And it's especially potent when you realize you can do it by playing on their emotions. See, emotional manipulation is an effective tool. And the more I used drugs, the less I began to feel, and the easier it became for me to toy with others. And the family is always an easy target. Why? Because they care about you and it's easy to take advantage of their love.

*Eric stumbles to his chair, pops open a pill bottle and swallows a pill. The Mind is by his side as usual.*

THE MIND

You're a disappointment, you know that.

ERIC

*(Flashes the pills at The Mind)* You'll shut up soon.

*Eric puts on his headphones, loses himself. The door opens.  
Madison enters.*

MADISON

Eric? Eric??

*No response. She takes the headphones off him.*

You know Mom and Dad won't stop fighting because of you.

ERIC

Don't blame me for Mom and Dad.

*He tries to put the headphones back on but she stops him.*

MADISON

I know you stole those pills. I found one of them on your carpet.

ERIC

I don't know what you're talking about. I don't do drugs.

MADISON

I found the pill—

ERIC

You know, I find it funny that you expect me to read your stories and do all these things to help you -- which I do! Yet the moment I leave the house you snoop through my stuff? I can't trust you, Madison. And when I think about all the crap we've been through together, that really makes me sad.

MADISON

I wasn't snooping. I was--

ERIC

I got no one. And next time you think I'm high -- think again. I'm not high, I'm depressed. Because I got no one. Not even you.

MADISON

I'm just saying...I--

ERIC

You're just saying what? Get out of here, and go tell on me if you want. I don't care anymore.

MADISON

Eric--

ERIC

GO. NOW!

*Madison heads to the door and then turns.*

MADISON

I'm sorry.

*Eric puts on his headphones, ignoring her. She leaves. When she does, he takes off the headphones and stares at the door.*

THE MIND

You're a really horrible person, you know that?

*Eric shakes his pill bottle but it's empty.*

ERIC

Yeah, I know that.

THE MIND

So what are you going to do about it?

ERIC

What else?

*Lights shift.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

Sometimes, we addicts have to expand our horizons in our never-ending quest for a buzz.

*Lights to full. Hannah, Bobby, Eric, and The Mind at a strip mall, outside a doctor's office. Hannah sits on the ground, her legs straight out in front of her. She looks extremely uncomfortable.*

ERIC

I'm not sure this is a good idea.

BOBBY

Here's the keys. Now go in and grab the Oxies. There's no cameras and the good doctor's out of town. This couldn't be any easier.

THE MIND

DO NOT DO THIS.

ERIC

I don't know.

HANNAH

Eric, my legs really hurt.

*Eric gets down and starts to massage them.*

THE MIND

If you keep this up, you're going to lose me. I mean, do you seriously want to lose the only part of your mind that still works? Don't you care about your future?

*Hannah stops Eric from massaging her.*

HANNAH

That's not helping. The pain's too much. I need the Oxies.

BOBBY

Dude, trust me. When you try these, you're going to be like...where have you been all my life? Plus, this is a gold mine. I won't have to steal video games and you won't have to steal crap from your mom.

ERIC

I should've gotten more for that wedding ring, man. Way frigging more. That was my grandma's.

BOBBY

Exactly. That's what I'm saying. This is easy money. Big money. Just go in, get the drugs, leave, get high, make Hannah feel better.

THE MIND

If it's so easy, why doesn't he go in?

ERIC

Yeah, why don't you do it if it's so easy?

BOBBY

Because, dude, I got the keys. I found the score. I've done everything. And I'm still on probation from the time I tried to return those videos I stole from Target back to Target.

THE MIND

Real genius you're hanging out with here.

BOBBY

You won't get caught. Besides, what else we going to get high on?

HANNAH

I really need it, Eric.

THE MIND

Just walk away. Come on.

HANNAH

Please.

ERIC

First sign of trouble, I'm out of there.

BOBBY

Yes!

*As lights shift we hear HOOTIN' and HOLLERIN'...Obviously, Eric successfully pulled off the heist.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

The thing about this life is there are so many highs. It's not just the high itself. It's finding the high. It's the thrill of the chase. It's robbing doctors' offices, scamming the dope boys, stealing video games, pulling copper piping out of a neighbor's house. It's all a high. You start to feel invincible. Like no one can stop you. The first time I did those Oxies, I never felt so close to God. Or so I thought...

*Lights go back to full. We're at the homestead.*

*Eric sits on a chair, staring off into space.*

THE MIND

Look at you. You've become such a waste.

*Eric gives The Mind the middle finger.*

Flipping yourself off. A real high point in your life.

*Madison enters.*

ERIC

Do you ever knock?

MADISON

Did you fill out the application yet. The deadline's--

ERIC

I know when the frigging deadline is.

THE MIND

She's just trying to help you.

MADISON

Don't you care about what you're doing to yourself? I mean, this is an incredible opportunity and you're just throwing it away. Most people don't get chances like this, Eric.

ERIC

It's my life.

THE MIND

It's not much of a life.

MADISON

It really depresses me to see you like this. You used to be somebody. You were worth looking up to.

ERIC

You're not my responsibility, okay. I don't have to be your role model. Or get into Harvard so you can. Get in on your own merit, not mine.

MADISON

You're just mean. That's all you've become...mean.

THE MIND  
He knows that.

MADISON  
But I know the real you is still in there. I won't give up on you.

THE MIND  
I love this girl so much.

ERIC  
What are you even talking about?

MADISON  
Are you using heroin?

ERIC  
What??

MADISON  
A lot of kids are using it. And I started thinking, why not you? You've totally changed. You don't care about anything anymore. You're just like distracted, different. Why wouldn't you be one of the kids using?

THE MIND  
It's a fair question.

ERIC  
Because I'm not.

MADISON  
Maybe not. But I know you're on drugs. And I wouldn't be surprised if one of these days you ended up shooting heroin too.

ERIC  
Look, I might smoke a little pot here and there -- just like you will one day too if you're not already -- but I'm not some crazy drug addict who's going to end up sticking my body full of needles.

THE MIND  
Don't be so sure.

MADISON  
I hope not, Eric.

*Madison walks out.*

THE MIND

That girl is something special.

ERIC

She needs to watch herself.

*Lights shift. MUSIC PUMPS. IT'S ANGRY.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

The worst part of being an addict is dealing with the people. The people who think they care. The people who think they know. I just wanted them to go away. I wanted to go away.

*Lights to full as Bobby, Hannah, and Eric sit together. The Mind is present but removed from the group.*

BOBBY

So you could snort it, if you want.

HANNAH

I want to shoot it.

BOBBY

Yeah, me too.

ERIC

Isn't it better to shoot it? Like that's the high, right, the real high?

BOBBY

Oh, yeah.

THE MIND

I thought you weren't going to become one of those heroin addicts with needles sticking out of his body.

ERIC

*(Paying absolutely no attention to The Mind.)* Then let's shoot it. What's the big deal?

BOBBY

Ain't no big deal. 'Cept we'll have to share this needle.

ERIC

Whatever. I don't have any diseases. What the fudge do I care?

HANNAH

I go first.

BOBBY

Of course. Ladies first.

HANNAH

But I can't do it myself.

BOBBY

I'll shoot you.

HANNAH

No. I want Eric to.

BOBBY

He ain't done this before.

HANNAH

I said I want Eric to do it. Just hit the vein. You can do that, right?

ERIC

Yeah...sure.

BOBBY

Your funeral.

HANNAH

Don't talk like that.

BOBBY

Relax. It's just a joke.

HANNAH

I don't think it's funny.

*Hannah crosses herself and says a silent prayer.*

ERIC

What are you doing?

HANNAH

I'm praying. I always pray before I use dope.

ERIC

Why?

HANNAH

In case the next person I see is God.

*Pause.*

ERIC

Are you sure you want to do this?

BOBBY

Shoot her, man. I can't wait all day.

HANNAH

Of course. Let's go.

*Eric takes the syringe and is about to inject her.*

ERIC

Okay, then...

*Eric shoots her up. She breathes deeply, closes her eyes. She looks like she's in nirvana.*

BOBBY

Oh, yeah, there she goes. I'm next. Come on. Hand it over.

*Eric hands Bobby the needle as lights shift.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

The defining moment of my life could not have been more ordinary. I suppose nonaddicts think that the first time you use heroin that it would be this huge momentous event, like you would really think about it, consider its far-reaching consequences, ponder the seismic shift that's about to happen in your life. But for me it was just another time to get high. Just, okay, that's in front of me. Let's try it. Pass the potatoes. But once I did it. Once I felt that rush. Wow! That was it. I was signed, sealed, and delivered. I knew right then and there. I was going to die from this miracle. Maybe not then. But eventually. It's weird to catch a glimpse of your future only to see death. But I

did and I didn't care. All I could feel was this warm glow enveloping my entire body, like I was wrapped in a cocoon. It felt like I was being cradled by an angel. Now I was seeing God for real. Finally, I found what I was always looking for. I was in love. I had crossed a line and there was no turning back. And I didn't turn back. I just kept going and going. The only problem was at first, it was a pretty cheap high, cheaper than pills. But then the more I used, man...at one point, I was shooting a hundred, two hundred dollars of dope a day into my veins.

*Lights go full. The Mind is beat. Slumped over. We've never seen the Mind so tired. Eric looks even worse, like he's going to vomit. Moving is difficult for him.*

THE MIND

You've become everything you thought you wouldn't.

*Eric shrugs.*

And you're never going to get that same high you did the first time.

*Eric shrugs.*

Don't you want to stop?

ERIC

I feel like hell. How am I going to score some more dope?

*The door bursts open. Madison comes in. She has a backpack and carries a laptop.*

MADISON

You look like dog vomit.

*Eric says nothing.*

Mom's going to kick you out.

THE MIND

Tell him something he doesn't know.

MADISON

Do you even care?

ERIC  
I care.

THE MIND  
(*Shocked*) You do?

MADISON  
Then maybe you can do something to change that.

ERIC  
I'd like to.

MADISON  
Really? Do you mean it?

ERIC  
Yeah.

MADISON  
Can you get her jewelry back? Because I think if you did that she'd really rethink...especially grandma's wedding ring. I mean that--

ERIC  
Do you have any money?

MADISON  
What?

THE MIND  
My God.

ERIC  
I need money.

MADISON  
Are you kidding? Jeez, I can't believe I just got my hopes up. I actually thought you were serious.

ERIC  
No, I need it for the application fee.

MADISON  
For Harvard?

ERIC  
Yeah.

MADISON  
Did you finish it?

ERIC  
I'm close.

THE MIND  
Filthy liar.

MADISON  
I want to believe you.

THE MIND  
Don't.

ERIC  
I know it's been rough lately with me. But I'm turning it around.  
You'll see. I am. And this is the start.

MADISON  
That is so awesome.

*She sets down her laptop and hugs him.*

THE MIND  
It might be time for you to seriously consider suicide, because this  
behavior is absolutely despicable.

*She releases from their hug.*

MADISON  
But I'm sorry, I can't help. I can't be sure you're not lying to me.

ERIC  
You're kidding, right?

THE MIND  
Told you she's something special.

MADISON  
When you're done, show me the application. Then I'll give you money.

ERIC  
You don't believe me?

MADISON  
No, but I do believe in you. I have to go now -- rehearsal. Today I learn how to walk with a limp. This is a great step for you.

*Madison gives him another hug and practices limping off. She forgets her laptop. Eric stares at it, sizes it up.*

ERIC  
I could just sell this.

THE MIND  
What?

ERIC  
The laptop. It's nice. I can get some good money for this.

THE MIND  
It belongs to your sister.

ERIC  
I know. But if she really cared about me she would've lent me the money.

THE MIND  
The reason she didn't lend you the money is because she does care about you.

ERIC  
Maybe.

THE MIND  
There's no maybes about it. You can't sell that.

ERIC  
I guess.

THE MIND  
Don't you want her to do something with her life? Don't you want her to escape as much pain as possible?

ERIC  
Yeah.

THE MIND  
Can't you see that everything she's doing is because she wants you to have a good life? And for her to have a good life? And maybe when you guys are older...who knows...your kids will have great lives.

ERIC  
Yeah.

THE MIND  
She cares about you. Sure she wants you to get into Harvard because it'll help her, but don't you believe that first and foremost it's because she really respects you, admires you, misses the person you were?

ERIC  
Yeah. Yeah, I do.

THE MIND  
Then don't do this. Don't sell it. Stop using. Get yourself help and become the person you're meant to be. And help her along the way too.

ERIC  
That sounds really awesome.

THE MIND  
Because it is awesome, Eric! It's beyond awesome. And it's what your life can be.

ERIC  
I want my life to be like that.

THE MIND  
Yes! I haven't been this happy with you since--

ERIC  
I want to find my purpose. I want to use my talents. I want to help others. And I want to help my sister. I don't want to hurt her.

THE MIND  
Of course, you don't. Awesome.

ERIC

But first I want to get high. Then I'll do that other stuff.

THE MIND

What?

ERIC

I want to get high. I'm selling it.

*Lights shift.*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

In case it's not abundantly clear, let me state this for the record: you should never expect a user to suddenly do the right thing. I'm told that takes a lot of work and rehab on their part. And if you expected that I was suddenly a person who would choose right over drugs, then I'm almost as disappointed in you as you are in me.

*Lights to full. Hannah, Bobby, and Eric sitting around. Bobby can't focus; he can barely hold himself up -- it's like he's not even there. The Mind is also there, but not saying a word.*

BOBBY

*(Indiscernible mumbling)*

ERIC

What?

HANNAH

Forget him. Shoot me up.

*Eric starts to prep the needle.*

I am so glad you got this for us.

ERIC

That's how we do it, right? Look out for each other.

HANNAH

Don't give me as much as Bobby had.

*He shoots her up. Her eyes go wide...then they shut.*

*Eric doesn't even look at her. He takes care of himself.*

*More MUMBLING and a GRUNT from Bobby.*

*Eric shoots himself up.*

ERIC

Oh, yeah. I love this.

*He closes his eyes, drifts. Hannah moves close to him.*

HANNAH

Do you love me?

*The Mind sits and watches. Says nothing.*

ERIC

I love everything when I'm like this.

HANNAH

Do you love ME?

ERIC

You're a part of everything, right?

HANNAH

Yeah...

*Hannah rests her head in Eric's lap. Eric's eyes close, and...Lights shift...*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

Using H is a game. A deadly game but still a game. Like you have to play to win the high, because the high is the only thing that matters. And every decision I made from that point on was about getting high. Every one. Get money, score, get high. Get money, score, get high. After a while I couldn't even get high-high, but I still had to use just so I could function. But I didn't lose hope. I still believed that I would find a high like the first time. That beautiful first time. I wouldn't stop searching for that. And some days were worse than others. Especially when I was low on cash or when I lost my drugs. Man, some people worry when they can't find their keys. Try losing a bag of Black Tar.

*Lights go full. Eric races around the stage in a frenzy. He's looking for something. Turning things over. Going crazy. The Mind sits by himself, dazed, confused, vacant.*

ERIC

Where is it? Where the hell...

*Eric pulls at his hair.*

Come on, Mind, think. Think what you did with it.

*Pounds his head.*

Tell me where it is.

THE MIND

*(Confused)* I can't...I don't...

*Eric grabs the Mind by the shirt, shakes him.*

ERIC

You don't what? You don't what? Jesus, you always have something to say. Always. But now when I need you, you can't function? You've just suddenly lost the ability to remember certain things??

THE MIND

...Not suddenly...I just--

ERIC

Think, man, THINK! I need that H before I rip my skin off. Don't you understand? I'm sick!

THE MIND

No, I don't...I don't know...

ERIC

YOU'RE USELESS!

*Madison enters.*

MADISON

Something wrong?

ERIC

What? (*Trying to regain composure*) No, everything's fine.

MADISON

Who were you talking to?

ERIC

No one.

MADISON

You're high.

ERIC

No, I'm not. That's the problem.

MADISON

You don't even bother to deny it anymore. I wish Mom would just kick you out already.

ERIC

Yeah, well, Dad won't let that happen. Now get out of here.

MADISON

What are you looking for? My laptop?

ERIC

I told you I don't know nothing about that.

MADISON

You're a liar.

ERIC

Look, I...(then exploding in her face) YOU SHOULD'VE LOANED ME THE MONEY! (*Then backing off, softer*) I'm sorry. I just have to find...or maybe you can loan me money and...

MADISON

Is this what you're looking for?

*Madison pulls a bag of heroin from her pocket, holds it up.*

ERIC

YES! Where'd you find it? Yes! Thank you!!

MADISON

I'm not giving this to you. I'm flushing it.

ERIC

Give it to me, Madison.

MADISON

Give me my laptop.

ERIC

Look, I can't...Listen, I'll get you a new laptop. I swear. But just--

MADISON

And what about all my files? My pictures? My stories! I had everything on there. My life. And you didn't even give it a thought.

*The Mind is just slumped in the corner.*

ERIC

Give me the drugs and I'll get your computer back. I swear.

MADISON

Even if you could guarantee that -- which of course you cannot -- I still wouldn't give this to you.

*She starts to leave.*

ERIC

Where are you going?

MADISON

I'm going to flush this before you ruin your life forever.

*She runs off.*

ERIC

MADISON!!!!

*Lights shift. Darkness...*

THE MIND (VOICEOVER)

If there's one thing I want you to remember, it's this: For an addict, the number one priority -- I mean THE number one priority -- is getting high. We put that above everything and everyone...including

people we care about. So I went after her. But she's really quick. Besides being brilliant, she's also a great athlete, and she got away from me...for a moment. When I caught up with her, I ripped the drugs out of her hand and that's when...

*(Losing himself in the past as he relives the moment)*...I think about the brief instant she was there in front of me, when perhaps I could've reached out to her, but didn't; when I could've saved her, but failed to. I think about her eyes and the look of surprise that instantly turned to disappointment, and then, finally, horror...

That's when she fell down the steps.

*Lights back to full. Eric and The Mind sit in jail.*

ERIC  
But I didn't push her.

THE MIND  
You didn't help her either.

ERIC  
Yes, I did...I...

THE MIND  
You went to the bathroom, you fell to your knees, and you shot up.

ERIC  
But then I helped her. I did help her.

THE MIND  
She was screaming in pain. And you didn't do anything until AFTER you got high. Your own sister!

ERIC  
I had no choice, you idiot! I had to get high. I couldn't even begin to help until I was high. And once I did, then I took her to the hospital.

THE MIND  
You drove her. High on heroin.

ERIC  
I got her there.

THE MIND

You're a true hero.

ERIC

You have to understand, I wanted to go to her immediately, I did. I just...I couldn't. I had to...I just...I mean first...Jesus...I'm lucky I didn't kill her.

THE MIND

You got a whole lot more luck than you deserve.

*Silence.*

ERIC

You know, I'm actually happy to be here right now. At least in prison, I know I can't get high.

THE MIND

You've been in a prison since you've been addicted.

ERIC

Spare me the philosophical musings.

THE MIND

I must be getting some of my edge back now that you've been off a few weeks. It's been awhile since I could even think this way.

*Pause.*

Do you think we could stay clean?

ERIC

Sure, as long as we're locked up for the rest of our lives.

THE MIND

Talk about the high life, right?

*They laugh.*

MADISON

Something funny?

*Eric looks and there's Madison. She's in a wheelchair, leg in a brace, her wrist casted up to her elbow, ribs wrapped.*

ERIC  
Madison?

MADISON  
In person. Broken though I may be.

THE MIND  
I can't believe she's here.

*Eric stands up and then sits right back down, embarrassed.*

MADISON  
It's okay. You can stand. I can't but you can.

*She laughs at her joke and then grimaces.*

It hurts when I laugh.

ERIC  
I'm sorry.

MADISON  
Yes, you are.

THE MIND  
You better come up with something better than that.

ERIC  
I don't...I don't know what to say.

MADISON  
There's nothing to say, Eric. Your words don't mean anything anymore. They haven't for a long time.

ERIC  
But I am sorry. I am. I mean that.

MADISON  
Will that get me out of this chair? Will it get me my part back in the play? Jesus, Eric, thanks to you, I can't even play a girl with a limp.

ERIC  
I'm sorry.

MADISON

Yes, I know. I heard you the first two million hundred thousand times. You're sorry. For what? Knocking me down the steps, destroying the brother I loved, bringing mom and dad to the brink of divorce? What exactly is it that you're sorry for?

THE MIND

For all of it.

ERIC

I don't know. I'm just...I'm sorry.

MADISON

You're a real a-hole for what you've done to me. Just to be clear.

ERIC

I know.

MADISON

And the amount of rage and hatred I feel for you right now can't even be quantified.

ERIC

I know.

*Madison stares at Eric, studies him, searching for a clue. He breaks the silence...*

I'm really sorry you can't be in the play. You would've totally rocked it.

MADISON

Yeah, well, on the bright side, at least I'm a little more intimate with pain now. Should help my writing, right?

*She laughs. They both do.*

THE MIND

She's still funny.

ERIC

You're amazing.

*She shrugs, says nothing, and just stares at him to the point where he feels self-conscious.*

What?

MADISON

You actually look good. Sobriety suits you, even if it is forced on you.

ERIC

I'm going to get clean. You'll see.

MADISON

I want to believe that.

THE MIND

You and me both, sister.

ERIC

You can. I will.

MADISON

You know, you were really scary that night. That was the first time in my life I was frightened by you. And now I worry it's too late for you.

THE MIND

Is it?

MADISON

I have to go. Mom's waiting in the van.

*She spins the wheelchair around and wheels herself away.*

ERIC

Thanks for coming, Madison. It means a lot.

MADISON

We'll see.

*Madison rolls to the exit and then turns.*

I accept your apology, Eric. Please don't make me regret it.

*Madison exits. Eric pulls a pen and piece of paper out. He starts writing as lights shift.*

**THE MIND (VOICEOVER)**

It was at that moment that I finally started writing this essay, which is why it's written in ink and not typed out, like I'm sure every other application you receive is. But I couldn't wait. I wasn't going to let sobriety slip through my fingers. I wasn't going to let my sister's accident be for nothing. I wasn't going to waste things. I was feeling good, and I knew that this feeling could vanish the first time I was out and around some junk. So I finally completed this essay.

But this is not for me, though I would love to attend your school. And I hope I have the strength to do what's necessary to defeat the devil so I can. But if not, I ask that you think of my sister, Madison Hunter, a girl who possesses true love for humanity; a girl wise beyond her years; a girl who could see what I was doing wrong before anyone else, including myself; a girl who stepped in and intervened when no one else would, and who paid the price for her courage; a girl who refuses to be fooled; a girl who has suffered extraordinary pain and I fear will face more; but a girl who because of it will help others heal. This is someone who deserves to be a student at Harvard University.

Respectfully yours,

Eric A. Hunter, heroin addict who is currently sober thanks to the wonders of incarceration.

*Lights to full reveal Hannah, Eric, and The Mind onstage.  
Hannah holds a baggie in her hand. She's showing it to Eric.*

**HANNAH**

The guy I got it from served in Afghanistan. He brought it back with him. Says it will blow your brains out.

**THE MIND**

You have to leave right now.

**ERIC**

I don't know, Hannah. I mean, I'm clean.

**HANNAH**

You're not in jail, Eric. You're free. Time to get high.

**THE MIND**

Seriously, we have to get out of here.

ERIC  
I don't know...

THE MIND  
I'm just getting myself back together, man. Please. I'm begging you.

HANNAH  
He told me this stuff got him higher than he was the first time he ever used H. It's that good.

ERIC  
Really?

*The Mind gets between Eric and Hannah. He grabs Eric by the shoulders and looks him dead in the eye.*

THE MIND  
If you do this now, I don't know what'll happen. Seriously. You can't keep using and expecting me to bounce back. Because one time, I won't. You'll see. It'll be like I went over to the dark side.

*Hannah cuts in between them and grabs Eric's hand.*

HANNAH  
If you don't want to do it, that's cool. Just shoot me up, but stay with me, okay? Don't leave me alone. Everyone always leaves me alone and I don't want to be by myself anymore.

THE MIND  
Eric...

ERIC  
What about, Bobby? I'm sure he'll--

HANNAH  
Bobby? Don't you know?

ERIC  
Know what?

HANNAH  
Bobby's like...dead.

ERIC

What do you mean he's like dead?

HANNAH

I mean he's dead. He OD'd. You didn't know that?

ERIC

No, I didn't know--How could I not know that?

THE MIND

Maybe if you spent less time in prisons, you'd be up on current events.

HANNAH

Don't think about him. Come on...

THE MIND

Do you see what this does to people?

ERIC

I can't believe that prick OD'd. God...

HANNAH

Come on. It'll take your pain away.

THE MIND

No, it won't.

HANNAH

You know how it goes. If you're feeling good -- get high. If you're feeling bad--

ERIC

--get high.

HANNAH

I can't wait much longer, Eric.

ERIC

But what if one of us OD's?

THE MIND

You will die.

*She hands him the bag for his own inspection.*

HANNAH

This is too good to worry about things like that. Look at it.

*Eric inspects the bag.*

ERIC

How'd you even afford all this?

*The Mind slaps Eric upside the head.*

THE MIND

Get a clue. A girl looks like this and she doesn't have to break into people's houses and steal copper piping.

HANNAH

It's no big deal. Just shoot me up...

ERIC

Is it really that good?

*Hannah kisses Eric.*

HANNAH

Blow-your-brains-out good. Better than your first time.

THE MIND

Russian roulette, Eric. I'm telling you.

ERIC

*(Nodding his head.)* Let's do it.

THE MIND

Are you frigging kidding me?? What about Madison?

*Eric starts to prep the needle.*

I'm telling you. I can't be held responsible anymore. Not for any of it.

ERIC

It'll just be one more time. That's it.

HANNAH

Yeah, just one more time. And then we'll both go to rehab together.

THE MIND

I don't know how many "just-one-more-times" I have left in me.

ERIC

We won't end up like Bobby.

HANNAH

No way.

*The Mind watches in disbelief.*

*Hannah crosses herself, says a silent prayer.*

ERIC

You ready?

*Hannah nods.*

*Eric injects her. Her body stiffens a moment, her eyes go wide.  
Then she lies back on the ground.*

Are you okay?

HANNAH

Oh God, yes.

*Silence. He reloads. The Mind watches him...*

THE MIND

Please, Eric. Don't throw this away. We've been clean for--

ERIC

Just one more time. I promise.

*Eric injects himself. His eyes go wide. As do the Mind's eyes.*

THE MIND

Oh God.

*The Mind starts walking in circles, confused.*

This is...this is actually...this is incredible...

ERIC  
Now you're talking.

*Then...*

*Hannah's starts to struggle for breath.*

*The Mind freezes and stares at her.*

THE MIND  
She's not breathing right.

*Gurgling sounds come from Hanna as she loses breath.*

I think she's OD'ing!

ERIC  
What?

*Eric jumps up. Goes to her. Grabs her.*

Hannah! Hannah!

*Eric shakes her...*

Hannah!

THE MIND  
She's turning blue, man. Run.

ERIC  
What?

THE MIND  
We have to go. Run!

ERIC  
We have to do something.

THE MIND  
I'm too high to do anything. Run, man. Run now. We can't help her.  
RUN!!

*Eric looks at her a moment, unsure.*

Run, man. RUUUUUUUUUUUUN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Eric rolls her on her side and runs off. As lights shift, we hear the sound of RUNNING FOOTSTEPS and LABORED BREATHING.*

*Lights go to full and we're back in Eric's room. Eric paces back and forth. Freaking out. The Mind sits on Eric's chair, puts on the headphones.*

ERIC

What are we going to do, man? What are we going to do?

*The Mind says nothing.*

How could you do that? How could you make me leave her like that? You're a frigging hypocrite, you know that? A hypocrite!

*Eric rips the headphones off The Mind's head.*

Listen to me. What's wrong with you?

THE MIND

I'm just trying to enjoy what's left of this trip. I mean, she practically killed it for me.

ERIC

Are you kidding? We have to do something for her. What are we going to do?

THE MIND

I don't know, man. I don't--Wait!

ERIC

*(Hopeful)* What?

THE MIND

We have her stash! We have her stash! We can get high again!!

ERIC

What are you talking about?

*The Mind pulls the stash out of Eric's pocket.*

MIND

Ha! We can still get high!

*The Mind pulls out a syringe and starts to load it. Eric watches in disbelief.*

ERIC

What are you doing?

*The Mind ignores him.*

Stop it, man. Listen to me and...

*Eric tries to stop The Mind from loading the syringe. The Mind pushes Eric away, knocking him down. Eric looks up at The Mind, horrified.*

What the hell happened to you? Who are you, man? WHO ARE YOU??

*The Mind walks calmly to Eric, holding the syringe.*

THE MIND

I'm you, Eric. I'm you. Finally, right? I'm you. This is who we are now. We're on the same page. (*Holding out the syringe.*) Ready?

ERIC

But what about...

THE MIND

Don't worry about her. We can't help that now.

ERIC

But what about my sister?

THE MIND

It's okay. She'll understand. Now don't you want this?

ERIC

Yes.

THE MIND

Then let's do it.

*The Mind holds the syringe out to Eric. Eric takes it.*

Atta boy.

*Eric is about to inject himself, when we hear from offstage...*

MADISON (*offstage*)

Eric! You're never going to believe what you got in the mail. Eric...

*Madison, with the aid of crutches, hobbles quickly onstage...*

You got a letter from...

*She sees Eric with the needle in his hand about to shoot up...*

...Harvard.

*Eric jumps up.*

ERIC

It's not what you think. I mean, I know it looks like...but I haven't...

*Madison says nothing. She walks to Eric. Hands him an envelope. Eric self-consciously hides the syringe behind his back as he accepts the envelope from her.*

I promise this is the last time. I'm not going to let this kill me, but it's hard to just quit, you know? I promise, just one more time.

*Madison stares at him. Silent.*

Will you please say something?

*Madison hugs him tightly. When she releases him, she kisses him sweetly on the cheek.*

MADISON

Bye, Eric.

*Madison turns and walks away.*

ERIC

Wait, Madison...Don't you want to hear if I got in or not? Madison!

*Madison stops but does not turn to look at him.*

MADISON

Eric, I love you. I do. But I can't watch you anymore.

*Eric watches Madison exit the stage. A long moment.*

*The Mind walks up to him.*

THE MIND

Ready?

*Eric says nothing. He opens the envelope, reads the letter.*

ERIC

Oh my God. They want to interview me. They say they've never read anything like my essay and they...Holy crap! (*Yelling in the direction Madison exited*) MADISON, HARVARD WANTS TO INTERVIEW ME!

*Silence.*

(*To The Mind*) I mean, they must be interested, right? They wouldn't waste their time if they weren't interested??

THE MIND

I don't care about that. Let's do this.

*Eric looks at the syringe...*

ERIC

I guess it's not like I have to go get interviewed right now, right?

THE MIND

Exactly.

*Eric stares at the letter and the syringe.*

ERIC

You know what, no. I'm not doing this.

*Eric throws the syringe down on the ground and starts to leave.*

*The Mind chases him, tackles him, and drags him back to the syringe. Eric tries to break free.*

ERIC

Let me go, man. Let me go. I don't want to--

*The Mind has Eric under control. The Mind sits on Eric's chest, with his legs pinning Eric's arms. There's no escape for Eric now. The Mind holds the syringe.*

I don't want to do this.

THE MIND

Yes, you do.

ERIC

No, I don't.

THE MIND

Stop talking.

ERIC

What happened to you? What happened to me? Why can't we control--

THE MIND

It's okay. It's out of our hands now. The heroin calls the shots.

ERIC

I don't want it to end this way.

THE MIND

Then we should've never started. Now come on. Stop thinking.

*The Mind gets off Eric and eases him into a seated position. The Mind cradles Eric as if he were a baby.*

ERIC

How can you be so calm about this?

THE MIND

Because I can't feel a thing. Not pain. Not sorrow. Not anything. I like that. And so do you. Why would we want to feel anything?

ERIC

We used to.

THE MIND

We used to, sure. But now we reached a perfect state of complete and total--

ERIC

--Nothingness. Complete and total nothingness. That's what we are.

THE MIND

Yes. Ready?

ERIC

Does it matter?

THE MIND

Nope.

*The Mind injects Eric. Eric freezes a moment, starts to nod off, then lies back on the ground. As lights dim, we can just make out the figure of The Mind standing, grabbing Eric by the legs, and dragging him offstage. Then the lights shift back to full...*

*...A bare stage. After a moment, The Mind pushes on a wheelchair with Eric sitting in it. Eric looks helpless. His head is tilted to the side and supported by a headrest on the chair. He has no motor control.*

*The Mind sets Eric center stage and takes a step back.*

ERIC

I always thought I would die from heroin. But I didn't. See? This is me living! I've lost most of my motor control. I'll never walk again. And I'll always need someone to take care of me in almost every way imaginable. So I guess heroin doesn't kill everybody! Bad joke. At least I can do this. I can talk to students like you. But it would be nice if I didn't have to be in this chair, and I could at least hold my head up...I wish I could hold my head up.

Hannah died that night. Her heart stopped soon after the injection, probably before I even made it home. So the dope didn't just blow her brains out...it blew her flame out. Horrible.

I never made it to the Harvard interview. I missed it because I was high. Surprise! But like I said in my essay, I was mostly writing on

my sister's behalf anyway, so... She didn't need my help though. Madison got into Harvard on her own merit. She's there now.

After Madison left my room that night, she was done. She cut me off. She was sure that I would die if not that night, then some other. She did the right thing by not looking back. A person can only watch someone they love destroy himself for so long before they say *no mas*.

If not for my overdose that led to my life sentence in this chair -- which PS I'm embarrassed to admit happened a full year after Hannah's -- I would've just kept using until I died. That's a fact. It took this state of existence to stop me from using, and you know what? I still think about it. Like it actually makes me sad to think that heroin is no longer a part of my life. Like, I mourn it. Isn't that pathetic? The good thing is the overdose brought Madison back into my life. Like she talks to me again...I'm extremely grateful for that.

There's really nothing more to say. You might wonder if I learned anything through all this. And I have. One, and this is going to sound ridiculously cheesy, but...drugs are bad. If you have pain that you're trying to mask, talk to someone. Seriously. Before it's too late. Share your pain, your embarrassment, your humiliation, whatever, and the world will be better for it. And so will you. And second, embrace the whole palette of your emotions. I mean, when I was using, I felt only two things, extreme pain or extreme euphoria. Nothing in between. That's no way to live. Like real life, real life happens between the pain and euphoria. It's embarrassment, discouragement, boredom, shock, indifference, nervousness, anticipation, anxiety, frustration, happiness, joy, thrill, fear. All these are the spices of life, use them before you lose them. And, finally, and this is kind of a repeat of the first one, but important things bear repeating: don't ever try heroin. Not once. DO NOT CROSS THAT LINE. Don't put yourself and your loved ones through it. I'm beyond lucky. I'm alive. I'm talking to you. And even though I'm like this, I feel complete again. Total. I don't feel split anymore. But it didn't have to be so painful to reach this point.

*The Mind exits, leaving Eric alone onstage.*

Here's the thing: I should be dead. And that's no joke. Because life's no joke. It's a journey. An opportunity. A gift. Treasure it. Thank you.

*Lights fade to black as Eric looks out at all the young people.*

**END OF PLAY**