

JOHNNIE

A drama in two acts

By
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FADE IN:

A series of still photos. Color. St. Johns College Campus,
Annapolis, Maryland.

DISSOLVE TO:

A series of still photos. Color. United States Naval Academy
Campus, Annapolis, Maryland

DISSOLVE TO:

BAREFOOT ST. JOHN'S STUDENTS (JOHNNIES) reading the great
books.

DISSOLVE TO:

NAVAL CADETS (CADDIES) marching in perfect formation

DISSOLVE TO:

PLAQUES listing THE NAMES OF THE 120 GREAT BOOKS

INT. ST JOHN'S COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - DAY

CHRISTOPHER NELSON, fifties, speaks to about a hundred
freshman students and their parents

NELSON

Welcome aboard. You are entering a
unique experience. This school has
400 students. Does that seem
strange.

STUDENT 1

Kinda' small

STUDENT 2

No

NELSON

And we have 120 professors. Is
that within the realm of reason?

STUDENTS

Yes.

NELSON

One difference. All are dead.
Reasonable?

STUDENTS

NO.

NELSON

Dead but distinguished. The Books
 themselves are the great professor.
 But I know introduce you to your
 tutors--yes your living "faculty".
 The first among equals.

Thirty TUTORS stand up. ANNE JONES, 18, looks bored. MARY
 JONES, forties, gives a disapproving glance.

EXT. U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY- DAY -

ADMIRAL KEMP, 50's, SUPERINTENDANT of the Naval Academy,
 addresses incoming FRESHMAN CLASS

KEMP

Welcome to the 160th entering
 class of the United States Naval
 Academy. This is your first day
 to develop morally, mentally and
 physically and to become imbued
 with the highest ideals of duty,
 honor and loyalty which will lead
 to a career of naval service and
 to assume the highest
 responsibilities of command,
 citizenship and government.
 Since 1845 more than 60,000 young
 men and women have successfully
 completed "four years by the Bay"
 to take their hard-earned places in
 America's Naval service. Many Naval
 Academy graduates have achieved
 greatness and earned a special
 place in our nation's history
 during its struggle to grow and
 preserve its freedom. Their names
 resonate down through history -
 Dewey, Halsey, King, Lejeune,
 Nimitz, Rickover, Spruance, Burke,
 Stockdale, Carter . . . to name
 only a few.
 Each of these outstanding
 individuals began his or her
 journey to greatness at the United
 States Naval Academy.

And every summer, the future begins here with new opportunities and challenges for 1,200 young men and women from all 50 states and beyond, representing the very best our great democracy has to offer. Among these outstanding young people will emerge the future leaders of our Navy, Marine Corps and the country.

DISSOLVE TO:

Cadets march in perfect formation.

DISSOLVE TO:

"Johnnies" smoke pot and singing.

INT. DORM - DAY

Anne and Mary unpack.

MARY

This is not the right school for you. I swear.

ANNE

They accepted me.

MARY

I don't know why.

ANNE

They have wisdom.

A WALL COVERED WITH THE READING LIST FROM ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE behind a small table covered with objects and lit candles

Act 1

Scene 1

The underworld. Hermes is rowing a boat across the Acheron River

PLUTO (O.S.)

Bark! Bark! Bark!

HERMES

Quiet, you bad dog!

PLUTO

Bark!

HERMES

You will not be allowed back on the boat for three days.

PLUTO

Bark!

HERMES

That poor man! You are supposed to protect the arrivals, not bite them in the but!

PLUTO

Arf.

HERMES

Here he was, one of the world's greatest men. First what happened was quite unexpected. Second he did not expect to be sent *here* of all places, and third he was not supposed to be bitten.

PLUTO

Bark.

HERMES

Shameful dog! You and I peeked in on some of the eulogies from around the world. In churches synagogues, Capitols, the press. The list is endless. They said.. "a statesmen, humanitarian, business leader, and a man of humility. One of the world's most loved people. His career really took off after he finished his distinguished second term as president of the United States." People all over that other world are i n mourning.

And you bit him his behind. There was no bleeding of course.

PLUTO

Bark.

HERMES

Shut up!. Something you haven't done in hundreds of years. You didn't even bite three superintendents of the U.S. Naval Academy and some of my unruly faculty members whom I had urged you to bite.

PLUTO

Bark.

HERMES

Are you sorry for biting that poor innocent man?

PLUTO

Wof.

HERMES

That means no.

PLUTO

Bark

HERMES

You are banished for three days. Off with you.

Suddenly johnny, a very handsome and dapper man in his late sixties, appears in the mist .

JOHNNY

Excuse me , Sir, but are you supposed to give me transportation across the river?

HERMES

You are Johnny I see.

JOHNNY

I am.

HERMES

You seem so happy and smiling. Most people who come here are not.

Come aboard. We must leave
immediately.

JOHNNY

Sir, please explain. Am I dead?

HERMES

WE speak only of arrivals..and
departures.

JOHNNY

Are there any women here?

HERMES

Plenty. But your urge may be gone
before long.

JOHNNY

Why am I here?

HERMES

You must speak to our Supreme
Commander. Hades.

Is this hell?

HERMES

No.

JOHNNY

I thought billions, perhaps
trillions would be here.

HERMES

Heavens no. Only people who are
not members of the ten thousand
world religions. Others go
somewhere else.

JOHNNY

But, Sir, there has been a mistake.
I am an Episcopalian.

HERMES

In name only.

JOHNNY

I was a communicant.

HERMES

That doesn't count But not a
believer. Right?

JOHNNY

Yes.

HERMES

Therefore you are privileged.
Things would have been worse for
you had you been practicing. We do
not allow goody-goodies here.

johnny

Are there any celebrities here?

HERMES

Thousands and thousands.

JOHNNY

Oh really. Is Hitler here?

HERMES

Who!

JOHNNY

Hitler, like in Adolph.

HERMES

Who!

JOHNNY

Adolph Hitler.

HERMES

Sir, who!

JOHNNY

Forget about it then. I'm sorry I
asked. Just a curiosity.

HERMES

Sir, we do have standards here. Not
anyone is admitted.

JOHNNY

When do we arrive at our
destination?

HERMES

You arrivals are so impatient. I
only have two hands. When we get
there.

JOHNNY

May I help you row?

HERMES

Certainly not! This is a time of privilege for you. You are about to arrive at your final destination.

JOHNNY

Who lives in that beautiful home on the hill? Is that where Dr. Hades lives?

HERMES

Heavens no. He lives in a real palatial mansion. Dante Alighieri lives here.

JOHNNY

Not possible. He was a Christian.

HERMES

We do accept refugees. Transfers as we call them. Seems as if he wrongly maligned some people he placed in the Inferno, and they were quite disturbed. Hence he is here. As rumor has it, anyhow.

JOHNNY

Have you ever seen him?

HERMES

Often, and he stuck his tongue out at me once because I refused to give him transportation. Never once before I came here did I think that I would not only meet him, but that he would stick his tongue out at me.

JOHNNY

Wow!

PLUTO (O.S.)

Arf.

HERMES

I told you to stop. You are banished. Now leave.

All of a sudden thunder is heard in the background.

HADES (O.S.)

Hermes! You have been misbehaving again! Stop it at once.

HERMES

How have I, Sir?

HADES

You have been blasphemous and have been gossiping.

HERMES

Since when has gossiping been a major infraction. You seem to enjoy it yourself, Sir.

HADES

Blasphemy is. You have used those forbidden words. In quotes: "Heaven only knows" "Lord only knows" Did I not hear you mention that ominous three letter word that begins with G and ends with D.

HERMES

I suppose so, but perfect I am not.

HADES

Just a warning. In the meantime make sure our new arrival is comfortable. Welcome, johnny.

JOHNNY

Thank you, Sir. I hope to meet you later.

HADES

Perhaps. Now good day. You begin a new life.

HERMES

I swear he can be such a pickle sometimes.

JOHNNY

Is he the ruler of this place?

HERMES

You have already asked me about 40 questions in the short time you have been here. Yes he is. Now please get the ants out of your pants as they say in that place you came from.

JOHNNY

Dr. Hermes, this must be the Severn River.

HERMES

No this is not the Severn River.
This is the Acheron River. You
know all of my passengers say the
same thing. This river is one they
knew on earth. Arrivals have
claimed this river as the Po, the
Mississippi, the Tiber, And the
Thames. Just in the past two days.
Now the Severn to be sure is a
lovely River.

JOHNNY

You know it?

HERMES

Of course.

JOHNNY

I thought so.

HERMES

You recognize me.

JOHNNY

I think so. You bear a strong
resemblance to someone I knew once.

HERMES

Oh?

JOHNNY

Sir, you're going to miss the bend

HERMES

Never mind. I have this boat under
control. To whom do I bear a
resemblance?

JOHNNY

Have you ever heard of St. John's
College?

HERMES

In Annapolis?

JOHNNY

Yes.

HERMES

Of course.

JOHNNY
You wouldn't be that same Dr.
Hermes?

HERMES
I would.

JOHNNY
The President of St. John's.

HERMES
Yes.

JOHNNY
You remember me.

HERMES
Of course. Jonathan St. John's at
St. John's. Immediately your name
became johnny.

JOHNNY
Why is this trip taking so long?

HERMES
How impatient. Like a child
almost., johnny. We will be there
shortly. You don't want to move
into someone else's house? Do you.
I must droop you off at your
assigned designation. You have
always liked pretty girls haven't
you, johnny.

JOHNNY
That's a part of my past.

HERMES
Not really.

JOHNNY
What do you mean?

HERMES
Eighteen year olds.

JOHNNY
Eighteen year olds?

HERMES
Yes, eighteen year olds. You have
always liked eighteen year olds.

JOHNNY
You're kidding.

HERMES
Jonathan St. Johns! You know I am not. There is nothing wrong with liking eighteen year olds. And you did,. When you were twelve you were into eighteen year olds, and when you were fifteen you into eighteen year olds and when you were eighteen you were into eighteen year olds. And when you were thirty and forty and fifty and seventy. And you were successful in each conquest! And even now.

JOHNNY
You are funny Sir.

HERMES
You don't need to Sir me now johnny, Ah. You have always been a good looking boy. At least all the women say so.

JOHNNY
Thank you.

HERMES
Not so quick. It was also your downfall.

JOHNNY
You remember?

HERMES
It broke my heart to throw you out of St. Johns. But In those days there was no choice anyhow. Damn good student too. But that's all past. You have a few surprises coming your way today.

JOHNNY
Dr. Hermes, this place has such a C.S.Lewis ambience to it. Is he here?

HERMES
Heavens no!

HADES
Hermes!

HERMES

Sorry, Sir. Just a slip.

HADES

With a smile, Hermes.

HERMES

Yes, Sir.

HADES

And treat our wonderful new resident nicely.

HERMES

Yes, Sir. (Turning to johnny) Now as I was saying that Lewis guy is not here. This is not a haven for Christian apologists. They're such a sorry lot.

JOHNNY

Will I be living alone?

HERMES

No, indeed. We have a surprise for you. And again so sorry about your untimely departure from that other world.

JOHNNY

Untimely departure!

HERMES

Oh,. Yes. You'll learn more later. Shall I read you some of the wonderful things the world wide press said about your contributions to humanity and all that other barf?

PLUTO (O.S.)

Barf! Barf! Barf!

JOHNNY

It doesn't matter much now. Does it?

HERMES

Nonsense, dear boy. Do you know that you are being lauded in 3987 Newspapers across the world for your contributions to philanthropy, the political structure of America, your dedicatin to the poor, and a whole host of other things.

JOHNNY

And look at where it got me.

HERMES

Complaining. You should be elated. And your daughters are crying uncontrollably. And your son is about to be elected a Senator.

JOHNNY

And my wife?

HERMES

(Clears throat)

The young lady has the situation under control. More about that later.

JOHNNY

What are you saying?

HERMES

I'm saying nothing. Stop being so hostile.

JOHNNY

Quite a letdown from being one of the world's great scholars to being an oarsman.

HERMES

I should slap you for that. Impertinent young man. I'll have you know that no less than several Kings of England had this job before I did.

JOHNNY

Willingly?

HERMES

Of course, they fought for it. Look to the hill on the right.

JOHNNY
There's a lovely home on it.

HERMES
That is where you will be living.
We have arrived.

JOHNNY
It's a mansion!

HERMES
Even larger than the one you had
before your arrival.

JOHNNY
Do I live there alone?

HERMES
Someone may move in with you. And
I shall often step in until you are
settled. Get are your bags. We
will be landing shortly.

JOHNNY
Is there much loneliness here.

HERMES
Heavens no. (Clears throat) I
mean no. And you won't be lonely
at all. That is why you will have
a companion.

JOHNNY
Who?

HERMES
A logical choice.

JOHNNY
Whose choice?

HERMES
That's a tricky word..both here and
there. Let us change the subject.
YOU will have a companion.

JOHNNY
When.

HERMES
Whenever.

JOHNNY
Is it a man or a woman.

HERMES

All right impatient child. That I will tell you . It's a woman. Now let us get into your new abode. I am sure you will like it. Let us get off the boat.

SCENE TWO

johnnys new exquisitely furnished home.

JOHNNY

It's very nice.

HERMES

Look out the windows. The views are breathtaking.

JOHNNY

Sir, may I ask you one more question before our guest arrives.

HERMES

(impatiently)
Go ahead.

JOHNNY

Am I living or dead?

HERMES

That is none of your business!

JOHNNY

I have a right to know.
Indications are that I am dead, yet I feel alive.

HERMES

You may have answered your own question. Now relax. I shall be here to take care of your needs from time to time.

JOHNNY

Can I leave?.

HERMES

Why would you want to leave? SO ungrateful you are!

No, you have no choice. Unless you want to go to one of the real misery places.

JOHNNY

How about the real heaven.

HERMES

That one is not an option for you. Besides you would be uncomfortable there. The way things are. Understand? Now let us do something more pleasant until your fellow roomer arrives.

JOHNNY

Like what?

HERMES

Let us listen to some of the obituaries...yes..we do allow that word here. That should make you feel even better.

JOHNNY

All 4000 of them.

HERMES

Listen to what the Times said:

JOHNNY

I don't want to listen to tit.

HERMES

Isn't this what you always lived for.

JOHNNY

But I'm obviously not living now.

HERMES

But you are. Let's not argue about it.

JOHNNY

(Eyes fixed on abstract sculpture in corner)
Where did that piece come from?

HERMES

Strange you should ask.

JOHNNY

Where did it come from!

HERMES
You recognize it.

JOHNNY
I believe so.

HERMES
Then you have answered your own
question.

JOHNNY
You mean..

HERMES
(Interrupting)
Yes.

JOHNNY
(Nervously)
Why?

HERMES
You need company.

JOHNNY
I didn't ask for company!

HERMES
You have never been a loner.

JOHNNY
But this is a different world.

HERMES
Our traits remain with us through
eternity. And besides...you will
need some companionship.

JOHNNY
To whom does that sculpture belong?

HERMES
To whom do you think it belongs.

JOHNNY
Is it Laurie?

HERMES
Yes.

JOHNNY
Is she here?

HERMES

Yes. YOU seem so disturbed,
johnny.

JOHNNY

What gives you that idea.

HERMES

I've known you for more than half a
century. Anyhow, you should be
nervous.

JOHNNY

Why?

HERMES

You know why.

JOHNNY

I don't.

HERMES

You always did have a few problems
with the truth. Come come now. No
need to be evasive with Dr. Hermes.

JOHNNY

Truth about what. She died under
normal circumstances,

HERMES

So the Earth believes.

JOHNNY

I'm puzzled.

HERMES

No you're not.

JOHNNY

Does she know?

HERMES

I don't know.

JOHNNY

I don't want to live with her.

HERMES

I'm sorry.

JOHNNY

Sorry! I say no.

HERMES

I'm not going to argue with you.

JOHNNY

That will not work.

HERMES

Just try it at least.

JOHNNY

No. I want to live alone.

HERMES

I must excuse myself. I Have several passengers to pick up shortly.

JOHNNY

Am I free to leave this place.

HERMES

I don't believe you would want to go to your only other option. Not at all.

JOHNNY

I see.

HERMES

Besides, you still haven't told me why you would be so uncomfortable with her. You were married for thirty years and raised four wonderful children together, all of whom have turned out be successful.

JOHNNY

Somehow I think you know the reason.

HERMES

This place has a certain reputation.

JOHNNY

I never heard of it before.

HERMES

There, of course not. But here, yes. But let me finish.

And it is out of character for you to interrupt me. You are not that way normally...as I recall. So nervous all of a sudden. Well in any case. Let me enlighten you.

JOHNNY

Speak.

HERMES

This place provides special sanctuary for murderers.

Murderers?

HERMES

You seem surprised.

JOHNNY

I am not a murderer.

HERMES

Johnny.

JOHNNY

What!

HERMES

Johnny!

JOHNNY

What!

HERMES

Johnny!!!!

JOHNNY

Does she know?

HERMES

Perhaps. That is not relevant. And she has been waiting for you. She still loves you as I understand.

JOHNNY

Whose idea was this!

HERMES

Don't raise your voice to me.

JOHNNY

I'm leaving!

HERMES
 (smiling devilishly)
 Go ahead.

Johnny starts walking out the door and comes to a dead halt.

JOHNNY
 I can't move.

HERMES
 Exactly. WE speak softly and carry
 a big stick here.

The doorbell rings.

JOHNNY
 Answer it.

HERMES
 This is your house.

JOHNNY
 Who is it?

HERMES
 I shall leave through the back
 door. You must answer it. It
 will all work out nicely. (Exits)

The knocking continues. Johnny does not answer. He goes
 closer to the door, hesitates and then sits.

HERMES(O.S.)
 Answer, or you'll be sorry!

The stage darkens.

JOHNNY
 No!

Thunder is heard.

JOHNNY
 No.!

The stage becomes totally black.

HERMES
 Then you shall be expelled from
 here, and you won't b happy. Just
 give this new arrangement a chance

JOHNNY
 All right.

The lights come on.

HERMES

I knew you would be reasonable.
Once you make the adjustment,
things will work. After all you
lived with her for thirty years.
And she's an absolute delight. Now
goodbye and good luck!(exits)

Knocking resumes again and Johnny answers.

Laura, stylish late 50's enters)

LAURA

My beloved, Johnny! MY beloved.

Johnny looks uneasily at her, and then comes closer

JOHNNY

Hello, Laura.

LAURA

My Johnny.

She tries to kiss him and he awkwardly returns the kiss.

JOHNNY

It is good to see you again.

LAURA

You seem cold and distant.

JOHNNY

Just tired.

LAURA

How strange of you to say that.

JOHNNY

Why, I just arrived.

LAURA

That should make no difference, my
love.

JOHNNY

Why?

LAURA

We rarely get tired in this place.
Only in cases of extreme stress.
And why should my love be under
stress.

JOHNNY
I don't know. I didn't realize I
was.

LAURA
Oh. Hold me Johnny.

JOHNNY
With pleasure.

LAURA
You feel so warm.

JOHNNY
Thank you.

LAURA
I have waited for so many years for
this day.

JOHNNY
A quarter of a century.

LAURA
And 3 months.

JOHNNY
Wow!

LAURA
And 2 weeks.

JOHNNY
Wow!

LAURA
And 7 days, 2 hours, and 51
minutes.

JOHNNY
You've been counting the days.

LAURA
And seconds. (Kisses him) I love
you, Johnny.

JOHNNY
I know.

LAURA
You almost seem as if you don't
want to see me.

JOHNNY

But I do.

LAURA

Perhaps I should leave.

JOHNNY

No, please don't. I'm just so pleasantly shocked in seeing you again.

LAURA

Why of course. It's been so long for me that I tend to forget.

JOHNNY

Can you excuse me for a moment. (To Laura) Shall we accept.?

LAURA

Let us do.

JOHNNY

WE accept/

Suddenly the stage darkens, and we hear a trial going on.

JOHNNY

Is this a trial going on.

HADES

It is.

JOHNNY

Whjose trial.

HADES

Yours.

JOHNNY

Mine

HADES

Yours.

