

Act One

Scene 1

(A park bench is set, at an angle, to stage right. A wire mesh trash bin is sitting at the end of the bench, near center stage.)

A young man, NEIL, age 25, sits on the bench facing off-stage right with his side turned to the audience. He holds a sketch pad and is working intently on a drawing. NEIL is dressed casually in jeans, t-shirt, denim jacket, and white running shoes.

NEIL pauses and examines his drawing. He leans back and closes his eyes, obviously daydreaming. The stage dim on NEIL and the following takes place, in a dream-like, ethereal manner, preferably done with the actors in silhouette, either behind a scrim or in some way separated from the realistic setting.

A man, wearing a jester's cap with bells, bows to the lady and extends his hand. She is wearing a tutu. She takes his hand, curtsies, and they begin to dance. The dance ends with a warm intimate embrace.

With the figures frozen, the lights slowly begin to come up on NEIL, who opens his eyes and begins to sketch again. As the lights come up the figures break apart, the woman turning away with her face in her hands. The jester stands straight and very still with his hands at his sides. The lights come fully up.

ALLISON enters from stage left. Same age as NEIL. She wears biking shorts and a t-shirt. She has a biker's cap on her head. She tiptoes up behind NEIL, holding a small paper bag behind her back.)

ALLISON

Want a pickle?

NEIL

(NEIL turns to face ALLISON, sitting sideways on the bench facing her. He is obviously happy to see her.)

H'lo love! A pickle? Pour moi?

ALLISON

Just for you.

(Holds out bag to NEIL.)

NEIL

Yum. Sit here.

(He pats the bench.)

ALLISON

Well, eat it, why don't you?

(She perches on the edge of the bench, facing the audience. She looks ready to jump up again at any moment. NEIL takes pickle out of the bag and obligingly begins to munch.)

What are you drawing?

NEIL

(Turns the pad so she can see. He has been sketching the figure of a ballerina wearing a burgundy colored tutu.)

I'm trying to get the ballerina down. I'm having a hard time with her face, but it'll come. I don't want to start carving her head until I can see her features.

ALLISON

Don't worry, you'll get it. You always do. You know I love your puppets.

NEIL

So what have you been doing today?

ALLISON

Been out cycling. I stopped at Carter's Deli to get you the pickle. Good?

NEIL

Very good!

(He reaches out to touch ALLISON'S cheek. She lets his hand remain a moment, then shakes it away, looking around the park.)

ALLISON

I was riding out on Hatcher's Lane this morning and I could hear the telephone lines buzzing. I thought about all those people talking. Seemed like I could almost hear their words. After I got home, I came to find you.

(Hesitates.)

Well, first I got a phone call, which is why I came to find you.

(ALLISON is visibly nervous. She continues to stare straight ahead.)

NEIL

Phone call? What about?

ALLISON

It's funny how somebody can disappear and then just show up when you haven't thought about him in ages, really, and the phone rings and when you answer he's there...

NEIL

(Interrupting.)

Allison. Who called?

ALLISON

(Looks down at her hands. Fidgets.)

Hesitates.)

David.

NEIL

(Starts to jump up.)

What!

ALLISON

(Puts her hand on NEIL's thigh. Pushes him back down. Cuts him off.)

Wait! I know you don't like it, but give me a chance to explain.

NEIL

Okay. Explain.

ALLISON

I know what you think about him and everything, but try to understand. He wants to see me.

NEIL

No!

ALLISON

Yes! Please don't make this a control thing. I've got to see him. I need to look at him and tell him that I love you. Then it'll really be over.

NEIL

Where are you meeting him?

ALLISON

(Deep breath.)

At our apartment.

NEIL

(Shocked. Angry. Pleading.)

Allison!

ALLISON

Neil, please. I know this is difficult for you, but please be strong. I really need that from you right now.

(Neil looks at her for a moment. Then pulls her close and holds her.)

NEIL

All right. I don't really understand why you want to see him. If it were up to me, he'd never be able to get near you again.

ALLISON

Well, it isn't up to you, and it can't be. This is something I have to do. It won't be easy, that's for sure. You know I haven't seen him since...

NEIL

(Interrupting.)

I know. Let's not talk about that. It was bad enough when it happened.

ALLISON

(Finishing NEIL's sentence with him.)

When it happened. I know. Well, I'm going to go now.

NEIL

You sure it'll be okay?

ALLISON

I'm sure. Thanks. He's coming at two. Give us some time, okay? I'll see you for dinner.

(She kisses her fingertip and touches it to his lips.)

Bye.

(She exits stage right.)

NEIL

Bye. Love you.

(He sits, staring at his drawing. He starts to sketch again, but puts the pencil down.)

Scene 2

(The stage is bare. All action takes place in silhouette, behind a scrim or separated in some way.)

A man, DAVID, enters from stage left. He stands just to the left of center, facing stage right.

ALLISON enters from stage right. She sees him and stops several feet away. She brings her hands up as if she's about to speak. She drops them to her side again.

DAVID stretches a hand out toward her. She stares at it for a long moment, then whirls away, facing off-stage. She stands with her shoulders hunched and her arms folded.

DAVID walks up behind her, places his hands on her shoulders. She shrugs them off and steps away. He steps behind her and wraps his arms around her waist. For a long moment she is very tense. She stands very stiffly. It looks as though she might run. Then she relaxes back against him. She stretches her arms behind to embrace him.

She turns and flings her arms around his neck. They begin to kiss.

NEIL enters from stage left. He sees the silhouette of the embracing couple. He stops. Balls his hands into fists held tightly at his sides.

He slowly turns toward the audience. Moving slowly, almost painfully so, he squats down and pulls his clenched hands up in front of his face.

Behind him, ALLISON's hat falls to the floor. She leans back. DAVID gently lowers her to the floor and places himself on top of her.)

Scene 3

(The room is the interior of an apartment. To stage left is the apartment door. A sofa sits stage left, tilted at an angle toward center stage. An area rug extends out from the sofa. A coffee table sits directly in front of the sofa. A pair of running shoes sit on the floor next to the sofa.

A wooden rocking chair sits stage right. There is a large window in the back wall.

Behind the rocking chair, next to the window is an a desk. There is a framed photo of NEIL and ALLISON on the desk.

Against the wall on stage right is a large work table with wood-working tools hanging on the wall above it. Sitting prominently on the table are two unfinished marionettes. One is a jester wearing a purple and white harlequin outfit, and the other, a female dancer wearing a burgundy velvet tutu. Neither puppet has a head. The two heads are lying on the table. The faces are not carved. Neither puppet has the strings attached.

To the right of the worktable is a door leading to the bedroom.

ALLISON sits on the sofa, looking miserable. She is bent over with her elbows on her knees and her hands over her face. She is wearing a long flannel nightgown. From the pillow and blanket lying on the sofa, it appears she spent the night there.

NEIL stands staring out the window. He wears sweatpants and no shirt, no shoes or socks. He holds a cup of coffee, which he strokes compulsively.)

ALLISON

(Whispering hoarsely. It appears she has been crying.)

Neil, please. I don't expect you to understand, I don't understand it myself.

NEIL

(He pauses a long while before answering. Stares into the coffee cup as if he expects to find words there.)

No. I don't understand. And I'm not sure I want to talk about it anymore. It would have been much easier if you'd stayed with the bastard in the first place. Or if you'd told me the truth yesterday in the park.

ALLISON

I did tell you the truth. I love you. But I still love him. I don't know what to do. Help me, please.

NEIL

I'd like to help you, but I don't know what to do. I'm having a real hard time seeing around this right now. I'm not sure how I feel about you anymore. I can hardly stand to look at you at the moment.

ALLISON

Why not? Am I so horrible? I'm sorry. So sorry.

NEIL

I can't look at you because every time I do I see last night again. I never wanted to see you like that. One time was more than enough, but somehow that image is burned into me, because I can't see anything else when I look at you.

ALLISON

How did you see it? Where were you?

NEIL

Does it really matter how? Or even if? You've confirmed it now. That's all I need to know.

ALLISON

God! I'm sorry. Neil, I need your strength.

NEIL

I need my strength. I'm still trying to figure out just who you are. You don't feel like the same person who has lived here for the past year.

(NEIL picks up the photo from the desk.)

Did you ever really smile like that when you were with me?

(He places the photo face down on the desk.)

Not that it matters now.

ALLISON

So what are we going to do? I understand if you want me to leave for a while. I can stay with my sister.

NEIL

I'd like that, if you don't mind. I don't know if I'll call you. You probably won't want to wait. You might just be better off with David.

ALLISON

I don't know. I really don't know where I belong.
(She stands and walks off stage right through the bedroom door.)

(NEIL picks up the photo again, smiling at it rather ironically. He opens the desk drawer and drops the photo into it. He sets down his coffee, walks to the sofa and begins to fold the blanket.)

NEIL

I'm going out for a walk. Please be gone when I get back.
(He sits on the sofa and puts on his running shoes which have been lying on the floor.)

ALLISON

(Re-enters room.)

Neil! Wait. Can't we talk about this more?

NEIL

Talk about what? What do you think you're going to do? Stay here and see him on the side? I don't know how you could see him at all, let alone have him touch you. It's disgusting. After what he did to you.

ALLISON

Don't talk about that! It all seems like it happened in another lifetime. It doesn't matter to me anymore.

NEIL

My god! Allison, he raped you! How could you put that aside? Does he even understand what that did to you?

ALLISON

It wasn't so horrible. I survived, didn't I?

NEIL

If you could call all those nights of hysterical crying survival. I guess so. He never saw that though, did he? As I recall, I was the one who held your hand through all that. When you thought you might be pregnant...

ALLISON

But I wasn't. And I can't totally blame him for what happened. I mean, we'd had a relationship. He had a certain right to expect...

NEIL

(Interrupting)

He had the right to expect nothing! He's got you whipped. That's pretty obvious from the way you're running back to him.

ALLISON

I'm not! Neil, I want to stay with you. I don't want to go.

NEIL

I don't know that I want you around, but even if I did, you would have to be with me exclusively. I'm talking about commitment. A word I'm not sure you would understand.

ALLISON

You want the comfort of a "c" word as if commitment were all that mattered. You never have understood that there is more to it for me than just committing to you.

NEIL

Like what? Well, I guess David coming back sort of changes things, doesn't it.

ALLISON

I told you that you wouldn't understand. I don't know if I should be happy that I know you so well, or sad that you are so easy to predict.

NEIL

You're absolutely right! I don't understand you at all. I can't believe that you would touch him willingly after he raped you.

(Pauses, obviously thinking.)

Allison. Did he really rape you? Or did you use me, lying to me then, just like now?

ALLISON

(Upset.)

No! No! No!

NEIL

No, what? No, you didn't lie? Or no, he didn't rape you?

ALLISON

No! I didn't use you!

(Pauses.)

I don't know if you would call it rape. I might have blown things out of proportion.

NEIL

You might have what? Never mind. Just leave. Leave! Get what you need and get out! You can get the rest of your stuff later. Go!

(NEIL turns and stomps out the door, slamming it behind him. Allison stands a moment, then returns to the bedroom.)

(The lights begin to dim. The jester and dancer are visible in silhouette. She reaches out toward him, but he turns completely away. She stands a moment, then turns her back. She crouches down into a ball. He turns back toward her, steps behind her, and stretches his hand toward her head. He stops, slams his fist into his hand. He turns away, and crouches into a ball. Lights out.)