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"Melancholy" A Play In Two Acts

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"Melancholy"

A Play in Two Acts

by

Andrea Waitt

Honors Thesis

March 29, 1993

Cast of Characters

Melany
Sandy
Colin
Phil
3 Shadows
Melpomene
Heather
Melany's Mother

An Assortment of Well-Known Characters
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of English.

[Signatures]

Director

Reader

Reader

Date
The stage is split into two levels. The upper level holds a walled-off study carrel, complete with table, chairs, and a door leading offstage. Upper level, stage left, holds the dormitory door with stairs leading down to the second level—this space is also referred to as "the platform." Melany's dorm room is on the lower level. It holds bed, desk, chair, mirror, double closet doors, a four-pane window, and a door to the hallway. Melany's desk features a computer only after the initial dream sequence.

Act I

[Scene opens on Melany, sitting at her desk with pencils, pencil sharpener, paper, etc. A spot of light surrounds her—the rest of the stage is dark. She sits and writes a moment, shakes her head, crumples the sheet of paper before her and starts over. Then the pencil tip snaps off and she groans, resting her head on the table, thumping books with an exasperated fist. She looks up, glares at the audience, sighs loudly, picks up the pencil, begins again—but of course the lead's broken, so she jams the pencil into the sharpener at her elbow. Grind, grind, grind, she turns the crank, whips the pencil out, checks its sharpness, jams it back in, grinds some more. Finally she decides it's sharp enough—she blows the shavings off the pencil, then off her hands, off the books—she's created quite a mess—the shavings scatter like flakes in a snowglobe. They snow to the ground; a current carries them up to the platform. A series of small spotlights follows the current of shavings; one spotlight finally settles on the platform itself, where the shavings collect and billow up in clouds, accompanied
by rising smoke. The buildup of smoke and shavings is accompanied by a
ggradual drumroll that grows louder and louder, until suddenly, "PHLEGMI"
belches out.

In a burst of light and drums, Phlegm appears Big, overweight, chewing
on the end of a fat cigar, a uniform dead grey in color—an apathetic sluggard,
dingy auto mechanic, on the left strap of his overalls is a small, round, stained
badge with the name "Phil" stitched on it.

Melany: [Startled] Hey, did you just— [Phil, his grinning, round head rolling in
her direction, raises his cigar as if in salute. He then pulls a long damp stringy
handkerchief from his pocket, blows his nose into it, wipes off his face, sneezes,
coughs, spits, clears his throat, louder and louder. Melany looks more and more
disgusted—at one point, she realizes he's about to taste a corner of his
handkerchief.] Oh—yuck! Gross! [She quickly erases a passage, and when she
blows the eraser bits & shavings away, Phil disappears in a cloud of eraser bits
and darkness.]

Start again. [She resumes writing. After a moment or more of scribbling,
the light around her table broadens, revealing 3 dark tall figures in long dark
coats, black gloves, black hats, black sunglasses. These Shadows are at once
detached and forboding, standing still and watching as Melany writes. Then, in
the manner of a panel of judges, and to the first three notes of "Thus Sprach
Zarathustra," one by one they pull from within their coats cards, like scorecards;
these, however, spell out a word: "MEL," "ANC," and "HOLY." The music allows
just long enough of a pause after these first three notes to let us read the whole
word, "melancholy"; at the next two notes, all three Shadows simultaneously flip
their cards over; on the other side are arrows, pointing at Melany, flashing red in
time with the booming timpani. Melany, however, doesn't seem to notice them;
at the last timpani thump, the Shadows come round the the table, each picking
up a chair along the way from the shadows, far stage left. They place the chairs around the table and sit down, speaking to the student in deep, grim, slow voices, the voices of concerned counselors crossed with loan shark goons.]

Shadow 1: Well, Melany—
Shadow 2: —now that you're—
Shadows 3: —about to finish—
Shadow 1: —college, don't you—
Shadow 2: —think its time to—
Shadow 3: —look at what comes—
Shadows All: —next?

Melany: [Looking up at her latest visitors, who, as she sits in frustration, continue to hassle her.] No, this isn't it, this is all wrong— [Immensely irritated, she jams the pencil into the sharpener again, beginning to grind, shaking her head. As soon as she begins to grind, the Shadow's voices disappear; they continue to argue with her, but only by mouthing their words and gesturing. The longer she grinds, the angrier she gets, the more insistent her interrogators become. This debate builds and builds, until everyone freezes at the sound of a puppy barking. All stare as a ten-week-old collie puppy, spotlights scampering around it, chases a bright blue ball from stage left to stage right. For a moment, Melany and the Shadows stand stymied; then the Shadows resume silently arguing. As Melany begins to resume grinding, she realizes she's already ground the pencil down to almost nothing.] Oh, great. Dammit, where's that pen— [Searching briefly through her materials, she finally discovers an ink pen—quickly she snatches up the last page of manuscript she's been working on and scribbles harsh, violent lines across the last paragraph—as she does so, the loud scratch of the pen is accompanied by the sound of a record being scratched. Strips and
splashes of "ink" flash Pollock-like across the Shadows; three more loud
scratches, and the entire spot of light is scratched out.]

Melany: [Offstage.] Finally, thank god. I'll never get this done.... [Lights on, upper
level—Melany is writing at the carrel table.] Melany J. Smith. January...
er—27th. Draft number— [The sound of a needle skipping at the very end
of a record begins to play, softly at first, then louder and louder.]

Mom: [Offstage.] Melany, you'll be late for school—

Melany: ...number...

Dad: [Offstage.] Melany, what about those grades—

Melany: Draft number...

Teacher: [Offstage.] Three days, Melany, and that paper is due—

Melany: What number was that....

Colin: Hey. [Appears as the end-of-the-record sound stops.] Hey.

Melany: [Noticing Colin for the first time. The lights on the carrel slowly shade to
yellow as she talks to him.] Hello, Colin. [Colin is fourteen, with long,
nondescript hair shaved interestingly on one side, thrashed jeans, black
T-shirt with the words “Keep Music Evil” scrawled in red; he's a punk, a
skater, an angst-filled mosh-pit frequenter. As they speak, “So What” by
Ministry begins to play, soft at first.]

Colin: Hey, have you got any...

Melany: [Continuing to write as she speaks.] No, Colin, I haven't got any pot.

Colin: Well, I was just thinking—you're a college student, you have connections.

[ Takes a seat. ] That is, when you're not bowing to those fascists.

Melany: Colin, do you know what “fascist” means?

Colin: [Putting his feet up on the table, he knocks two or three of Melany's books
to the floor.] I've seen “The Wall.”

Melany: The what?
Colin: You know—Pink Floyd. [Crosses his arms smugly.]

Melany: [Muttering.] Well, I guess it’s a start.

Colin: God, isn’t this just a jail to you?

Melany: No, this [Holding up handfuls of manuscript] this is jail.

Colin: Heavy. Here. [Pulls a joint out of his pocket.] You need this more than me.

Melany: No thanks.

Colin: Aw, come on! [She waves him off.] Come on! [growing impatient, angry.] Come on!! [He stands up, flings his chair away—in angry yellow flashes, timed to loud “flashes” in the percussion in the song, Colin-clones appear; the music gets louder and louder, the clones begin jumping around, slamming into walls, chairs, each other—a strange sort of hyperactive slam dance, yellow light flaring like flames and explosions. Melany, backing away from them in fear, suddenly grabs the manuscript and tears it into shreds. As she rips the paper, the clones are also ripped by strips of shadow; as each flame-dancer is ripped out and each yellow light quenched, the stage is again left in silent darkness.]

[Pause. Then, again, barking and pattering puppy feet.]

Melany: [From the darkness] What? Whuzzat? Hmm? [Lower level, lights rise slowly. Melany is in bed, waking up as if from a strange dream.]

Sandy: Hi, honey! [The dorm room door opens, red light slowly fills the room.]

Sandy—glossy, bubbly, fake-happy, red-haired, red-lipsticked—stands in the doorway, waving. She speaks with a lush Southern accent.]

Melany: Oh no—nooo, not this again—[Melany begins searching the sheets and pillows; after a moment of frantic pawing, she pulls pages of manuscript from under a blanket.]

Sandy: Now, honey, I’ll try to be back by two, okay? [Pulls a compact from her purse, fusses with her lipstick.] ‘Course, since it’s gonna be that wild Billy from Atlanta, well, I just don’t know [Giggling, grinning, she approaches
and seats herself on Melany's bed, a love-gushing mom and bigchummy sis. She preens her hair.] You think my hair looks good, curled to the side, or should I just floof it all back that way—

Melany: [Glancing at her manuscript, then at Sandy.] I can't believe this—where's that pen? [Sandy's prattling gets more and more annoying; the light in the room gets rosier and rosier. Sandy gets up and starts a bubbly, breezy description of Bill.] Oh, the hell with it! [She crumples the entire mess of paper—likewise, Sandy “crumples” to the ground behind her, on the far side of the bed. Melany gets up, steps around the bed to where Sandy fell, and picks up a huge wad of crumpled pages of "Vogue" magazine. She tosses the wad into the trash, then notices the residue left on her hands] Lipstick?

[Up at the table again, in the library carrel where Melany encountered Colin. Melany and a friend, Heather, are studying and talking. Melany shakes her head.]

Melany: Twenty-seven drafts.
Heather: Twenty-seven?
Melany: Yep. Counting the paper bag I wrote the first notes on.
Heather: You must be exhausted!

Melany: On the third day of the ninth month, September 3rd, I wrote those first notes. Then—I was on page 27, and it was 9:30 at night last Wednesday. The Ninth floor of the Science building, gone to get my 3rd Coke of the day. I came back to my Mac, Mac number three, and everything was gone. No disk, nothing in the hard drive, no printed copies.

Heather: That's terrible. Do you think somebody stole it?
Melany: I don't know. I don't see why they would. My head's a real mess over it, though. I keep having nightmares.

Heather: Really?

Melany: Yeah. Usually in the dream I'm writing something—something pretty stupid, I think—and these characters pop up out of nowhere and annoy me—until I find the manuscript I wrote about them in and destroy it or scratch them out. That makes them disappear. At first I thought it was cool, the way they just appeared that way, but now they really harass me. It's been even worse since the disk disappeared.

Heather: Strange...

Melany: I really don't need this now. [Rests her head on the desk.]

Heather: Melany?

Melany: Hmmm?

Heather: What're you going to do after you graduate?

Melany: Don't ask. Don't even think I can answer that question now. I can't stop worrying about it. You're just a sophomore; you've got a while to go. But wait 'til you're a senior. Then you'll find out just what that chem major of yours is really worth.

Heather: Well, I know it's worth a job, isn't it? Or grad school—

Melany: Maybe. Maybe not.

Heather: Well, you don't know what—

Melany: [Apologetic.] Look. I'm not trying to tell your future for you—especially since right now I can't even begin to face mine. I just think that once you get as close to finishing as I am, you'll start realizing that there's lot more to the world than chemistry, chem majors, and chem profs. [Sits back, closes on of her books to look at the cover.] I mean, look at this English stuff I live on. So important, right? [Heather shrugs.] But is it? I don't know.
[Pause.] Sometimes if it wasn’t for the fact that I don’t know what else I’d do, I’d just drop it.

Heather: You want to quit? Wait a second—are you saying you don’t think you can make something out of English? I always thought you were meant to do this stuff. It’s... it’s you.

Melany: And what’s that supposed to mean?

Heather: Hey, I was just—

Melany: [Frustrated, but regaining composure.] Those kinds of questions—they scare me, okay? [Deliberate.] It’s just been too easy to wake up in the morning and convince myself that English means nothing out in that “big wide world.”

Intercom Announcement: The Library will be closing in five minutes.

Melany: Great. [They pack up and exit the carrel, stage right. A moment later, they re-enter at the front door of the dorm, far right, lower level.]

Heather: I hope you’re not mad—

Melany: Me? No, I’m not angry. [Pause.] I just want to be done with this project; I want those nightmares to stop. I wish those character would just leave me alone. [They sit on the stairs.]

Heather: Are they the same characters from your story, the one you lost?

Melany: I’m not writing a story, I’m researching humour theory.

Heather: What’s that?

Melany: Oh, this medieval theory about bodily fluids. See, basically most people in Medieval times thought that everybody, every human person, had these four fluids in them. They, er—[Notices Heather, who seems to be leaning a little too close to her, her hair seeming to glow red. Melany scoots over a bit.] They thought that if you could balance the humours, you’d stay healthy—[the sound of cars passing the dorm interrupts her,
squeaking brakes, doors opening and closing, engines slowing and accelerating]—but if your humours were out of balance, you could get sick, go crazy, or die. The thing is, tough, that while you can affect the balance by your own eating habits and those things, some uncontrollable—[A couple, returning from a date, saunters in from stage right, moving up the stairs between Heather and Melany, their long black overcoats brushing against Melany as they pass. She glares at them and clears her throat, frustrated with the interruptions.]...uncontrollable forces were bound to mess you up. Like a bad configuration of stars, or maybe a comet—[One last car curves around the street before them—all the audience can see, of course, is the yellow headlights, bright beams landing on Melany’s face.] Ow, that’s bright.

Heather: You’d think he’d try not to do that—

Driver: [Offstage.] Hey, lady.

Heather: Hmph! Yellow cab...

Driver: [Offstage.] How do I get off this campus?

Melany: Just go the way you came in!

Driver: [Offstage.] Thanks!

Melany: Don’t mention it! [Muttering.] Just leave... [A moment later, the headlights are gone.]

Heather: Now, what were you saying?

Melany: Well, it’s just that those same humours were eventually disproved by biology and other fields. But other people kept looking to them to explain the behavior of those around them—especially eccentrics.

Heather: How?

Melany: Well, before, you have somebody whose really short-tempered, right?

Today we’d say, I don’t know—that he had a bad childhood or
something. But humour theory states that short-tempered means too much yellow bile. And even if it isn't because of an actual fluid, being choleric would still be his personality type.

Heather: Hmm. [Pause.] What do you think your personality type is?

Melany: Me? I've never thought—[Looks up, noticing how the light is dimming.] I guess when they come up with a Humour for Fear, that'll be me. [The lights dim still more, leaving Melany and Heather in a spot that fills the steps and the platform.] Getting kind of late...

Heather: Well, I hope you find that project disk soon. Let me know if you need help. [She gets up to leave.]

Melany: Thanks. Goodnight.

Heather: Goodnight.

[Lights shift—spotlight fades, light comes on in Melany's room. She's standing in the doorway.]

Melany: Tetris. I'll play Tetris. That'll make me feel better. [She's standing in the doorway to her own room, which is cluttered with books, clothes, etc. She sits down at her desk and begins to play the game. The phone rings. She talks back to the phone without picking up the receiver.] Hi! [Another ring.] Well, I'm doing just fine, thanks. Yourself? [Another ring.] I'm sorry, I can barely understand you through that accent. [Another ring.] Well, if you insist. [Picks up the phone.] Oh, hi. Awful. I lost my final project. [Pause.] Somebody might have stolen it. I don't know why. [Pause.] Yeah, I'm sure I brought the disks to the lab with me in the first place—what's the matter here? [Begins scrutinizing the screen.] No, mom, it's just the screen—my computer's making all the colors go funny. Anyway, I don't think it's how the disks were lost that's important, it's what I'm going to do...
now. My entire paper is—[To herself.] Wait, there must be a backup of some kind around here somewhere. [She begins to look around. As she's searching, carrying the phone with her, we hear from offstage the sound of her mom's voice, chattering at her through the earpiece. The voice begins softly, but as Melany pays more attention to searching for the disk and less attention to her mom, the voice grows louder and clearer. What starts out as the sound of a poorly-connected long distance call becomes Melany's mom's voice speaking as clearly as if she were in then next room. ]

Melany's Mother: ...And I hope you're figuring out what you're going to be doing come June. I mean, I don't mind if you decide to take some time off—that's great, give yourself a break, find out who you are, whatever—just don't forget what happened to me—[ As the voice states the next line, Melany, now looking under the bed, by the windowsill, anywhere she can think of, pantomimes her mother's words. ] Six times I had to quit, six times I went back. [Melany resumes searching.] I knew what I wanted, what I wanted to be—and I did it! Took me a while, but I figured it out.

Melany: Well, Mom, I wish I could say the same thing. [She sits down to talk; we can't hear her mother when she speaks.] I mean, I don't know what I—[Pause.] Well, of course I want to make something of myself—whatever the heck that means. [Pause.] You know I can't answer that question yet. Look, I'm just finishing here, give me a little while to catch my breath, okay? Didn't you just say it was okay to sit back and take a break? [Pause.] Oh, in other words I can only commit to self-exploration if I already know who I'll be by the end? Listen, mom—this is going nowhere. Why don't I [Pause.] What kind of a question is that? [Pause, as Melany finally thinks to search the closet. Her mother's voice returns.]
Melany's Mother: I mean, you aren't just going to let everyone decide who you are for you, are you? I mean, look at the guy you dated who told you to go into acting! What a joke! I can't even imagine what would've happened if you'd tried that! Where would you be now? Who would you be?

Melany: [Forgetting the closet for a moment.] Somebody. [Pause.] Or at least a little more than I am right now. [Pause.]

Melany's Mother: Melany? Are you okay? Melany? [Pause.] I'm sorry, honey—I didn't know you were so—Melany? [Melany has opened the closet door.]

Are you still there?

Melany: What the hell is this? [Pause. On the floor of the closet, amidst shoes and socks, the collie puppy sits with the bright blue ball.] Oh, not you, mom, sorry—look, can I call you back? I've found a slight problem here. [Pause.]

Okay, I've got a lot of slight problems here. But this is a little different. [Pause.]
There's a dog in my closet. [Pause.] I don't know. Maybe someone's playing a joke or something. I'll find out and call you back. Okay? Bye. [She hangs up the phone, standing back from the closet, suspicious but amused.]

There's a puppy in my closet. [She crouches down as if to pat the puppy, then jerks back.] Wait, I know you! I saw you in— [A knock at the door.] Just a second. [She opens the door—Heather enters. Melany remembers the puppy too late, but Heather either doesn't see it or doesn't care. As they talk, Melany realizes the dog is gone.]

Heather: What's going on?

Melany: Not much—I'm trying to get back to that project is all—I was looking for a backup disk [Glances again into the closet.]

Heather: What, in your closet? I'd be surprised if you could find the floor in there.
Melany: Well, the paper's due in three days—anything I can do to make it easier helps.

Heather: Three days? How long was it altogether?

Melany: Well, like I said, I was revising page 27 when everything disappeared.

Heather: Don't you have any old drafts you can work from?

Melany: I had some with me, but they disappeared with everything else. But most of it wouldn't do me any good right now, it was all notes, basic stuff I already know. I just have to write it all down again.

[Slowly, the lights go down in the room; alternately, a light appears in the window, yellow light. Soon, all that's visible on stage is the window's yellow rectangles. For a moment, all is silent—then we hear tossing and turning, the sounds of another bad dream for Mel.] Hey! What's going on? What are you—

[Flickering strobes in red, yellow, grey-green, and pale light randomly flash across her room. The rectangles shift from yellow to one red, one yellow, one grey-green, and one black-out. The strobe-flashes strike their corresponding characters—enough light to show is that Melany is lying in a strange tug-of-war between Sandy, Phil, Colin, and the Shadows. Strange, percussive music plays, and the tug-of-war continues until Melany, protesting throughout, begins to yell.] NO! STOP IT! STOP IT! [All falls into darkness. The four-pane window then shifts to a morning light that soon fills the room. Melany is in bed, sitting up, shivering.] Just dreaming, just dreaming, just...[As she mutters to herself, she pulls the blankets up around her. She notices her wrists]...just... what? I'm all bruised—scratched up—even my ankles, too. [The phone rings, scaring her. She rushes to answer it.] Hello? Hello?... [She replaces the receiver.] This keeps happening, and I'll go nuts. I must've bee scratching my wrists in my sleep—I can't believe those dreams! Maybe that talk with mom—[A knock at the door.] Just a second! [She opens the door and in trots the puppy. It jumps up on
the bed, as Melany looks down the hall.] Nobody's there. [She comes in and closes the door.] Well, now what? I can't have you in here. Although I guess if you're quiet, no one will know you're here, right? [She begins to pat the puppy, then notices that it's wearing a collar and a single tag.] "Melpomene." That's familiar. I wonder how you got in yesterday— [Melpomene licks her hand; Melany remembers something. She picks up a book off the floor and begins reading.] "Melpomene: one of the nine Muses of Greek mythology. The muse of tragedy." Great, I suppose things will get worse, now that you're here. [Sighs.] Wish I was as determined about myself as Mom seems to be. But what am I supposed to do, anyway? Really. Find the career best for me so I can take my major to its limits! Easy for mom to say. She's a dental hygienist. She changed her major six times, transferred to three different schools—and she tells me she knows exactly what's what? Right. Of course, she does have an advantage—she has a job. A boring job, but a job. But English majors... [Pause.] The only excuse for English majors is college. But when you leave here, then what? I'll tell you— [She leans over, whispering at the dog.] Nothing! Absolutely nothing! I mean, who out there, in the big wide world, cares about Hamlet, or Voltaire, or Homer? I'm telling you [The puppy begins to whine loudly.] Hey, shhh, it's okay, I wasn't yelling at you. You sound so scared. Hey, you think I'm not afraid? Why do you think I have nightmares? That little thread in my head between me and English must be snapping. [She closes the book suddenly, startling the puppy—Melpomene, once soothed, now cries louder than ever.] Hey, stop... [Again, Melany spends time consoling the puppy, taking her into her lap until she's still.] What if this is the thread? [She picks up the book.] Here I am, and here's the cord—attached to... what? [Notices her watch.] I've got to get working, here—sorry, Melp. [She returns to the desk; the puppy has fallen asleep.]
Okay, here we go—only twenty-seven pages, only three days, no problem... [Pause.] Humour theory... the Four Humours—Black Bile, Yellow Bile, Blood, and... and look at me! All that bitching, just to jump right back into this mess! Geez, you'd think this was my life or something... Anyway, here we go—Humours, four bodily fluids whose perfect balance in human bodies, animal bodies, bodies of water, and heavenly bodies, means perfect health and happiness. Phlegm. [Writing again.] Aspects: cold, wet, and gross—no kidding—associated with the element water, with.... [She begins opening books to find information—behind her, in the window, a face slowly appears. It's Phil. As Melany mutters at her books, he peers farther and farther into the room, as far as his fat neck will allow. A greenish, pale light escorts in his appearance, filling the window around him.] sluggishness, apathy, dullness. Lack of energy. Direction: north. Season: what was it? I can't remember all this.. [Searches in her books again. Then, thinking she senses Phil behind her, she jerks around in the chair to look—meanwhile, Phil has ducked down just in time, but she's still suspicious.] I remember now. Season: winter. Disease: senility. Ruling Planet: Venus. Age: old age. Taste: sweet. [Phil's head reappears in the midst of this list. He watches as she writes, his eyes half-shut and sleepy.] Phlegm. God, that guy in my dream looked just like a car mechanic. He even smelled bad.

Okay, melancholy. Black Bile. Aspects: cold, dry, and gross; from the element earth. [She stops to think, as the Three Shadows' black-hatted heads peer at her from around the closet door.] Aspects. Bitterness, gloominess, melancholy.... Regret. [Melpomene whines in her sleep. Melany gets up to comfort her.] you, too? [The Shadows and Phil hide until she returns to the desk. Phil gives the Shadows a gestured, "It's o.k."] Direction: west. Taste: acrid. disease—madness; season—fall. Age: middle age.
Third Humour—Blood. [As the Shadows and Phil resume watching, Sandy emerges from the same spot she crumpled into.] This is getting really old. Aspects: hot, wet, subtle; element: air—yeah, I buy that—liberal, joyful, venereal. Sanguine. Direction—east; season—spring; age—childhood; taste—salty [Sandy pulls her compact and some lipstick from her cleavage, boldly seats herself on the bed next to the puppy, who keeps sleeping. Sandy, fusses at herself in the tiny mirror, ignoring the warning gestures of the Shadows.]

Last one. Yellow Bile. Hot, dry, subtle. Quick-tempered, bilious, angry—yep—irascible. Element—fire; direction—south; season—summer; age—youth. [This list is accompanied by the appearance of Colin, who creeps up sulkily from under the covers of her bed and sits back against the pillows. The puppy wakes up—Colin strokes her head. The Shadows are also half-way out of the closet, and Phil has decided to rest his arms on the windowsill.] Disease—wrath-madness [Colin grins.]. Okay, that just about does it. [The phone rings; Melany picks it up.] Oh, hi Heather. Okay. Oh, you're going shopping, then? No, that's fine—I have a lot to do here. It's going well enough, I guess. No, I never found the backup disk—I think I'll [The puppy begins to yap.] just a second. [She sees the characters. Pause.] Uh-oh. Look, I'll just call you back later, okay? No, I'm fine. 'Bye. [She replaces the receiver and looks at the Humours.] Great. Am I dreaming again, then? Is that it? No—that can't be—I just talked to Heather. [Picks it up, tries to dial..] Hey, the phone's dead.

Sandy: Excuse me, sugar—you got a moment?

Melany: Okay, I've always been told I have a wild imagination—which means I could be imagining this whole thing. I've also been told I have a wild sense of humour—which means this could be all a big joke someone thinks I'll like. [Glances at Phlegm.] Whatever.

Colin: [To Sandy.] Forget it. Let's find somebody else. She's not falling for this—
Sandy: Quiet! [Again, to Melany.] Listen, girl—

Melany: Or maybe it's a combination of the two—maybe I'm imagining a really great joke! Or maybe, somebody's playing a joke that really makes fun of my imagination. But who would go through the trouble? [Sandy gets up, sauntering to Melany at the desk.] Wait, don't come over here. You can't. I've decided it—you're not even here.

Sandy: Oh, and I supposed this isn't here, either? [Pushing on of the keys on the keyboard, she makes the computer spit out Melany's much-sought disk.]

Melany: Hey—that's my disk! That wasn't there before!

Sandy: Ah-ah-ah [holding it beyond Melany's reach.] And it still isn't here, either, remember?

Melany: Yes, it is!

Sandy: Then so are we, right? [Big smile.]

Melany: No you're not— [Sandy holds the disk farther away.] ...you, you're only a figment of—

Sandy: [Bending down near Melpomene.] Does puppy want a new toy? I thought so! Nicey-nicey chew-toy—

Melany: Oh—okay, okay, you're real.

Sandy: Thank God! Everybody, now, a quick yet heartfelt moment of gratitude to Our Dear Lord for letting' this child grant us blessed existence in her presence—

Colin: Oh, cut that shit out, Sandy.

Melany: Now can I have the disk?

Sandy: I'll keep it safe for you, for now. But I can give it to you later—

Melany: You want something. Well, what is it?

Sandy: I—that is, we—want immortality.
Melany: Doesn't everybody?
Sandy: You don't seem to understand—
Colin: —glad you noticed—
Sandy: —so let's just start with a little introduction. I'm Sandy, that guy on the windowsill is Phil, this kid's name is Colin, and the three gentlemen in black are the Shadows. [Shadows tip their hats.]
Melany: Much obliged. Melany, I'm Melany. And that's Melpomene.
Sandy: I prefer— that is, we call her Melpo—
Phil: Like "Alpo!" [Chuckles, a squishy sound.]
Sandy: Yes. [Colin goes to help Phil climb in, while Sandy escorts Melany to the sit on the bed.] You see, we stole the disk. We want to work out a deal with you. Now, I want you to look at us, our names, our natures, and the research for your project, and tell me—who do you think we really are?
Melany: [Pause for thought.] Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Melancholy.
Sandy: Very good. Now, as you may have noticed in your studies, people don't take us too seriously any more. I mean, their faith truly is shaken, isn't it? Science, experimentation—they take the place of everything! Why, not only are we replaced physically, but psychologically as well! People are too busy being "manic depressant" and codependent to consider their Humours anymore. There just doesn't seem to be any use for us at all any more, does there?
Melany: [Suspicious; the lights begin to redden, and Sanguine's tone, despite her words, remains rather blythe.] I guess not.
Sandy: In fact, except for those little history-type books you've got here, there's very little mention of us anywhere at all is there? Except...
Melany: Except?
Sandy: Except in stories! [Colin finally gets Phil to fall in through the window with a sloppy thud. Colin, wiping his hands off, clears Melany’s desk, sweeping her papery mess to the floor and sitting on the desktop.]

Phil: Ow.

Sandy: Pick yourself up, Phil. You're such a mess! [Irritated yet giggly.]

Phil: Sorry. [Slowly rolls himself upright.]

Sandy: Much better. Now. As I was saying. Stories. Let's consider a few, hmm? Shadows? The men in black come to stand directly behind Sandy and Melany. Each draws from beneath his coat a book from which to read.

Shadow 1: "Jealous? Who, he? I think the sun where he was born drew all such humours from him."

Sandy: Shakespeare. And—

Shadow 2: "Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir; your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself divers times—"

Sandy: Enough! [To Melany, almost whispering.] That was Jonson! [Aloud.] And the of course, there's—

Shadow 3: "Certainly this dream which you have dreamed tonight comes from great excess of your red choler, by god."

Sandy: Chaucer. There, you see? We Humours are right there. The Shadows hide their books in their coats again.] But this kind of thing runs so thin and frail in this day and age—maybe you know what I mean, dearie—why, it's about as nonexistent as we are ourselves! So I thought—we decided—that maybe if we could find an English major who knew something about us already, who could take the information they knew and write a story of us, why, we'd be good for at least another fifty years or so! Isn't that grand?

Melany: Fifty years?
Sandy: Well, or until we find someone else, right? But the thing is, if you write our stories, we can live on! [Triumphant, tearful, sighing.]

Melany: You'll find “someone else”? So you've done this before?

Sandy: Why, of course, darlin’. Who do you think I just quoted?

Melany: People who wrote without your coercion, I think.

Sandy: Well, yes, of course there's something in it for you. I mean, in the very least, there's this little old disk. Maybe more. Think about it.

Colin: What she's trying to say is, what's immortality for us could mean the same for you, too.

Melany: Wait—wait. This is too much. I have to think—

Colin: [To Sandy.] Look, I'm warning you, she won't do.

Sandy: Oh, but I believe in her, boy! [Louder, so that Melany hears her.] I believe in her! [To Colin.] We convinced her we're here, right? And I think we've already convinced her that we can be rather... imposing?

Colin: But a fifty-year piece?

Sandy: She's desperate, honey? Remember? [A scratchy recording of Melany's voice plays from offstage, loudly whispering over and over]

Melany's Voice: All this—means nothing! All this—means nothing! All this—means nothing! [Colin nods in agreement, though he seems as suspicious of Sandy as Melany is.]

Sandy: I believe in her. [Pause.] I believe in her fear. [Lighter.] She'll get it—trust me. Besides, she has a muse to help her. [Melpomene's ears prick up. Sandy giggles, amused.]

Melany: How long do I have to think it over?

Sandy: You've already thought it over. [Taking the disk, she inserts it into the Melany's computer, clicks a key.] See?

Melany: [Reading the file list.] Project file, midterms file—humours file?
Sandy: There we are! [She clicks another key, takes the disk, stores it next to her compact.] Simple, isn't it? And we'll be sure to help you if you need us. [A knock at the door.] I hear a knocking—

Melany: [Startled.] Who can that be? [Before she can check, all light disappears.] Damn! Heather: [From the hall.] Everything okay in there?

Melany: [From the dark.] Oh, sure. Perfect.

Act II

[Study carrel—Melany, hard at her work, puppy at her feet. She’s frustrated—pencil-breaking, paper-crumpling, erasing as usual.]

Melany: This isn't right. [Pause.] None of this works. [She shakes her head at the mess, pushes it all to the floor, much of it on the puppy's head. Melpomene plays with the papers while Melany paces.] How do I know where to begin? I'm so confused by all this strange stuff happening, I can't even get started! [She sits next to Melpo. The puppy presents her with the bright blue ball.] Play? Okay. Fifth time I've taken a break this hour, but oh well. [They play quietly:] You know, this is fun. Why can't writing be more like this? You're my muse—you tell me. [Sarcastic singsong:] Why is writing always such a pain in the ass? Hmm? [Melpomene licks her face.] I thought so. [Behind her and to her left, Sandy appears.]

Sandy: For a muse, she's too cute for words, isn't she?
Melany: Unfortunately. [*Sighs, looking at the papers around her.*]

Sandy: You're having problems with the story?

Melany: Yes. I'm not sure how to begin writing about Humours. I have a hard
time trying to write a story about you, when I'm not you.

Sandy: But I'm in you, honey! [*Melany is puzzled.*] I'm a Humour, and you've got
Humours in you, don't you? Oh, I know, not literally, maybe—but don't
you think you got some little spark of sanguine down there somewhere.

Melany: Well, *deep* down, yes.

Sandy: Okay, then! Just let it all out! Let it rise to meet this burden, let it flow
from your soul, let it—

Melany: That's all very poetic, but how does it help me write—

Sandy: Or better yet, think about this—*be me*!

Melany: Be *you*?

Sandy: Hey, it ain't all that hard! [*Deliberate.*] And it can't possibly be any
worse than what you are now—can it?

Melany: I... I don't know....

Sandy: Well, I can see the notion strikes you as unusual. I don't want you to feel
uncomfortable—I mean, now that I think about it, if you were me, you
could 't write anyway because, well, I can't write worth a damn! [*Giggles.*]
But at least we can give you a sanguine example. [*Knocking.*] And here
she is! [*Sandy opens the door.*]

Heather: Hi! [*Much changed from her former appearance, she's wearing*
red pants and top, red shoes..] Hey, do you like my new outfit? I got it
yesterday. [*Laughing.*] I was going to dye my hair red, too—you know, so
I could match completely—but that's kind of expensive. What's the
matter? [*As she speaks, the light begins to grow red.*]

Melany: But... you never liked red before....
Heather: Hey, cute dog. Yeah, well—there's always room for change, right? By the way—you want to go out tonight?

Melany: Er—sorry, no. [She sits down at her work again.] I've got a paper to do. Don't you have class in the morning?

Heather: Tomorrow's Saturday, dummy!

Melany: Oh, right. What are you doing now?

Heather: [Putting on lipstick in the mirror of a small red compact.] Putting on lipstick. Geez, what's your problem today?

Melany: Well, you don't like makeup, either...

Heather: Look, I thought I try something new, okay?

Melany: Yeah, but—

Heather: Look, if it makes me happy, why not? Look, mom, I can do this, you know. I'm a big kid, remember? [More impertinent than angry, pouty.]

Melany: But—

Heather: —besides, nobody's forcing me to do this—so don't you try to stop me,

Mel. [Stern, pouty. Almost playful. Begins humming as she scrutinizes her face. The light in the room is very red.]

Melany: [Noticing the red light.] Whatever. [Glancing over her left shoulder, she sees Sandy, smiling; looking the other way, she sees Colin in the doorway, disgusted. Suddenly, she too shifts from surprised to disgusted.] This is stupid. It's none of my business, but—

Heather: That's right, it isn't!

Melany: —if you want to wear a color that makes you look like a tomato—

Heather: What? [The color of the light shifts, taking on a yellow tinge.] That was uncalled for! What are you yelling at me for?

Melaney: I'm surprised you can hear me over those clothes.
Heather: What did you say? [The light gets more and more yellow, Heather's voice is louder.]

Melany: I didn't call you anything. [She stands up.] I just think your outfit looks terrible. [Her voice is rising, but still controlled. Heather, on the other hand, is livid.]

Heather: Well, I'm not going to stand here and take this! [Grabs her purse and stomps out, muttering obscenities. The light is completely yellow.]

Sandy: [Pushing Melany aside.] No, wait! Stop her! [Glaring at Colin, then Melany.] That isn't fair!

Colin: [Snide.] What isn't fair?

Sandy: You—you know! Ohh! [Disappears in a flash of red.]

Melany: [Sitting down again.] What... what the heck is going on now?

Colin: [Smug.] Good job.

Melany: At what? What did Sandy do to Heather? What did I do to Heather?

Colin: Oh, more than you think—

Melany: What?

Colin: [Excited, pacing, almost bouncing.] What next? What next?

Melany: Until you tell me what going on, nothing!

Colin: Go on! Write!

Melany: I'm not writing anything.

Colin: Write!

Melany: I'm getting out of here. [Quickly, she gathers as much as she can, including the dog, and leaves. Behind her, Colin finds the ball, forgotten behind a chair. He picks it up, and jumps out the door after her. Lights go off in the carrel, the stage remains dark for a long pause.]
Lights come on downstairs again. Melany is once more in bed, in shivers.

Melany: Melp? Melp? Oh—asleep. In the closet. Good girl. Maybe it's safer in there. Sure isn't safe out here. Can't even destroy the manuscripts any more—they come back anyway. [Pause.] Can I get out of this, Mel?

You're my muse—can you help me? I seem to have been forced to do this all along—I don't want to do this any more. Help me.

Colin: [From the Window.] I can help you.

Melany: I don't want to do this any more.

Colin: Why not?

Melany: I'll tell you why. You saw what happened to Heather last time. It's crazy!

I'm still not sure what happened, but our friendship is probably completely destroyed, Heather might be going crazy—I don't know anything for sure any more.

Colin: I can help!

Melany: No, you can't. I'm not sure what happened last time, but I think if you weren't there, I might've been able to fix things. You just made it worse!

[She gets up, pushes Colin down out of sight, slams the window down on his hands.]

Colin: OOOOWWWWWWW!!!!!!

Melany: Oh, shit—[Quickly she leaps back into bed, murmuring, "Oh, no, wake up—wake up!" She ducks under the pillow as Melpomene leaps from the closet door, jumping on the bed, barking. A moment later, Colin's boot kicks on the window panes—thud! thud! thud!—Then, SMASH!! He hurls himself through the glass. Yellow light flashes everywhere—the room seems to be on fire.]

Colin: Get up! GET UP! [He begins jumping around, throwing books.] GET UP!

Melany: Hey—[sitting up.] Knock it off! You're breaking everything—
Colin: Get UP!!! [Sends a shoe crashing into the computer.]
Melany: STOP IT!! [From the bed she jumps on him. They wrestle.]
Colin: Angry? ANGRY?! [Threws her to the ground.] Feels GOOD, doesn't it?!

[His original theme music and lights are pounding through the room.] Get
UP!! GET ANGRY!!! [He jumps on the bed, kicks pillows, snarls at
Melpomene who's snarling at him, chases her out of the room, thumps
back in.] Come on!!!

Melany: What?
Colin: Let's GO!! OUT!! NOW!! [He grabs her wrist almost throws her out the
door. Through the music, sirens begin wailing. Then the light falls—in a
crash of thunder, the music and sirens stop. The thunder continues, the
sound of scampering paws is heard, briefly. Silence. Then, a dim light,
dark grey, fills the remains of the four-square window. A breeze moves
the torn curtains, rain falls. The room cools a while.]

[A long pause. Then, light beings to filter through the open dorm room door.
Melany steps in, walking very, very slowly. Just as slowly, a slimy grey-green
light follows her, fills the space around her. We can see the room, a fantastic
chaos, a shambles. Water has blown in with the rain, funguses are growing in
the damp, mildew covers lumpy clothes o the floor. Melany is pale, a zombie,
shaking. She sniffs, shivers in the breeze coming through the broken window,
sneezes.] Oh my. My... God. [Quiet, heavy shock. She shuffles weakly to the
center of the room, coughing. Wiping her runny nose on a torn sleeve, she
notices her wrists.] I'm bleeding. [Half-chuckling.] Must've have on humdinger
nightmare to scratch myself like that, eh? Looks like I didn't even stop there—
[Looks around the room. slowly shaking her head.] I did this... in my sleep?
[Pause.] Wow. [Pause.] Melp? Melpo? Melpo...mene? Where... are you here? [Peers into the closet. She opens both doors, one of which falls off at the hinges. In the closet stands Phil.] Hey... come on in... [He shuffles—only slightly more quickly than she does—to the desk, and drops his tool box there—thud! He begins to survey the area.]

Phil: [Slow, slushy voice.] Well, ya know, the biggest job I ever done, it was this T-bird fanbelt-and-complete-overhall job back in '79. Took me... only 'bout a year, see? And I figger, this place? [Looks around again.] Well, personally I think it looks perfectly fine, really liveable... but seen' as it's your place... I can have it done in say, May. Ninety-six.

Melany: [Only slightly disturbed.] Ninety-six dollars?

Phil: No, the year.

Melany: Oh. [Shuffling around] But I graduate... soon. May of... this year.

Phil: Well, now—I just don't think that's going to be possible.

Melany: No?

Phil: Nope.

Melany: No. Oh. What'll I do until then?

Phil: [Shrugs.] Dunno. Play with the dog, I guess.

Melany: Oh. [Pause.] Good idea. Melpo? Melpo? Melpo...mene? [Phil begins emptying his toolbox, examining every piece as he goes. Meanwhile, the puppy crawls out from under the bed, bright blue ball in her mouth.] Hi. [Climbing atop the remains of her bed, she pets and plays with Melpomene. After a few toss-and-fetch games, the puppy retrieves the ball, drops it in front of Melany, barks, and runs under the bed.] Hey, where you going? You want me to have this? For keeps? [Under the bed, Melpomene barks.] Oh. Thanks. [Melany holds the ball—and the longer she holds it, the more she begins to wake up. Suddenly she sits up straight, looks over at Phil, and realizes that she and her room are a
Phil: Ow. [Not even flinching, he starts his strange nasal attack. Finally overcoming her disgust and backed by the puppy's barking support, Melany begins striking Phil with her book like a madwoman.] Ow. Ow. [She drives him out. She throws the entire box of tools out the window. It begins to rain again. The light in the room fall to the broken grey window rectangles. We can barely see Melany. She's leaning out the window, as the puppy barks and barks, nipping at her pants leg—is Melany laughing? The puppy's barking is too loud. She turns around.] Where are my slippers—got to keep my feet warm. [She staggers around the room, collecting her slippers, book bag, dog, the bright blue ball.] I have stuff to do—I can't concentrate here. [She limps out the door, limps back in, grabs a book, limps out again. More rain. A voice calls from the hall.]

Heather: Mel? Melany? [At the door, a figure stands. It's Heather. She steps in the room, turns on the light. The room is back to its original state—cluttered, but liveable. The window is open, rain blows in—Heather shuts it.] Not here—no dog, either. Where could she be going at this hour? [Heather walks over to the bed, sees blood on the sheets.] What's this? She have an accident? Maybe that's it—had to go to the store for "emergency supplies." I get it. Well, my mouth is shut if yours is. [As she's walking out, she sees the computer. A disk is in the drive; Heather pulls it out and reads the label.] Hey—"Spring Projects-1993." This must be her disk! I guess she must have found it somewhere. Hmm... Well, I'm outta here. [Shuts off the light as she leaves.]
[Lights on, upper level, study carrel. Mel steps in quietly, sets herself and her stuff down under the table, moves a chair around to hide behind. She gets up, shuts the light off, hides again. ]

Melany: Here we are. Shhh... can't let them know we're here.

Intercom announcement: The library will be closing in five minutes.

Melany: Just a couple more minutes... [A few moments later, a flashlight-bearing librarian pokes her head through the doorway, gives the room a quick glance, then closes the door.] Just one more minute, okay? [The puppy in the bag begins to whine, softly.] Shhh, they'll hear you! [After a moment's wait, she crawls out, turns the light on again. The Three Shadows have appeared, clustered in the carrel's far left corner. Melany is only briefly surprised.] Hey, about time you guys showed up, right? [Half-joking, half frantic.] You Humours are worse than Scrooge's ghosts. [She creeps up to them.] Hey, pretty scary, huh? Like all you guys. Pretty scary... [She sits on the floor with Melpomene.] So. What do you guys want? [They don't respond.] You do to want something, right? Right? Hey—do you want my book? [She picks up the single book she brought with her, holding it towards them. They do not move.] Hey, come on. Say something. You have to. You're the last ones. [She speaks right into their faces.] Come on. Tell me to be gloomy, or dark, or sad. Tell me to be cruel. Make me feel cold and bitter. Make me regret. That's what I'm supposed to do, right? That's the best way, bitter and cold. Better yet, tell me—go on, do—tell me to write a story. It'll only cost you a couple of lessons, and immortality is yours! I'll do this for you like I'm doing it for the other three. I'll just become one of you for a while, learn all about what it's like, and write it all down—hey—[The Shadows circle the table, take her by the wrists—which no longer seem to be bleeding—and force her to sit down. They sit with her.] See, I knew you wanted
something. You guys are just more subtle. But I tell you, I did write their stories, even though I had to become them to do it. The manuscript's back in my room. Of course, I couldn't stay like them, like that—I'm still a human being, you know. But it was kind of fun, I guess, at times. Taking their roles for a little, their identities. Solid. They're solid as this book. [She thumps the text with her fist.] But I'm not cut out for that, to stay like that. I had to come back to me, no matter what I think of it. Sandy—she was too glossy, too much. Colin was too violent. I mean, the guy took me out to a bar, and we're not there for more than two seconds when he starts a fight! Think of it! Heather saw it all, too—she... oh, now I remember. [Shocked.] He smashed her head open. In the fight. Threw her against the bar, threw a chair at her head, smashed her all up. [Pause.] Oh my god, Heather—and, and I cut myself on some glass, and I was bleeding and bleeding and we ran, and there were sirens—oh, Heather! And my hands bled—but they're okay, now. Maybe Melpomene healed them. [Almost whispering.] She's a goddess, you know. [A grave nod. The Shadows nod with her.] Anyway, I came back, Phlegmmy Phil is in my room, what a mess! I couldn't take it, I had to go! I couldn't have had company there anyway. So I came here to meet you. It's much nicer here. [Pause. Businesslike.] So, what happens now? [Pause, as Melany gets up and begins pacing.] Well, don't all speak up at once or anything. I mean, I probably already told me what you're about to say, anyway. Melancholy. I'm ready for it. I've got a whole week's worth of strangeness to gush over. Lots to regret. I mean, don't get me wrong, I've done stupid shit before, but this past week? Wow. But it's perfect, too—it's—[Shadows grab her by the wrists again, make her sit again.] Okay, I'll sit and listen. I'm patient. [Short pause.] So what's with you guys! Talk to me! I mean, this whole dark image is a great trick, great subtlety—but when are you going to move me, hmmm? Come on! Make me do something! Make me talk! Make me
"English Literature—Timeless Masters." Okay, I'll read. Here we are: "Table of Contents." Hmmm, lots of good ones. Wordsworth, Wollestonecraft, Dickens, Milton, a bunch of other dead guys... What, do you want me to write you up immortal in something like this? I can't write like this. It would be nice to be able to write that way, but I can't.

Is that what this is about? A confession? Okay, I confess that writing your story is a task too big for me. Depressing, isn't it? Perfect for Melancholy. Unfortunately, you can't be melancholy and be happy, too. God, I'm confused.

[She sighs, sits and thinks a moment.] Are you guys English majors? Nevermind. I was hoping you could answer my questions. Not like, what will I be doing in a year, and will I have a job. I mean, things like what is this [She points at the book.] and what does it have to do with me and the big wide world. I mean you must know something about this, otherwise you wouldn't keep shoving this book at me, right? Did you find the answers in it? What can you tell me? Anything at all? Do you know—really know—anything at all?

Shadows All: [Very low, very hoarse—men burying tears in their gullets.] No.

Melany: What was that? No? Nothing? [The Shadows shake their heads. She stands up, indignant.] Well, you got a lotta nerve telling me what to do, don't you? Just like Mom, or Heather, or anybody else! Who the hell do you think you are? I mean, at least I'm honest. I'm an English major, dammit! There must be answers in that! Tell me there are!

Shadows All: No.

Melany: Tell me!

Shadows all: NO!

Melany: [Stymied. Pause.] Fine. Okay, look. As long as you're all being honest here, let's just come right out with it! Who are you guys? Out with it! [The
Shadows look at each other, reluctant.] Out with it! [They take the book back, open to the first couple of pages.] What, are your autographs in here?

[She begins to flip through the pages. Suddenly, the sound of a huge metal door booms out, then the chattering roar of a crowd. Behind, below, around her, a strange gathering begins to appear. Its members are Macbeth, Troilus and Creyside, Volpone and Mosca, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, the Wife of Bath, the Miller, Wellbred, Knowell, and Brainworm, the Pardoner and the Summoner, Falstaff, Richard II, and last of all, Hamlet. More and more characters appear; as Melany sits and watches, she realizes all of the characters of the works of Chaucer, Jonson, and Shakespeare are roaming the stage. All are chattering their most well-known lines at the same time; most seem to be having difficulty remembering those lines—they keep making mistakes, stammering, confused. Loudest of all is Hamlet, nearly shrieking, “To be? To be?!” The crowd keeps up its noise for a while; gradually, their voices grow quieter and quieter; soon, they are all milling about, just as confused, but utterly silent.]

Melany: No, wait. This can’t be right. Are you Chaucer, Jonson, and Shakespeare? [Pause.] You are? [Pause.] And I’ve been yelling at you? Shit, I may as well chew out God! [Sits down.] Oh, I am so sorry—I didn’t even mean it... You guys aren’t stupid at all, you know a lot. You wrote all this! [She shakes the book.] You made all of them! Doesn’t that mean something? [They’re removing their hats and shades, shaking their heads. Shakespeare is especially recognizable; his head is bowed, he’s knotting his fingers in his hair. She grabs his hand, pointing to the characters, forcing him to look.] See? See what you did? [He hides his
face in his hands.] No—wait—please don't do that. Why aren't you looking up? Are you afraid?

[Suddenly, Hamlet breaks from the throng, approaching his creator. Shakespeare looks up; Hamlet, with his eyes and hands, pleads for his voice. Shakespeare shudders, bows his head. Hamlet flees.]

Melany: Can't you give him his voice back?
Shakespeare: No.

Melany: But I'm sure he has something important to tell you—look at him, look at all of them! They looks so—
Shakespeare: No.

Melany: You're afraid? [No response.] I believed in you, and you're the ones who are afraid? [Pause., confused.] I believe in your creations—now I have to believe in your fear, too? [Pause..] What does that mean?

[No response. All sit silently, including Melany, who grows more and more thoughtful, perplexed, and finally, fearful. Then, one by one, Melancholy rises. The three "English majors" take off their coats (each wears his traditional garb underneath), fold up their gloves and sunglasses into their hats, and exit stage right. The throng of characters leave through the regular stage exits, fading as they go. Melany barely sees them go. She seems more and more afraid, hunched in a single spotlight. Slowly she moves from her chair to the front of the table. She sits on the floor, and Melpomene climbs into her lap, holding the ball. Her eyes are huge with fear.]