

Splinters
by J.S.P. Cummins

First produced at the Transalta Arts Barns
for Edmonton Theatre Squared in May of 2005

Original Cast

Director
Stage Manager

Matthew O. Watterworth
Paul Wlodarczyk

Dakota
Lauren/Paramedic voice
Kerry
Whisper voice/ EMT 1/ Imp 1/ Jack
Psychiatrist voice/ EMT 2/ Imp 2/ Paul

Josh Langedoe
Marilena Gherghinoiou
Tracy Davis
Joseph Aysis
Alan Boos

Characters

Dakota

Lauren/Paramedic voice

Kerry

Whisper voice/ EMT 1/ Imp 1/ Jack

Psychiatrist voice/ EMT 2/ Imp 2/ Paul

Scene One

Recommended set should be split into two levels- upstage a few feet higher than the downstage- to facilitate the quick set changes.

(A male voice is heard from directly above the audience, the stage is dark.)

Psychiatrist

If there really was a monster in your closet, would you then believe in God?

(Two video screens are set up on the walls of the theatre space half way into the audience, set up so that they are beside the audience on either side. These screens flash on, with a scene filmed from a first person perspective. The first person camera is along the outside of a building- at night- and at the far end of the sidewalk embracing the building a figure is seen running around the corner. The camera runs toward it, but upon reaching the corner, no one is there. Looking out into the parking lot in front of the building the figure reappears, but upon moving towards it the figure vanishes. As the camera spins around in fear, the figure is right beside the first person, causing the camera to stumble back. The figure vanishes again and reappears on a hill top just past the sidewalk's end. The first person chases it up the hill, but the figure continues to vanish and reappear further in the distance. Finally, the ghost has led the camera to a mysteriously lit cement patio in the middle of nowhere, and the figure appears to be lying dead on the ground. As the camera approaches, the figure turns out to be Lauren [Lauren: a seventeen year old girl] and as it nears, Lauren remains unconscious. Coming right up to her, the first person presents his hand, taking her head up into his palm as if to try and wake her. Her face blips suddenly to a horrific, piercing scream (the first and only sound heard in the scene) and then vanishes, leaving the camera staring at an empty hand. The hand flips around nervously a few times and then the screen is turned off.)

Scene Two

(Lights rise on stage. Dakota [Dakota: a seventeen year old boy] sits rocking in the upstage right corner with Kerry [Kerry: a sixteen year old girl] and Lauren talking to each other downstage of him. Dakota is wearing a white hoodie and baggy rave pants, but his part of the stage is not yet lit.)

Lauren

I hate this place. I can't wait until I leave this cold and get the hell out of this city.

Kerry

Yeah?

Lauren

Dakota's gonna take me out of here someday, somewhere with a beach and sunsets and warm nights.

Kerry

Hey Lauren, where is Dakota anyways?

Lauren

Down the alley. (Calls to him) D, why you down in the dirt? (Lights rise on Dakota rocking back and forth)

Kerry

Why so quiet? (Dakota mumbles something)

Lauren

I can't hear you, D? (Dakota remains curled up as the girls approach. They sense that something is wrong.)

Kerry

What did you take? (The sound of cawing ravens is heard fading into the stage, Dakota becomes visibly upset, Kerry and Lauren don't seem to hear it.)

Dakota

Get it off! Get it off my shoulder! Don't let it scratch my eyes, look out, it's everywhere! (The sound of the birds fluttering away is heard as the girls look for what he sees and see nothing.)

Kerry

Calm down, calm down. It's me, Kerry. What do you want me to do?

Lauren

What do you see, what do you see? (Dakota returns to paranoid neutrality.)

Dakota

Black wings in my face.

Lauren
Is it gone now?

Dakota
It's circling overhead. It's been there for days.

Kerry
What did you take?

Dakota
When?

Lauren
(Her voice is audibly distorted, promptly scaring Dakota, but neither of the females seem to hear it.) Today.

Dakota
Nothing.

Lauren
(Again the voice is distorted) How long has it been since you slept?

Dakota
A couple nights. (A raspy whisper is heard from the back of the audience, but again neither of the females hear it.)

Whisper
Give me the keys.
(Dakota again becomes visibly upset as the whisper repeats itself slowly whenever he speaks over all further dialogue before the black out.)

Kerry
What's wrong?

Lauren
Dakota!

Dakota
I don't have any.
Whisper
Give me the keys.

Kerry
Any what?

Dakota
(In a rage, directed at the whisper) Leave me alone!
Whisper
Give me the keys.

Lauren
Not until you tell us what's wrong.

Dakota
(Again directed at the whisper) Stop!
Whisper
Give me the keys.

Kerry
(Her voice is distorted) What did you take? (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Three

(The lights rise from the flash of ambulance lights, Dakota is strapped to a stretcher in the back of the a vehicle.)

EMT 1

(struggling to hold Dakota down) Looks like this one wants his mommy.

EMT 2

Why him and not the other two again?

EMT 1

This one's actually serious.

EMT 2

Who cares? They're all gonna drug themselves to death eventually anyway.

EMT 1

It's a waste of gas. It's like plumbing the sewers for dead rats.

EMT 2

Those other two- (Dakota cuts him off in a blind rage)

Dakota

It's gonna bite!

EMT 2

What's that, you want mommy to come get you?

EMT 1

Don't let Charlie hear you say that.

Paramedic Charlie

(hidden, from the driver's seat) Oh, I've been listening. It's not like the kid is gonna remember anything. Look at him, he's too busy choking on his own tongue to be planning a law suit.

Dakota

It's gonna bite me, they're wrapping themselves- I can't move, I can't move!

EMT 2

That's because you're strapped in genius. (Gives Dakota a needle.)

Dakota

They're biting me!

EMT 1

That's just a needle.

Dakota
Get them off of me!

EMT 2
Get what off of you?

Dakota
Get them off of me! (The sound of dozens of snakes hissing and slithering fades into the scene, again only Dakota seems to hear this.)

EMT 1
Look kid, what is it exactly that you see.

Dakota
They're laughing, making fun of me. (The sounds of snakes fades out as the crew looks at each other with a touch of worry)

EMT 1
Who? (EMT 3 pushes EMT 1 away)

EMT 2
Who?

Dakota
Snakes.

EMT 2
(Voice is distorted) It's just the straps kid, don't be so paranoid.

Dakota
Poison. (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Four

(Lights raise with Dakota sitting on a stool downstage centre, the Psychiatrist's voice is asking questions from an ominous position directly above the audience, the voice is strict and controlling.)

Psychiatrist

Tell me more about these animals.

Dakota

Which one.

Psychiatrist

What about the beetle, tell me more about the black beetle.

Dakota

I woke up one morning and thought I saw a beetle on my arm, that's all.

Psychiatrist

Where did it come from?

Dakota

I don't know, it was only there for a moment.

Psychiatrist

I see. And at the time you were under the influence of narcotics.

Dakota

No.

Psychiatrist

Have you had similar hallucinations, when not under the influence of narcotics?

Dakota

No.

Psychiatrist

How about the feelings of panic.

Dakota

Those I do get, all the time.

Psychiatrist

(Voice distorted, Dakota is shaken) Tell me more about these, feelings.

Dakota

What was that?

Psychiatrist
Tell me more about your feelings of anxiety.

Dakota
(suspicious) Sometimes, I don't trust people, cause, I think maybe that things aren't exactly as they seem.

Psychiatrist
Continue.

Dakota
(Becomes hypnotized over monologue) There was this time, I was with a few friends, a guy and two girls. The four of us were joking around when I came up with this idea, it sounded pretty cool in my head, so I wrote it down and showed it to the girls. The idea was that women, although portrayed as sometimes weak, were really all a part of this society no man was ever allowed to see. That there was this pecking order in the choosing of men that no man could resist; which every man was victim to. That government, bureaucracy, corporations- all were subsequent to the 'hierarchy of lady interest'. Of course the girls immediately started playing, acting as if I'd stumbled upon a real conspiracy and trying to convince us- me and the other guy- that we were powerless. Saying, 'Yes, it's true, now you know but it still doesn't matter'. And me and the other guy, we of course played it up like we had to tell the world before it was too late. Then, after a while, the pieces of the puzzle started to fall together a bit too perfectly. (Psychiatrist speaks, but Dakota continues over top of him.)

Psychiatrist
Go on.

Dakota
(hypnotized) As it went on, I became more and more aware that we were in some real danger. Ian took me to the corner and laid out this plan to avenge our fate, but it was too contrived. I figured he too must have been one of them. They'd gotten to him too, he was too jokingly with me, this was serious! A few minutes later, the girls started noticing that I was really, actually upset; that I had come to fully and outright believe everything that they had said. Kerry tried to calm me down, tell me it was only a joke- but I saw through her yet again. She was just trying to cover it up, they were just trying to silence me. It took a few more minutes for me to realize how much this was upsetting her- good... not so good. She was so hurt that I had become afraid of her. I tried to comfort her in my confusion, my first reaction was to hold her, but it took several more hours to truly put the fear out of my mind, put that belief out of my mind. Only her genuine pain could bring me out. It should not have been that way.

Psychiatrist
(distorted) You're a very well spoken young man Dakota.

Dakota
(fearful) What?

Psychiatrist
(hyper-distorted) You're a very well spoken young man.

Dakota
(calming himself, yet still afraid) Say that again.

Psychiatrist
(normal) I said, you're a very well spoken young man.

Dakota
(suspicious) What do you mean by that? (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Five

(Hospital. Dakota is sitting on a bed. Lauren and Kerry enter.)

Kerry
How are you?

Dakota
I don't know, I've been sleeping for two days straight.

Lauren
You never sleep.

Dakota
I know, it's weird. Can you lend me a smoke?

Lauren
Lend you one? (They smile as she hands it to him.)

Kerry
(sternly) Have they been mean to you?

Dakota
Not really. A little condescending sometimes, but they try and hide it.

Kerry
Who the fuck do they think they are!

Lauren
Calm down Kerry.

Dakota
(whispering) Do you guys have anything else to smoke?

Kerry
No more for you, do you have any idea how worried we are? About you?

Dakota
I know, I know. I quit. I just, get reminded. That's all.

Kerry
No more, never. Read my lips. Drug induced schiz-ophrenia.

Dakota
Sorry.

Lauren

We did bring you something else though. (Takes out his hoodie.)

Dakota
My hoodie!

Lauren
I thought you'd miss it.

Dakota
Lets go outside.

Kerry
Sure.

Dakota
I'll catch up, (searching for words) I just have to tell the nurse.

Lauren
Meet us at the front entrance?

Dakota
Okay. (The two girls go ahead. Dakota slips on the sweater and proceeds to roll up his sleeve. A small plastic baggy of white crystals is hidden on the inside of his sleeve. He holds it out in front of him, admiring it.) Thank you Lauren. (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Six

(A small garden bench and trees, Dakota is saying goodbye)

Kerry
I love you, okay?

Dakota
I know.

Lauren
Love you too.

Dakota
Thanks.

Kerry
We'll see you tomorrow?

Dakota
Bye. (The two girls exit. Dakota removes a pipe from his pocket and begins to pack it with a key of the powder.) (resolved) One last fix Kerry, I promise. (As he lights the product, the focus shifts to two other patients, (the Imps) a few years older than him, hiding in the trees.)

Imp 1
What is he doing? I can't see.

Imp 2
I think he's lighting something.

Imp 1
Lighting what? I can't see.

Imp 2
Shhh! That's the new guy all right.

Imp 1
What's he lighting?

Imp 2
It looks like a pipe.

Imp 1
Didn't he just have a cigarette?

Imp 2

Yes, yes he did.

Imp 1

So why would he smoke again if he already smoked?

Imp 2

Shhh! (becoming impatient) It doesn't look like that kind of pipe.

Imp 1

What do you mean?

Imp 2

People like that bother me.

Imp 1

Sorry.

Imp 2

No not you. People like him.

Imp 1

Sorry. Why?

Imp 2

We're the ones who have to deal with this for the rest of our lives, not drug induced idiots like... punks like him come along and show the world that we're nothing but delusional drug addicts. I mean, imagine, being able to quit this, to be able to quit the voices and the paranoia. To be able to quit schizophrenia. I bet you he thinks it's cool to be like this, well it's not fair. I hate people like that.

Imp 1

Do you think one day we'll be able to quit schizophrenia?

Imp 2

Not while idiots like him run around stealing our hospital space and giving us a bad name.

Imp 1

Really?

Imp 2

Don't you see? If he chose it, chose to be like this, he should learn to live with that choice. (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Seven

(Spotlight on Dakota, talking from a stool in one of the upstage corners, voice of Psychiatrist is as before. The rest of the stage is dimly lit to show Kerry's front step in another part of the stage.)

Psychiatrist
You were warned.

Dakota
But I-

Psychiatrist
There is no tolerance for such activity here. The police have been called, you can stay and speak with them if you wish.

Dakota
How do you even know?

Psychiatrist
We received an anonymous letter from another patient.

Dakota
How do you know it's true?

Psychiatrist
The security camera.

Dakota
But what if it's the trigger, and not the cause! (Dakota slithers off of the stool and crawls across the stage to Kerry's doorstep. Once Kerry's doorstep is where we find Dakota, he is rocking back and forth. The lights rise as Kerry opens the door. Dakota is high.)

Kerry
Oh my- Dakota! What are you doing here?

Dakota
It was my last fix, my one last fix.

Kerry
What's wrong honey?

Dakota
My last one, my one last one.

Kerry
Dakota (feels his forehead) your burning up. Come inside.

Dakota
I can't go in there anymore.

Kerry
Can't go where?

Dakota
The doctor said.

Kerry
Did they kick you out? Why!

Dakota
One last one.

Kerry
Oh Dakota, what did you take?

Dakota
They wouldn't let it be.

Kerry
Who gave it to you! Who got you this high?

Dakota
They told me there was no way that the other last one could be my last.

Kerry
What are you talking about? (Dakota slowly goes from his rocking position to a sobbing mess around her knees.)

Dakota
I'm sick, and nobody cares.

Kerry
(her voice is hyper-distorted) That's not true! (Dakota is terrified, fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Eight

(Next Morning. Lights rise on Kerry's living room where Dakota sleeps beside Kerry on the couch. Dakota wakes her.)

Dakota
What happened last night?

Kerry
You took my virginity. (Both smile a little at her joke.)

Dakota
Was I any good?

Kerry
You were amazing.

Dakota
Did you get a video? (Kerry smacks Dakota playfully.)

Kerry
I forgot.

Dakota
Can I ask a question?

Kerry
Sure.

Dakota
What really happened last night? (Kerry's smile becomes sympathetic)

Kerry
What do you want to know?

Dakota
I saw the rust spots on your drain pipe come to life, I pretty much know that wasn't real.
I also heard the bus trying to talk with me, but I'm pretty sure that wasn't real either.
And then I saw...

Kerry
What is it? (Dakota pauses.)

Dakota
Jesus, crying.

Kerry

What did he look like? (Dakota avoids the question in embarrassment, Kerry realizes that Dakota has taken her question the wrong way and responds.) No, no. I didn't mean it like that.

Dakota

Do you think it, he was real? (Now it's Kerry's turn to pause.)

Kerry

I don't know... Maybe God reaches out to the ones who need him most.

Dakota

(surprised) Did I, say that last night?

Kerry

No.

Dakota

Maybe he does. Maybe he reaches out to the ones who need him most. Or maybe people like us are just a little more sensitive to his voice. Yeah, I've thought of that before.

Kerry

(notices a white mark on Dakota's face) You've got something on your cheek.

Dakota

Where?

Kerry

There. (Kerry points to the spot, Dakota becomes self-conscious.) What's wrong?

Dakota

Can you keep a secret?

Kerry

Of course.

Dakota

I need to borrow your makeup.

Kerry

Why? (Dakota hesitates, and then slowly lifts up his shirt. Beneath it are large splotches of bleach white over his chest.) Is that from the schizophrenia?

Dakota

No.

Kerry

Let me get it for you. (Kerry goes offstage to retrieve the foundation and then returns.)
So how do I put it on?

Dakota
Blend into the edges of the spots. (Dakota removes his shirt and several more spots are revealed. Kerry begins.)

Kerry
Are they, sensitive?

Dakota
No, it's just like normal skin, just without the pigment.

Kerry
(As she applies) Like this?

Dakota
Yeah. When I was ten, I had a little spot of white hair on my head. I didn't know what it was until I had spots all over my body at the beginning of high school, and went to the doctor. He looked at them, told me I had vitiligo, that there was no cure, wrote it down on a piece of paper and told me to look up more about it on the Internet. Thus was I diagnosed

Kerry
(Sarcastic) Nice.

Dakota
So, I started using something to cover them up. Please don't tell anybody.

Kerry
Don't worry.

Dakota
Now I'm not just ugly, I'm crazy too. (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black)

Scene Nine

(Lights rise, Lauren is sitting in the school bathroom by herself. She is doing her makeup in the mirror until she finally explodes. She violently turns about, begins to cry uncontrollably and slumps down.)

Lauren

How dare she! (Lauren cries a few more seconds, Kerry enters)

Kerry

You are so selfish.

Lauren

How dare you.

Kerry

Just confess.

Lauren

Why, so both of us can get locked up in some institution?

Kerry

He needs this.

Lauren

I need this! He's just sketchy, he'll come out of it, he's not really crazy.

Kerry

Stop being so selfish.

Lauren

Did you ever ask Dakota whether or not he wants me too? Have you ever asked him why I'm not gonna say anything? I can't, okay? If I do, I'll never be able to leave this country.

Kerry

What are you talking about?

Lauren

You think I want to live the rest of my life in this winter desert, in Canada? I hate this place, and now that the only thing that kept me going is gone, you expect me to get some criminal record and never be able to leave again!

Kerry

Then you shouldn't have done what you did in the first place.

Lauren

He's just sketchy.

Kerry

(Breaking her composure) The doctor's said it wasn't drug induced! (Lauren stops in shock)

Lauren

What?

Kerry

The tests came back, they said it wasn't drug induced. But he still needs to tell them where he got the drugs before they'll take him back. (They both fall silent.)

Lauren

Just remember. I've been around forever. You're new here, missy. He doesn't love you. (Kerry goes to slap her, stops in disgust, and walks out of the bathroom. Lauren waits, rages again and breaks the mirror. The lights go to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Ten

(The television screens light up once again. The film is shot first person. The camera is wandering up to a playground, sees another mysterious figure. It vanishes and reappears further into the playground as we approach a few times, until it is finally swinging back and forth in fluid motion on a swing. On this swing, she disappears and reappears, while the swing remains continuous in motion. Coming right up in front of the figure, we see it is Kerry- with a dead look in her eyes devoid of all emotion. She swings back and forth a few times, and then whispers to break the silence.)

Kerry

Why is everybody drowning? (She vanishes off the swing after one more movement back and forth, and the camera collapses to the ground. The screens are turned off.)

(Dialogue over darkness.)

Kerry

She said no.

Dakota

(Saddened) That's okay, I understand.

Kerry

Are you really okay?

Dakota

Do you think people with schizophrenia see elephants, in India? Maybe the goddess Shiva? Like in Dumbo, when the little guy gets into the drink and sees all those weird hallucinations? I wonder what they see in Mecca, I wonder what they see in Tibet. Do they see something else, even if they do, is it still God?

Kerry

Goodnight Dakota.

Dakota

Goodnight.

(Lights rise to Kerry's porch after a pause, Lauren is waiting as Dakota opens the door.)

Lauren

Kerry's not up, is she?

Dakota

No.

Lauren

D, I just, wanted to apologize.

Dakota
Whatever.

Lauren
Don't be hypocritical.

Dakota
Oh not this again.

Lauren
Look, you gave me my first drugs. You got me hooked, and now I'm supposed to take the fall for something you did to me?

Dakota
You made each and every decision on your own, don't you go blaming me again.

Lauren
Look, I said I was sorry and you jumped all over me.

Dakota
Don't you love me anymore?

Lauren
I can't do it, I just can't anymore.

Dakota
You can't love me anymore?

Lauren
You have no idea what I'm going through, you have no idea how much I wanted to be with you. How much I needed you to take me away from this place. I am so cold, I'm always cold. You said we'd leave this place, you promised me that we would leave this place Dakota. How dare you break your promise, how dare you do this to me and then ask me to give up the rest of my life just so that you can pretend you never dealt drugs to half this city. How dare you! You've taken away my future and now ask me to give up every other one of my dreams?

Dakota
You wanna know what the difference is? That while you can't love me, I will always love you. I just don't like you anymore. (Lauren spits in Dakota's face, runs off. Dakota stares off after her and then sits. After a time, he slowly fades into paranoia. The lights dim, another film flashes up on the television screens. This scene is similar to the first filmed scene but is now in a graveyard. The figure is Lauren and instead of vanishing, she is ducking and hiding from sight behind graves and then appearing to come out of graves further into the graveyard. When we finally come upon her, she is not

unconscious but shivering cold upon the top of a grave stone. As the first person takes her head into their hand, she gasps in dread fear.)

Lauren

Why are you eating my soul? (The film cuts out and the lights rise again with Kerry's entrance. Dakota is in the same sort of shuddering position as he was at the beginning of the play.)

Kerry

What are you doing?

Dakota

Lauren's dead.

Kerry

What?

Dakota

(Begging at something in the air) Please, take this demon out! (To Kerry) Jesus cried because he couldn't help me. The demons climbed inside my head. (Now Dakota's voice grows distorted like the others before, Kerry is scared) No one can help me.

Kerry

I can. I will. Let me tell them, let me tell the doctors.

Dakota

(Grievingly) Okay, but let me, let me do it. (Lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Twelve

(Lights rise again on Dakota sitting on a stool with the Psychiatrist's voice overhead. However, this time the stool is in front of the bathroom mirror and Dakota sits sideways, although the light is in a spot above him and the rest of the bathroom is not lit.)

Dakota

I have something to tell you.

Psychiatrist

We've heard. I'm glad you've finally stepped forward, decided to put your past behind you.

Dakota

Who told you?

Psychiatrist

Why that sweet girl Lauren did.

Dakota

What?

Psychiatrist

She came in here and confessed that your friend Kerry took the drugs in with your favourite sweater.

Dakota

What?

Psychiatrist

She collaborated with our witnesses. (The two Imps enter from either side of the stage [one opposite the side of Dakota and the other position diagonally opposite], stand for a moment in slim spotlights and then exit.)

Dakota

That's not true.

Psychiatrist

I know it's difficult to give up your friends, but you'll come to realize you've made the right decision. Hold onto that Lauren girl, she's very good for you. She's only doing what's best for you. (The lights rise from the spotlight on the stool to reveal Dakota staring into the cracked mirror in the girls bathroom. A sign hangs on stage that says, 'Bathrooms Switched for Repairs, Sorry for the Inconvenience'. He notices a vitiligo mark on his face and reluctantly takes a bottle of foundation out of his bag. He applies solemnly, but jumps as two other men enter the bathroom. Dakota tries to quickly hide his makeup, but is caught red handed. They- [Jack and Paul: a couple of larger jocks that

seem much older than Dakota] are laughing amongst themselves as they enter. Suddenly they see Dakota.)

Jack
Will you check this out.

Paul
Dakota, right?

Dakota
Um.

Paul
I heard about you.

Jack
Looks like you really are crazy. Just because they switched us to the girls' washroom today, doesn't mean you have to start wearing bitch stick.

Paul
(mockingly) Easy Jack, he's sensitive.

Jack
Hey fag, can I borrow your makeup? I feel a blemish on my ass coming on. (Paul grabs the makeup from the counter.)

Dakota
You know what? Keep it.

Jack
Lauren said he was a pussy. Come on, fight back.

Dakota
Who? What did you just say?

Jack
I said Lauren said, that you, were a loose pussy.

Paul
That you like to pretend you're 'so high'.

Jack
I didn't know they threw people in the nut house just for being a pussy. (Dakota gets visibly angry) What are you gonna do psycho?

Paul

Oh, don't kill me psycho. (Dakota slips a hand into his pocket and removes a pencil, his anger deepens.)

Jack
Don't kill me psycho.

Paul
Don't kill me psycho.

Jack
Don't kill me psycho.

Paul
Don't kill me psycho. (As they taunt him, Dakota raises the pencil in the air as if to stab something, and plunges the tool down into his own arm, it sticks for a moment and then falls to the ground. He does not flinch at the pain.)

Jack
You really are crazy. (The two leave the bathroom in a slow and confused manner, dropping the makeup. After they leave- in time- Dakota bends over to pick up the foundation, takes it up and begins to finish his application on the stool.)

Dakota
I am not crazy. I am not crazy. I am not crazy. I am not crazy. (As he repeats the mantra in a dead tone, Lauren busts in. Dakota is wary and paranoid, she is panicked.)

Lauren
I'm sorry. I didn't know. I'm sorry.

Dakota
I'm not acting.

Lauren
I only told one person, I swear. I didn't think she'd tell.

Dakota
I am not acting.

Lauren
Please, let me help you.

Dakota
I am not acting.

Lauren
Please. I'll tell okay, I'll tell.

Dakota

I am not acting. You think I want to be crazy, you think this is fun? You think I want to rage with feelings I can never understand? As if at seventeen years of age, the disintegration of my body, and my mind, isn't enough to drive someone crazy. At least Kerry was loyal and then you rape me of the last thing I'll ever have, (she tries to approach the wound). No! Let me die, you killed me, now let me die.

Lauren

I never went to the doctor, I mean, I did. I went to tell him about myself and the doctor got all crazy and pushy about what I was saying and then he got confused and I got scared and I couldn't get the words out and I left. I was just trying to make it better, I'm sorry. I just didn't know what to do. (Dakota weakens as Lauren holds her chin, and skeptically takes her body into his arms.)

Dakota

I know, I know. I know the look, I've seen the look they gave you. It's okay. I've know the look, I've heard them push. (Dakota notices the wound on his arm.)

Lauren

Now I'll never get there. Now I'll never leave this place.

Dakota

Yes we will baby, yes we will, no matter what.

Lauren

Now we won't. (She collapses) I'm so cold. (The lights fade to ice blue and then to black.)

Scene Thirteen

(Dakota is on a stool again at the front of the stage, his arm is bandaged.)

Dakota

Schizophrenia, has a ninety percent survival rate. Ten percent of them commit suicide. Another half come close enough. What is it like inside my head? Normal people, they walk across the bridge of life, most without getting a single splinter in their feet. For me, it's like for every step I take a splinter breaks off into my foot, and stays there. Over time they become like paintings, these splinters, forever etched upon my mind. Over time the paintings start to overlap, merge, blur into a new work of distorted art. And from this distortion, as I walk, the mutating splinters bury their influence with the pain of stepping on tender soles. Little blips of altered perception, like a dash of paint from the mind onto the world around me. A dash onto reality, a shock over which I have no control. But there are more than just splinters that riddle my feet. There is an apathy towards everything, for who knows if it's real? We cling, to the things we have the most faith in, the fragments of what we once knew, and the few rays of sunshine through the clouds. For in truth, and it is not just a figment of my imagination, this world is driven by doubt. Doubt in others, doubt in ourselves.

Voice of Kerry

(From left side television [no picture], mimics line from Scene Seven) That's not true.

Dakota

Perhaps I have merely been given the gift to see what the rest of the world cannot.

Voice of Lauren

(From right side television [again no picture] mimics line from Scene Five) I thought you'd miss it.

Dakota

Or maybe it is not what I believe, but that this world does not wish to believe in me. If I weren't real, would that be your happy ending? (Lights fade to blood red, and then to black. As the lights fade out entirely, the Psychiatrist's voice resounds from the back of the theatre this time, like the whisper from Scene Two.)

Psychiatrist

Tell me more about the black beetle.

(Lauren's scream from the first video flashes on the television screens. Darkness follows.)

The End