

Sudden Service: An Exaggeration

By

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Cast of Characters

Dirk: A lazy college student.

Boris: A good friend.

Alyssa: An artist.

Aaron: A disciplinarian.

Alex: A realist.

Albert: A knight.

COVER PAGE

Scene 1

A messy one room apartment. On stage right is a door leading to the bathroom. Upstage center is the exit. A bed is in the stage left corner. Downstage left is a desk with a laptop, pushed against the wall. A TV with a current-gen gaming console is hooked up on the upstage right corner, with a few cheap folding chairs set up in front of it. The sounds of conversation are heard offstage.

DIRK

So I told her, "That may be, madam, but I'll be sober in the morning, and you'll still have the face of a saber-tooth tiger."

BORIS

Churchill? So early in the evening?

DIRK

More or less. I'm not sure he knew about saber-tooth tigers. Either way, she left in a huff.

The two burst into the apartment. Dirk happily flops down on his bed, while Boris pulls up a chair. Dirk is buzzing heavily, Boris is depressingly sober.

DIRK

Boris, when was the last time you got laid?

BORIS

I don't even remember. It was probably at that party the Guild threw-

DIRK

Let's not talk about her. She...let's just not.

BORIS

As you say.
(Beat)

BORIS

Dirk, did you ever finish that History paper?

DIRK

I've got a week. I'm not really worried about it.
(Beat)

(CONTINUED)

BORIS

Dirk...it's due tomorrow morning.

There's an awkward pause as Dirk shifts from buzzing heavily to mind-alteringly sober.

DIRK

...But the syllabus said-

Dirk gets up and digs through the desk, pulling out binders and folders and eventually a packet of paper.

DIRK

Yeah, right here! It's due the last day of classes, and that's-

Boris walks over and examines the packet. He looks at the first page before sighing heavily.

BORIS

This is version 1 of the Syllabus. She gave out a new one two months in the semester, remember?

DIRK

...You mean that day I had the stomach flu?

BORIS

No, it was the day you had the hangover that could have ended worlds.

DIRK

Like I said, the stomach flu. Worked for Health Services.

(Beat)

DIRK

10 pages in...

Dirk checks the clock on his laptop.
8 hours. My dad was right when he told me to take afternoon classes.

BORIS

What about your research?

DIRK

Hey, I did a little bit of work. I have a title!

Dirk brings up a document on the laptop.
"Why Martha Washington was a whore: An inventive look at history by Dirk Magnusson."
(beat)

BORIS

...What?

DIRK

It's a working title. I'll get it fixed up by tomorrow.

BORIS

...You need a ride to the gas station, right?

DIRK

I doubt my ability to drive and am fully confident in my ability to consume caffeinated beverages.

BORIS

Alright. But I'm not staying with you this time.

DIRK

Deal.

The two leave. Lights fade down slowly. Blackout.

Page 3

Dirk can be heard typing in the blackout. The lights come back up on the same apartment, the desk now littered with empty coffee cups, caffeine pills in piles on the surface, and Dirk at the computer. The trash can has been moved from the bathroom and sits by the desk.

DIRK

...Thus, we can assume that George Washington's decision to quell the various uprisings during his presidency were due in no small part to the looseness of his wife's thighs. Awesome. That has to be four pages now.

He counts.

DIRK

...Or maybe two. Well, at least it only took me two hours, so I'm right on schedule.

He counts.

DIRK

...Or maybe four. Still, eight pages in four hours? Nothing. I need to stay awake, though. I'll take a small break.

Dirk stands up and stretches.

DIRK

Let's see...there's always...no, I can't play that for just 15 minutes.

(beat)

DIRK

Of course! I'll sing! It's what George Washington would do!

Dirk warms up his voice and puffs out his chest.

DIRK

Me, mo, me, mo, me, mo, me, mo!

Dirk then gets ready to give it his all, and begins singing.

DIRK

If I were a scholar! I'd give to thee this one th-

Dirk begins coughing, loudly, before realizing what's about to happen, grabbing the trash can and vomiting violently inside it.

(beat)

Dirk looks up, wipes his mouth, and counts the coffee cups on the desk and in the can. When he gets to seven, he realizes what went wrong.

DIRK

How did I forget that? Too much sugar. Disgusting.

He goes into the bathroom. There is the sound of running water and spitting offstage. During this, Alyssa enters from the audience, waves at the audience, and sits in Dirk's chair, leisurely playing with the laptop. She is dressed in casual clothing, but including a pair of elbow length white gloves. As Dirk enters and notices her, he is startled. She greets him warmly, jumping up and hugging him.

ALYSSA

Good morning, pile of sweetness! I have missed you ever so much!

DIRK

...buh?

Alyssa steps up to plant a kiss on his lips, which he manages to evade.

DIRK

W...who are you, again? Not that I would...reject any girl coming into my life in such a fashion...ignoring my previous behavior...let's start again.

Dirk walks back over to her, placing her arms around him, and instead of backing away closes his eyes and puckers his lips.

ALYSSA

Hee. My tiny bundle of nerves, you will get another chance soon enough, but not now.

She untangles herself from him, patting him on the shoulder.

DIRK

I'm so awful at these things, really. But back to the point at hand; Your identity, if you could?

ALYSSA

Why do you get to ask me of my identity when you know not of your own?

DIRK

Philosophical! But it's kind of a courtesy thing...

ALYSSA

Really, it doesn't matter, does it? I just want to help.

DIRK

With the paper?

ALYSSA

With your life.

DIRK

One is somewhat reliant on the other right now.

ALYSSA

Then both will get my special touch.

Alyssa sits down in his chair again, and beckons him upon her lap. He does so happily, and reluctantly begins typing as she puts her arms around his waist and nuzzles his back.

ALYSSA

Why must it be a piece of writing? You despise writing.

DIRK

No I don't...actually. I kinda do. Academic writing, at least.

ALYSSA

It should be a painting. That's what you love.

DIRK

Loved. I haven't held a brush since junior year.

ALYSSA

It's not like it would leave you, love.

DIRK

It's just not an option, I'm afraid.

ALYSSA

Such a sad world we live in, that art is not of equal value.

DIRK

This isn't really something involving art.

He types more. Alyssa gets bored and forces him off as she stands up and walks over to his bed. He sighs heavily and can't bring himself to type any more.

DIRK

I need a soda or something. I'll be back.

Alyssa waves as he leaves upstage. After he leaves, Alyssa heads to his computer and types in a hurried manner. As she finishes a particularly good sentence, Aaron walks in from the audience, turns, and walks into the room from the stage right door. Their eyes meet.

Aaron is well-dressed and moves in a precise manner- the only thing not suitable to his demeanor is the ratty sneakers on his feet, taking the place of what should be normal dress shoes.

AARON

Oh, you are already here.

Alyssa sticks her tongue out at him and begrudgedly allows him to have the computer.

AARON

Excellent.

He stares at the screen for a moment, reading what she has typed. He sneers in disgust.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

These lines do little more than stretch out the four basic words they actually require.

ALYSSA

Typical of you, Aaron. You never are any fun.

AARON

Dear Alyssa, your energies are wasted so fruitlessly on things that deserve them not.

ALYSSA

I could spend them squeezing the fun out of the cloth of the Earth, like someone I know.

AARON

Whatever you say. I have work to do.

Dirk finally re-enters to find Aaron typing up his paper, a soda in hand.

DIRK

Another? I'm pretty sure I locked the door...

AARON

Ah, Dirk. Mere locks cannot keep me out of here, I'm afraid. Your performance warranted my arrival.

Alyssa hisses at Aaron and clings to Dirk. Aaron stands and points at the chair, staring at Dirk.

AARON

You should be ashamed. Now sit down. You have only three hours to perfect seven more pages.

Dirk sits down again. Alyssa sadly flops down on his bed as Aaron leans over his shoulder.

DIRK

I don't remember writing this page.

ALYSSA

It was all you, love.

DIRK

It resembles my usual structure, yes. Well, whatever. I think I can stretch this topic-

AARON

No stretching. You will research topics in their entirety.

DIRK

I'm a bit short on time, here, stranger.

AARON

Why are you not typing?

DIRK

We were having a conversation. I didn't want to spoil the rhythm.

AARON

Get to it.

Dirk begrudgedly resumes typing. As he does so, Alex sashays out of the audience. She proceeds to walk into the scene and sits down in one of the folding chairs, lazily turning her head towards Dirk.

She is dressed in very seductive garb, looking like she's about to go on some sort of red-hot date, but her hair is messy and uncared for, and she lacks makeup of any sort.

AARON

That sentence is weak.

DIRK

It works well en...yeah, it sucks pretty hard. What's a good synonym for "whore-bag"?

ALEX

Your mom.

ALYSSA

Lady of the Night.

AARON

Is "Prostitute" applicable?

DIRK

Not quite. I'm pretty sure she wasn't paid for her services.

AARON

Hmm. A skank, perhaps?

DIRK

That doesn't necessarily refer to one who has sex on command.

(CONTINUED)

ALYSSA

The connotation is of that very thing, however, darling.

DIRK

You've a point. It'll do.

Alex stands up and pushes Aaron out of the way, hovering over Dirk's shoulder.

ALEX

You probably aren't going to finish this in time.

DIRK

I have lots of time! I'm on page four already!

(beat)

But you're right. Maybe I should just get some sleep and turn it in late.

ALEX

She doesn't accept late papers.

DIRK

She doesn't. I'll have to give her everything I can write.

ALEX

You hate getting B's.

DIRK

My standards are kind of unrealistic.

ALEX

When they exist at all.

Dirk stops typing and turns around, startled to find that yet another person has entered his room unannounced.

DIRK

Incredible! With each page, another intruder! Would this one give me the honor of knowing her name, or should I just start assigning them?

ALEX

Alex. It's the same name as that girl who took your virginity. And, coincidentally, the guy who did the same, albeit from a different angle.

DIRK

I was drunk!

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

You liked it.

DIRK

A little. It was the vodka.

ALEX

It was his voice.
(beat)

ALYSSA

It was a nice voice!

DIRK

Yeah! Wait, what?

AARON

You are not typing.

DIRK

Point.

Dirk resumes typing. Alyssa moves in and creates distance between Alex and Dirk. Aaron steps over to the bed and begins undressing for the night.

ALEX

She made you lose sleep for two weeks. You bombed a test because of her.

DIRK

There were other factors, alright?

ALEX

There weren't.
(beat)

DIRK

There weren't.

ALYSSA

At least it lead you to create that wondrous blog entry.

DIRK

I did get a lot of Kudos for it. That's real writing, after all- not this stiff academic stuff. Real writing's not so bad.

ALEX

You're afraid to learn more about it. You're afraid you might like it too much.

(CONTINUED)

DIRK

I have to graduate on time!

ALEX

You aren't a real Accounting major.

DIRK

It'll pay the bills.

ALEX

It'll kill your soul.

Dirk finally loses it.

DIRK

What the hell do you expect?!

ALL FOUR

This a world where the soulless jobs are the ones with salaries!

(beat)

Dirk leaves the desk and sits in the floor downstage. Alyssa moves in to comfort him as Alex stands behind him and Aaron makes himself comfortable in his bed.

ALEX

Your penis is five point three inches long. You always round up so you can say you aren't below average.

DIRK

It's been years since I measured that!

ALEX

It hasn't gotten any bigger.
(beat)

ALYSSA, AARON & DIRK

I know.

ALEX

She knew.

DIRK

There's no way!

ALEX

But you're still afraid.

DIRK

...Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

You're tired. You need sleep.

AARON

You aren't done yet.

ALYSSA

You must press forward!

DIRK

I hear too many voices; both inside and out.

Dirk moves to take a couple of the caffeine pills on his desk, then resumes typing.

Alyssa pulls up a second chair and leans on him. Alex moves to the bed and sits on top of Aaron.
(beat)

A voice is heard from the audience.

ALBERT

Thou art giving up already?!

Albert storms in from the audience. He's dressed in pajamas, with a large cape trailing behind him and a sword on one side. Alyssa is overjoyed and clings to him.

ALBERT

Thou hast overcome far worse than this paltry trial! Stand tall, Dirk! This task is far below thy capabilities!

DIRK

This isn't the first time I've had to do this, after all.

ALBERT

That's the spirit! Now show him thy passion! Use thy words like a sword, and slaughter the knave without mercy!

DIRK

I have no other choice, do I?!

ALEX

You could resign yourself to being the small-dicked essence of sloth.

ALBERT

Shut thy wretched mouth, witch! Thou who seeks to crush his spirits deserves the gallows and little else!

(CONTINUED)

Alex stands and struts over to Albert. The two stare each other down for a moment before they simultaneously break off.

Dirk resumes typing as everyone else resettles and things calm down. Eventually, he hits a snag.

DIRK

Page five, somehow...I think I hear birds outside.

ALYSSA

You're half-done! That's enough to pass the class!

DIRK

Yeah! A low C, maybe.

AARON

That's despicable. You will finish this paper in its entirety.

ALBERT

Thou shalt leave this paper a bloody mess, as an example to thine enemies.

DIRK

Imagine how awesome I'd be if I finished one of the old crone's papers in a single night, and got a good grade in the process? I'd be some sort of hero!

ALBERT

Aye! Immortalized among thy peers 'till the stars themselves perish!

ALYSSA

But it's so boring.

ALEX

You'll never be a hero. You can't even get a date.

Dirk deflates a little bit. He then begins to swell with a different emotion altogether, and stands to face Alex. Aaron, Alyssa, and Albert back off, leaving Alex and Dirk locked in conflict.

DIRK

Do you gain some sick pleasure from this?

ALEX

None. I'm just telling the truth.

DIRK

Tell you what. Why don't you take your Truth, and the two of you go off and play Hide and Go Fuck Yourselves? I'm doing poorly enough- what is your lousy pessimism going to fucking accomplish?!

ALEX

To keep you informed of your limits-

DIRK

Fuck your limits! You might not believe in me, but I'll be damned if I'm going to be stopped by you or anyone else!

Alex is stunned into silence. Alyssa and Albert are inspired immediately and move to pat Dirk on the back.

ALEX

If you cannot accept your self, you will lose it. If you do not care about your limits, then you will overextend yourself, leading to the destruction of everything you hold dear.

ALBERT

With Courage, there are no limits!

ALYSSA

Art is entirely about breaking the limits of the soul!

AARON

The paper is due in two hours.

Everyone stops. Dirk is hit by a wave of exhaustion and plops back down into the desk. There is a knock. Dirk waves at Albert to get it, and Albert opens the door to reveal Boris, carrying some take-out. Everyone except Dirk and Boris isolates themselves to corners of the room, as Dirk turns his chair to face him. Boris doesn't pay any attention to the rest of the people in the room.

DIRK

Morning, Boris!

BORIS

M...morning, Dirk. How did it go?

DIRK

It's still going, friend! Top of page six and counting!

BORIS

Class is in two hours, man.

DIRK

I'm not worried! I'm more than capable of finishing this lame little assignment.

BORIS

You do realize it's half our grade, right?

DIRK

I've been doing well. I'm not worried.

BORIS

Dirk, you've failed every test in the class.

DIRK

High 'F's! High!

BORIS

You need to do amazingly on the paper to pass at all.

DIRK

I'm trying my best!

ALBERT

There is no try!

DIRK

I'm doing my best! No, better! I'll rock her face right off with this paper!

BORIS

Good luck, man. Here, I brought you some breakfast.

DIRK

You're a true friend, Boris.

ALBERT

A knight is nothing without his squire, after all.

DIRK

Yeah.

BORIS

Yeah?

DIRK

A knight is nothing without his squire.

BORIS

Oh. Right, sure. I'm going to let you finish up. Good luck, Dirk- I think you're going to need it.

(CONTINUED)

Boris turns and leaves. As he closes the door, everyone else in the room begins to come back together. Alex and Alyssa both make it to the food and begin angrily sharing it, Boris having left only one fork in the box.

DIRK

Five pages...

Alyssa pipes up with a mouthful of food.

ALYSSA

Three!

DIRK

How is it three?

ALYSSA

Title page and Works Cited count!

AARON

I think she meant ten pages of genuine material.

ALBERT

Indeed. That idea is quite underhanded.

ALEX

She'd never let you get off with that.

DIRK

She never said one way or the other.

ALBERT

You need no handicap! Five pages or fifteen, it matters not!

ALYSSA

It lacks creativity; what does it matter? Just finish it.

ALEX

It makes her have to read through less of your drech. She'll be grateful.

Dirk resumes typing, a bit more frantic than before.

DIRK

What's the point of this, anyway? She'll get a load of shitty papers and we won't gain anything from it. I'm not a History major! I don't need this for anything!

ALEX

You ARE an accounting major, and you certainly don't try any harder there.

DIRK

That's because it's too easy. It's not worthy of effort.

ALBERT

Why take upon ye a task that neither benefits others nor betters thyself?

DIRK

Like I said, it'll pay the bills.

ALYSSA

It hurts me so to hear such a statement from such a lovely mind.

AARON

You are being realistic.

ALEX

You hate it.

DIRK

I'm working on a paper, here. Philosophical whatsits can come later.

ALEX

Philosophy is all you have. Your personal philosophy demands you do things you don't give a damn about. Your ideal philosophy ignores this and focuses on the things you want to care about, and leaves you in a situation in which you hold yourself back and fail to reach anything resembling your actual potential.

DIRK

You're fucking infuriating. You know that, right?

ALEX

I'm still speaking only truth, Dirk.

ALYSSA

It may be, but what use is it?! There is no goal along such a path- it can only lead to destruction!

ALEX

Little girl. You wouldn't understand- it's about knowing yourself, and your limits. It's about Dirk realizing who he actually is and acting accordingly.

ALYSSA

I am the eldest of all of us, you...you...!

ALEX

And the least learned. You know even less than he, prancing around and begging desperately for attention, all encased in the guise of 'art'. What nourishes you?

ALYSSA

Appreciation!

ALEX

Incorrect. It's pain. You want people to notice how miserable and lonely you are. You drape a painting, or a poem, or a performance around it, but you want little more than to be told that it's all okay and that you're better than anything they can throw at you.

DIRK

Lay off-

ALEX

REGARDLESS of how true it is! You're naive and stupid! You need people to take care of you to even make it day to day!

Alyssa is almost in tears. Dirk stands in front of her in a protective fashion and she clings hopelessly. Aaron and Albert back off, creating a kind of ring for the three of them.

ALEX

See? You depend upon him now, to feed your insatiable appetite for comfort!

DIRK

Who the hell do you think you are?!

AARON

You have stopped typi-

DIRK

Fuck the paper! I'd much rather end this bitch!

ALEX

You fly to her defense, of course. But what can you actually do?

Dirk holds a hand towards Albert. Albert hands him his sword.

DIRK

I can be rid of you.

Alex opens herself wide. Dirk charges forward for a massive swing, but stops before he hits her. He holds for a second as he realizes he can't do it.

DIRK

J...Just leave! Won't you?

ALEX

I won't.

DIRK

What do you gain by staying here, tormenting me like this?

ALEX

It's about what you gain.

DIRK

A stress headache and an ulcer?!

ALEX

Understanding. Have I lied to you?
(beat)

ALEX

Exactly. Now stop reacting mindlessly and listen to what I have to say.

DIRK

I know exactly what you have to say! I'm the wrong major! I gave up painting because it wouldn't make me any money, due to lacking confidence in my own ability! My idea was always that I would simply work during the day, mostly on auto-pilot, then come home and be my actual self for the rest of the time.

(beat)

Of course that won't do, because human beings don't work that way! Eventually my work will destroy my spirit to the point that I don't want to do anything at all, my creativity will evaporate entirely, and I'll be left a pathetic stump of a man, sitting on my couch watching whatever shit the networks are broadcasting at that point; basically turning me from someone with potential to the ultimate stereotype of the American salaryman! I know that!

(beat)

But tell me, Alex. What should I do about it? Should I forgo financial success entirely, drop out of school, and starve to death trying to sell my shitty paintings? Or, better yet, maybe I should just coast a little bit

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DIRK (cont'd)

more on my parents' success, move back home, forget ever being anything besides a dependent, because I'm not happy with the world of work? There are no good options, here! That's not the world I live in! No, the world I live in demands I have a job, and that I make everything else lower priority. Being unemployed is worse than being uncreative. It's worse than being stupid, even. What the hell can I do about it?!

(beat)

(beat)

ALBERT

Thou must fight! Thou can see the injustice in the world! Thus, lift thy spirits high and crush all who might oppose thee! That is the key to victory!

AARON

You must balance your work and personal life, so that one does not rule over the other.

ALYSSA

You have to fix the world! Make it accept artists as legitimate!

ALEX

You can't fix the world. The world is unforgiving, and would crush you like a bug.

ALBERT

Thou mustn't let it! Thou must do battle with any world that would dare to threaten ye!

ALYSSA

How could this world be so wrought with cruelty and injustice?

AARON

Simply keep a level head. Move through life and maintain some stoicism- then you need not fear the world, nor its inhabitants.

ALEX

Human beings can't be truly stoic about anything. Repression will do little to aid you, nor will lamenting the state of the world or simply trying to combat your own depression with mindless enthusiasm.

DIRK

What, then?

ALEX

Accept what you are. Accept the world for what it is.
Do what must be done so that the two of you can get
along.

(beat)

DIRK

It's all just thought. Theory at best, conjecture at
worst. None of this will help me; none of it has
affected me on a personal level, in fact. Even if I end
the day with some great new philosophy on life, it
won't mean a damn thing because it's just that- a
philosophy. What action can I take to even hope to
achieve any of the ideals we're discussing?

No one replies. Alex begins to chuckle.

ALEX

I think you finally get it.

AARON

It would seem so.

ALBERT

Another trial, handily defeated. Bravo!

ALYSSA

We have finished already, then...

DIRK

I'm more confused than I've ever been! How have I
figured out anything?

ALEX

Action, Dirk. That's the key.

DIRK

Action...

AARON

It is almost scientific. Action begets reaction...

ALBERT

Reaction bolsters action!

ALYSSA

Thus making new action come into being.

ALEX

Thought has little to do with such things, until you
make use of it.

(CONTINUED)

DIRK

I can't change the world...

ALEX

You don't have to.

Alyssa, Aaron, Alex, and Albert all begin to leave, gathering any items they have misplaced. Alyssa then grabs Dirk and kisses him.

ALYSSA

Please, Dirk. Start painting again.

DIRK

I...I will.

Alyssa walks out through the front of the room and into the audience.

Aaron moves in and shakes Dirk's hand.

AARON

Keep a level-head, Dirk. It will make things far easier.

DIRK

I'll do my best.

Aaron nods and steps out through the bathroom before turning and heading into the audience.

Albert, after recovering and sheathing his sword, approaches and gives Dirk a hearty slap on the back.

ALBERT

Strength, Dirk! Thou hast more than most! Make use of it.

DIRK

I'm not really sure how...

ALBERT

In time, Dirk! In time!

Albert, with a flourish of his cape, steps out from the front of the room and into the audience.

Alex slowly steps Dirk, chuckling softly to herself.

DIRK

You have to be the single least pleasant person I've ever met.

(beat)

DIRK

Thank you.

Alex is about to leave without a word when Dirk seizes and kisses her. Neither of them enjoy it very much, but the gesture was made. She exits the same way she came in.

Once they're all gone, Dirk turns to face the computer. Knowing what he must do, he sits down and begins typing.

Page 10

A classroom with an open door upstage. An older woman, Brenda Henderson, stands in front of several desks containing students. One of them is Boris.

BRENDA

Well, that's that. Class starts...now. Pass your term papers up to the front, then.

BORIS

Uh, professor! Dirk is running a bit late, but he should be here...

BRENDA

He should have been here early, considering his track record.

BORIS

That's...probably true, but...can't you cut him a little slack?

BRENDA

No exceptions.

Two students turn to Boris.

STUDENT A

He's really done it this time, huh?

BORIS

I'm getting worried.

(CONTINUED)

STUDENT B

Seems like he finally bit off more than he can chew.

BORIS

Never thought I'd see the day.

DIRK (OFF)

What day, Boris?

Dirk bursts in through the open door, clutching a 10 page paper. Brenda sighs and holds out a hand, in which Dirk places the paper. She begins reading it, mostly out of curiosity. Dirk seems unwilling to take his seat.

BORIS

Dirk...how did you...?

DIRK

I told you, Boris. I'm far more capable than you think.

BRENDA

Mr. Magnusson...this topic is simply terrible, you cited things incorrectly, there are numerous spelling errors, your style seems to change from sentence to sentence...I can't give you a passing grade on this. Did you do all of this last night?

DIRK

Giving me a passing grade on that would be an insult to real students like Boris, here. The piece of shit you're holding there is the combined result of laziness and unrealistic personal standards.

BRENDA

Yet you still have the gall to turn it in?

DIRK

It's an honest example of how I feel about this class. That makes it the first true thing I've ever given to you.

BRENDA

I'm sorry you feel that way, Mr. Magnusson. You of course realize that without this paper, you'll fail my class?

DIRK

Well aware. I deserve nothing less.

BRENDA

Why do you seem so pleased with yourself, Mr. Magnusson?

DIRK

Because, my lady, in doing your stupid assignment, I found out something very important. We can't change the world, not directly.

BRENDA

What does that have to do with-

DIRK

But we can change ourselves. By bettering myself, I intend to better the world. If you can get out of your own head for a minute, it might be something worth thinking about.

Dirk bows to Brenda and leaves. The class sits in awkward silence, mystified.

STUDENT A

He just failed the class. He couldn't look happier.

STUDENT B

He's lost it. Finally.

BORIS

No, not quite. The thing he's always been looking for? I think he's finally found it.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY