

ALL THAT WE ARE

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EXT. ROGERS BUILDING - DAY

As students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are walking in front of, toward and away from the building, HARRY and BRYAN are sitting on the grass near the Stratton Student Center, across from the building.

HARRY  
I'm still not convinced.

BRYAN  
Well I can't see how you cannot see it when it is obviously there.

HARRY  
Obviously there? The only thing obvious is that the Star Wars prequels are the worst thing ever made.

BRYAN  
Oh really? Are you still going to hold up the original ones as some great masterpiece? Even Lucas doesn't think highly of their look and thinks they're too simple.

HARRY  
I really don't want my space cinema to be complicated. If I wanted that, I would stick with 2001. Thank you very much. Also there has to be more to it than just neat visual shit.

BRYAN  
But there is more in the prequels. The Star Wars universe is much broader and wider now.

HARRY  
Sometimes I'm better off not knowing everything. Yet I also seem to know very little because they don't really bother to clarify any of it.

BRYAN  
So you wanted Lucas to take you by the hand and tell you everything that's going on?

HARRY

No. But there should at least be some logic behind the actions instead of just random shit that happens either for no reason at all or for dubious ones.

BRYAN

Why do you keep saying there's no logic in the prequels? Events do connect. Characters have a purpose. It's not like everything happens at random.

HARRY

Yes it's random. All the examples you keep using demonstrate only circular logic. It may "work" within the film but that still doesn't make it logical.

(interrupts Bryan)  
And if you say "will of the Force" one more time, I'm going to go into your room, overcook something in the microwave and start a fire.

BRYAN

My, my. What's with the ad hominem here? And with the violent overtones too?

At this point, THOMAS with a briefcase in hand walks by them and notices their conversation. He stops to listen.

HARRY

I'm just tired of having an immaterial entity - now understood as mere microscopic organisms - justifying every single action in Star Wars. If that were the case, then why not have the little globules make better decisions? Like thwarting the whole Palpatine-Sith takeover of the Galactic Republic before it even could happen. The way the Force is used only seems to justify very sub-par writing.

BRYAN

But I don't know why you are still hostile to the prequels. Can't we just conclude that they are each good in their own way?

HARRY

No I can't. The originals are better than the prequels. And it shouldn't even be in dispute. It's an established scientific fact.

THOMAS

Ah, excuse me? But what are you two talking about here?

BRYAN

This wanna-be psycho-killer wants to convince me that the Star Wars prequel trilogy is total garbage and that it shouldn't have ever been made.

HARRY

It's pretty obvious.

BRYAN

No it's not.

THOMAS

So you?

HARRY

Harry.

THOMAS

So Harry, you are trying to assert and prove scientifically the superiority of one work over another?

HARRY

Why do I have to prove it? Isn't that even already self-evident?

THOMAS

I'm sorry my friend. In order to prove something scientifically, it has to conclude either as true or false. You can't in this situation. Even if you can spend anywhere from ninety minutes to ninety hours "proving your point." And if you are willing to spend that much time talking about Star Wars, then you really have no life.

HARRY

So you are agreeing with this fucker here?

THOMAS

I will give you this much. I couldn't stand the prequels either. I'm just not going to waste my time trying to prove something that's true or false when I can't. But don't worry. I would think it's more of a waste of time trying to prove that the prequels are worth my attention.

(looks at Bryan)

Again.

(looks back at Harry)

And if you want further convincing on how futile it ultimately is to debate about a work of space fantasy, just walk several blocks in either direction along Mass Ave and ask anyone who doesn't look like they go here if they really give a shit about Star Wars.

(nods)

Good day.

Thomas leaves. Harry and Bryan look at each other and then at the departing Thomas.

HARRY

I told you they sucked.

Thomas crosses Massachusetts Avenue and enters the Rogers Building.

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Students are in their seats. Some are talking amongst themselves and others are looking at notes and books. When Thomas walks down the stairs with his briefcase in hand, they all take notice and start to stop their activity to face him. He sets his briefcase down on the table and looks at the students.

THOMAS

OK class. Today, we finally leave behind the Middle Ages, which I'm sure will make you all happy. After all, you don't want to linger anymore with intense tortures by committee and backward thinking by the masses, all indicating a slavish and unquestioning devotion to God.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Especially now that we have our modern and progressive way of thinking about things. We actually think and analyze and challenge even the most established set of conventions and most well-known of paradigms. The man who's responsible for initiating this brave new world of thinking.

He walks to the board, writes "RENE DESCARTES" and then turns to face the students again.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Rene Descartes. Born 1596. Died 1650.

CUT TO:

INT. COLLÈGE ROYAL HENRY-LE-GRAND - CLASSROOM - DAY (PAST)

A young DESCARTES, shortly after he entered the Collège Royal Henry-le-Grand [now the Prytanée National Militaire] in 1607, sits at a desk with paper and listens to a lesson on mathematics.

THOMAS (V.O.)

He was someone who loved his studies over at some Jesuit school in La Flèche. But he especially loved mathematics. Why?

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

THOMAS

Actually he can tell you why. And I quote:

(reads from Discourse)  
"Because of its certainty and the incontrovertibility of its proofs."  
Whatever that means.

(looks up)  
Apparently he also liked to sleep in so he could think about problems. Typical college slacker.

(a beat)  
Actually that's giving too much credit to slackers for actually thinking about anything other than more sleep. But I digress.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

So after his studies, he decides to "see the world." And he does this by joining the military. Of course I don't know how the hell the military could ever accept a late sleeper. Different expectations I guess. At any rate.

CUT TO:

INT. NEUBERG ARMY QUARTERS - STOVE ROOM - DAY (PAST)

Descartes, 23, sits in the room, lost in thought.

THOMAS (V.O.)

It was one day while "inside a stove" - whatever the hell that means - on November 10, 1619 where he first discovered his method after some intense and probably very trippy dreams.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

THOMAS

Now if I really want to be snarky here, I would say he came up with a new method for jerking off. But I'm in a good mood today. The method is something he will explain in general in A Discourse on the Method . . .

(holds up the book)

. . . And then he would elaborate his findings further in Meditations on First Philosophy.

(holds up the book)

After his little army stint, he settled in Paris, found it too distracting and then moved to Holland. It was there he wrote all of his major works, including the aforementioned Discourse and Meditations.

CUT TO:

## INT. STOCKHOLM ROYAL COURT - DAY (PAST)

Descartes, now 53, meets with CHRISTINA, Queen of Sweden in the dark hours of an early winter morning. They, along with Johan FREINSHEIM discuss philosophy as they walk toward the castle's library.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Finally in 1649, he's invited by Christina, Queen of Sweden, to be an exclusive teacher of philosophy and perhaps the "method" too. Again if I weren't nice here, I would say she needed some help getting herself off. But I won't.

## INT. CHAUNT RESIDENCE - DESCARTES'S BEDROOM - DAY (PAST)

Descartes - who is staying with Chaunt, the French ambassador to Sweden - coughs violently in bed.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Unfortunately for Descartes, her early morning sessions and the Swedish winter was too much for him. And thus, he dies of pneumonia the next February.

CUT TO:

## INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Throughout the lecture, the students write notes. Some are shocked by his crass and rude delivery. Some smile and try to hold back some laughter. And others try not to respond and just take notes. Thomas continues to speak.

THOMAS

So that's Descartes' life in a nutshell. But I'm sure if you want to know more about him - and maybe about his sex life too - you know where to find it.

(a beat)

Now to his philosophy. Or his "method" if you will. While we will discuss his Discourse and Meditations later in more depth, I'll give you fine little people a general overview.

(a beat)

I will say this about Descartes.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

He at least tells us exactly how he went about being wrong. And also to the bastard's credit, Descartes does show some measure of humility. I quote:

(reads from Discourse)

"It is, however possible that I am wrong, and that I am mistaking bits of copper and glass for gold and diamonds."

(looks up)

Of course if I were his publisher, I would replace "copper and glass" with something else. That way you get shock and honesty. The former is great for sales. But that's just me. So what does he do?

CUT TO:

INT. BLANK PAGE - DAY (THOUGHT)

Simple line drawings illustrate the main points.

THOMAS (V.O.)

His first step is to be a complete skeptic. Just assume outright that everything he was ever taught and everything he ever knew to be utterly false and deceiving. And then he proceeds to rebuild an entire epistemology using as a basis a simple set of rules.

Actually, there's four. First, accept nothing as true unless it is what we would call "clear and distinct." Second, take the problem and divide it into smaller and easily solvable problems for analysis. Third, order your thoughts from simple to complex. And fourth, review everything until nothing is left out and then synthesize the findings.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

THOMAS

So he now has his method of self mental love.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And what does he find out first?  
Well you should know this being the  
smart, perceptive and insightful  
apple-polishers that you are.

(writes on the board)

"Je pense, donc je suis." Or if  
that went over your pointy little  
heads, here's another rendering.

(writes on the board)

"Cogito, ergo sum." I fucking  
think, therefore I fucking am.  
That's the basis of his entire  
philosophy. This clear and  
distinct idea, according to him and  
his method, that as he's actively  
thinking, it affirms his existence  
as a thinking entity.

CUT TO:

INT. BLANK PAGE - DAY (THOUGHT)

Simple line drawings illustrate the main points.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And so, with this solid and single  
point foundation, he builds upon it  
other ideas. He proves God exists  
because 1) He's benevolent and not  
into the game of fucking with  
people's perceptions willy-nilly  
and 2) existence has causes and the  
best cause for all of existence is  
God. He also looks at the natural  
world and all of its wonder and  
even gets into friendly debates  
over the circulation of blood. And  
thus from Descartes' spillings onto  
the parchment is born modern  
philosophy.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Thomas sits down on the table.

THOMAS

As we are going to elaborate  
further in subsequent classes,  
there are a few problems that  
arise.

(MORE)

## THOMAS (CONT'D)

For starters, if you are going to be outright skeptical, why not go the whole nine yards? For an example. It seems to the believer in a kind of mega-skepticism that he should have abandoned the God notion altogether and not even try to evoke His name. After all, this brown-nosing with the divine didn't necessarily help his writings gain immediate acceptance or credence. The Catholic Church would later put his works on that dreaded Index of theirs and the Protestant-appropriated University of Utrecht would condemn his philosophy. So if both Western Christian camps - who disliked each other greatly at the time - are going to give you the finger, what's the point of even bringing God into it? Then there's Descartes' preoccupation with mind and body and thus spawns what we now call "Cartesian dualism." This notion of a separate and parallel mind and body with no intersection whatsoever ruined generations of simple, cheerful and perhaps violent childhoods. And it continues to do so. And we are now left figuring out if Descartes is right. And if he is, how exactly do the two come together? And finally, his initial skepticism doesn't yield the same conclusions Descartes reached. You could argue that later on Hume - who was a bigger skeptic and therefore an even bigger asshole than Descartes was - took skepticism to its logical conclusion.

(chuckles sarcastically)

And his conclusion resulted not in some rationalist-based idea, a la the Cogito, but a complete rejection of anything rationalist which then leads to accepting empiricism. And even that was not good enough for Hume.

(looks at his watch)

So in conclusion, Descartes tries to remake a vision of the world in his own image.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But instead of the rest of the world embracing it whole-heartedly, we would end up spending the next nearly four centuries either loving him or downright loathing him.

Welcome to modern philosophy folks.

(sighs)

My little kingdom here for a fucking drink. That's all.

The students get up.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Be sure to start reading that fucking Discourse for next time.

The students leave as Thomas looks at the exiting crowd. KAY gets up and walks timidly to him.

KAY

Excuse me? But can I talk with you?

THOMAS

Walk with me to my office.

He grabs his books, puts them into his briefcase, grabs it and gets off the table. She follows him up the stairs and out the door.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

Thomas and Kay walk into his office. The lights turn on automatically to reveal a very frugal room: devoid of books and decorations and having only the office essentials like a computer, pen/pencil holder, paper inbox, a lamp and a few other little items. He sits at his desk while she sits on the chair facing his desk.

THOMAS

So what do you want to talk about?

KAY

It's about my performance.

THOMAS

Your performance seems OK. Let's see here.

He pulls up a program containing his students' grades.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
C average.

KAY  
I think I can do better.

THOMAS  
You mean you want an A.

KAY  
That's not it.

THOMAS  
Of course it is. You're probably someone who was valedictorian at your school because your parents had access to prominent attorneys and therefore could make it happen. Now you want high marks across the board. Thus you come to me to see how you can get it.

KAY  
That's not it at all. How dare you accuse me of procuring a higher grade through some kind of coercion.

THOMAS  
Fine. I take it back. But I don't know what you want to discuss here. You do what you do for class and it's sufficient. But if you want a higher mark, do better.

KAY  
How?

THOMAS  
Just do better. Go deeper.

She sighs in discouragement and he looks on coldly.

KAY  
Sorry to have wasted your time.

She gets up and leaves. He looks on and then turns to his computer.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Thomas looks through the shelves at the second floor east mezzanine, where the philosophy books are.

Then he walks down the stairs out of the mezzanine and toward the main stairs.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Thomas walks out of the stairs and through the first floor toward the service desk. He then stops at the new books section and sees SOPHIA sitting in front of one of the computers at the service desk. Near her is a chess board with pieces set mid-game. She looks at the computer and sometimes at the board. Eventually, someone approaches the desk for an inquiry and she answers, appropriately and politely. Thomas continues to observe her from a distance. Afterward he walks toward the main entrance.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas enters his house, puts his keys into his pocket and walks toward the kitchen. He throws his briefcase onto the couch as he passes by it.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Thomas quietly sorts through his mail and throws away various unsolicited pieces. He then gets out a glass from the cabinet and fills it with water. He drinks it down at once, places the glass in the sink and walks out of the kitchen.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas stands in front of his bookshelf and looks at his books. He then pulls out a book and walks over to the couch. He collapses onto the couch, lying on his back with feet resting on the arm and his head propped up by a pillow. He leafs through the book and starts reading.

Later on, he lies on the couch on his side while watching a television program with half-awake eyes. After a few moments, he suddenly hyperventilates and screams in short bursts. He sits up and calms down gradually. He then looks around the room, turns off the television and gets up off the couch.

Later on, he sits in front of a chess board in starting position. He leans back and sighs aloud.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

The next day, Thomas sits at his desk and looks at the computer screen. Suddenly he hears a knock and turns to see ROBERT standing at the door.

ROBERT

Hey there.

THOMAS

Hey.

ROBERT

Do you have a minute?

Thomas gestures and Robert enters to sit. Thomas turns to face him directly and undistractedly.

THOMAS

So Robert. What shall we ponder together?

ROBERT

Cut the sarcasm for just a moment Thomas.

(a beat)

How often do we have to discuss your . . .

(ponders)

. . . Teaching style?

THOMAS

What about it? It's not like I brutalize them physically or anything.

ROBERT

OK. So you don't resort to wielding a mace wildly at them or anything. But you do insult them.

THOMAS

How?

ROBERT

You've called them slackers, layabouts, underachieving overachievers, dunces, idiots, ninnies, twits, simpletons, imbeciles and morons. And this is only what you've said this semester.

THOMAS

I have a crass approach. So what? I would think that it would be popular for a student body who gets their news from people who like to make a joke of it.

ROBERT

There's a difference between using humor, even the crass kind, and outright berating your students.

THOMAS

And I take it there's more.

ROBERT

Oh yeah. The Chair gets complaints about you every year. Historically your course evaluations are the least favorable not only within the Department but of the whole university. You've not been a significant mentor to anyone since you've been here. The first and last time you sat on a thesis board was three years ago and only when you were forced to do so. In the end, it was a nightmare. And while you do produce some provocative and engaging writing every now and then, you've not made any real significant impact here.

THOMAS

So what's your point?

ROBERT

You are treading on thin ice. Isn't that even obvious to you?

THOMAS

Maybe. But why bring this up and ruin my day? Why can't the Chair come by to tell me all this?

ROBERT

First off, you are the kind of guy who doesn't need anyone to ruin his day. And second, the Chair is both too frustrated and too afraid to deal with you even through e-mail, much less to your face.

THOMAS  
So why this concern on your part?

ROBERT  
Because - for better and for worse - I'm your friend. And the only one it seems. You were the only one who supported me from the beginning. Granted what I myself did didn't exactly win a lot of friends. But that's a story I don't care to retell. Basically I don't want to see you get dismissed from here. In spite of yourself, you have an engaging mind, a rarity these days it seems in academia. Even though you seem to hate your subject, you do so with a passion.

THOMAS  
I don't hate philosophy.

ROBERT  
Maybe. But you don't seem to give it much praise either.

THOMAS  
Is that all?

ROBERT  
Yes.

Robert gets up and starts to leave. He then stops at the door and turns to face him.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
You know. I suspect that somewhere inside that snarky and vindictive shell of yours, you're really some kind of a romantic. Perhaps even a sentimentalist.

THOMAS  
Got proof?

ROBERT  
Forget it.

Robert leaves and Thomas looks on before he resumes his work on his computer.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Sophia sits at the service desk in front of the computer. Thomas approaches the desk with an index card in hand.

THOMAS  
Excuse me?

She looks up.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
But I have a interlibrary loan  
request to make.

She takes the card from his hand and looks at it.

SOPHIA  
Not a problem sir.

THOMAS  
Thanks.

He notices the chess board near her with all the pieces in starting position. She notices him looking at it.

SOPHIA  
You play?

THOMAS  
A fair amount.

She stands up and places the board on the desk's ledge with the white facing him and black facing her.

SOPHIA  
Show me.

They play the following: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.c3 f5 4.Bc4 Nf6 5.d4 fxe4 6.dxe5 exf3 7.exf6 Qxf6 8.gxf3 Nc6 9.f4 Bd7 10.Be3 0-0-0 11.Nd2 Re8 12.Qf3 Bf5 13.0-0-0? d5! 14.Bxd5? Qxc3+ 15.bxc3 Ba3#

THOMAS  
Well played. Thank you.

He walks away and she looks at him leave. She then sits down and resets the board.

INT. MICHELLE'S CONDOMINIUM - DAY

Sophia looks at the chess board sitting on the couch in the middle of play. MICHELLE then enters with a briefcase in hand and sees Sophia.

MICHELLE  
Nose to the old grindstone eh?

SOPHIA  
Nice to see you too sis.

Michelle sets the briefcase down next to the couch and she collapses onto a nearby plush chair.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Rough day?

MICHELLE  
I'm just exhausted.

SOPHIA  
Is it that trial?

MICHELLE  
Yeah. That never-ending drama bullshit. Leave it to the glorious Commonwealth to prolong it.

SOPHIA  
Must be a new way to guarantee employment.

MICHELLE  
(smiles)  
Must be.

Michelle's phone vibrates and she answers.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
Yes?  
(a beat)  
I just got home and you want me back over there?  
(disconnects the call)  
Son of a bitch!

SOPHIA  
Shall I save you a plate then?

MICHELLE  
Only if you want to.  
(gets up - sighs)  
This is so ridiculous.  
(starts to leave)  
See you whenever.

SOPHIA  
(playful)  
Don't have too much fun.

Michelle gives Sophia a strong raspberry followed by a smile and walks out. Sophia looks at the door, then at the board and finally lies back onto the couch with her eyes closed.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Sophia sits at the service desk. Thomas approaches the desk and Sophia eventually looks up to see him.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry but your book hasn't arrived yet.

THOMAS

No worries.

SOPHIA

So is there anything else I can do for you?

THOMAS

Where's the chess board?

SOPHIA

(looks around her)

Oh. It's here. I just don't feel like having it out today.

THOMAS

I was wondering. Since we played a short game.

SOPHIA

And an established one.

THOMAS

Right. Do you want to play a real game later on today?

SOPHIA

That's a bold move for a professor.

THOMAS

Only to those who can play chess.

SOPHIA

(looks at her watch)

I get off in a couple of hours. Do you want to meet at the pub?

THOMAS

You mean Muddy Charles? Yeah I'll be there.

SOPHIA  
Alright then.

Thomas gestures a farewell and leaves. Sophia looks on and then resumes work on the computer.

INT. MUDDY CHARLES PUB - DAY

Sophia walks inside the pub with her chess board in hand and sees Thomas at one of the tables with his briefcase opposite of him. She walks to the table and when he sees her, he takes his briefcase aside.

SOPHIA  
Thanks for saving a spot.

THOMAS  
Sure.

SOPHIA  
You weren't waiting long were you?

THOMAS  
Not long.  
(a beat)  
And I'm sorry that I didn't catch  
your name earlier.

SOPHIA  
Sophia. Sophia Avery.

THOMAS  
Thomas Ritchard.

She unfolds the board and takes out two plastic bags with the pieces.

SOPHIA  
I know.  
(holds up the bags)  
Same as before?

THOMAS  
Sure.

She hands him the bag with the white pieces. They both open their bags and set up the pieces on their respective sides. When they are finished, she looks at him make the first move, which is his king's knight to f3.

SOPHIA  
Wow. We are wasting no time here.

She then moves a pawn to d5.

THOMAS  
You have a nice chess board.

He moves another pawn to g3.

SOPHIA  
Thanks.  
(moves e6)  
It gets the job done.

He moves his king's bishop to g2.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Though I admit I was picky about  
it.  
(moves Nf6)  
I didn't want it to look cheap or  
anything.

He castles kingside.

THOMAS  
But you didn't go for one of those  
display ones either.

SOPHIA  
Nope. But maybe someday.

She moves one of her pawns to c5. He then moves another pawn  
to d3.

THOMAS  
So how often do you play?

SOPHIA  
Well I go to a couple of different  
chess clubs.  
(moves Nc6)  
But it was only recently that I  
started to get into more  
competitive play.

He moves his queen's knight to d2.

THOMAS  
Do you know your ranking?

SOPHIA  
I haven't play enough games to get  
one.  
(moves Be7)  
(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
But it doesn't matter to me in the  
end. I just enjoy playing.

He moves another pawn to e4. She looks at him critically and  
he notices her look.

THOMAS  
What?

SOPHIA  
First off, I thought this was going  
to be a more leisurely game. Do  
you have to go somewhere?

THOMAS  
Not particularly.

SOPHIA  
And second, why this aggression on  
your part?

THOMAS  
(shrugs)  
It's how I like to play it.

SOPHIA  
Come now. There's more than one  
way to win a race, skin a cat and  
bring your opponent to mate.

THOMAS  
You don't like my style then?

SOPHIA  
I don't like that you are being  
aggressive and unoriginal.

THOMAS  
Why should it matter? There's only  
so many moves you can do.

SOPHIA  
Maybe. And maybe this is your  
approach to things. But I figured  
you were more . . . Nuanced.

THOMAS  
Nuanced?

SOPHIA  
You know. Playing the pieces.  
Utilizing the board. Not resorting  
to a single approach all the time.

THOMAS

I think we are going to have to agree to disagree.

SOPHIA

The height of arrogance.

THOMAS

So what you would have me do?

SOPHIA

Maybe broaden your horizons a bit. Or try something else.

She castles kingside.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

For I'm sure you know more openers besides the overtly aggressive ones.

He moves one of his pawns to e5.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Unless of course you are trying to be the next Bobby Fischer.

She moves her knight from f6 to d7.

THOMAS

Interesting idea.

He moves his king's rook to e1.

SOPHIA

Please. There was only one. We don't need to go searching for another one.

She moves another pawn to b5 and then he moves his knight from d2 to f1. She pauses and looks directly at him. He then looks up at her.

THOMAS

Now what?

SOPHIA

You really are a jerk.

THOMAS

I like to think I'm just blunt.

SOPHIA

Yeah. And a jackass. And don't think I don't know about your reputation here on campus.

THOMAS

Oh?

SOPHIA

Yes. The great Thomas Ritchard. Known to condemn and scourge basically any philosopher who has ever written anything.

THOMAS

How would you know that?

SOPHIA

You know where I work. I have to know where everything is. And in addition, I tend to be quite observant.

THOMAS

OK. So what do you know about me?

SOPHIA

Well. Let's see. And please step in to correct me. You've called the Pre-Socratics: "the old new priests." Socrates, Plato and Aristotle as "dumb, dumberer and retarded."

THOMAS

Hey. I've toned that one down.

SOPHIA

What? "The classical Three Stooges"?

THOMAS

How did you know?

SOPHIA

Call it powers of perception. Moving on. Augustine is God's #1 fanboy. Thomas Aquinas is an articulate killjoy. Rousseau is the father of navel-gazing. Kant is the king of the useless. Hegel is the first stoned philosopher. Marx is the godfather to politicians.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

James is a pragmatic lunatic.  
Wittgenstein is the modern sound  
and fury. Sartre is a model  
jackass. And Derrida is the post-  
modern sound and fury. That's all  
I can remember off hand.

He looks on indifferently.

THOMAS

And your point is?

SOPHIA

Doesn't it bother you in the least  
that you come off as this scathing  
man who uses his lectern to throw a  
tantrum?

THOMAS

You think I'm throwing a tantrum?  
A tantrum is just an outburst and  
not really defined by anything  
other than just to make a scene.

SOPHIA

OK. Fine. You don't throw a  
tantrum. But you still come off as  
a scathing jerk, no matter how  
great your intellectual acumen is.

THOMAS

Ah. So you agree with some of what  
I've said?

SOPHIA

Some. But not all.

THOMAS

And what exactly is your goal in  
bringing this up?

SOPHIA

None really. Though if I were to  
come up with one, it would be for  
you to maybe think more about what  
you are doing to other people.

THOMAS

Why should I care?

SOPHIA  
Are you serious? Are you even aware of how many students have been frustrated by your antics?

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - DAY (THOUGHT)

A series of students speak to an imaginary camera.

STUDENT 1  
I can't believe the nerve he has.

STUDENT 2  
All he does is rant about philosophers.

STUDENT 3  
I've never been so upset by a lecture.

STUDENT 4  
Is this guy really a professor?

CUT TO:

INT. MUDDY CHARLES PUB - DAY

SOPHIA  
And some of them even have some choice words for you.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - DAY (THOUGHT)

STUDENT 1  
Jerk-off.

STUDENT 2  
Asshole.

STUDENT 3  
Prick.

STUDENT 4  
Fucker.

CUT TO:

INT. MUDDY CHARLES PUB - DAY

Thomas looks on indifferently.

THOMAS  
OK.

SOPHIA  
So all of that doesn't bother you?

THOMAS  
Why should it?

SOPHIA  
Come on Professor. Do you know how  
childish you sounded just now?

He looks at the board.

THOMAS  
Shall we continue?

SOPHIA  
Yes.  
(looks at the board)  
But do me a favor. Think about  
what I've just said. Please.

He looks at her and then at the board.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

Thomas sits at his desk. After a few moments, Kay knocks at the door.

THOMAS  
Come in.

She enters and sits down. He looks up at her.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
What can I do for you?

KAY  
(a beat; timidly)  
I want to drop the class.

THOMAS  
Why come to me? There's nothing  
stopping you from doing so. And  
I'm not even involved with it in  
the end.

KAY  
Just being courteous.

THOMAS  
Not necessary. But it's  
appreciated. May I ask why?

KAY  
It seems like no matter how hard I  
try with this, I don't seem to get  
it. I don't know.

THOMAS  
You want an A.

KAY  
It's not that.  
(a beat)  
OK. It is. There. You're happy  
now? I just admitted to being a  
grade grubber.

THOMAS  
Only if you think you've admitted  
to being one.

KAY  
What do you mean? Is this another  
one of your sardonic responses?

THOMAS  
No. Listen Kay.  
(a beat)  
There's nothing you've done that  
indicates to me you are a grade  
grubber. You haven't begged for an  
A. And you haven't done anything  
unsavory to try to get it. Also  
being frustrated about an outcome  
is not the same as desiring an  
outcome by any means necessary.

KAY  
OK.

THOMAS  
Then what exactly is the problem?

KAY  
I don't know. I just want to say I  
can do this course. And I want to  
do it well.

THOMAS

You are doing fine. It's just mediocre. And I'm being objective here. If you want the higher marks, you have to do more than just give safe and surface answers. You have to go deeper in your thinking and in your analysis. That's what philosophers do.

KAY

But it is not even my major.

THOMAS

Alright. But say you are going to be an engineer. You have to be thorough with your ideas in order to produce something solid and sound.

KAY

Look at me. Do I look like I'm going to be an engineer?

THOMAS

So why are you here?

(a beat)

Never mind. Look. If you are looking for the secret to success, I just gave it to you. But if you want to dismiss this as the rantings of a mad professor and you still want to leave, you can. I wasn't going to stop you from doing it. But I hate to see you give up.

KAY

I don't know.

THOMAS

Think of it this way. Try to prove me wrong.

KAY

Prove you wrong?

THOMAS

Yeah. Let's see how deep you can go in class and in your work. Prove me wrong.

KAY

Alright.

(smiles)

(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)

It's on.

(gets up; a beat)

Thank you.

THOMAS

Don't mention it. See you in class  
then?

KAY

Yes.

She leaves the office and he looks at the door before  
returning to his computer.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Sophia sits at the service desk. She looks up to see Thomas  
approach the service desk.

SOPHIA

You are in luck.

She hands him the book.

THOMAS

Always prepared.

SOPHIA

Try to be.

THOMAS

Do you want to play chess again?  
This time out in that courtyard  
over there.

SOPHIA

Is it going to be more of the same-  
old, same-old?

THOMAS

No. I promise.

SOPHIA

OK. I'll see you in a few hours  
then.

THOMAS

Alright.

Thomas walks away from the desk and Sophia resumes her work.

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY

Thomas sits at one of the courtyard tables and reads his book. He looks up to see Sophia walking with the travel chess board in hand. She opens it and gives the bag with white pieces to him. They then set up the pieces.

SOPHIA

I'm glad you suggested we play outside.

THOMAS

Thank you. I figured the weather is nicer today.

SOPHIA

That it is.

They finish setting up. After a short pause, they begin: 1. d4 d5. After he moves another pawn to c4, she smiles.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Well it looks like we are starting on a calmer note.

She moves her pawn to c6.

THOMAS

(smiles)

Yeah.

He moves his king's knight to f3.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Do you like my playing now?

SOPHIA

It's not about me liking it. In fact I can't believe you are insulting me with these moves.

She moves her pawn from d5 to capture his pawn on c4.

THOMAS

Then why play along?

He moves another pawn to a4.

SOPHIA

Good point.

(looks at the board)

Though I think this is a set up.

She moves her king's bishop to f5.

THOMAS  
Could be.

SOPHIA  
Are you always so cryptic?

THOMAS  
Perhaps.

SOPHIA  
And so difficult?

He moves another pawn to e3 and she moves another pawn to e6.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Though I have to ask. I can't be  
the only one with whom you can play  
chess. I mean you must have other  
friends.

THOMAS  
Not really.

He captures her pawn on c4 with his queen's bishop.

SOPHIA  
(moves Bb4)  
Didn't I see you once with Robert  
Sullivan? The guy who dared to  
challenge one of our illustrious  
professors?

THOMAS  
Yeah I know him. He's not a chess  
player though.

SOPHIA  
So you tried at least.

He castles kingside.

THOMAS  
So how come I've never seen you  
before?

SOPHIA  
I don't know. It's your sight.

THOMAS  
Yeah. I guess I hadn't noticed.

She moves her queen's knight to d7.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
So what about you?

SOPHIA  
Oh you want to make this more than  
just playing chess?

THOMAS  
(smiles)  
I'm just asking. It's OK if you  
don't want to answer it.

SOPHIA  
You're probably going to be a smart  
ass about it.

THOMAS  
No. I'm just curious. Honest.

SOPHIA  
(looks into his eyes)  
OK. The boring story of my life.

THOMAS  
I'm sure it isn't boring.

SOPHIA  
Trust me. But since you asked  
nicely. The basic setup is that I  
was born in Poughkeepsie, New York  
and have also lived over in  
Stockbridge and then in West  
Roxbury. Finally I'm the youngest  
compared to my sister Michelle.

CUT TO:

INT. SOPHIA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Sophia, then 17, works on her application to attend St.  
John's College on the dining room table.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Growing up, I was basically someone  
who loved to learn. And this led  
to an obvious conclusion.

EMILY walks into the room.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Even if it raised some eyebrows.

EMILY  
Honey?

SOPHIA  
(looks up)  
Yeah Mom.

EMILY  
Are you sure you want to do this?

SOPHIA  
Mom. I want to go there.

EMILY  
But why St. John's College?

SOPHIA  
Why not? It's like you think I  
want to go to some correspondence  
school or something.

EMILY  
Your father and I are just  
concerned about you and your  
future.

SOPHIA  
Mom. I don't think I'm going to  
turn homeless just because I  
decided to get an education that  
has nothing to do with proving how  
useful I could be in the world.

EMILY  
Alright dear. You know how I  
worry.

SOPHIA  
You shouldn't Mom. But thanks.

Emily smiles and gently pats on Sophia's back.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
So wisely she agreed with me. For  
now.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY (PAST)

Sophia sits in a seminar room and listens attentively and, if so prompted, discusses.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Even if my parents still had reservations about it, I'm glad I didn't cave in. I really enjoyed my time at St. John's College. And I wouldn't trade it for anything.

EXT. ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE - FRONT LAWN - DAY (PAST)

Sophia walks out of the main building across the front lawn.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

It was there that I did exactly what I want. Not merely to know about things on the surface. But to think deeply about them.

INT. ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE - DORMITORY - NIGHT (PAST)

Sophia sits near a window and reads a book.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

The goal was to build upon a rich past toward a richer future. And even if it wasn't the actual exit from the proverbial cave, I felt like I could at least have access to the keys.

EXT. ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE - FRONT LAWN - DAY (PAST)

Degree candidates, dressed in academic regalia, sit attentively and reverently during the Commencement exercises.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Of course all good things must come to end sadly.

Sophia sits and listens attentively to the exercises.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

But there was a part of me that was determined to carry on that spirit beyond the campus green, no matter where I ended up.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Some people sit behind desks typing away. Some walk down the aisles. Chatter can be heard from a few spots throughout the floor. And in one cube, Sophia sits quietly and types an e-mail.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Yeah. I hit a wall.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (PAST)

Sophia's work team sits around the table, engaged in a staff meeting. Sophia remains quiet.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
And boy was it some wall. No longer was I discussing the thoughts of Plato or the sonnets of Shakespeare or the observations of Jane Austen. I had to expend my mental energies oiling Big Machine.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - DAY (PAST)

Several colleagues either sit and stand while they eat birthday cake. A great many of them talk and a few laugh. Sophia sits at a table along the edge of the room and watches everyone else.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
I was in some ways amused by the inner clockwork of a corporate office environment. And speaking of Austen, I'm sure a good book could have come from this. Though I would imagine a part of me would cry to employ - ha-ha - beautiful prose to describe such vapid and surface mannerisms.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - SOPHIA'S DESK - DAY (PAST)

Sophia sits and looks at the computer screen.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
I was no longer in my element. No longer traversing the open seas of knowledge and wisdom. I now felt confined to the mere shore.  
(MORE)

SOPHIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
And it wasn't even a shore with an  
inspiring vista.

She turns her chair away from the computer.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
So one day, I saw the choice.

She gets up, leaves her desk and walks down the aisle toward  
her manager's office.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Live for myself. Or die a drone.

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Sophia knocks and the MANAGER looks up to see her standing at  
the entrance.

MANAGER  
Oh. Sophia. Please come in.

Sophia enters and sits opposite of his desk.

SOPHIA  
I have to talk to you.

MANAGER  
Sure. What's on your mind?

SOPHIA  
I want to put in my notice.

MANAGER  
Oh. Any reason you wish to share?

SOPHIA  
I just want to move on from here.

MANAGER  
Better job?

SOPHIA  
Nothing like that. I just want to  
move on.

MANAGER  
(looks down; a beat)  
Oh. I see.  
(a beat; looks up at her)  
Well first of all, I'm sorry to see  
you go.  
(MORE)

MANAGER (CONT'D)

And second - and I hate to say this - but you kind of already beat me to the punch.

SOPHIA

You were going to fire me? For what?

MANAGER

Let's see.

(reads a review form)  
General apathy in the office.  
Withdrawn from colleagues. No real motivation to go above and beyond the call of duty.

SOPHIA

That's it? Just because I'm mostly quiet in the office? Though I'm sure if I were so talkative to where I wasn't really working, you'd fire me for that too. I mean come on. Were you really going to fire me just because I'm not interested in talking about what beautiful or popular prima donna hack will become the next American Idol?

The manager pauses for a moment.

MANAGER

Huh. I didn't think of it exactly like that but yeah.

Sophia looks at him scornfully.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

It's amazing what is considered a priority in the "real world."

INT. SOPHIA'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Sophia, Emily, Michelle and ROGER sit at the table for dinner. Michelle talks as Roger and Emily listen with interest and Sophia listens whilst looking at her plate.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

It's also amazing what others consider a priority. Especially those close to you. And all it takes is a crisis to make it clear for all to see.

ROGER

That's great.

(eats - looks at Sophia)  
So what's new with you? You've  
been awfully quiet.

SOPHIA

I'm not one to talk much. You know  
that.

ROGER

But something must be going on.  
For instance, how's work?

SOPHIA

I quit.

ROGER

What?

EMILY

Oh honey. Why did you do that?

SOPHIA

I don't see myself climbing up some  
corporate ladder. There's other  
things to pursue.

EMILY

Like what?

SOPHIA

Maybe go back to school. Or maybe  
work somewhere where I don't feel  
like I'm just a cog. In fact I  
applied to work over at the MIT  
libraries.

EMILY

When did you apply?

SOPHIA

Last week.

EMILY

When will you hear back from them?

SOPHIA

Soon I think. I'll give them a  
call on Monday.

EMILY

Oh baby, I'm just so worried. What are you going to do about money in the mean time?

SOPHIA

I have my severance and some savings. It can't take forever. I'll find a way to make it work.

EMILY

And you think working at a library will be good for you?

SOPHIA

I believe so.

EMILY

I don't know darling.

SOPHIA

Why do you sound like I just gave myself a plague? I just want to work somewhere where I feel like I'm using my brain in ways other than placating some senior manager's ego.

EMILY

But is it realistic?

SOPHIA

I think so. Certainly more satisfying.

ROGER

Now assuming you get this job. Will it be enough to support yourself?

SOPHIA

Maybe. And if not, I can find a roommate.

EMILY

But don't you like being by yourself?

SOPHIA

Yes. But I think you can find a roommate that gives you some space.

MICHELLE

Say sis. If you need a place, I  
could let you . . . .

EMILY

Michelle. Please.

MICHELLE

Mom. I'm offering to help out.

EMILY

Don't encourage her.

SOPHIA

What? What do you mean?

EMILY

What I mean is . . . .

SOPHIA

You think I'm just going to be  
lazy.

EMILY

I didn't say that.

SOPHIA

You know. You never thought highly  
of me. You never liked the choices  
I've made or the fact that I'm not  
interested in the same things you  
are.

EMILY

I'm just worried about you.

SOPHIA

You always say that. But I think  
you only want me to do what you  
want me to do.

ROGER

Don't talk to your mother like  
that.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry but that's what I sense  
every time she's "worried" about  
me.

(a beat)

And in case you truly are, I  
appreciate it. But I'll be fine.

EMILY

So you are willing to throw away a chance at having a nice life for some childish pursuit?

SOPHIA

Is that what you think I am? That I'm a child?

EMILY

Well. Just quitting a job on a whim without having another job lined up is not exactly mature.

SOPHIA

But I would think keeping a job that you don't really like is just stupid.

EMILY

I know that you think you can do what you want in the world. But you can't. Reading books and having big discussions was fine when you were younger and in school. But you can't do that now.

SOPHIA

Who says I can't? You? I'm sorry Mom, but I'm not a child, in spite of what you may think. I know what I would like to do. I'm sorry I don't have the answers to all of your questions immediately but I'll find a way. But I'm not sorry for not wanting to meet your shallow expectations.

ROGER

(gets up)  
Sophia! You're out of line!

Sophia looks at him in shock and then at Emily, who looks at her with faint disapproval.

SOPHIA

I can't take this anymore.

She gets up and leaves the dining room and eventually the house. Roger sits down and continues to eat. Everyone else looks at their plates in stunned silence.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (PAST)

Sophia enters the apartment, slams the door behind her and collapses onto the couch in the living room area. She starts sobbing for a few moments until her phone rings. She then answers it.

SOPHIA

(wipes away her tears)  
Yeah?

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Listen. If you need to move in with me, that's fine. You know that I have space for you.

SOPHIA

Thanks.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

I love you Sophie. And I'm proud of you. Always have been.

SOPHIA

(cries)  
I love you too.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Take it easy OK? We'll talk later.

SOPHIA

OK. Good night.

She ends the call and lies back down on the couch.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - SECOND FLOOR - DAY (PAST)

Sophia pushes a cart full of books down the aisle.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

So I moved in with Michelle. And I even got the job. And I've been happy ever since. No regrets. And no looking back for me.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY

Thomas and Sophia are still at the board.

SOPHIA

Of course, I haven't spoken to my parents since that night. Michelle is the messenger of sorts. Though I still don't have much to say. But at least now they don't have to see me.

THOMAS

It happens sometimes.

Thomas looks at the board for a moment.

SOPHIA

And you?

THOMAS

(a beat)  
So why chess?

SOPHIA

What do you mean?

THOMAS

Well how did you come to chess?

SOPHIA

Oh. Well, I didn't think of it much until I saw Michelle sitting down in front of the board one day. She uses it as a mental exercise for her legal work. She noticed I was curious about it and therefore decided to teach me. At the very least the basic moves. It didn't take long for me to get it. And the more I played it, the more I liked it.

THOMAS

What did you like about it?

SOPHIA

I liked how it made me think.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD OF BATTLE - DAY (THOUGHT)

Two lines clothed in white, emulating the chess pieces, stand upon one valley crest faces the opposite two lines clothed in black. Clouds are present and form an overcast. The wind blows as both lines stand ready.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

There is of course the classic set-up: one army against another.

Sophia, dressed elegantly as a dame in white, walks in front of and surveys the army.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

You have your army. Each piece has a particular character. And their abilities help determine many possible strategies.

She arrives at the other end and looks out in the distance.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Of course your opponent is aware of this too.

Thomas, dressed handsomely as a lord in black, stands firm next to his army and looks over at the field.

Sophia looks at her army and points at one of her front-line pawns to step forward.

Thomas looks at his army and points at one of his front-line pawns to step forward in response.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

And this call-and-response determines the course of the game.

Other pieces move when called upon to do so.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

One move can bring you either closer to victory or to defeat.

At one point, a white piece stops and lounges a spear in the air at an opposing black piece. The black piece falls down in response.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

And your opponent knows this too.

Another black piece, following where the fallen black piece once was, approaches the same white piece. This black piece swings a sword in the air and the white piece falls back.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

Overtime, the battle moves in favor of one and then the other and then back.

The pieces continue to move across the field. Some pieces are lying still as they were dead. Some pieces are still and others are ready to attack the other.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
And it continues until one is able to conquer the other.

Several pieces surround the black king and are ready to attack him. He panics and kneels down in surrender.

Thomas looks down in defeat as Sophia looks out in victory.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY

Thomas and Sophia are still at the board.

SOPHIA  
That is of course the classic set-up: one army against another. And it's easy to see life as such a conflict where you meet your opponent and both move and respond accordingly. I can also see this dichotomy at play in history, literature and philosophy. But as I got deeper into the game, I realized that it's more than just a conflict of two armies. Much more.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT (THOUGHT)

A regular chess board, with pieces in starting position, floats against the darkness of space.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
First, there's the encapsulation of an army into sixteen pieces on each side.

The pieces move according to various opening strategies.

SOPHIA (V.O.)  
Their unique movements are confined within a board of sixty-four squares. This reflects the human desire to understand a larger world on a smaller scale.

Stars slowly start to appear and the pieces return to starting position.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

And I found you can compose with chess rather than just play it. You can solve problems and create elegant and creative means to achieving a desired end.

The pieces move according to various chess problems.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

This desire to compose various chess problems shows a deep desire to understand the world around us and see if it really is what it is and why. Sometimes we understand this "why" in the end. Other times we don't really know until later on. And then there are those times when we will never know. But it's wondrous all the same.

At this point, many different astronomical objects occupy the surrounding sky.

SOPHIA (V.O.)

I like to think of chess not just as a game of competition, but also a microcosm of the universe.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY

Thomas looks at Sophia in awe and she smiles.

SOPHIA

I got to you didn't I?

THOMAS

Yeah.

(clears his throat)  
I mean . . . Thank you.

SOPHIA

For what?

THOMAS

Just. Thank you.

Sophia looks at him bemusedly but then smiles. They both look at the board and resume play.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas looks his chessboard. He then gets up, walks to his bookshelf and pulls out a book of Augustine's writings. He sits back down on the couch and leafs through the pages until he finds a passage and reads.

INT. MICHELLE'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

Sophia sits on the couch and reads a book. Soon Michelle walks lethargically up to the couch from the other room.

MICHELLE

Hey Sophie.

SOPHIA

Done with work?

MICHELLE

When am I ever done?

She circles around the couch, walks to the plush chair and collapses in it with a loud sigh.

SOPHIA

But it has to end sometime.

MICHELLE

You'd think. Anyway, how was your day?

SOPHIA

(continues reading)

Fine.

MICHELLE

I know you tend to be the quiet one but I would like to hear something else besides deliberations and other forms of bullshit.

SOPHIA

Not much. Though I've been playing chess with someone.

MICHELLE

Who?

SOPHIA  
One of the professors. Thomas  
Ritchard.

MICHELLE  
What kind of professor?

SOPHIA  
A professor of philosophy.

MICHELLE  
(perplexed)  
Huh.  
(a beat; shrugs)  
I guess it's possible.  
(a beat)  
Wait. Does he actually teach  
philosophy? Or does he do  
something else?

Sophia puts her book down on the table and looks at Michelle.

SOPHIA  
He teaches philosophy and he plays  
chess. If he does something else,  
I don't know about it.

MICHELLE  
Is he at least cute?

SOPHIA  
(laughs)  
Are you trying to marry me off or  
something?

MICHELLE  
(smiles)  
I'm just asking if he was cute.  
Whatever you want to do with him is  
your business. At the board or off  
it.

SOPHIA  
Well he's nice. At least he is to  
me. He has a reputation on campus  
for being a bit of a prick. I  
don't know.

(a beat)  
Maybe he's trying to change.

MICHELLE  
If that's true, do you think you're  
the cause of this?

SOPHIA

Maybe. But I don't know.

MICHELLE

Well if you don't know, go find out.

SOPHIA

Thanks. But I'll just wait and see what happens.

Sophia picks up her book, lies down on the couch and resumes reading. Michelle lies back on the chair as well.

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Students are in their seats. Some are talking amongst themselves and others are looking at notes and books. When Thomas walks down the stairs with two books in his hand and they all take notice and start to stop their activity to face him. He sets his books on the table, writes RENE DESCARTES on the board and looks at the students.

THOMAS

So. Let's look at Descartes' method.

(a beat)

He starts by first doubting everything he's been taught. On the surface, it seems simple; but in a deeper sense, it's ridiculous. Why? Because you really can't let go of everything. After all, have you ever tried to let go of some of your deeply held ideas and beliefs? And also, as I have stated previously, you can always take skepticism even further than Descartes did. But let's say you reached something like absolute skepticism. It no longer becomes skepticism. Why?

(a beat)

Think about it for a moment.

(look at the students)

Does anyone want to venture why?

The students look at him. Some look at each other.

KAY

Because if you are skeptical of everything, then what remains to be skeptical about?

THOMAS  
Exactly. Thank you Kay.

Kay smiles.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And there's another problem. While Descartes says he was skeptical and doubted everything, there were some things that remained. And for him, it was mathematical certainty. And it's mathematics that will form the basis - the supporting bar if you will - of his entire philosophy. Now, this dependence on mathematics was something Descartes admitted to doing. But as I mentioned earlier, Hume would be a skeptic too. Though he rejected more than his predecessor - and kept some - Hume's conclusion would be completely different than Descartes. So you can't depend on skepticism alone to yield a consistent result. In a strange way, the past four centuries of Western philosophy has been consistent in using skepticism as a first step and also in yielding inconsistent results. Also modern philosophy is really the story of how we constantly question things and yet never accept any answer. It's almost like not wanting a chess game to yield either in a mate or in a draw.

(a beat)

So from skepticism, Descartes has the notion of clear and distinct ideas. But what's interesting to note is that Descartes questions sensory experience. And even after he has a grasp of a consistent philosophy, he still questions it. So that's another thing about using skepticism. You can still hold on to it for your own convenience and still question things and not accept any answers just because you can still question it. Again that's modern philosophy for you. Moving on.

Thomas sits on the table.

## THOMAS (CONT'D)

It also seems that Descartes enjoys his dichotomies: certainty and doubt, truth and deception, mind and body. While dichotomies are to be found, there's a danger in making everything into one or the other. And in this case, there's the rejection of sensory experience in favor of pure reasoning. Now imagine if you will a tool box that only has hammers. The reason for this is that most tasks involve hammering nails and therefore the only thing you really need is a hammer. Of course this is not the most eloquent or sound reasoning for having a hammer-only toolbox but you can see where I'm going with this. To try to explain the world using only one approach and not the other is to deny the other's contribution to understanding the world. This is why we very often talk about Plato and Aristotle. And if not, maybe we should. They are not enemies of each other. Different, yes. At odds with each other, maybe. But I can't see them locked into some war where it ends only when one side completely annihilates the other. There is no need for total victory here. A priori has its place. And so does a posteriori.

(a beat)

Now this is the great irony I find about Descartes.

(looks at his watch)  
Which I'll get further into next time. But for now, I'll just say this.

(pulls out a book)

For all his talk about coming up with a new philosophy based on the actual world of his time as oppose to say the ancients or the medievals, it's amazing how he seems to reiterate some of the same points. And you even don't even have to look deep into Descartes' writings to see it.

(MORE)

## THOMAS (CONT'D)

Take his famous dictum "I think, therefore I am." He asserts that as he is engaged in the process of thinking, he exists. But he wasn't the first one to notice this.

(opens to a marked page)

Bear with me here.

(reads from the book)

"But since we are investigating the nature of the mind, let us not take into consideration any knowledge that is obtained from without through the senses of the body, and consider more attentively the principle which we have laid down: that every mind knows and is certain concerning itself. For men have doubted whether the power to live, to remember, to understand, to will, to think, to know, and to judge is due to air, to fire, or to the brain, or to the blood, or to atoms, or to a fifth body - I do not know what it is - but it differs from the four customary elements; or whether the combining or the orderly arrangement of the flesh is capable of producing these effects; one endeavors to maintain this opinion, another that opinion. On the other hand who would doubt that he lives, remembers, understands, wills, thinks, knows, and judges? For even if he doubts, he lives; if he doubts, he remembers why he doubts; if he doubts, he understands that he doubts; if he doubts, he wishes to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he judges that he ought not to consent rashly. Whoever then doubts about anything else ought never to doubt about all of these; for if they were not, he would be unable to doubt about anything at all."

(closes the book)

That my friends was Augustine. Of course "I think, therefore I am" is much more succinct. But remember also that Descartes spent a considerable amount of time explaining himself.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And those after him, would devote even more time and energy on it. For Augustine, it's pretty much what I just read. And interestingly enough within a larger discourse concerning the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. (looks at his watch) That's all for now. We will continue with Descartes next time.

Students get up and leave the room. When Kay gets up, she looks at him and smiles. Thomas notices this and smiles in response. As the room almost empties, Robert shows up at the stairs.

ROBERT

Why hello Thomas.

Thomas looks up and sees him.

THOMAS

Robert.

Robert starts to walk down the stairs.

ROBERT

You seem well today.

THOMAS

You think so?

ROBERT

Stop denying it. You look different.

THOMAS

If you say so.

Robert stops and looks at the board.

ROBERT

So did you tear Descartes a new one again?

Thomas shrugs and then smiles.

THOMAS

Not really.

ROBERT

I thought you didn't like Descartes.

THOMAS  
You're right. I don't.  
(a beat)  
But call it sparing the rod.

Robert looks at him in shock and then smiles.

ROBERT  
Well, well. The mighty Ritchard  
knows when to use a sword and when  
to use a dagger. And even when to  
use neither.

THOMAS  
I guess.

ROBERT  
So this must mean that I don't have  
to worry about you anymore.

THOMAS  
(smiles)  
You never had to.

ROBERT  
Right. I'll see you later then?

THOMAS  
Yeah.

Robert walks up the stairs and Thomas sits for a while. Then he gets off the table, grabs the books and walks up the stairs.

EXT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - DAY

Thomas stands outside the library in the midst of a late afternoon approaching dusk. He looks around at the occasional passerby. Then he looks up to see Sophia walking out of the building. He waves to her and she sees him.

SOPHIA  
(approaches Thomas)  
Good to see you.

THOMAS  
Likewise.

SOPHIA  
Listen. I can't play chess right  
now.

THOMAS

It's not that. I was wondering -  
if it doesn't sound too odd - that  
I may walk with you for a while?

SOPHIA

I was just going to go home.

THOMAS

That's fine. You don't mind me  
coming along, do you?

SOPHIA

No. I don't mind some company.

THOMAS

(smiles)

OK.

Sophia smiles and she leads the way as they both leave the court.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE - DAY

As the day approaches sunset, Thomas and Sophia walk side-by-side leisurely with the Charles River next to them. Traffic flows steadily and occasionally a few people either walk or cycle by them.

THOMAS

Nice day.

SOPHIA

I didn't know you were one for  
small talk.

THOMAS

I'm not. I'm just noticing.  
(smiles)

Of course if you want to try to wax  
philosophical about it.

SOPHIA

Now there's an idea.

(a beat)

OK, how about this. If most of us -  
if not all of us - know the earth  
is a ball spinning around and  
around, then why do we still have  
the geocentric word sunset?

THOMAS

Is there really a good alternate to sunset? After all, it's from our point of view. And to us, the sun appears to rise and set.

SOPHIA

Yeah. That was a bad one.

THOMAS

No, no. I understand. Sometimes we want to shed skin to make room for a new flesh of sorts. But some things still remain because we can't find something better.

SOPHIA

Thank you for salvaging it.

They continue to walk for a while.

THOMAS

So how was work?

SOPHIA

The usual. Nothing really exciting happens. People come to get books or stay to study and work. My job is to help get the books and keep the library a place to study and work. Nothing more. No weird procedure implementations. No pointless training sessions. No fourteenth edition of a mission statement stating the obvious once more.

(a beat)

Why this sudden interest in what I do day in and day out?

THOMAS

Just making small talk.

(a beat)

Oh yeah.

(smiles)

You're not one for it.

SOPHIA

(laughs)

No. Anyways. That's what I like about the library. It's routine so you can't really talk about it like it's something important. And yet it's never dull.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

You are immersed in many books  
touching on important ideas. It's  
great.

THOMAS

You seem very happy with where you  
are.

SOPHIA

I am. And thank you for noticing.

They continue to walk for a while.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Speaking of noticing, I notice you  
actually seem really . . .

(ponders)

. . . I don't know . . .

(still ponders)

Happier maybe?

THOMAS

What makes you say that?

SOPHIA

You just seem more relaxed than  
I've ever seen you. That's all.

THOMAS

Maybe.

SOPHIA

(smiles)

Why so evasive?

THOMAS

I'm not. I just don't know what to  
say really.

SOPHIA

Perhaps you could illuminate for me  
while the sun still lingers in the  
sky?

THOMAS

I don't know. The words aren't  
there right now.

SOPHIA

Fair enough.

They continue to walk. After a while, she looks at him.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Are you thinking?

THOMAS  
Yes. Why?

SOPHIA  
Well can you please stop looking so  
serious?

THOMAS  
What do you mean?

SOPHIA  
I mean this!

She pushes him back gently and continues to walk but with a smile. She pushes him every now and then until he runs to chase her. She laughs aloud and he smiles more openly. They continue to chase each other playfully until they stop to catch their breath. They look at each other, smiling, laughing softly and panting slightly. Then suddenly he leans over to kiss her on the lips. She looks surprised by this sudden gesture.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
What was that for?

THOMAS  
(smiles)  
I think I've found the words.

She looks at him with confusion and his smile turns into a look of concern.

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Look I'm sorry about that.

SOPHIA  
(unhesitatingly)  
It's OK. Really. Just forget it.

They walk solemnly. He looks down and then at her every so often. She looks down and over at the Charles.

THOMAS  
Are you alright?

SOPHIA  
I'm fine. Don't worry about it.

THOMAS  
(a beat)  
Do you want me to leave?

SOPHIA  
Only if you want.

He looks down and they continue to walk up the road toward Longfellow Bridge.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas, forlorn and crestfallen, sits on the couch with only the faintest of light illuminating the room. He then lies on his back on the couch and lets out a sigh as he rests his forearm on his forehead.

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY

Thomas and Sophia sit at the chessboard table in the middle of a game. He looks resigned.

SOPHIA  
Was it something I said?

THOMAS  
No.

SOPHIA  
Come off it now. Something's bothering you.  
(a beat)  
Is it about the other day?

THOMAS  
I don't want to talk about it.

Thomas looks up and remains silent.

SOPHIA  
Why did you kiss me?

THOMAS  
I don't know. Momentary lapse of reason.

SOPHIA  
That must have been some lapse.

THOMAS  
I don't know what came over me.  
I'm sorry and let's just move on.

SOPHIA  
Well it's hard to move on from something like that.  
(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

(a beat)

I mean you show up at the library,  
ask me to play chess and we start  
this chess-playing interaction,  
which I assumed was a friendship.  
Then we walk together and you  
decide to kiss me.

THOMAS

No I didn't decide to do it.

SOPHIA

Fine. You decided on impulse.  
Whatever. And to be honest, I was  
really just confused by it. And  
now you don't want to talk about it  
and I'm left feeling more confused.

THOMAS

Can't we just say I was clumsy and  
awkward and just move on?

SOPHIA

No. I'm sorry Thomas. But I can't  
let this go.

THOMAS

Why not?

SOPHIA

Because you don't go from casual  
acquaintance over chess to a  
twilight kiss. And certainly not  
without me knowing more about you.

THOMAS

Why do you want to know about me?

SOPHIA

Come on, Professor. You seem to  
know plenty about me. Certainly  
the things worth knowing and then  
some. But I hardly know you.  
Except you can play chess, you  
teach philosophy and you have a bad  
reputation here.

THOMAS

Well I don't give a damn about my  
reputation.

SOPHIA

So that's your answer.

THOMAS

What answer? What exactly was the question?

SOPHIA

Forget it.

(a beat)

I'm just interested in knowing more about you. Like when did you start playing chess?

THOMAS

In school.

SOPHIA

Like in college? High school?  
Maybe you were a preschool prodigy.

THOMAS

In school.

SOPHIA

Don't be difficult Professor.

THOMAS

I'm not. I'm just not talkative right now.

SOPHIA

You hardly are.

THOMAS

What's wrong with some silence?

SOPHIA

Not as much as you give. Oh, except if you want to prove me wrong in something.

THOMAS

I don't do that.

SOPHIA

Don't deny it. You seem to like antagonistic relationships. Hence this aggressive chess playing you tend to do. I mean do you see everyone as some sort of enemy?

THOMAS

That's a bit bold.

SOPHIA

It's not bold. I mean look at yourself. You berate both your subject of expertise and your students. Is this how you relate to everyone on the planet?

THOMAS

Not everyone.

SOPHIA

Oh?

THOMAS

There's you.

SOPHIA

Why me?

THOMAS

Because I appreciate you.

SOPHIA

I don't want to be just appreciated.

(a beat)

Wait. Is that why you kissed me?

THOMAS

(annoyed)

Oh you got to bring that up again. Forget the kiss already.

SOPHIA

I can't forget it. Especially since you just gave a vague hint of liking me in some slightly deeper way.

He looks down at the board.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Look Thomas. If you want to be my friend, then start acting like one. If you want to be more than my friend, then start opening yourself more. But I can't take much more of this resistance from you. OK?

THOMAS

OK.

They look at the board and resume play.

INT. MICHELLE'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT

Michelle sits on the chair and reads some papers. No sooner does the door close loudly and Michelle looks up to see Sophia approaching the couch.

MICHELLE

Wow. I never thought you could have a rough day at the library.

SOPHIA

(sits down)  
It's not at the library.

MICHELLE

(puts down her papers)  
Is it that guy who plays chess?

SOPHIA

Yeah.

MICHELLE

So what did he do now? Propose?

SOPHIA

(smiles)  
Please.  
(sighs)  
I'm just so confused right now.  
And he's not helping at all.

MICHELLE

So are you going to stop seeing  
him?

SOPHIA

If he keeps acting like a jackass.

MICHELLE

And when is that?

SOPHIA

I don't know. Maybe he just had a  
bad day today or something.

MICHELLE

That seems to be routine for him.

SOPHIA

Though maybe it's worse now. But I  
wouldn't know that unless he starts  
talking to me.

MICHELLE

Just don't push it. And certainly  
don't let him push you.

SOPHIA

Don't worry. You know me.

MICHELLE

(smiles)  
Yes I do.

Sophia smiles back and she lies back upon the couch.  
Michelle picks up her papers and lies back on the chair.

INT. MUDDY CHARLES PUB - DAY

Thomas sits at one of the tables and reads a book. Soon  
Sophia walks over to where he sits and he looks up to see  
her.

THOMAS

Hey Sophia.

SOPHIA

Hey. Can we talk?

THOMAS

About what?  
(looks at her)  
And where's the chess board?

SOPHIA

I really want to talk. No chess  
playing.

THOMAS

OK.

She sits down opposite of him. He continues to read.

SOPHIA

Can you pay attention to me?

He puts aside his book and looks at her.

THOMAS

So what do you want to talk about?

SOPHIA

I don't know why you keep  
resisting. And the more you  
resist, the more confused I get. I  
really want to know where we stand.

THOMAS

Alright.

(a beat)

We are friends. And we play chess together. And that's fine by me.

SOPHIA

OK. We are friends. And we have a common interest we can pursue together. But we can't just keep playing chess and not much else.

THOMAS

What's wrong with just playing chess? Don't people just get together and play a game without much conversation or having some deeper relationship?

SOPHIA

That may be possible. But not if they ever kissed.

THOMAS

Why do you keep bringing it up?

SOPHIA

Stop. Just stop.

(sighs)

I really would like to know more about you. But you keep pushing me away. Yet you keep arranging these little visits and I end up knowing less about you while you seem to know more about me. It doesn't work that way. Not even with friendships.

THOMAS

I just don't see the point of me getting into myself. It's really not that interesting.

SOPHIA

Well if it's not that interesting, then what's there to hide from me?

THOMAS

I really don't think you knowing about my past is relevant to this moment right now between us.

SOPHIA

It's not about relevancy. In fact what does that even mean? I just want to know more about you. Is that so hard?

He looks away and she looks away with a loud sigh.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

OK. Let's try something here. Let's start with some questions. Not about your past but in the present.

THOMAS

OK.

SOPHIA

And just for you, let's make these philosophical ones.

THOMAS

OK.

SOPHIA

Do you believe in God?

THOMAS

Maybe.

SOPHIA

So you're agnostic?

THOMAS

Apathetic.

SOPHIA

What does that mean?

THOMAS

If there's an answer either way, I'm not going to take the time to find out.

SOPHIA

Skip that one. Let's see.

(a beat)

Is there another world or is this the only one?

THOMAS

You mean like another planet with life?

SOPHIA

I mean this world. The material world where you can perceive it through your senses. Is it the only one? Or is there another world beyond this one? A spiritual plane. The realm of ideas. The will. Whatever you want to call it.

THOMAS

Yes.

SOPHIA

Yes what?

THOMAS

Yes there are other worlds beyond this one as you put them.

SOPHIA

So what is it? I gave you some options. Pick something.

THOMAS

I don't know.

SOPHIA

You don't know. So why not become a pure materialist?

THOMAS

What's the point of being one? You are just frustrating yourself by limiting your imagination to what's there in front of you. We tend to be thinking beings. Otherwise we just eat and shit and fuck in the woods.

SOPHIA

OK. That's a little better than the last one. Let's try another.

(ponders)

This should be good. And try to commit to a position this time.

(a beat)

What do you think about man?

THOMAS

Like what?

SOPHIA

Stop being so non-committal. What do you think about man?

THOMAS

Isn't that a broad question?

SOPHIA

Yes. But I'm not in the business of playing Twenty Questions here. Just make a statement.

THOMAS

Any statement?

SOPHIA

An honest one please.

THOMAS

Alright. I don't think highly of man. We may think deep thoughts and contemplate other worlds besides the woods where we can eat, shit and fuck. But in the end, we are cruel and savage brutes. In fact, I think of this savagery as some kind of cruel trick played on us by a God who is too jealous to give us the best of all possible worlds. There are way too many shortcomings and alternates that are not part of this great design here. And that's the great cosmic crime that remains unpunished. However if we want to go beyond just the savage, we should first contemplate and then incorporate, by whatever means necessary, better traits with the intention of progressing beyond petty jealousies and heartless cynicism. But perhaps in the end, it's just a futile attempt since we can't seem to really know what's there. So we push up a rock forever because we think it's there. But it's probably not called a rock.

(sighs)

Happy?

SOPHIA

What kind of statement was that?

THOMAS

I gave you a statement. Is it not the right one or something?

SOPHIA

It just sounded like one of your survey lectures. I heard at least four philosophers in there I think. And some of them quite contrary to each other. Do you really believe in what you just said?

THOMAS

I've made my statement. What more do you want?

SOPHIA

You really are just a mass of prejudices. All thought and no feeling Professor.

THOMAS

At least your address to me is correct.

SOPHIA

(aggravated)

Why can't you give me a straight answer without evading the damn question?

THOMAS

Isn't that what remains? There's hardly any other answer. Or are you someone who thinks everything has a cause? A telos? Some purpose of design? Did God make every single one of us a precious and unique snowflake?

SOPHIA

Maybe not in those words but something like that.

THOMAS

And you don't think for a moment that God is some cruel bastard for say, making some people highly intelligent and others incredibly stupid. Or some that are well-off while others endure hardship.

SOPHIA

OK. I admit I'm not the most religious person here. But I think there is a underlining reason to things. We may not understand it always but it's there. And I don't see any flaws as something to scorn or excise. It's there in each of us, for better and for worse. Some flaws can be overcome but not all. And for those particular ones, we just accept it as it is.

THOMAS

Oh was that what they taught you at that stupid college of yours?

She looks at him with tears forming. Then she looks at him angrily, gets up and slaps him very hard

SOPHIA

Asshole.

She walks away from him.

THOMAS

(yells out)  
You don't have to take it that personally!

He rubs his cheek and then picks up his book to read.

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Thomas paces in front of the board and behind the table.

THOMAS

So Descartes, using his method of philosophical insight, affirms the statement "I think, therefore I am" as a clear and distinct idea. From this method, he also justifies the existence of God and the ability to understand the external world.

(a beat)

Now we get into some more problems. For starters, there's his obsession of sorts to make the mind and the body distinct to where they are actually separate. This is the famous Cartesian dualism.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Interestingly, this dualism creates a divide amongst philosophers since Descartes. If you are on his side, you are going to spend all of your precious time talking about the mind and consciousness and conscious thinking. If you are not on his side, you are going to see the mind and body, or immaterial and material, not as some clear dichotomy. There will be some interaction between the two that makes it more like synergy.

(rubs his eyes)

Moving on. Then there's also the reliability factor to Descartes' writings. For who says you can't be skeptical of someone who used skepticism? During the course of his pondering, he mentions the notion of an evil deceiver. This evil deceiver is one who tricks your brain into thinking you are experiencing certain sensations. You know this. It's like that damn movie. You know. The one that looks green and where the enemy looks like some Secret Service agent. Anyway. Descartes brings it up and then brushes it aside with his Cogito. For according to him, even thinking about an evil deceiver is still thinking. So my own question I pose to you is: if thinking doesn't depend on a body since if our brains were in some type of vat - or plugged into the Matrix - we will still be thinking, then what's the point of understanding the external world since it could very well be just arbitrary nonsense? It's just imaginary. Non-existent. And good as dead.

Kay raises her hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Yes Kay?

KAY

There's another problem I've noticed with Descartes.

THOMAS  
(unimpressed)  
Really? Go on.

KAY  
I don't think he really justified  
God's existence using his method.

THOMAS  
OK.

KAY  
The big problem is Descartes'  
arguments are almost no different  
than earlier arguments from before  
his time.

THOMAS  
So how would you have done it?

KAY  
By saying God doesn't even exist.  
In fact, it's more like a God  
delusion. There's nothing really  
supporting the notion there is God  
in the real world. And the things  
that do support His existence are  
really all about control of thought  
and actions. Religion says it  
encourages the best of humanity but  
it has shown to encourage the  
worse: territoriality, aggression,  
dominance and social hierarchy.  
While it may possibly have been  
useful at some point early on in  
our existence, we need to evolve  
from it. Weed out the weaker  
traits and make way for stronger  
ones.

Thomas smiles and pauses for a moment.

THOMAS  
Kay. Don't you think you are being  
quite anachronistic employing a  
very populist yet very erroneous  
understanding of 19th Century  
scientific theories as reasoning  
Descartes should have used to  
dismiss God right from the start?

KAY  
Well who says Descartes really  
believed in God?  
(MORE)

## KAY (CONT'D)

Maybe he was just a closet atheist who had to pay lip service to God because that's where the money was so to speak? Didn't you even say that Descartes was disliked by both Catholics and Protestants? And that maybe he should have saved himself the trouble of not bringing God into his own philosophy?

## THOMAS

OK. I want to clarify what I said before. I suggested that idea of "not bringing God into his own philosophy," as you have so paraphrased, more as an illustration of how you can take skepticism to a greater level than Descartes did. It was not to suggest that Descartes should have done it. In fact Descartes himself was piously Catholic throughout his entire life. He may have had some brushes here and there but he was never antagonistic toward the Church. And even if you could construe some hidden deist or even atheist tendency from him, the goal of Descartes was to establish a new means of understanding the world. It was epistemology, not metaphysics, that he was interested initially. So it was legitimate of him, regardless of his own personal beliefs, to ponder God's existence as it is knowledge that can be acquired. And maybe from epistemology you can derive metaphysics. But for Descartes, epistemology came first.

## KAY

Do you realize how you sounded just then? You sounded no different than these religious apes who waste a lot of time and space yapping about some nothing that did nothing except caused untold misery in the world. How can you defend religion here? For all religion really does is lust for violence and is violent toward what they call lust.

(MORE)

KAY (CONT'D)

Religion is turned on by the spilling of blood but turned off by the spilling of other fluids. Especially if it's between two consenting adults. And why do you choose to defend this nonsense? You need to be modern and forget that medieval world.

Thomas looks at her and then paces for a moment before he stops at the middle of the table.

THOMAS

So. You think I'm some religious ape. Or someone lost in the Middle Ages. And therefore I should be modern. Well let me pose something to you. If you are so smart. And you think you know what is right. Then why don't you think for the both of us. For . . .

(shouts - slams his hands on the table)

. . . All of us! Huh? You seem to have all the answers here. Why don't we make this year zero then? Just throw . . .

(throws a book against the board)

. . . Everything out and start the fuck over! Wouldn't you like that sunshine? You can be the master of the fucking universe. The universe can be your bitch. And maybe you!

(points at Kay)

Yes you. You can make this the best of all possible worlds for once. Where there will be no more death. No more tears. No more fucking complications and no more fucking drama! So let's do it! Before today, everything's dead.

Religion. Dead! Ideas. Dead! Descartes. Dead! Shit, he's been dead for nearly four centuries. So that's an easy one. All of them are dead! But since I mentioned earlier how you can always take things further, how about me? I'm dead! And this fucking classroom too. I now consider all of you. Dead!

(raises his middle finger)  
(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Dead! Dead! Dead! You fuckers!  
So fuck all of you!

He storms out from behind the table and up the stairs. All the students remain seated in stunned silence.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Sophia walks up the east mezzanine stairs with an index card at hand. She sees Thomas sitting at one of the desks and continues to walk amongst the shelves. Thomas gets up and walks over to her. He stands next to her and she pretends not to notice him and continues to look at the shelves and at the index card.

SOPHIA  
(looks at the shelves)  
You got any more insults for me?  
Or did you used them all on your  
students today?

THOMAS  
How did you know?

SOPHIA  
Word travels fast. Plus it was  
intense.  
(looks at him)  
Even for you.

He looks down in shame.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
Oh get over yourself.  
(looks at the card)  
As if you actually cared at all.

THOMAS  
Maybe I want to care.

SOPHIA  
(looks at the shelves)  
You have a funny way of showing it.

He looks down and then at her.

THOMAS  
Why don't you believe me?

She stops and turns to look at him.

SOPHIA

Because you haven't given me a reason to care. None.

THOMAS

What do you want from me?

SOPHIA

Why don't you take a chance and step outside. And if you can't, lose some sleep and say you tried.

THOMAS

What does that mean?

SOPHIA

Figure it out.

She turns away and looks at the shelves. He looks at her for a moment and then leaves. She finds the book, pulls it out and leaves.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

Thomas sits at his desk in the late afternoon and stares at his computer. After a few moments, the DEAN knocks at the door.

DEAN

Mr. Ritchard.

THOMAS

Yes?

DEAN

Could you walk with me please?

Thomas gets up and walks toward the door and then they both leave.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - EIGHTH FLOOR - DAY

Thomas and the Dean walk side by side toward the elevator. The Dean looks forward silently. Thomas looks down and every now and then at him. When they arrive at the elevator, the Dean pushes the down button.

The Dean does not respond and looks at the elevator doors. Thomas looks down and eventually at the doors. When the doors open, the Dean walks into the elevator and then looks at Thomas, who still stands outside the elevator.

The Dean gestures to Thomas to enter. Thomas walks into the elevator and then the doors close.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - ELEVATOR - DAY

Thomas and the Dean stand in the elevator. Thomas stands close to the back wall while the Dean stands more in the middle.

THOMAS

What is this about?

DEAN

You caused quite a stir today.

THOMAS

Look I'm sorry but . . . .

DEAN

Your antics have gone on for too long. Even the President is fed up with you.

THOMAS

Does this mean I'm dismissed?

DEAN

Not exactly.

THOMAS

Then what?

The bell rings and the doors open.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - FIRST FLOOR LOBBY - DAY

Thomas and the Dean walk out of the elevator and Thomas follows the Dean who is walking toward the Vassar Street exit.

DEAN

You are suspended for the rest of the semester with pay. And that's very generous considering what you did. However there will be a discussion at some point in the near future to determine whether you return here or not. In the mean time . . . .

The Dean opens the first door.

DEAN (CONT'D)  
. . . Best of luck to you.

He looks at the Dean and slowly walks through the open door. The Dean then turns around and walks away. Thomas looks out toward Vassar Street and walks out the second door.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas opens the door and slowly walks inside the house, closing the door behind him. He walks to the couch, sits down and then lays down in a fetal position, facing out.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next day, Thomas lies in a fetal position, facing in. Then he turns to lie down flat, stretches his arms out and lets out a loud yawn. He lifts himself up and sits at the center of the couch. He rubs his eyes and then gets up to walk away from the couch.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Thomas stands in the kitchen and looks inside an open refrigerator. After a few moments, he closes the door and steps back away from it.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Several days later, Thomas, more disheveled, lies on the couch on his side, looking at the television. Nearby, his phone rings but remains still and does not pay attention to it. He looks catatonic as the television continues its programming.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - WORK STUDY - NIGHT

Thomas looks at the monitor to his desktop computer. An e-mail program is open full of unread messages: most are from MIT addresses including Sophia's. He continues to look at the screen, completely immobile. He then lets out a sigh and gets up.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next day, Thomas stands and looks at his bookshelf with his head resting on his forearm, which itself is resting on the edge of one of the shelves.

THOMAS  
(slowly - deflated)  
I don't care. If only I could say  
that. If only my eyes would close.

Thomas straightens himself up and walks away from the shelf.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Several days later, Thomas, much more disheveled, lies on the couch in a fetal position, facing a silent television. His eyes are half-closed until the phone rings. His eyes widen and then are half-closed again. Eventually the phone stops ringing.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas sits in front of a chessboard. The pieces are in starting position. He looks at the board with no expression. It slowly turns into rage. Finally he screams and knocks all the pieces off the board. He sits still for a while as the scattered pieces settle on the floor.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The next day, Thomas lies flat on his back upon the couch with the phone in his hand. He listens to the various messages left for him, deleting them as he finishes listening to them. Then the next one plays.

MICHELLE (V.O.)  
Hey there. If you care about her,  
give me a call. Bye.

The message ends and he sits up, hangs up the phone and looks around the house. He then gets up off the couch and walks out toward the bathroom.

INT. BOSTON RESTAURANT - DAY

A clean and showered Thomas walks into the restaurant and waits at the front. He looks out into the dining area. Then his phone rings and he answers.

MICHELLE (O.S.)  
Look for me waving.

He looks up and sees Michelle waving. As he walks toward her, she disconnects the call. She already has a salad plate in front of her.

THOMAS

Hello.

MICHELLE

Well hello. Nice to meet you  
finally. Please. Sit.

He sits down opposite of Michelle.

THOMAS

(a beat)  
How is she?

MICHELLE

Bothered actually.

THOMAS

How?

MICHELLE

She still doesn't really know you  
nor what to make of you. And  
wishes she could.

THOMAS

I can't see why anyone would want  
to know about me.

MICHELLE

When you start kissing them, they  
usually want to know more.

THOMAS

She told you about that?

MICHELLE

She told me a lot of things.

He sighs and takes a drink of water.

THOMAS

But what's there to know? I mean  
really. What you see is what you  
get.

MICHELLE

(scoffs)  
Please.

THOMAS

What?

MICHELLE

I don't buy it.

THOMAS

Buy what?

MICHELLE

This whole "look at me I'm a big asshole" act.

THOMAS

Who says it's an act? And who are you to say that it is? Hell, we barely know each other.

MICHELLE

It's just a hunch. And so far, I'm right.

He sighs and mutters to himself.

THOMAS

You got any good reasons for it?

MICHELLE

Here's one.

(leans forward - softly)  
A true asshole wouldn't have answered my call.  
(leans back - normal)  
Furthermore, he wouldn't have made the effort to come here.

THOMAS

That's it?

MICHELLE

Also from what I heard about some of your classroom antics, it all seems . . . Desperate to me.

THOMAS

Desperate?

MICHELLE

I don't know. Words are not coming to me right now and I'm so tired of talking. You try dealing with the courts daily.

THOMAS

So we are going to have a silent lunch then?

MICHELLE

Shut up.

He looks down in shame. She smiles and he catches it.

THOMAS

Now what?

MICHELLE

You're just proving my point  
nicely.

THOMAS

Which is?

MICHELLE

That you are not the cold-hearted  
asshole you think you are.

He sighs and drinks his water.

THOMAS

So.

(a beat)

What should I do?

MICHELLE

Don't know.

THOMAS

You - full of insight - don't know?

MICHELLE

I don't know because it's up to  
you. You started it; you finish  
it. At least it's the chivalrous  
thing to do. And you do want to do  
the chivalrous thing?

He looks at her and after a few moments he gets up.

THOMAS

It was nice talking with you.

MICHELLE

Leaving so soon?

THOMAS

I'm sorry. I have to go.

(smiles)

And do the chivalrous thing.

MICHELLE

OK.

THOMAS

And thank you.

He leaves and she looks on at him. She then eats her salad.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - WORK STUDY - DAY

Thomas sits in front of the computer. He thinks for a moment and starts to type.

THOMAS (V.O.)

My dearest Sophia. I have come to realize the great pains I have inflicted upon you. And contrary to what you may have concluded about me, using such blunt and sharp objects on you was never part of my ambition. However I did and because of this you have needlessly suffered. Therefore I humbly submit myself to you and ask for your forgiveness. For you are - and were even then - the least deserving of any and all hostility from me.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY (PAST)

Thomas, 9, packs his backpack full of books to where the backpack is overloaded.

THOMAS (V.O.)

In addition to a humble penance, I also wish to offer to you a substantial discourse, of which you have sought from me for some time. It is something I kept locked inside my heart for no one to behold. Now it must be revealed - and first of all to you - for the sake of a true repentance from a life lived falsely.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SUBURB - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks on the sidewalk to school during a early spring morning.

THOMAS (V.O.)

For as long as I could remember, I felt two very contrary sensations simultaneously.

A KID walks fast behind him and pushes Thomas forward. He leans forward but catches himself and stands upright to regain his balance. He then resumes walking.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY (PAST)

Thomas looks through the shelves of the nonfiction section, particularly amongst the history books.

THOMAS (V.O.)

One was wonder whilst learning about the world apparent and the world hidden. Of ancient notions of perfection, order and harmony amongst the worlds.

He pulls out a book about the ancient Greeks and walks away and walks to a table to sit and look through the book. As he reads, several children walk behind him and taunt him.

THOMAS (V.O.)

The other was mockery from my immediate peers, who never wasted an opportunity to remind me how ridiculous it was to embark on such an adventure.

He looks up sadly but then continues to read.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA SUBURB - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks on the sidewalk.

THOMAS (V.O.)

While the schoolyard may have exercised its own cruelties . . .

The same kid walks behind him and pushes him and Thomas does fall forward this time onto the ground.

THOMAS (V.O.)

. . . Thankfully it was only temporary.

Thomas gets up and resumes walking.

INT. THOMAS'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas walks into the dining room, with his father FRANCIS following him, and approaches his mother NANCY with a hug, which she gladly gives to him.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Home with my parents - Francis and  
Nancy - provided much needed relief  
and reprieve.

Francis and Nancy kiss each other and then everyone takes  
their seat at the table.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I basked in the warm shelter  
provided by a strong father and a  
tender mother.

Everyone at the table eats dinner and talks. Francis and  
Nancy attentively listen to Thomas.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
They knew they had a delicate  
flame. And while others would try  
to extinguish it, they let it burn  
gently and steadily. For they knew  
somehow it would yield into  
something wonderful.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY (PAST)

The students sit at their desk as the TEACHER gives her  
lesson. An OFFICE AIDE enters and whispers at the teacher.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Unfortunately I would never know  
what they could see me as in the  
end.

The teacher and the aide look at the students and at Thomas  
specifically.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Thomas, 11, walks into the office and looks at the seated  
PRINCIPAL. In the office with him are a POLICE OFFICER and  
an FAA OFFICIAL. Thomas sits opposite of the principal.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
One idle afternoon, I received word  
that my parents were perished in  
the flames of flight. I was only  
eleven years of age.

Thomas's eyes slowly form tears as the principal informs him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BINGHAMTON HOME - DAY (PAST)

Thomas exits out of a van with his backpack. He walks around it and then alongside PAUL, his uncle, up the sidewalk. JOANN stands there at the door.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Sometime afterward, I was brought under the care of my father's brother, Paul and his wife Joann up in Binghamton, New York.

She opens the door and everyone enters.

INT. BINGHAMTON HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY (PAST)

Thomas reads on a book on the couch. BRITTANY and WILLIAM, his cousins aged 9 and 7 respectively, walk into the room.

THOMAS (V.O.)

They had two children of their own:  
Brittany and William.

They sit on opposite sides of Thomas and look at him reading.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Sadly, their interaction with me reminded me all too well the sufferings I had in school.

Brittany smacks the book down onto the ground and William punches Thomas' arm. Then both of them run out of the room and Thomas looks on as he rubs his arm.

INT. BINGHAMTON HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas, Paul and Joann sit at the table. Thomas talks to them enthusiastically with a book in hand.

THOMAS (V.O.)

One would hope I would find solace from the parents . . .

Paul and Joann shrug their shoulders and get up to leave.

THOMAS (V.O.)

. . . But instead I received indifference and disinterest.

Thomas sits in his seat, crestfallen.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
No longer had I a sanctuary in the home.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY (PAST)

Thomas, 14, looks through the shelves of a nearly empty library.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
The new location carried the same afflictions.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM - DAY (PAST)

As students run around in circles, Thomas stands off to the side and quietly observes.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
As I advanced steadily in years and in stature, I resided more in the hidden corners or the remote edges of rooms, obscure from anyone's sight and distant from anyone's reach.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAYS - DAY (PAST)

Students, among them Thomas, 17, walk through the hallway during a transition to the next class period.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I never had what you would call a close compatriot or a comrade-in-arms. I was merely a long and obscure drop in a sea of youth.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY (PAST)

Thomas sits at a table surrounded by books and writes notes on index cards.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
While there were some moments of great sadness and melancholy, the only consolation I had was my personal quest for knowledge.

He stops, rubs his eyes and looks out into the distance.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Thankfully this venture I partook  
had its own reward.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLLEGE WALK - DAY (PAST)

Students, among them Thomas, 19, walk either on the concrete path or on the grass to their various destinations.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I was invited to study at Columbia.

INT. HAVEMAYER HALL - ROOM 209 - DAY (PAST)

Thomas and his colleagues sit and listen to the lecture.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
My original aim was I would finally  
seek out knowledge amongst kindred  
spirits.

SAMUEL lectures to the class.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Sure enough I did find one:  
Professor Samuel Harrington.

Thomas listens and smiles.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I instantly admired his  
intelligence, zeal and drive.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - SAMUEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Samuel sits at his desk and Thomas sits opposite of him. They have an animated discussion over a game of chess.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I began to look at him as a father.  
Likewise, he came to look at me as  
a son.

INT. LOW LIBRARY - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas sits at a table surrounded by books and slowly leafs through one of them.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I finally felt serenity and peace.  
No longer would I be ostracized or  
discouraged or disrespected for  
merely pursuing an object of  
intense interest.

He gets up and stretches out before walking away.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
And yet fortune has its way of  
presenting a different outcome, a  
lesson that I should have mastered  
already.

EXT. COLLEGE WALK - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks slowly and thinks deeply.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
As I navigated through the waters  
of academe, I began to notice less  
encouragement in affirming the  
ideas of old and more in embracing  
the new.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - ROOM 716 - DAY (PAST)

Another PROFESSOR gives a lecture in a seminar room.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
The ideas of a modern time, while I  
was fully aware of them and even  
their potential utility, never  
spoke to me the same as those of a  
more ancient time.

Thomas, 24, listens and takes notes.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Yet, once again, I was the unusual  
one.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks down the hallway of offices toward Samuel's  
office.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
All around the department, I was  
pressured and compelled to abandon  
my endeavor and embrace theirs.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - SAMUEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Samuel talks to Thomas from his desk.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
The final call came from Professor  
Harrington, the same mentor whom I  
held dear.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks through the hallway of offices away from  
Samuel's office.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
And thus I gave up those childish  
things and became a man in their  
eyes.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks through the park amongst an early autumn, late  
afternoon sky.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
While my new undertaking was met  
with silent approval, I could not  
help but notice a growing contempt  
within me for having made such a  
deep excision.

INT. LOW LIBRARY - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas, with a stack of books of various modern philosophers  
scattered in front of him, reads silently.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
As I became better acquainted with  
the various schools of modern  
thought, I saw less an aspiration  
to understand things as they are  
and more an objective to reject  
anything and everything in the  
vainglorious hope of acquiring an  
idea of a greater luster.

Thomas puts down the book and writes some notes.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I resented having to accept these  
respectable yet fallible men as the  
great and only doctors of thought.

INT. THOMAS'S UNIVERSITY APARTMENT - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas sits in front of the computer with little to no light.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
And whereas in my youth I would  
resort to a hushed mourning, I now  
wanted to exert another means of  
making my grievances known.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks through the hallways.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Perceiving everyone with sword and  
dagger on their person at all  
times, I began to arm myself as  
well. And waited for the moment to  
draw.

Thomas knocks at the door to Samuel's office.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
And as fortune would have it, the  
first instigator I faced was my own  
mentor.

INT. PHILOSOPHY HALL - SAMUEL'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Thomas and Samuel are arguing.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
For him, the man turned idol in his  
heart was Karl Marx. Whereas  
before it may not have mattered to  
me, I now wanted to break the clay  
feet to topple down that idol of  
gold, silver, iron and bronze.

Thomas finishes his point and Samuel looks at him in stunned  
silence.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Surprisingly, it was not hard to conquer it. But for the great disciple, its shattering was a great and blinding illumination.

Samuel looks at him in anger.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And instead of being grateful for the darkness overtaken . . .

Samuel yells at Thomas.

THOMAS (V.O.)

. . . He cursed the light and its harbinger.

Thomas gets up and leaves the office.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I no longer had a father in Samuel Harrington.

Samuel looks at the door and resumes his work.

CUT TO:

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY (PAST)

Thomas, closer to the present time, sits at his desk and writes an essay.

THOMAS (V.O.)

After earning the status of Master and Doctor, I resolutely commenced on a personal crusade against the college of modern thinkers.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas writes on a pad of paper while sitting on the couch.

THOMAS (V.O.)

As you can imagine, this endeavor left me with very few companions and close colleagues. And yet I was content with that situation.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY (PAST)

Thomas walks through the first floor.

THOMAS (V.O.)

More recently, I felt a growing  
dislike with the mask I wore.

Thomas looks at Sophia near the service desk.

THOMAS (V.O.)

When I first saw you at the  
library, I had this faint notion  
you were the light beckoning me to  
exit this self-imposed darkness.

EXT. LIPCHITZ COURTYARD - DAY (PAST)

Sophia talks to Thomas about her background and her chess  
epiphany.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And as I grew to know you more,  
this notion transfigured into a  
clear affirmation.

EXT. MEMORIAL DRIVE - DAY (PAST)

Thomas and Sophia laugh on the path.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I knew you were the ladder to a  
personal salvation I've been  
searching for all these years.

He leans forward to kiss her on the lips.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And my kiss was my sincere yet  
incautious attempt to express my  
true sentiments.

She expresses confusion over the bold gesture.

THOMAS (V.O.)

You were confused by this gesture.  
And while this confusion was  
understandable in retrospect, I  
took it as rejection.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Thomas lies on the couch in near darkness.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
And once again, I retreated deeper  
into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - WORK STUDY - NIGHT

Thomas types on his computer.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
Forgive me for lacking the courage  
to discharge my mind then and  
there. Had I possessed this  
virtue, we would not have reached  
the level of animosity we did. I  
hope this letter will rectify it.

He looks over what he wrote on the screen.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
This period of solitude - and  
particularly this moment of  
confession - has inspired me once  
more to shatter at long last this  
self-fashioned visage.

He then gets up and walks out of the room.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas paces around the room.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I no longer wish to cut down anyone  
I perceive to be my adversary.

He leaves the room.

THOMAS (V.O.)  
I wish instead to practice true  
virtue on others: compassion, mercy  
and forgiveness.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - WORK STUDY - NIGHT

Thomas looks through his drawers to find several blank sheets of paper.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And finally I should no longer feel  
shame for who I really am. For why  
should I remind myself of past  
betrayals and adversities?

He also takes out a fountain pen and inkwell.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I have felt love. And that alone  
should inoculate any ravenous  
compound.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE UNIVERSE - NIGHT (THOUGHT)

Thomas stands in the middle of an infinite plane in near darkness.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Why should I remain embittered as  
if I had only imbalanced humors  
within my body and tumultuous stars  
amongst my skies?

Slowly the firmament above him lights up with stars and planets rendered as if it were a medieval manuscript.

THOMAS (V.O.)

For the heavens continue to dance  
above me and the earth continues to  
unfold before me.

The plane below him turns into a map of the world as if it were a medieval manuscript.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Regardless of how little our faith  
is toward the true and the  
beautiful, it is always there.

Everything surrounding him becomes brighter and more animated. He looks around at the animated sky and ground.

THOMAS (V.O.)

We no longer have to be imprisoned  
inside the cave. Nor confined on  
lone islands by the raging ocean.

He walks around the plane and smiles.

THOMAS (V.O.)

For we are in a universe that  
yearns to be seen and explored.  
And to be loved as fully as  
possible. God, nature and each  
other. What a glorious universe we  
inhabit!

He stops to see the outline of a figure from the distance.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I declare all of these things, both  
future tasks and present words,  
because I truly love you.

The outline turns into a brightly illumined Sophia as she  
slowly walks to him.

THOMAS (V.O.)

You have found the keys to my heart  
and they shall remain in your  
possession. You have rekindled the  
long-dormant flame and it shall  
remain alight for all to see. You  
have opened my eyes and they and  
all of me shall be yours and yours  
alone.

She stands in front of him and they look into each other's  
eyes.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I will always strive to do the  
right and beautiful thing for you.

They slowly kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - WORK STUDY - DAY

Thomas writes the conclusion of his letter.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And even if you do not reciprocate,  
I shall ever remain yours from a  
distance. And I will still labor  
to attain a deeper and worthwhile  
communion.

After he finishes writing, he puts his pen down.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Once again, I fear I may have  
reached beyond what is easily  
attainable between us.

He folds the letter and puts it inside an envelope.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Nevertheless I hope these words  
will provide comfort rather than  
displeasure.

He seals the envelope and gets up to leave the room.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Even if you do not accept  
everything to heart fully and  
instantly, know that what I've  
written to you is honest and  
sincere.

EXT. THOMAS'S HOME - DAY

Thomas walks to his mailbox.

THOMAS (V.O.)

And I hope you and I can once more  
associate together with grievances  
reconciled, intentions clarified  
and perhaps have an end that is  
mutually desired.

He puts the letter inside the box.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Until then, I bid adieu.

He closes it and returns to his house.

INT. THOMAS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Thomas walks inside his house and toward the couch. He sits  
and after a moment, he picks up his phone and dials a number.

THOMAS

Hello. It's Thomas Ritchard. Is the Dean there?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COMPTON LABORATORIES - ROOM 100 - DAY

Students are in their seats. Some are talking amongst themselves and others are looking at notes and books. When Thomas walks down the stairs with his briefcase in hand, they all take notice and start to stop their activity to face him. He sets his briefcase down on the table and then looks at the students.

THOMAS

Good morning.

(a beat)

Before I begin, I must put to rest something that's been ever-present since I started teaching here.

(a beat)

Now you might know me as the professor who likes to dish out juvenile insults at all the great thinkers. And occasionally at the students too. But I want to do something bold. To take a chance and step outside. I realized a while back that I am not some master of the game or a winner of arguments. I am simply a human being. Nothing more. And the great minds before us who wrote great things were human too. All of us, past and present, are fallible, prone to make mistakes, prone to hurt others and cause other forms of harm. But I like to think we are also capable of thinking, pondering, understanding, learning and even changing for the better.

(a beat)

To study philosophy and its history is to learn how we've come to understand the world and ourselves. What I hope to do over the course of this semester is take you personally on a voyage of our understanding throughout the ages.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It is my hope for each of you then in turn embark on your own journey of understanding. To add your light to that great sum of light. And hopefully what you find can help the rest of us understand the world and ourselves better.

He smiles and walks to the board.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Let us begin.

He picks up a piece of chalk.

INT. DREYFOOS TOWER - THOMAS'S OFFICE - DAY

Thomas sits at his desk. His office now has more books and a little more decor. He reads a printed letter from Kay to himself. After a few moments, Robert walks by and sees him.

ROBERT

Hey Thomas.

THOMAS

Hey Robert.

ROBERT

What you have there?

THOMAS

Oh. Just something from an old student.

ROBERT

Is it by chance the same one you yelled at last semester?

THOMAS

(smiles)

The same.

ROBERT

And how is she?

THOMAS

She's doing well.

Thomas puts the letter aside.

ROBERT

I must say that you look well too. In fact you look more . . . Sane.

THOMAS

Well. I think we all go haywire at times. And if we don't, maybe we ought to.

ROBERT

Just don't go crazy on your students next time.

THOMAS

(smiles)

Right.

ROBERT

Talk to you later then?

THOMAS

Yeah. See you.

Robert leaves and Thomas looks at the door and then at his computer.

INT. HAYDEN LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Thomas walks through the main entrance and stops. He looks toward the service desk and sees Sophia there. After a few moments, he slowly walks toward the desk. He stops at the desk and stands in silence for a while. She does not notice him at first.

THOMAS

Hi.

She looks up at him.

SOPHIA

Hi.

THOMAS

(a beat)

Nice to see you.

SOPHIA

And you.

He looks at her for a while and then breaks the silence.

THOMAS

Would you like to play chess with me later?

CUT TO: BLACK.