

PROLOGUE

*Out of the darkness steps Robert.*

ROBERT

If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.

*Truman steps out next.*

TRUMAN

The best books are those that tell you what you know already.

*Then, Erin steps out.*

ERIN

Dark and silent and complete... Losing all hope was freedom.

*Next, the guard steps out.*

GUARD

The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously.

PROTESTER

And we know that once we have a majority that are dependent upon the government, we will lose our freedom. That's the next stage.

*They begin walking in a counterclockwise circle, each repeating their individual line, until eventually, all begin saying:*

ALL

They have done it to themselves.

*At first, it is disjointed and misaligned, but slowly, they come together as the circle slows, until they are standing still and chanting.*

ALL (CONT'D)

They have done it to themselves. They have done it to themselves. They have done it to themselves. They have done it to themselves. They have done it to themselves.

SCENE 1: SCENES FROM THE BREAK ROOM

*In the darkness, there are overlapping audio clips regarding "cancel culture" or similar things. The noise grows to a peak and then abruptly ends.*

ROBERT

I agreed with it all at first. Holding people accountable for their actions didn't seem like something that could lead to this.

PROTESTER (AS WOMAN)

Rapist! Killer!

ROBERT

But the problem was that it came from a place of hate for some, not love for others.

GUARD (AS MAN)

You bastard! You'll burn in hell for this!

ROBERT

I remember the day that it all really started, though.

*The blackness lifts to reveal a break room. Erin and Robert are passionately making out. After a few seconds, Truman walks in, staring at his phone.*

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Jesus, Truman, try to announce yourself next time.

TRUMAN

Breaking news. Listen to this.

*Truman turns the volume on his phone up.*

NEWS ANCHOR

-has just signed the executive order to ban all uses of racial slurs in any situation. Those who are found guilty will be forced to pay a fine and repeat offenders may be sentenced to prison time.

ROBERT

Come on. That's gotta be against the first amendment.

TRUMAN

Maybe it's not a bad thing, Robert. It could help reduce hate for those groups that are targeted.

ERIN

Yeah, and it's good to make sure that there are repercussions to what you say and do.

TRUMAN

Thank you, Erin.

*The room fades back into blackness again.*

ROBERT

I bet you're thinking that the new law sounds like a pretty good idea and that I'm some racist asshole. A little near-sighted, but reasonable. But then they started taking away the books. Any book with a slur in it was destroyed.

*The break room fades back in.*

ERIN

Did you know that the government is paying thirty-five dollars an hour to help with their book search?

ROBERT

You can't seriously be even considering joining that.

TRUMAN

Why not? It's more than we make an hour here.

ROBERT

Truman. Do you not see how terrifying this is?

TRUMAN

I think it's a pretty sweet deal.

*The room fades to black again.*

ROBERT

My friends didn't see the problem either.

*Truman and Erin walk into the light while ripping books. One drags a trash can with them. They toss the books in and light a match.*

*The match goes out while Truman and Erin exit. Erin hesitates for a moment, looking to Robert, but ends up leaving anyways.*

ROBERT (CONT'D)

But it didn't just stop at those books. They started destroying anything that the president and his people disagreed with. The Communist Manifesto. 1984. Fahrenheit 451. Common Sense. Soon after, a similar law as the Slur Law went into effect. This one banned speaking out against the government, which they called the "Anti-Propaganda" law. Same punishments.

*A lone protester emerges from the darkness*

PROTESTER

No speech, no freedom! No books, no freedom! No speech, no--

*A guard of sorts comes from behind the protester and subdues them. They carry the protester away.*





















DYLAN

We haven't had a winning season since you were in school.

PRINCIPAL HILL

How about joining a club?

DYLAN

And set up one of the little tables at lunch that everyone just ignores?

PRINCIPAL HILL

Dylan. Just stop. Stop the band. Focus on school, on college!

DYLAN

No, you just stop! You don't get it! This music is all we've got!

*Dylan storms out, grabs his guitar and begins to sing/play. The band joins him*

DYLAN (CONT'D)

I STAND WAITING AT THE CHECK IN WINDOW  
 WAITING TO PAY TO SEE HER AGAIN  
 FEELS LIKE I'M GIVING CASH TO SEE ANOTHER WHORE  
 WHAT'S EVEN THE POINT OF THERAPY AGAIN?  
 AND I KNOW NEXT WEEK I'LL BE BACK  
 TO GET MY WEEKLY FILL  
 OF HEARING AFFIRMATIONS AND REALLY NOT MUCH ELSE  
 AND EVERY MORNING TAKING A PILL

BUT WHY CAN'T I JUST BE HAPPY?  
 WHY WON'T THE SUN JUST STAY SHINING?  
 ITS NOT LIKE I'M BEING SAPPY  
 IM JUST STRUGGLING TO SEE THE SILVER LINING

THE SUN RISES AGAIN AND I'M BACK ON MY FEET  
 AFTER HALF AN HOUR STRUGGLING TO GET OUT OF BED  
 AND THEN I GOTTA WALK AROUND LIKE I HAVE MY SHIT TOGETHER  
 DO YOU THINK THAT I'D BE BETTER OFF DEAD?

WHY CAN'T I JUST BE HAPPY?  
 WHY WON'T THE SUN JUST STAY SHINING?  
 ITS NOT LIKE I'M BEING SAPPY  
 IM JUST STRUGGLING TO SEE THE SILVER LINING  
 WHY CAN'T I JUST BE HAPPY?  
 WHY WON'T THE SUN JUST STAY SHINING?  
 ITS NOT LIKE I'M BEING SAPPY  
 IM JUST STRUGGLING TO SEE THE SILVER LINING

AND GUESS WHAT? ITS RAINING AGAIN  
 NO SUN AND THE SKY  
 PLEASE SOMEONE TELL ME WHY?  
 AND GUESS WHAT? ITS RAINING AGAIN  
 NO SUN AND THE SKY

PLEASE SOMEONE TELL ME WHY?

WHY CAN'T I JUST BE HAPPY?

WHY WON'T THE SUN JUST STAY SHINING?

ITS NOT LIKE I'M BEING SAPPY

IM JUST STRUGGLING TO SEE THE SILVER LINING

WHY CAN'T I JUST BE HAPPY?

WHY WON'T THE SUN JUST STAY SHINING?

ITS NOT LIKE I'M BEING SAPPY

IM JUST STRUGGLING TO SEE THE SILVER LINING

SCENE 7: BASEMENT

*Dylan and Avah walk into the basement.*

DYLAN

So this is the practice space.

AVAH

It's so cool! Do you play all of these instruments?

DYLAN

I mean, I like to play a bit of everything. Obviously guitar is my favorite, but yeah, I mess around with it all.

AVAH

I've always wanted to play something. My mom put me in piano lessons as a kid but I stopped after a couple years.

DYLAN

Well, what do you want to learn?

AVAH

Haha, you're sweet.

DYLAN

No, I'm serious, what instrument down here do you want to play?

AVAH

Oh, um, what's the easiest?

DYLAN

Well, none of them are super easy, but out of the things down here, probably bass. It's pretty simple to pick up but its tough to get really good at it.

AVAH

Ok, yeah, that sounds fun!

DYLAN

So this is how you hold it...