

Rookwood

a musical comedy

(script version 2026 v11)

Logline

Ask the universe for the meaning of life at your peril.

In a sentence

Two brothers fight at their father's funeral, setting in motion a surreal and deadly journey.

Words: David Staume Music: Bryce Jacobs

Synopsis

Rookwood is a darkly comic and surreal musical that reveals the tumultuous story of Tom and his older brother Godfrey as they navigate grief, sibling rivalry, and existential dilemmas in the aftermath of their father's funeral at Rookwood Cemetery.

The story begins as the estranged brothers clash beside their father's grave. Godfrey, hardened and cynical, believes the world is a jungle where only the ruthless survive, while Tom believes life is a school meant for growth, kindness, and learning. Their heated exchange culminates in a fateful, violent encounter, when Godfrey confesses to a dark deed from their shared past and, in a burst of rage, 'murders' his brother.

Godfrey hides Tom's body in their father's coffin, but Tom is not dead. Trapped, lying on his father's corpse, and with limited oxygen, Tom disassociates from his body and confronts a parade of philosophical and spiritual figures drawn from the mourners at the funeral and seen through his imagination. Rawkins, a staunch atheist science teacher, the devout and punitive nuns, his grasping aunt, and the mystical witches, each present radically different visions of truth, suffering, and meaning.

Guided by the enigmatic guru, Yuthumi, and the wisdom of singing trees, Tom wrestles with vengeance, forgiveness, and the measure of a life well-lived. Two lessons emerge: Tom must understand who he is and why he's really trapped. Meanwhile, Godfrey is left to battle the demons of his own creation in a psychological landscape that mirrors his inner turmoil.

As dawn breaks, the gravedigger returns to fill in the grave and Godfrey returns to the scene of the crime, we learn if Tom survived the night, and whether he's learned the lessons that will ultimately set him free.

Cast

Tom	male, twenties
Godfrey	male, thirties, Tom's older brother
Yuthumi	male, Indian guru, fifties to seventies
Phyllis	female, seventies, Tom's aunt
Nun 1	female, seventies
Nun 2	female, forties to seventies
Nun 3	female, forties to seventies
Rawkins	male, fifties, science teacher
Edith	female, sixties, witch
Sharon	female, forties, witch
Gwendolyn	female, fifties, witch
Grave Attendant	male, seventies to eighties
Singing Trees (2)	represent the wisdom of nature

Scenes

Prelude

Act 1

1. Cemetery – Late Afternoon	Cast (minus Yuthumi)
2. Cemetery – Early Evening	Tom Godfrey
3. Cemetery	Tom Yuthumi
4. Cemetery Library	Rawkins Tom
5. Cemetery Convent	Nuns Tom
6. Cemetery Phyllis' House	Phyllis Tom

Intermission

Act 2

1. Cemetery	Tom Yuthumi Nuns Rawkins Phyllis
2. Cemetery Coven	Witches Tom
3. Cemetery Forest	Tom Trees
4. Cemetery	Godfrey Tom Yuthumi
5. Cemetery	Yuthumi Tom Godfrey Attendant

Songs

Prelude

Act 1

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Who's in the coffin? | Cast (minus Yuthumi) |
| 2. Useless | Godfrey Tom |
| 3. A pitchfork through the eyes | Tom |
| 4. The universe is going to shit | Rawkins Tom |
| 5. The least we can do for our Lord | Nuns |
| 6. Love was not the first thing on my list | Phyllis |

Intermission

Act 2

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. No God to save me | Tom |
| 2. The diamond in the turd | Yuthumi |
| 3. So mote it be | Witches |
| 4. Listen to the trees | Trees |
| 5. The quiet voice | Tom Trees |
| 6. This is all great advice | Cast |

Prelude

A large, Victorian-era gate, with the words 'Rookwood' crafted in wrought-iron, sits between lichen-encrusted sandstone walls in a late-afternoon light.

There is an outline of trees, in the background, to each side.

A crow flies in, lands on top of the gate, looks around, then preens.

The gates shudder, then open slowly, from the middle, drawing behind the walls to each side.

The crow pushes off, unhurriedly, and flies away.

A few moments later, we hear the crow, from on-high:

CROW (OS): Faark ...

Faark ...

Faaark!

The sandstone walls and the gates – now open – retreat to the sides.

In the middle distance we see a coffin, rows of chairs set in place for a burial, and a mound of earth to the side of a freshly dug grave.

ACT 1

ACT 1. SCENE 1. CEMETERY – LATE AFTERNOON

Surrounding trees shield the soon-to-gather mourners from the late afternoon sun. There is a prominent tree to the right, with one chair underneath, and additional seats to the left, so attendees may sit or stand.

The MOURNERS enter:

EDITH (female, sixties, witch) stops closest to the coffin. She observes the other mourners kindly, waiting for them to assemble.

TOM (male, twenties) stands to the right of the grave, sombre.

GODFREY (thirties, Tom's older brother) and PHYLLIS (female, seventies, Tom and Godfrey's aunt) follow. PHYLLIS sits on the seat to the right. GODFREY looks for where to stand. TOM moves closer to EDITH to make room for GODFREY.

TOM gives GODFREY more space than he needs.

The remaining mourners decide where to sit or stand. These are: three NUNS (forties to seventies), RAWKINS (male, fifties, science teacher), SHARON (female, forties, witch), and GWENDOLYN (female, fifties, witch).

All the mourners, except GODFREY, hold flowers.

The mourners are slow to settle.

EDITH: If everyone could please gather.

EDITH waits a moment for the mourners to settle.

EDITH: For the final part of our ceremony, Norman requested his son, Tom, read one of his poems, as he was buried, according to his wishes, under a tree.

TOM steps forward toward the coffin and slowly recites:

TOM: Sometimes I see ...

Within a tree ...

Every ...

Cosmic ...

Analogy

But then again ...

Possibly ...

I may be just a nut.

A momentary pause.

EDITH, SHARON, RAWKINS, GWENDOLYN and TOM erupt with a mixture of hearty and melancholic laughter.

GODFREY, PHYLLIS, and the NUNS, are unmoved.

GODFREY: That was totally stupid.

PHYLLIS: He was always off with the pixies.

Pause.

TOM: Perhaps you should have got to know him better.

GODFREY bristles.

EDITH places her flowers on the casket.

EDITH: I will always miss you my friend ... especially your tree-mendous sense of humour.

SHARON, RAWKINS, GWENDOLYN, and TOM, smile and laugh good-naturedly.

GODFREY, PHYLLIS, and the NUNS, are unmoved.

EDITH: I know some of you would like to say something.

... Tom?

Music swells.

TOM steps forward and places his flowers on the casket.

WHO'S IN THE COFFIN?

TOM: HE WAS MY DAD
HE WAS A FRIEND
AND I'M GLAD
I TOLD HIM AT THE END

HE NEVER TOLD
ME WHAT TO DO
BUT TO PERSIST
AND SEE THINGS THROUGH

*HIS FATHER WAS MEAN SPIRITED
AND HIS EARLY YEARS WERE GRIM
BUT HE WAS A BETTER FATHER
THAN HIS FATHER WAS TO HIM
HE TAUGHT ME TO DO THE RIGHT THING
NOT CARE WHAT OTHERS THOUGHT
AND NOTHING THAT YOU EVER DID
WAS EVER DONE FOR NAUGHT*

*I REMEMBER WHEN HE SAID
IT WAS A STANDARD THAT HE SET
HE'D SAY, 'YOU'RE BETTER OFF TO TRY THAN TO
REGRET'.*

TOM steps back and resumes his position, wiping a tear.

PHYLLIS stands, steps forward, and places her flowers on the casket.

PHYLLIS: *WELL I'M CONFUSED
WHO'S IN THE COFFIN
THAT IS NOT THE PERSON I RECALL
YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM AS HE WAS*

AND I KNOW THAT'S TRUE BECAUSE
THAT'S NOT HOW HE APPEARED TO ME AT ALL!

HE WAS MY BROTHER
BUT I'LL NEVER KNOW WHY
WAS HE HAPPY
BARELY SCRAPING BY

HE'D PLAY HIS JAZZ
WELL THERE'S A CRIME
OUT OF TUNE
AND OUT OF TIME

HE WAS ALWAYS VERY SELFISH
AS FAR AS I COULD SEE
HE'D NEVER CHANGE A LIGHTBULB
OR FIX ANYTHING FOR ME
HE WAS ALWAYS BUILDING FISHPONDS
OR PLANTING SOME NEW TREE
OR DRESSING LIKE A SPACE-MAN
TO INSPECT HIS HORRID BEES

HE ALWAYS WAS THE BLACK SHEEP

AND I'M PRETTY SURE

HE NEVER AMOUNTED TO VERY MUCH AT ALL.

TOM is grim.

PHYLLIS steps back and resumes her position.

RAWKINS steps forward and places his flowers on the casket.

RAWKINS:

I'M NOT CONFUSED

WHO'S IN THE COFFIN

BUT THAT IS NOT THE PERSON I RECALL

YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM AS HE WAS

AND I KNOW THAT'S TRUE BECAUSE

THAT'S NOT THE FRIEND THAT I KNEW AT ALL!

HE WAS AN ATHEIST

JUST LIKE ME

BUT HE COULD SEE

MEANING IN A TREE

HE WOULD SAY

THAT EVERY ACT OF WILL

WILL RETURN

A SWEET OR BITTER PILL

*BOTH OF US LOVED SCIENCE
AND WE BONDED OVER STARS
BUT I THOUGHT THEY ONLY TOLD US
HOW MEANINGLESS WE ARE
HE WAS A WISHFUL THINKER
WHO SAID I COULDN'T SEE
THE SUBTLE WORLDS AROUND US
SO WE OFTEN DISAGREED

BUT ONE THING WE AGREED ON
WAS AS OUR KNOWLEDGE GROWS
WE WOULD REALISE HOW MUCH MORE THERE IS TO
KNOW.*

RAWKINS steps back and resumes his position.

The NUNS gather, step forward and place their flowers on the casket.

NUN 1: *WE'RE NOT CONFUSED*

WHO'S IN THE COFFIN

NUN 2: *WE'RE CRYSTAL CLEAR*

THE PERSON WE RECALL

NUN 1: *WE KNOW EXACTLY WHO HE WAS*

NUN 3: *AND WE KNOW IT'S TRUE BECAUSE*

NUNS: *WE SPEAK TO THE HIGHEST SOURCE OF ALL!*

NUN 1: *HE'S GOING TO HELL*

NUN 2: *THERE'S NO DOUBT*

NUN 3: *AS HE WAS NOT*

THE SLIGHTEST BIT DEVOUT

NUN 1: *HE'D GO TO CHURCH*

NUN 2: *TO APPEASE HIS WIFE*

NUN 3: *WHO HE TERRORISED*

WITH PHILOSOPHY ALL HER LIFE

NUN 1: *HE ACCOMPANIED HER TO MASS*

MAYBE ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR

BUT HIS HEART WASN'T IN IT

HIS FAITHLESSNESS WAS CLEAR

NUN 2: *SHE DIDN'T DESERVE A GODLESS MAN*

MISGUIDED AND UNCOUTH

NUN 3: *AND SHE NEVER WOULD HAVE MARRIED HIM*

IF SHE'D ONLY KNOWN THE TRUTH

NUN 1: *HE'D HOLD HIS BIBLE UPSIDE DOWN*

AND OFTEN ROLL HIS EYES

NUNS: *SO HE WON'T BE MEETING JESUS NOW HE'S DIED!*

The NUNS step back and resume their positions.

*The witches (EDITH, SHARON, and GWENDOLYN) gather and step forward.
SHARON and GWENDOLYN place their flowers on the casket.*

SHARON: *WE'RE NOT CONFUSED*

WHO'S IN THE COFFIN

EDITH: *HE HAD HIS STRUGGLES BUT WAS EQUAL TO THE TASK*

GWENDOLYN: *HE PERSEVERED AND OVERCAME*

AND TO HIS CREDIT NEVER BLAMED

WITCHES: *AND THE WORLD IS ALL THE POORER THAT HE'S PASSED*

SHARON: HE WAS CHARMER

EDITH: THAT'S FOR SURE

GWENDOLYN: WHEN HE'D READ HIS POEMS

SHARON: WE WERE ALL ENTHRALLED

EDITH: HE WAS KIND

SHARON: HE LOVED TO GIVE

GWENDOLYN: AND HE WAS MODEST

IN HOW HE CHOSE TO LIVE

SHARON: WE KNOW HE LOVED HIS SONS

DESPITE THE PROBLEMS THAT HE FACED

EDITH: AND IF OUR COVEN INVITED MEN IN

HE WOULD SURELY HAVE A PLACE

GWENDOLYN: HE SAW A DEPTH IN NATURE

THAT CEMENTED US AS FRIENDS

EDITH: AND HE ALWAYS HAD A GOOD HEART ...

Hanging pause.

GWENDOLYN: ... EXCEPT RIGHT AT THE END ...

The WITCHES exchange, 'Well yes, that's true' looks.

EDITH: *HE THOUGHT THAT MAKING PROGRESS
WAS BETTER THAN PERFECTION*

WITCHES: *AND WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED WITH THE
GREATEST OF AFFECTION!*

GODFREY shakes his head.

GODFREY: Not by me.

TOM: Stop.

A GRAVE ATTENDANT (male, seventies to eighties) walks on, carrying a shovel.

GODFREY: There's irony being buried under a tree, seeing he could
hardly keep a roof over our heads.

The MOURNERS shift uncomfortably.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT plants his shovel in the ground.

TOM: He did his best.

*The GRAVE ATTENDANT walks to the grave and inspects the lowering device
on the coffin.*

GODFREY: Yeah. ... Well it wasn't good enough. ... One day you'll realise life's not about tree-hugging and philosophy and shit. It's about real things ...

TOM tries not to react.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT steps back.

GODFREY: ... Like money. Like not living in poverty. Like not having people look down on you.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT presses his remote.

With a clunk and a rattle, the coffin slowly lowers into the ground.

TOM: People didn't look down on him.

Everyone tilts their heads down, following the coffin into the ground.

TOM closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

TOM: He taught me to love nature. To love books. To be kind.

Pause.

GODFREY: I think being a spiritual person is code for someone who can't make it in the world.

TOM tenses, emotion building.

TOM: Not now.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT removes the lowering device and prepares the site for burial.

GODFREY: It's the truth.

TOM: Shut up.

The MOURNERS stiffen.

TOM: Please.

GODFREY: He was ... the most useless ...

TOM: Just shut up!

The MOURNERS ease back.

GODFREY tenses. He does not like to be told to shut up.

GODFREY: (maliciously) You have all his weaknesses.

TOM breathes deeply. Then completely breaks down, utterly distraught ...

TOM: You had to ruin it!

You never see good in anyone!

Even at his funeral!

Even for an hour!

EDITH stands her ground, but everyone else begins to back away.

GODFREY: (loudly, defensively, ironically)

I'm not the one scaring people away!

The MOURNERS have had enough.

TOM puts his head in his hands, trembling.

EDITH tries to recover the situation.

EDITH: There's ... food and drink ... at reception ... for anyone ...

But she's speaking to no one.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT observes nervously, standing rigidly, then taking his cue from the departing mourners, grinds into action and picks up his shovel.

EDITH approaches the GRAVE ATTENDANT.

EDITH: I think we should leave them alone.

THE GRAVE ATTENDANT stops, perplexed.

ATTENDANT: I can't leave an open grave.

EDITH: I know dear ...

... but maybe it's better to leave them be ... and come back.

ATTENDANT: I can't.

EDITH: Well ... up to you ...

EDITH places her hand, deliberately, on the GRAVE ATTENDANT'S shoulder.

EDITH: ... but I think it's going to get ugly.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT considers, then acquiesces.

ATTENDANT: I'll ... come back before dawn.

EDITH removes her hand.

The GRAVE ATTENDANT plants his shovel into the ground and departs with EDITH.

ACT 1. SCENE 2. CEMETERY – EARLY EVENING

TOM and GODFREY are alone. TOM is seated. GODFREY stands.

TOM has his head in his hands.

GODFREY: I've been thinking about the lease. It expires in a month, you can't afford it, the old man's gone ...

I'm not going to renew it.

Pause.

TOM: Is it possible ... to have one day ... perhaps the day of his funeral ... where you're not thinking about money?

GODFREY: It has to be discussed. These things don't go away.

TOM: I have to sort all of Dad's things.

GODFREY: He didn't have many things.

You have a month before Uni goes back.

Look, I paid part rent until Mum died. And while he was sick. And I haven't lived there for years.

TOM: Can you hear yourself?

TOM wipes his eyes and shakes his head.

GODFREY looks pityingly at his brother.

GODFREY: You need to be stronger than he was.

TOM looks up. Confusion and contempt written on his face.

GODFREY: He wasn't a good role model Tom. He had no ambition.

TOM: I think ... his ambitions ... were just different.

GODFREY: The world is going to eat you alive.

TOM: I don't think you understand the world we live in.

GODFREY: And what world is that?

TOM: A world that doesn't reward greed, for one.

GODFREY laughs.

GODFREY: Seriously?

TOM: A world where you can't get away with anything.

GODFREY: Oh for God's sake Tom. Open your eyes! It's you who doesn't understand the world. People get away with everything, every day. There's no consequences ... if you're rich enough and smart enough.

You can get away with murder.

TOM: No. Actually. You can't.

Everything we do comes back to us.

GODFREY: Spare me!

Music swells.

USELESS

GODFREY: *LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE WORLD TOM*

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE WORLD
IT'S NOT A PLACE WHERE THE LIKES OF YOU SURVIVE
IF YOU DON'T HAVE CUNNING
YOU'LL BE WELL AND TRULY SCREWED
IF YOU WAIT UNTIL THEY HIT YOU
YOU WILL END UP BADLY BRUISED
I DESPAIR THAT YOU CAN'T SEE IT
WHEN IT'S OBVIOUS TO ME
BUT YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE

YOU MUST WIN AT ANY COST TOM
YOU MUST WIN AT ANY COST
PLAYING FAIR'S FOR LOSERS AND THE LAME
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST
SHOULD BE A CORE BELIEF
WHERE THE PEOPLE ON THE TOP
SQUASH THE PEOPLE UNDERNEATH
I DESPAIR THAT YOU CAN'T SEE IT
WHEN IT'S OBVIOUS TO ME
BUT YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE

THE WORLD IS NOT A SCHOOL TOM
THE WORLD IS NOT A SCHOOL

*IT'S A JUNGLE WHERE YOU FIGHT AND KILL TO LIVE
THE SYSTEM RUNS ON MONEY
GET SOME SENSE INTO YOUR HEAD
STOP YOUR STUPID SEARCH FOR MEANING
GO MAKE SOME CASH INSTEAD
I DESPAIR THAT YOU CAN'T SEE IT
WHEN IT'S OBVIOUS TO ME
BUT YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE*

*GET SOME SKILLS TOM,
GET SOME SKILLS
PHILOSOPHY'S A DEAD-END USELESS WASTE
YOU CAN LISTEN TO THE BUDDHA
AS HE SITS UPON HIS ARSE
YOU CAN MEDITATE FOR HOURS
IN A BASKET-WEAVING CLASS
OR GOD FORBID, WHAT YOU'RE DOING
GETTING A BLOODY ARTS DEGREE
BUT YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE*

TOM:

*WOW.
WHEN THE GENES GOT SHUFFLED
THEY WERE SHUFFLED QUITE A LOT*

THEN CUT AND SPREAD AND
SHUFFLED 'ROUND SOME MORE
THAT WE HAVE THE SAME PARENTS
IS A STAGGERING THOUGHT
BECAUSE WE'RE VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE
THAT'S FOR SURE

GODFREY: THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG TOM
THAT'S WHERE YOU'RE WRONG
THINKING THAT OUR PARENTS WERE THE SAME
I HARDLY EVER SAW HIM
UNTIL I WAS NEARLY FIVE
OUT MAKING MENIAL WAGES
SO NONE OF US COULD THRIVE
FROM ONE LABOURING JOB TO ANOTHER
AND AS FAR AS I CAN SEE
YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE

YOU WERE HIS FAVOURITE TOM
YOU WERE HIS FAVOURITE!
AND THAT ONLY MADE ME HATE HIM EVEN MORE
IF HE PUT THE ENERGY INTO MAKING MONEY
HE PUT INTO BREEDING FISH

*WE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO STRUGGLE
AND OUR LIVES WOULD HAVE BEEN RICH
I RESENT IT, AND I HATE HIM
AND AS FAR AS I CAN SEE
YOU'RE AS USELESS AS THE OLD MAN USED TO BE*

TOM: *BECAUSE I'M DIFFERENT
YOU THINK I'M A LOSER
BUT I DON'T WANT TO WIN AT LIFE
AT ANY COST
IF OTHERS HAVE TO FEEL BAD
FOR YOU TO FEEL GOOD
THEN I THINK YOU'RE VERY SAD
AND VERY LOST.*

GODFREY: You live in a fantasy land.

TOM: I think the world is a school.

GODFREY: Then I feel sorry for you.

TOM: You think you're better than me, but I know things.

GODFREY: You seem to know things you can't prove.

TOM chooses not to reply.

GODFREY: I remember you saying, if you want to know something,
'ask the universe and it will answer you'.

So ... do it!

Ask the universe if the world's a school.

But you know what I reckon? I think you'll find the universe
is absolutely silent!

Pause.

TOM: Sure.

I will!

And I'm not afraid of the answer.

But when I tell you, I seriously doubt you'll listen.

GODFREY: Not at all. I can honestly say I'm looking forward, with
anticipation, to what the universe says.

You think you're smart, but you have no idea what I've had
to do to get where I am.

TOM: I don't think there's anything you can teach me.

GODFREY bristles.

GODFREY: Really?

With everything I've done for you.

TOM is taken aback.

TOM: Like what?

You're constantly putting me down!

What have you ever done for me?

Pause.

GODFREY: I fix things!

Pause.

TOM: Like?

GODFREY: That guy ... who bullied you at school.

TOM holds still, thinking.

GODFREY: I fixed it!

TOM: What do you mean, 'you fixed it'?

He died.

TOM stares at his brother, confused.

GODFREY: And you can get away with it.

The gravity of the confession slowly dawns on TOM. While GODFREY realises he can't unwind his words.

TOM: Jesus!

GODFREY: You will not tell anyone!

GODFREY'S panic rises with his realisation that his boast was a serious error.

GODFREY: You will not ... tell ... anyone!

GODFREY takes a step toward TOM.

GODFREY: I swear Tom ...you understand me?

TOM steps back.

TOM: No. I don't!

GODFREY steps forward.

TOM glances at the shovel behind him.

GODFREY: I'm deadly serious!

TOM: You can't do that!

You can't!

It's not right!

GODFREY: Just shut up ... and nothing will happen!

Forget I said it.

Can you?

Can you ... do that?

TOM and GODFREY hold tense positions for a moment, before TOM reaches for the shovel to defend himself, but GODFREY advances quickly and grabs TOM by the throat.

TOM drops the shovel.

GODFREY pushes TOM back onto the tree-trunk.

GODFREY: You will not tell anyone!

Because I did it for you!

Holding TOM by the throat, GODFREY pounds the back of TOM's head into the tree-trunk.

GODFREY: I did it!

For you!

GODFREY continues to pound TOM's head into the tree-trunk.

GODFREY: I ...

Did ...

It ...

For ...

You!

TOM goes limp.

GODFREY lets go of TOM and steps back.

TOM falls to the ground.

Stillness and silence.

GODFREY drops to his knees, next to TOM.

GODFREY: *(with extreme anger) No!!*

GODFREY straightens and looks around, hoping he hasn't attracted attention. He stands and spins around, looking for witnesses.

None.

GODFREY is momentarily paralysed, then looks at the grave.

GODFREY turns back to TOM, bends down, grabs TOM by the ankles, and pulls TOM's body parallel to the grave.

GODFREY lifts the clamps on the casket and opens the lid. He flinches at the sight of his father's corpse, then rolls TOM into the coffin.

GODFREY closes the casket lid and clamps it shut.

GODFREY stands, sees the shovel and walks toward it, picks it up, then pauses, looks at the grave, before carefully placing the shovel back exactly where the Grave Attendant left it.

GODFREY scans the scene, lifts his hands to his head, rocks back and forth for a moment, then leaves.

A long pause.

We hear a sudden inhalation of breath, then panicked staccato breaths, slowly becoming more regular.

A kick against the casket lid.

Then more. Harder.

We hear a long series of anguished, panicked cries and kicks.

Pause.

Then the crow-call, again, from on-high:

CROW:	Faark ...
	Faark ...
	Faaaark!

ACT 1. SCENE 3. CEMETERY

Audio and visual cues indicate a transition from physical reality to a dream-like hyper-real state.

The cemetery scenery remains visible in the mid-ground to ensure the audience always knows where Tom really is – in the coffin.

TOM is sitting on a chair in the foreground, anguished, breathing irregularly, trying to control himself. He screams through gritted teeth.

TOM: Arghhh!

We hear a kick against the casket lid.

YUTHUMI (male, Indian guru, fifties to seventies), wearing elegant robes, walks on and sits next to TOM. TOM does not look at YUTHUMI throughout the scene.

YUTHUMI speaks slowly, with a deep, resonant, educated tone, and radiates a profound calm.

YUTHUMI: Disassociating from your body seems like a good idea ... considering the circumstances.

Pause.

YUTHUMI: You're going to be all right. I promise.

TOM: How can you say that?

YUTHUMI glances at TOM, with a smile.

YUTHUMI: It's good you were close to your father.

TOM: Oh, very funny.

Not funny.

Actually ... not funny at all.

YUTHUMI: Do you remember your High School physics?

You're rather like Schrödinger's Cat.

Trapped in a box.

Alive ...

... or dead.

And we won't know which ... until morning.

Except it's not a thought experiment. Is it?

TOM: No.

YUTHUMI: You will be all right though, I promise.

You have a lot to learn, Tom. But at least, now, you have some 'quiet time' to learn it.

TOM puts his head in his hands.

We hear a kick against the coffin lid.

TOM's breathing accelerates. He closes his eyes. A sob. A tear.

Pause.

YUTHUMI: You ask the universe for the meaning of life at your peril.

TOM: Is that what I did?

YUTHUMI: You asked if the world was a school or a jungle. You asked a profound question.

TOM: Well I don't like what it's saying.

The world feels like a jungle.

He can't be right.

He can't.

I hate him, So much!

We hear a kick against the coffin lid.

YUTHUMI: I'm sure you'll figure it out.

So what's the plan?

Pause.

TOM: Well ...

TOM breathes deeply and looks dark.

TOM: Considering what he just did ... or tried to do ...

Music swells.

A PITCHFORK THROUGH THE EYES

TOM: *I'M GOING TO BREATHE SHALLOWLY*

OR HARDLY BREATHE AT ALL
BECAUSE THE AIR INSIDE OF HERE IS HARDLY FRESH
AND WHILE I CALCULATE THE OXYGEN
TO LAST ME 'TILL THE DAWN
I WILL MEDITATE AND PLAN MY BROTHER'S DEATH!

YUTHUMI sighs and shakes his head.

I COULD PROVE TO HIM HE ISN'T RIGHT
BUT THAT'S A POOR REVENGE
BETTER TO GET OUT OF HERE SOME HOW
THEN I'LL MAKE MY BROTHER SUFFER
WORSE THAN WHAT I SUFFER
AND SO TO GOD I MAKE A SOLEMN VOW

THAT WHEN MY BROTHER SEES ME
AND HE STARTLES AND HE STARES
WITH A LOOK OF HORROR AND SURPRISE
I'LL TELL HIM THAT HE'S FULL OF SHIT
AND NO-ONE GETS AWAY WITH IT

THEN I'LL STAB HIM WITH A PITCHFORK THROUGH THE
EYES!

WHILE I WAIT AND CONTEMPLATE
AND COUNT DOWN TO THE DAWN
AND HOPE TO HELL THAT SOMEONE WILL APPEAR
I'LL FIGURE OUT WHICH GOD IS RIGHT
AND PRAY TO THEM WITH ALL MY MIGHT
THAT HE OR SHE CAN GET ME OUT OF HERE!

MY BROTHER DOESN'T UNDERSTAND
THE WAY I THINK LIFE WORKS
THERE'S A BIGGER PICTURE HE CAN'T SEE
SO I'LL PROVE TO HIM THERE'S KARMA
THEN GO ALL JEFFRY DAHMER
AND DO WORSE TO HIM THAN HE EVER DID TO ME!

I'LL TELL HIM THAT HE'S FULL OF SHIT
AND NO-ONE GETS AWAY WITH IT
AND VIOLENCE IS NEVER EVER WISE
THEN I'LL GO ALL CAIN AND ABEL
AND COMPLETELY TURN THE TABLES
AND I'LL STAB HIM WITH A PITCHFORK THROUGH THE
EYES!

YUTHUMI looks perturbed.

YUTHUMI: Freedom and violence are incompatible. And anger will only use up oxygen.

You don't know who you are until you're tested, Tom. And it looks to me like this is a test.

Do you like who you are right now?

If the world's a school, Tom ...

Let it teach you.

ACT 1. SCENE 4. CEMETERY | LIBRARY

The cemetery scenery remains visible in the mid-ground to ensure the audience always knows where Tom really is.

TOM starts to pace, controlling his breath, looking to the heavens for inspiration.

RAWKINS walks on. He stops and watches TOM for a moment.

[Tom visually acknowledges the presence of all characters he summons up from now.]

RAWKINS: If you're praying ... I'm wondering, which God you're praying to?

There's ... quite a choice of course.

Your father didn't believe in any of them. Preferring to talk to trees. He once said though, 'If God does exist, even the Hindus lack the required imagination'. And that's saying something!

TOM: I'll figure it out.

RAWKINS: You were a good student in High School, Tom. I'm sure you will.

I remember a day in class, when you put up your hand and asked me, 'Why can't you melt celery?' ... I remember thinking, 'What an annoying little shit', but more importantly, 'There's a boy who thinks ... outside the box'.

(glancing at the coffin)

... Oh ... sorry!

Pause.

TOM: I don't know who to pray to, but I do know there's more to life. I feel it.

RAWKINS: I'm not sure feelings have very much to do with what's real.

TOM: Sometimes I've talked to God.

RAWKINS is incredulous.

RAWKINS: Did he reply?

Pause.

TOM: Kind of.

I'm not sure.

Maybe not.

RAWKINS: I have to ask. ... Where is that God now?

Now you really need him.

You do understand, Tom, you were talking to yourself.

TOM: How can you be so sure?

RAWKINS: Because I'm pretty sure you're talking to yourself right now.

TOM: Shit!

No. ... Hang on ... Whoever I was talking to was wiser than I am.

So it couldn't have been me.

Music swells.

RAWKINS: I think you need a dose of reality.

THE UNIVERSE IS GOING TO SHIT

RAWKINS: *WHEN YOU WALK IN THE PARK*
AFTER DARK WITH YOUR DOG
AND YOU TALK INSIDE YOUR HEAD
WITH WHAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE YOUR GOD
DOESN'T SOMETHING STRIKE YOU
THAT'S PERHAPS A LITTLE ODD?
... YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO SOMEONE ELSE ...
BUT ...

TOM: You're really, really, talking to yourself?

RAWKINS: Yes!

TOM looks forlorn.

RAWKINS: *IN THE MIDDLE AGES THE PEASANTS AND THE SAGES*
THOUGHT THAT GOD CREATED BABIES AND THE RAIN

AN ANGRY GOD MADE THUNDER
A BENEVOLENT GOD GAVE PLUNDER
GOD WAS ALL WE EVER NEEDED TO EXPLAIN
HE WAS BIG AND HE WAS MIGHTY
WHEN OUR KNOWLEDGE WAS ... WELL, POLITELY ...
MINIMAL ...

BUT WHEN WE STARTED THINKING ...
GOD STARTED SHRINKING ...
'TIL HE VANISHED UP HIS OWN KAZOO
WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE
AND SAYING PRAYER'S AS USELESS
AS A PAPERWEIGHT IN SPACE

The cemetery scenery is overlayed with elements of a library, with the appearance of a wall of books.

RAWKINS puts his arm over TOM's shoulder and orients him to the shelves.

RAWKINS: Every science book I ever read, Tom. This is where I came when I needed answers. And not a Bible, Koran, or New Age fantasy in sight. And not a single book on theology ...

... oh no, I tell a lie, here's one ...

right next to ...

easter-bunniology!

RAWKINS cracks up at his joke.

TOM's not laughing.

RAWKINS' laughter fades.

RAWKINS: Come on Tom ... if you can't have a laugh about God, lying on a decomposing atheist, when can you?

TOM ignores him.

TOM: Were you ever religious?

RAWKINS: I thought about the concept of God a lot when I was young, and I came up with an excellent definition:

A being whose body is the universe,

whose activity is evolution,

and whose will expresses itself as the laws of physics.

And then I realised, of course, I had defined God out of existence. ... You can give your life meaning Tom, but there's no meaning to life.

TOM: You're saying the world's a jungle.

I feel like an idiot.

RAWKINS: Sorry to be the one to tell you.

Actually ... not sorry.

Facts are facts.

And facts, Tom, must be faced.

RAWKINS: *THE UNIVERSE IS ABSOLUTELY INDIFFERENT TO OUR
NEEDS*

*IT DOESN'T CARE IF WE'RE SATISFIED OR IF WE'RE SICK
OR BLEED*

WE'RE ONLY HERE, DAMMIT

ON THIS GOLDBLOCKS PLANET

TO LIVE AND DIE - AND MAYBE WE WILL BREED

*THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO MEANING TO WHO YOUR
PARENTS ARE*

GENETICS IS A BIG GAME OF ROULETTE

*BE GRATEFUL FOR THE FACT YOU WERE CONCEIVED IN
THE FIRST PLACE*

AND THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING YOU GET ...

Pause.

TOM: What about herpes ... lymphoma, syphilis?

RAWKINS: Yes, well, when I say 'everything' I'm not being literal for
goodness sake. Look ...

RAWKINS: *LIFE'S COMPLETELY RANDOM*

OR DID YOU MISS THE MEMORANDUM?

ALL THE MAJESTY WE NEED IS IN THE SKY

IT'S THE VASTNESS OF THE LARGE AND SMALL

THAT BRINGS ME TO MY KNEES IN AWE

AND THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO POINT ASKING 'WHY'

TOM: *BUT ISN'T QUANTUM PHYSICS TURNING REALITY ON ITS HEAD*

AND TELLING US THE CONCEPT OF TIME AND SPACE IS DEAD?

WHEN THE ACT OF OBSERVATION CAN CHANGE THE PHYSICS OF LIGHT

EVERYTHING WE THOUGHT WE THOUGHT WE KNEW JUST CAN'T BE RIGHT!

RAWKINS: *WHILE WHAT YOU SAY, TOM, IS POSSIBLY TRUE*

IT MAY NOT APPLY IN ALL CONTEXTS

AND CAN BE EASILY MISCONSTRUED ...

DON'T LEARN YOUR SCIENCE FROM OPRAH

OR THAT DEVIANT DEEPAK CHOPRA

DON'T GET SUCKED IN BY LOONY NEW-AGE POINTS OF VIEW!

RAWKINS: Do you want to know why you're here?

You're here because none of your ancestors died childless!

And by ancestors I don't just mean your human ones. I mean your ancestors going back millions upon millions of years to the first bacteria to exist on Earth.

RAWKINS: *THERE'S NO LIFE AFTER DEATH TOM*
AND NONE BEFORE CONCEPTION
LIFE HAPPENS ONCE (IF AT ALL)
AND ONLY GOES IN ONE DIRECTION
THERE'S NOTHING BEYOND THE GRAVE TOM
AND NOTHING BEFORE THE CRADLE
AND I THINK YOU'LL FIND THAT DEATH, TOM
IS AS FINAL AS IT'S FATAL!

TOM: So there's no meaning to any of it? We live, we die, and it's ultimately pointless. A waste. Nothing really matters ... Nothing ... endures?

RAWKINS considers for a moment.

RAWKINS: An excellent precis.

RAWKINS: *ANY GREATER MEANING IS WISHFUL THINKING*
THESE ARE COLD HARD TRUTHS WE MUST ADMIT
IT'S ALL IN THE MECHANICS
OF THE LAWS OF THERMODYNAMICS
THE UNIVERSE DOESN'T CARE FOR YOU ONE BIT!

*WE'RE HEADING TO A HEAT-DEATH
WHERE ENTROPY'S AT MAX
IT'S PROGRAMMED INTO THE PHYSICS
AN INCONTROVERTIBLE FACT
SOME SAY I'M PESSIMISTIC
AND SOME SAY I'M ALOOF
BUT REALLY ALL I HAVE TO SAY IS
'SHOW ME THE GODDAMN PROOF!'*

*BASICALLY, MY SON
THIS IS IT
THE UNIVERSE - IS GOING - TO SHIT!*

TOM: Then can you help me get out of here?

RAWKINS: No.

But science can help you ...

Let's see ...

A coffin contains about seven hundred litres of air, give or take.

But mostly take.

Pause.

TOM: Take away the space of two bodies.

RAWKINS: And only a fifth of that is oxygen ... which you're consuming at the rate of ... say ... 250 millilitres a minute.

Long pause.

TOM: Shit.

RAWKINS: You're welcome.

I'm afraid the world's a jungle, Tom.

You're proving the point.

Pause.

TOM: So there's no chance there's more to life?

More than we can see?

RAWKINS: *(serious tone)*

If the cosmos isn't big enough for you, Tom ...

I can't help you at all.