

Desperately Seeking David H.

Play in one act

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JEAN DE DINTEVILLE, *one of the ambassadors. A French diplomat who lived during the 16th century.*

GEORGES DE SELVE, *the other ambassador, a French diplomat and a clergyman who lived during the 16th century.*

BYRON, *a farmer from Iowa.*

NAN, *Byron's daughter.*

MR. CLARK, *he is a fashion designer from England.*

MRS. CLARK, *she is Mr. Clark's wife, a textile designer, also from England.*

PERCY, *Mr. and Mrs Clark's cat.*

QUEEN, *Queen Elizabeth II.*

SETTING

All the characters are in one painting that is set center stage.

In the background, there are all their respective paintings, in which they can go back.

SCENE I

[Someone is climbing the stairs from backstage and opening the door. The light is turned on.

All characters are on stage.]

MR. CLARK, *with a typical British naive accent*: What is going on? I am currently sleeping, or at least I was! Who dare disturb me? Is it you, Mrs. Clark?

MRS. CLARK, *with an irritated and arrogant voice*: I doubt it, my dear. I would not wake you up.

MR. CLARK, *getting angry*: If it is not you, who dare disturb me?

MRS. CLARK, *with an authoritarian voice*: For God's sake, look outside!

MR. CLARK: I can't!

MRS. CLARK: Why not?

MR. CLARK: The dazzling light blinds me. Describe what is happening then!

MRS. CLARK: I have to say I can't see anything either. The light's too bright! I can't even remember the last time I saw such a bright light. If it stays on, we might even get a suntan!

BYRON, *in a typical American accent*: Have you ever seen the sun? Well at least a different sun from the one in England! (*Laughing*) You won't get suntanned, not with this sun light!

MR. CLARK, *vexed*: Americans are always boastful, it is absolutely unbearable!

BYRON: Come on! It was only a joke! Cheer up.

MR. CLARK, *still vexed*: I do not like jokes! Well, I can appreciate good ones, however you'r pretty bad at cracking jokes.

MRS. CLARK, *with an arrogant voice*: Oh... That is surprising. I thought that drugs made people laugh.

MR. CLARK, *angry*: How dare you? I have never been on drugs and you know that. I am not gullible enough to fall into such dangerous addictions!

MRS. CLARK, *with an arrogant voice*: Such a liar! A filthy liar!

MR. CLARK, *angry*: Oh, am I now? You are the bane of my life.

MRS. CLARK, *with an arrogant and angry voice*: And you? Do you even question yourself? What are you? A cheater! Aren't I right? Remember, you cheated on me.

MR. CLARK, *whispering, very irritated*: Do you always need to say that out aloud? We already talked about this... Please!

MRS. CLARK, *arrogant*: I....

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *cutting Mrs. Clark off, in a British accent*: Please, hush now, we have more important things to solve! Byron, since you are the tallest, can you see anything? Anything at all?

BYRON: Of course, your Majesty.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Describe what you see, please.

BYRON: I see a woman. Hum... she looks like David's mom. She is walking around in circles. Oh, dear is she crying? (*He asks himself out loud*) she is crying, definitely crying. (*Panicky*) Perhaps her cries are what woke Mr. Clark up. (*People talking in the background*) Can you please hush! She is talking, and I am trying to hear it, it seems that she is calling David, or at least trying.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Good God, why is she crying? It doesn't make sense.

BYRON: I don't know. I really have no clue.

MRS. CLARK, *frightened*: It sounds strange, doesn't it? I have a foreboding feeling that something is wrong.

MR. CLARK, *laughing*: Rubbish! His mother is angry at him. That's all! Stop being melodramatic.

MRS. CLARK, still *frightened*: you speak nonsense! Something is wrong, I am sure of it. How many times have you seen David's mother cry! And anyway, my instincts are always right.

[Mr. Clark laughs]

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *cutting Mr. Clark off, in a British accent*: You are right, my dear, David is such a nice boy, he would never do anything bad, and especially something that would put that young woman in such a dreadful state!

MR. CLARK, *laughing*: And? What's your point?

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Can you see anything else Byron?

BYRON: Oh yes, there is movement. David's mother is leaving the flat. Oh, how odd, I can see us too.

MRS. CLARK, *puzzled*: Excuse- me? What do you mean by ‘I can see us too’?”

MR CLARK, *laughing*: This is what we call a mirror!

MRS CLARK, *angry*: For God’s sake, let him speak and stop acting like a child.

BYRON, *impassive*: I know what a mirror looks like, and just so you know it isn’t one, or at least not a basic one. This is something different and I can see David next to us, in the same framework. And the whole thing is surrounded by blue stripes, or at least it seems so.

MRS. CLARK: What is it?

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Oh my dear, what he is describing is what we call a laptop. It was invented soon after you got painted. Moreover, what you are seeing, Byron, is perhaps Facebook, a social network.

BYRON: A what? A social network? What is that? And what is a computer? For God’s sake it doesn’t make any sense to me.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: My dear fellows everything is normal, it is something new, a new piece of technology, and at least it is new for you. Just tell yourselves that it is the new way to share things with your friends online. It is actually quite hard to explain the concept of Facebook or of a social network in general.

BYRON, *he says uncertain*: All right but why would David decide to share this with some of his friends?

QUEEN ELIZABETH: When I think about it, he might not have any friends. We have never seen anybody else apart from his mother and his father, so I would not be able to answer your question.

BYRON: Everything is quite odd, don’t you think? David’s mother’s fuss was already strange, and now that picture? Something’s wrong.

[People crying downstairs]

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Can you hear that?

[Everybody is silent, and trying to hear what is happening.]

MR. CLARK: Of course we can hear something. The only problem is that it sounds like mumbling from here. Byron, can you see anything?

BYRON: No, nothing actually. After David’s mother left I haven’t seen anything more. However, I am pretty sure that the cries that we have just heard are worrying.

MR. CLARK: Byron, enough with your trite comments! Everyone here understood. Strangely we are not thick.

MRS. CLARK: Oh... poor darling. She probably broke one of her nails!

MR. CLARK: OK I apologize Byron. Some people are indeed thick here. Please stop saying stupid things, it is related to David not to her nails. (*Rolling his eyes*) Let's recapitulate: first, David's mother suddenly came into the room and shouted. Her scream was loud since it woke me up. We could clearly hear her calling David, however this time her voice sounded different, as if something was wrong, as if she was worried, scared, stressed. And just a few minutes after that, we heard some cries. Everything is quite worrying isn't it?

BYRON: Wait a minute, when was the last time we actually saw David?

MRS. CLARK: Well since he comes here to relax every day I suppose that he came after school, perhaps only a few hours ago.

MR. CLARK: Hum, I am pretty sure that he did not. I would have heard something. We would have heard something. At least steps on the floor, or the squeaky noise that his bed makes when he sits on it, not even his little conversations that he has alone to cheer up. We did not hear a single noise, not a breath, nothing.

BYRON: I agree with Mr. Clark on this one. We would have seen him. I would have seen him and I can assure you that I didn't. I can assure you that he didn't come back home today.

MRS. CLARK: Since when does a child come home on time? Yes, he rarely comes home late, but give the kid a break. He probably just went to the cinema, or perhaps he met his friends with whom he shares pictures on social network or he may even be outside, in a park reading a book. Who knows?

[Mrs. Clark laughs nervously in an attempt to reassure her friends.]

MR. CLARK, *irritated*: Come on darling! Use your common sense, please. Tell me, have you ever seen David playing with anyone, ever? He probably has no friends. I know it may be the harsh truth but the truth remains the truth.

MRS. CLARK, *with compassion*: Oh... Poor kid, I had never really thought about it this way. It is probably the reason why he is sad. He may feel like a social outcast, disliked, unloved, unwanted...

[Mrs. Clark starts crying]

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Dear Mrs. Clark, everything will be alright. Do not worry. He knows that he is loved and wanted. (*Looks at Mr. Clark*) I do have to admit that your wife might be

right. However, it is too early to assume things, we cannot figure out much about David's situation.

BYRON: I am sorry to break your little debate but I really do not understand why the boy posted this picture on the comp...compo...compu... (*Stumbles and looks at the others asking for help*)

MR. CLARK, *spelling slowly:* C-O-M-P-U-T-E-R, it is called a computer. But anyway, Byron you may be right about questioning the picture. David never posts anything on social media, I did not even know he had an account...

[Everybody is silent for a few seconds.]

MRS. CLARK: Honey, you did not even know that it existed. And I agree with you two, why did he post this picture of him with us in the background? What could it mean? If it means anything.

[Once again, everybody is silent for a few seconds.]

MRS. CLARK, *touching her hair:* I wish I had known when my picture was being taken. My hair must look terrible on the photo...

MR. CLARK, *exasperated, he sighs:* Please stop complaining about your...

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *interrupting:* Excuse-me but I think someone is talking downstairs. Byron, you are the one closest to the door, are you able to hear anything?

BYRON: Yes, I shall listen. Hum... I'm pretty sure that what we are hearing is David's mother's voice.

MRS. CLARK, *impatiently:* And what is she saying?

BYRON: She is talking very fast. It is quite hard for me to understand everything she is saying. She sounds nervous, I cannot understand who she is talking to, nobody is answering her...

MR. CLARK: She is probably just on the phone.

BYRON: Wait a minute (*silence*) I've just heard something. She is talking about David. Oh dear, good God, did I just hear her say "disappeared" ... Has my little boy disappeared??

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *seems panicked and impatient:* Focus! What else is she saying, what else? We want to know.

[Sound of a door being shut, and few seconds later, sound of wheels scraping on the ground.]

BYRON: I can't hear anything else, she probably left.

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *losing a part of her restraint:* For God's sake! Now we can say that something occurred to David!

MR. CLARK, *worried:* Byron, when you heard the word "disappeared", are you sure that she was talking about David?

BYRON: Yes, as you said previously, no one here is thick.

MRS. CLARK, *with the hands joined toward the sky:* I deeply hope that nothing bad happened to my little boy... my little David... *(Tears welling up in her eyes)*

MR. CLARK *in a kind and gentle voice, talking to Mrs. Clark:* Hey, like the saying goes, prepare for the worst and hope for the best, ok?

BYRON, *talking with an impassive tone of voice:* David might be dead. Let's just hope that if such is the case he did not suffer too much.

QUEEN ELIZABETH, *frightened:* Excuse-me? Do you realize what you are saying good sir? The mother said "disappeared", not "killed", you idiot!

BYRON: Mmh, yeah true, so let's hope for the best, he might have been kidnapped.

MRS. CLARK, *looking at her husband:* Darling! Please, tell me it is impossible! Tell him that he is wrong. That David is just lost or that his mother panicked over nothing...

MR. CLARK: I wish I could say that, but sadly if we take into account all the things that happened recently, I would not be surprised if what Byron said really happened. *(Hesitating)* However, it could also be a simple misunderstanding...

[All the characters quiet down, pondering on the events, and hoping for the best]

[EXEUNT]

SCENE II

[All characters are on stage except PERCY]

MRS. CLARK: But where could he possibly be?

Mr. CLARK: I haven't got a clue darling, despite the fact that we knew him well, at least I thought that we did.

GEORGE: T' was known that he was a reserved fellow.

JEAN: Indeed, methink that he was a pariah.

NAN: He has always been an outcast. I remember seeing him bursting into tears like an old lady. He was always complaining about his classmates. He's been like this for all his school years: a punching bag. You know, his only obsession was to paint ourselves and embellish his different canvas... it's true that his childhood was not the softest. How do you expect him to be confident? Come on, answer me.

BYRON: You've got a point Nan. But where is the old cow?

QUEEN, *with a perfect British accent.* Who are you referring to, old pauper?

BYRON, *ironically.* 'scuse me, your majesty, I forgot divine blood flows within your veins!
(Aside) This old lady is so moody...

NAN, *infuriated.* Daddy, a little respect please... let's stay focused on our discussion: the disappearance of our friend, David.

QUEEN: Vile subject, I think our dear friend, is a misunderstood artist, and so am I.

[ENTER PERCY]

PERCY: Meooww, Meooww...

[EXIT PERCY]

QUEEN, *upbeat tone, Freud personality.* My last canvas! Abysmal!

[EXIT QUEEN]

MRS. CLARK: HUM, Hum... did you see on the computer, on faceb ... faceboo, whatever that is...

MR. CLARK, *irritated, interrupting Mrs. CLARK.* Honey, this is not the time!

MRS. CLARK: Wait, listen to me. David posted a picture of himself on the Internet, and we appear in the background. David's relatives say it was his very last sign of life.

JEAN: Sayeth she what? What is a “picture”?

GEORGE, *bewildered:* I don’t have the faintest idea, my friend...

NAN: Ooh, that’s interesting... We mattered to him, our dear David cared about us! He was proud of what we had become. [pause] Perhaps he was not proud of what he had become...

[ENTERS QUEEN]

QUEEN: I think to better investigate the disappearance of one of my subjects, we need to better understand this man.

BYRON, *aside:* She is a total schizophrenic!

MR. CLARK: Here is a good idea! We should each remember David. All our memories with David.

JEAN: If I may say so myself, I’m convinced...

GEORGE: ... that WE were the first to know our painter.

BYRON: I was the third person painted, I am certain of it and then my daughter was painted, just after me.

NAN: At the time he seemed less withdrawn... maybe a little happier...

QUEEN: Then he painted his majesty, I immediately felt that we both had the artistic flair, if he had not disappeared, he could have had a career in painting, just the same as me.

MR. CLARK, *speaking while the Queen continues mumbling upstage:* He! He is not dead, he can still have a career and a great one. Stop talking non-sense. To go back to the subject, after you Byron it was our turn to be painted...

MRS. CLARK: It was quite recently actually, I have the impression he even finished us off in a hurry.

NAN: Oh! Really? Ah! Here's a clue, right? Or am I wrong?

MRS. CLARK: That means he was probably planning his escape! Or his disappearance.

[ENTERS PERCY]

PERCY, *stubbornly, as if he wanted to point something out:* Meoww Meowww!

BYRON, *angry:* Unbearable cat, go away. Shoo! Shoo!

[EXITS PERCY]

MR. CLARK: Did you notice that he painted us all in a chronological order?

GEORGE: I'm not surprised, he was meticulous.

NAN: It's true that everything he did was calculated, he probably left some clues, let's try to find others. And this time let's look intently.

QUEEN: Poor child, why do we find the greatness of a painter when he is on his deathbed or post mortem? *(There is a change in the way she speaks and acts)* The only time we speak about a genius of modern art is when he is dead or really old. Look at all those Spanish artists: Picasso, Juan Miró or Salvador Dalí. We look at their early works only in their museum, long time after they painted them. He must be really discouraged about this world and people inhabiting it.

[ENTERS PERCY]

PERCY, *trying to applaud but falling on the stage:* Meoww! Meoowwww! Meooowww!

BYRON: Didn't I tell you to go away? *[Shouting]* Annoying cat! Go away! Shoo!

[EXITS PERCY]

MR. CLARK: Oh God, she is getting crazier and crazier! It is starting to get on my nerves.

MRS. CLARK: You are rude, darling, I think she might be right. And that's the reason why he painted us and why you exist. Unfortunately, he did not persevere in the field of arts, his only passion. Oh it is really a beautiful craft... *[Starts to daydream but stops and continues to talk.]* He has never experimented friendship or love, except perhaps familial love. His life was dedicated to painting but he is not recognized as an artist, at least not as a respected artist but more as a lunatic. That is not normal. Look at what happened to him because of that!

MR. CLARK: Now that you have said that, it seems clear we all have been painted in the same canvas. He created a new type of art blending different generations. And in order to stay a pioneer he disappeared to let his painting create a hype about his art. And himself as an artist! At least that's what I think.

BYRON: Good god! You all sound crazy! Are you even listening to yourselves? You are all becoming mad. All of you! You are just like the old cow back there! Acting just like that lunatic.

QUEEN: Sorry? Am I hearing your despicable words again, old Farmer?

NAN: Daddy, please stop being so mean with them, you don't know anything about art and loneliness because you have always had friends, and you have always had me.

BYRON: You might be right, but is it the lack of friendship that caused his disappearance?

NAN: We should ask the ambassadors about that.

GEORGE: Friendship is the linchpin of the human race.

An absence of contact's regrettable.

JEAN: Even with all the wealth I owned, I felt

No glee. Cheerfulness came with my holy

And kind friend. He kept me away from the

Seven deadly sins. I am so grateful.

BYRON: What have you just said? Is it English or another language?

NAN: Yes father, they explain why having a friend is essential.

BYRON, *laughing*: I was kidding you!!!

QUEEN, *angry*: Do you think that is the appropriate time for a joke? Our creator left us. And our friends, the ambassadors, made a beautiful statement! You are an old pauper for sure now!

BYRON, *getting angrier and faltering*: Do you ... do you ... Do you know what the old pauper tells you!!!

NAN: Stop that, we've got something on!

MRS. CLARK: You're calm and relax now? Nice. The ambassadors are right. Personally, I've never seen anybody in his bedroom. Apart from him, that is.

MR. CLARK: Neither have I.

BYRON: Same here.

NAN: I've never seen anybody either.

QUEEN: It is true that since I have been painting, nobody came to admire our canvas.

BYRON: It reminds me when I was a young adult in the countryside. Sometimes, I worked for weeks without seeing anybody, and that was hard. I mean, being alone in a vast area's really tough. Perhaps he was like me but figuratively. Totally lost.

QUEEN: You see, when you want, you are able of deep introspection.

BYRON, *ironically*: Thank you from the bottom of my heart, your Majesty.

[EXEUNT]

SCENE III

[All the characters are on stage except PERCY.]

Indistinct sounds and voices from backstage. The person stopped crying.]

GEORGE, *standing still center stage. He looks on his left, then on his right and seems absorbed about something:* Methinks I hear something strange. Stop talking!

QUEEN: What do you mean “something strange”? I shall be given the opportunity to express myself for once! You should respect the Queen!

JEAN: With all due respect, my fair Queen, remain quiet.

[The characters remain silent. The indistinct sounds and voices are now louder.]

BYRON: Indeed, our friend David was so isolated! Maybe that is why he painted us... I know what loneliness means, personally. We have lived our whole life secluded from society. We were just treated like bumpkins. Poor David I can ...

QUEEN: That is enough farmer! We already had an account of your life but that is not the subject here! [More calmly.] Poor David... I hope he will not get hurt! He painted me such a long time ago that it feels like he is my own son now...

MRS. CLARK: Oh my god! I can hear those sounds too now!

MR. CLARK: They seem familiar to me...

[Mr. and Mrs. Clark turn around to where they think the sound is coming from.]

MRS. CLARK, *shouting:* I know!

[The farmers, surprised, look at her awkwardly]

MRS. CLARK: I think it David’s television! In his bedroom!

NAN, *tight-lipped:* Thank you, miss for this demonstration but instead of screaming can you explain to us WHY this is important?

[whispering] I can’t believe it! She is so arrogant... as all the city-dwellers ...

MRS. CLARK, *yawn:* I was about to do so before you interrupted me...

[*She takes her time to answer, takes a small mirror out of her handbag to check on her hairstyle, she looks at all the others, who are waiting for her to speak*] What time is it George?

GEORGE, *surprised, looking at a clock on the table:* Oh! It is precisely 9 pm. Why?

MRS. CLARK: Just as I thought. Jean, do you still have this log where you write what happens every day?

JEAN: Of course, fair lady, I do have it with me.

[Jean takes a heavy book on a shelf and hands it to Mrs. Clark.]

MRS. CLARK, *opens the book, reads a few lines at the end of each page and quickly turns the pages:* 7 pm: we start to hear the television. [*She turns a page.*] Here it is the same. [*She turns another page.*] And here again. And according to this, the television is switched off at... 8:30! You said it was 9:00... This is not normal! It proves something happened to David!

MR. CLARK: Oh, calm down! We cannot be sure of that! Maybe he has just forgotten to turn the TV off tonight... Or maybe he is sleeping. We do not know! You know David! You know how much he can be absorbed in his paintings... to forget this cruel world around him ...

QUEEN, *ignoring Mr. Clark:* The volume of the television is so high that even I would not be able to sleep!

BYRON, *totally at a lose:* By the way, could anyone tell me what a TV is?

MRS. CLARK, *rolling her eyes:* I can't believe that ...

[Percy comes back from backstage. He has colored stains on its fur.]

MRS. CLARK: I maintain that it is not normal! Something terrible must have happened! In the countless days reported in the book the television has never been on after 8:45 pm!

[Suddenly, the farmers notice Percy.]

NAN: Oh Percy! Where have you been to be so dirty? Have you played in the mud?

MRS. CLARK, *seeing her cat and the stains on its fur:* Oh my god! My Percy! Those stains! Is that blood?

BYRON, *analyzing the stains on the cat:* For all I know, blood is not orange... Nor blue.

MRS. CLARK, *losing her temper:* Alright! If it is not blood; then what? My Percy's fur is as white as snow usually, and he is very clean. So how can you explain those stains?

GEORGE, *touches a green stain on the cat fur which leaves green on his fingers:* It seems like paint. Dost thou agree with me?

JEAN: I agree with thee, this could be fresh paint!

Sacrebleu, it makes sense!

GEORGE: Of course it does!

MR. CLARK: Fresh paint? But where would Percy find paint?

[The characters sit around the table to think about the question. Meanwhile, Percy leaves, unnoticed by the others.]

QUEEN: Maybe this is a message from David! He wants us to know that everything is fine!

BYRON: I trust you, your Majesty, but this is too far-fetched for me! Am I the only one to think that our respectable queen is becoming senile?

JEAN, aside: I agree with thee, at her age; no doubt

That she is having hallucinations!

GEORGE: If your Highness wants to say such nonsense

Every time she opens her mouth, it better

Remains closed. Oh, for God's sake, Jean is right!

MRS. CLARK: I am on the ambassadors' side for once. I do not get the link between David and my cat.

MR. CLARK: Alright everybody. I think we should all calm down and look for evidence now.

QUEEN, getting prepared to deliver a speech: As I said, we should not be worried. Look at this cat, this silent shadow which moves slowly, those eyes shining with intelligence, this fur which seems as colorful as David's paintings! Is it not the proof that David is still at home? That we should keep calm, and react with dignity...

JEAN: Here she goes again! Talking nonsense!

MRS. CLARK: That is ridiculous! You're the queen of nonsense! Don't you have any feelings towards David? You heartless scumbags! I am sure we are missing something very important. There is something weird... Something strange... I... I... *[She starts crying.]*

MR. CLARK: Honey! Please calm down! Everything is going to be fine; I promise!

MRS. CLARK whispering: Blood, paint, ... blood, paint ... Could anyone tell me what is the difference?

GEORGE, whispering to Jean: Well, this is even more ridiculous.

BYRON: Instead of arguing, let's summarize what we know. We heard some indistinct noises as everyday but at an unusual hour. Secondly, Percy arrived with colorful stains on its fur. I don't know what this mean, but I'm sure it is not normal.

NAN: Maybe it is a sign from the Devil!

QUEEN, angrily: The devil now? And I am the one exaggerating! Come on!

JEAN: We will not move if we keep repeating

The same things! The most important right now

Is to know where David is! So, hurry up!

MR. CLARK, walking around nervously: I think we should all try to search everywhere! If we consider that what the queen said is true, maybe David has left other clues!

BYRON: I think it is a good idea since we do not seem to have a better solution!

[The characters begin to move the furniture to look for something unusual.]

GEORGE: Look! I found something! That might be a clue.

[He carries a world map. They gather around a table to look at the map]

NAN: Why are there some little dots on some locations on this map?

GEORGE: Actually, that is the question! I

Am quite sure that they were not there before!

MRS. CLARK: Ah! You see? I am sure it is linked to David! Maybe they are all the places he wants to visit and he has been to one of them?

BYRON: It could be... But in my days people did not travel much in a lifetime! Not to say never! So why should David want to travel? And were would he find the means?

QUEEN: Besides, there are so many dots on this map! If he is really in one of these places he could be anywhere in the world!

JEAN: I pretty much agree with the farmer...

David is quite young so I do not think

He has the means to travel very far...

MRS. CLARK: I have another idea! We could split into teams! The ambassadors and the farmer, look at the map to see if there is any hidden detail that could tell us where David is.

Honey and Nan, search again on the right side of the room. Look everywhere! I will search with the queen on the left side!

[All agree and start searching.]

BYRON: So, we are in the United States... The closest points are...

GEORGE: Excuse me, my dear, but methink we're not.

BYRON: So, where are we?

GEORGE: Well, in the United Kingdom of course!

JEAN: If we cannot agree on where we are

We won't find anything interesting.

Just let me get my lovely compass

So, I can find our precise location...

QUEEN: All my body aches! Why do we listen to Mr. Clark when he asks to find clues about David and not to me when I repeat that he is fine!

MRS. CLARK: I just thought about something... Not long ago we saw David's picture! That is another clue!

NAN: Yes, I remember, with all the nasty comments below... David must have felt very bad if he read them!

MRS. CLARK: And maybe that is why he run away! If he received this kind of remarks every day, no doubt he wanted to leave!

MR. CLARK: I am not sure... He did not seem sad on the photo...

QUEEN, *looking at the world map again:* Now that you are saying this, all the places circled on the map are very remote! Greenland. Here is a dot on the Amazon rain forest...

BYRON: Maybe David wanted to disappear? Live far away from a society that does not understand him! Just like we did with my daughter, in our little house!

MRS. CLARK: How can you say that? Just by looking at some dots on a map? Do you not remember the fresh paint on Percy's fur! For me it means that David hasn't left!

MR. CLARK, *trying to explain to his wife by showing the dots on the map while the ambassadors are holding it so everyone can see:* Celia, look! All of this makes sense!

MRS. CLARK: If David felt sad and lonely, why would he want to go to even more isolated places?

NAN: Because he is still the David we all know! Caring about the others! He does not want his family, and friends, and us, to see him suffer! So, he leaves to find some peace. But he doesn't tell us so that we won't prevent him from going!

GEORGE: I agree it could be a possibility. When we were travelling to complete missions as ambassadors, we would not reveal our families all the details!

MRS. CLARK: How can we be sure that he made it safely to one of these places? Accidents do occur unfortunately!

QUEEN: Maybe we can try to go in our original paintings and ask around if someone has seen David? He really likes to visit museums, and if he painted us here, maybe he would like to see our original selves!

BYRON: At last a clever idea! Hooray! Let's do it!

[All the characters go back to their frames upstage. We hear them talk indistinctly. After a short time, they all come back.]

BYRON: Nothing on our side. He has not been to Chicago...

MR. CLARK: It seems like he hasn't been to the Tate museum either...

GEORGE: And methink he hasn't gone to London

Because he also hasn't visited

The national gallery where we are.

QUEEN: Okay, so no tangible result... Maybe because he hasn't left yet!

MR. CLARK: And that would explain the fresh paint on Percy! That's it!

NAN: You forget the indistinct sounds that we still hear! I think it is quite important! And it doesn't match your theory!

BYRON: Maybe he decided to join God?

NAN: You mean... He is dead?

BYRON: No! I mean, David is a very pious boy. He is a virtuous young man...

MRS. CLARK: These farmers! So narrow-minded and confined in their religious beliefs!

QUEEN, *speaking to herself*. No one is listening to me! I used to reign over an obedient people who listened to what I had to say! I can understand this poor David! My whole life, I've been listened to as the queen of the United Kingdom. But now... I can understand how you feel when no one cares about what you have to say! When your voice vanishes into thin air, as a dead leaf falls from a tree in autumn. I feel like David. My whole life, I have been represented only as a queen, as David has always just been David H. As young people today, who show themselves in networks; simply through a superficial representation of themselves; a picture; physical appearance. David was categorized as different and rejected, just as I have been categorized as the picture of a queen, whose personality doesn't matter...

[EXEUNT]

SCENE IV

[All characters are on stage, except Percy. We still hear the indistinct sounds of the TV on.]

MR. CLARK, *with a British accent*: So, if we recapitulate everything. All we know is that he must have been in his room recently as the television is still on and Percy has fresh paint on its fur.

MRS. CLARK, *with a British accent*: Talking about Percy, where is he?

NAN, *thinking*: Yeah, it's true that this cat keeps disappe...

[ENTERS Percy]

QUEEN, *interrupting daughter*: Oh! Here he is!

JEAN, *with a French accent and a childish tone, petting Percy*: Where hast thou been? It has been a long time, too long!

NAN, *quite excited*: Look! He has something in its mouth! Do you think it could be a clue?

BYRON, *with reasoned voice*: Let's try not to count our chickens before they hatch. We shall see what Percy brought us.

[The farmer takes the thing from Percy's mouth]

BYRON, *dubitably*: um... well, it looks like a drawing.

[Shows the piece of paper to everybody]

GEORGE: Sacrebleu, methink it's a starry sky.

JEAN: Look, I see a comet, a bright comet.

MRS. CLARK: Oh! And there's even a tail, identical to Percy's.

BYRON: All we can see is seen through a window. A window similar to mine.

MR. CLARK: May I see it closer?

MRS. CLARK: Of course, honey!

MR. CLARK: Ummmm *Indistinct mumbling*

QUEEN: You look concerned young man.

MR. CLARK: Yes, um, I think there is something written. I can't read it though.

JEAN: Let me see, I am an enlightened man

Thus, my understanding may be better.

[JEAN is lost in his own thoughts.]

JEAN: It looks similar to a quote:” My home is in heaven I'm just traveling through this world.”

QUEEN: Oh! Good God it is indeed a stunning phrase!

BYRON: It makes me think of life after death or something like that. Don't you think?

MRS. CLARK, *offended:* Isn't it a bit far-fetched? I mean, he's a young boy. You do not get depressed when you are his age!

NAN: Actually, there's no particular age to get that kind of thoughts. In Iowa, a lot a people felt depressed and some, especially farmers, even committed suicide!

[The Queen, Jean and Georges share horrified glances as she utters the word 'suicide.']

MRS. CLARK, *quite desperate:* It was the Great Depression, of course people suffered from depression!

GEORGES: Moreover, one should not forget that it's

Not recognized by the Church. God bless us!

MR. CLARK: Actually, I can understand the Daughter's point of view. If we look at his situation, we can't say for sure that he was the happiest teenager ever. He's never been very close to his family and as the ambassadors mentioned previously, he never had many friends.

[All sadly agree.]

QUEEN: How dare you say such words? I must say that you are right about his situation but it is not a reason to commit suicide! God bless him.

MR. CLARK: Nowadays, *[ironically]* your Majesty, many teenagers commit suicide for many different reasons. One being: they do not feel good about themselves. And let me remind you all the nasty comments he got under his picture! This clearly shows how he is perceived by his peers and how, as a consequence, he perceives himself. *[Turning towards MRS. CLARK]* So yes, he is young! *[facing everybody]* Yes, he shouldn't feel this way! Yes, it's cruel! *[Turning towards GEORGE]* And yes, it goes against religion! *[Facing everybody again]* But it's the reality of our society, a superficial society that rejects people when they are different. And the truth is that David is different, he adores art, even though it is not common at his age and within his social class. I mean... look at us, look at all of us! Who else would have had the idea to paint us all together? We are so different! But he didn't care about all these

differences, unlike other kids who might have. That's what makes him so different, so unique and so vulnerable...

[All are stunned. MR. CLARK tries to catch his breath.]

BYRON: Perhaps there is some truth in all your babbling.

NAN: Yes, and we should keep trying to search for clues leading to what happened to David.

JEAN: Um, methink that I may have an idea.

In my painting, I shall help find something.

[EXITS JEAN]

QUEEN: What is that young man's problem again?

MRS. CLARK: Argh! Why are you complaining once more? You should be grateful. He's here to help us find David.

[ENTERS JEAN]

JEAN: My dear friends I have found my telescope.

It might help in our investigation!

[to himself] My lovely telescope that shall help us.

BYRON, aside: For God's sake I am surrounded by a bunch of idiots. *[to the others, ironically]* Then let's start to use your lovely object!

[JEAN is looking at the drawing, especially at the stars]

JEAN: Look at what I found! This is marvelous!

QUEEN, a bit irritated: Spare us all these mysteries!

JEAN: I found what looks like numbers in the stars.

MRS. CLARK: Can I have a look at it?

JEAN: Of course, thou canst but be very careful

[MRS. CLARK takes JEAN's telescope and starts looking at the stars.]

GEORGE: Thou letst her borrow it so easily

While thou hast never let me do it so!

JEAN: Oh, my dear friend, don't misunderstand me

I just did it because it was needed.

MRS. CLARK: There's no time for a scene! Indeed, there were numbers and it made me think of dot-to-dot pictures.

NAN: Yes, I used to do it when I was younger. May I connect the dots?

BYRON: You're not a child anymore!

NAN: I know; and I don't want to lapse into second childhood. I want to help find David. I think Mrs. Clark is right when she says it might be a clue. So. May I connect the dots?

MRS. CLARK: Of course, you may.

[NAN starts connecting the dots.]

QUEEN: So, darling, have you found something... anything?

NAN, *concentrated*: Not yet, let me finish first.

QUEEN: There's no need to raise your voice!

NAN: I'm not angry, I'm simply trying to concentrate so I don't make any mistakes. Please, let me work.

[NAN keeps connecting the dots and all the characters except her go back to their own painting. Blackout.]

[Spotlight on MR. CLARK and MRS. CLARK]

MRS. CLARK: Oh, honey! I don't know what to do, I'm so worried!

MR. CLARK: There's no need. He'll be fine. Plus, DAUGHTER is trying her best.

MRS. CLARK, *petting Percy*: I know, I know... but he was a father to us all, he loved us and we loved him back. He was only a child! As a mother I feel guilty. I feel responsible for him. Where did we go wrong...?

PERCY: Meow, meow.

[Spotlight on BYRON]

BYRON, *within his inner thoughts*: Oh God! [*Thinking about his daughter*] She is working so hard to save a beloved son, I can only picture David through her. Oh, my dear David, I deeply hope that you are alright. And if you are not [*Fear can be seen in his eyes*], it would only break my daughter's heart, thus it would break mine...

[Spotlight on the Ambassadors]

GEORGE: Fellow, what dost thou think happened to him?

JEAN: I do not care about David, thou fool,

I only care about my telescope!

GEORGE: What is wrong with you Jean, there are things that

Are more important than your telescope!

JEAN: An example please? I am listening

GEORGE: An example? David! Thou! Silly fool!

JEAN, *looks down in silence.*

[Spotlight on the Queen]

QUEEN: I shall never understand why people always create a fuss out of... nothing! They are all talking, shouting, screaming. About what? A child! Yes, he may have created us however there is no hint what — so — ever leading to his death. Oh, good God! Why the use of such a word? Their paranoia is contagious, I am going crazy! *[She screams]*

[Each character goes back within the main painting. Blackout.]

NAN: My dear friends, I have finished connecting the dots!

MRS. CLARK, *panic is sensed in her voice as well as comfort:* Oh jolly! What does it spell?

NAN: ...

ALL TOGETHER: Come on, tell us!

NAN: It spells out... Soul.

[They all look at each other, trying to figure out what it means.]

QUEEN, *losing patience:* So, what does this mean?

MRS. CLARK, *a bit aggressively:* Well, that's pretty much exactly what we are trying to figure out. But thank you for asking!

BYRON: There's no need for us to yell at each other! Let's first look at it just the way it is.

MR. CLARK, *to Byron:* Yes, you're completely right. *[to everybody]* So... there's this drawing that we already described but we just discovered the word "soul" written in the sky...

GEORGE, *exclaiming:* Oh! It makes me think of an expression

We have in French, which is “monter au ciel”.

It means “going to heaven” in English.

MRS. CLARK, *starting to sob*: You... you think that he ... that he might be

MR. CLARK, *in a gentle voice*: Yes honey, it means that David might be dead ...

[They look at each other.]

JEAN, *sadly and with a soft voice*: Yes, but after all “Memento Mori.”

MRS. CLARK, *drained*: And could we please know what it means?

GEORGE: It means, my dear, “Remember thou shalt die.”

MRS. CLARK, *sobbing*: Yes, but not at his age! He is too young!

NAN, *trying to comfort Mrs. Clark but not really believing what she is saying*: Ma’am, don’t be sad. We don’t know for sure if he’s dead or not. Remember all the clues we discovered: *[showing Percy]* the fresh paint on Percy’s fur, the picture that was taken not long ago and the map with all the dots! Maybe he’s just in one of these places!

MRS. CLARK, *hopefully*: I hope you’re right ...

[MR. CLARK takes his wife and Percy in his arms; the QUEEN wipes her eyes; NAN and BYRON exchange sad glances; the AMBASSADORS talk to each other quietly. Blackout]

[EXEUNT]

SCENE V

[MRS. CLARK and Percy downstage. The other characters are in their respective frames]

MRS CLARK: No, he can't be dead. He was too young [*Thinks to herself*] He is too young. Youth can make one do crazy things. Don't you agree Percy? [*Percy does not flinch*] I mean he may just have wanted to get away and he will come back, or maybe he lost himself in the woods. Or he met a girl. No, that is not right, it is not like him to do such things. So, he may have left with his friends... No, it makes no sense. His only friends are his paintings...

[Voices fade. A voice on TV is heard: sometimes I want you to listen to me Jake! Things aren't always as they seem to be. A smile can hide pain and a laugh can hide death. You say you like me but I don't feel you really do. Nobody does. You're all blind. Deaf to despair. You only see people without looking at them; it's time to open your eyes! Don't talk to me if what you want is not my answer but the sound of your voice echoing in mine. Don't look at me if what you want is to see yourself in my eyes. Don't consider me if it's to find yourself Jake. I feel like glass but I'm only a mirror for you, for everyone...]

MRS CLARK: Right, perhaps he just wanted to be heard.

PERCY: Meow

MRS CLARK: Oh sweetie, you agree with me. Then, I have a point: he wanted to express himself.

[The TV is heard again: I only wanted you to listen to me, please. Don't turn away, don't go! You can't leave me with silence. Silence turns people crazy. By ignoring someone you make the person disappear. I need to be. I felt like glass and now I am; you look through me. Listen to me please! I only exist through my words and now you take that away from me too. Just say something, insult me, say you've never loved me, say I'm nothing to you, say whatever you want but say something. Don't let my words fade...]

MRS CLARK: Young people are so melodramatic. Loving my cat is easier.

[Only the voice of a journalist on TV is heard: I saw at the Turtle Conservation Sanctuary turtles eating hatchlings or biting hatchlings to crush their heads so as to make the eyes pop out and other hatchlings came to eat. I informed the staff. They told me it was normal. It turns out that it is natural for turtles to eat other smaller or weaker turtles. It is common turtle behavior, both in the wild and in captivity. Other reliable sources confirm having seen smaller turtles being eaten by the larger ones, while another person said he once saw a turtle with scars and bite marks inflicted by other turtles. We decided to speak to Ubai Naim, a marine biology graduate, who confirmed it was normal for turtles to eat smaller animals when they

feel threatened. The habit is not limited to a few species. Mammals, insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and birds all have been known to eat their own children.]

MRS CLARK, to Percy and suddenly reacting to what she heard on TV: Don't you think that it is kind of weird to assault your own species? Percy? You would not assault cute little kittens, would you? They lie. Mammals are nice. I would never ever hurt my fellowman.

[Voices fade and the TV is heard once again: While they were in high spirits, they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So, they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus, he killed many more when he died than while he lived.]

MRS CLARK: Do you hear that Percy? Maybe the TV is trying to tell us something. *[Thinking about it]* The falling pillars could represent... Or maybe all the people dying with him are... I'm over it! I'm going crazy! For god's sake where the heck is David?

[There is a blackout and only the TV is turned on. On the screen we can read the following sentence: "Comets are like cats, they have tails and they do precisely what they want. I guess I'm with the comets now."]

Statement of intention

We wanted to write a problem play, denouncing the fact that our society is superficial and reject people who are different. This can have awful consequences such as suicide. That is why David hasn't got the same hobbies as his peers. The suicide scene at the end comes from the Bible: Samson, before committing suicide, is being mocked.

Moreover, all characters are only in one frame for most of the play to represent that most of the time (if not at all time) we are stuck in this society. They are also "stuck" in David's mind as he is the one who painted them all together. He is the one giving them life, which explains that the play ends with David's death.

Speaking about David, we did some research in order to understand more about the name David H. and the first result was David Hockney, the painter of "Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy". That is why Mr. and Mrs. Clark are those that are the closest to David. The last line ("Comets are like cats: they have tail and they do precisely what they want") is a real quote by David Hockney.

For the characters in general, we wanted them to act and think according to their real personality and real life and then to link them to David's life. For example, Mr. Clark, Byron and Nan understand the "depression aspect" because the first suffered from one after his divorce and the others saw it in Iowa during the Great Depression as a lot of farmers committed suicide at this time. The ambassadors understand the "friendship aspect" as they were friends. The phrase "Memento Mori" (in scene IV) was Jean's motto, etc. The two ambassadors mostly speak in iambic pentameter (or at least in verse of ten syllables) to imitate Shakespeare's way of writing. And the Queen has a double personality as she represents Queen Elizabeth II and Freud at the same time in her painting.

Finally, the characters have the ability to go from one painting to another if they are represented in it, as a reference to Harry Potter.