

WANDERING DIALOGUE

He, She, and Him are all about 25. The stage, which can be very small, should have a bench to be used as chair, bed, couch, bench, whatever. He and She are standing at attention, side by side. Him enters and sits. The actors should retire to the attention position when not speaking. Actions and props should be pantomimed, and the play should be done very rapidly, without pause except toward the end, as indicated. The play runs through Him's life -- a span of about 46 years with several recaps at the end. Actions and characterizations should be very simple.

SHE. Where have you been?

HIM. Wandering around.

SHE. Wandering around. I don't know why you can't be a man; you just wait till the army gets ahold of you, young man.

HE. They'll make a man of you.

SHE. Straighten you out.

HE. A little regimentation.

SHE. Regulation.

HE. Specification.

SHE. Indoctrination.

HE. Boredom.

SHE. You'll get up and go to bed.

HE. Drill, march.

SHE. Take orders.

HE. Fight.

SHE. Do what they tell you.

HE. Keep in step.

SHE. Do your part.

HE. Kill you a man.

SHE. You'll be a better person to live with, believe me. As a matter of fact your father and I are getting tired of having you around.

HE. Looking after you.

SHE. Making your bed.

HE. Keeping you out of trouble.

SHE. How old are you, anyway?

HIM. Sixteen.

HE. Sixteen, well, my goodness.

SHE. Shouldn't you be drafted before long?

HIM. Two years.

SHE. You just better toe the mark.

HE. How long at your present address?

HIM. Six months.

HE. Any previous experience as an apprentice?

HIM. No sir.

HE. Where did you live before that?

HIM. I was just wandering around.

HE. Not good; draft status?

HIM. Well, I haven't been called but --

HE. We like fighters on our team, fellow.

HIM. Well, actually I'm a conscientious --

SHE. Sit down. Roll up your sleeve. Take off your shirt. Stick out your tongue. Bend over, open your mouth, make a fist, read the top line. Cough. (*the boy coughs*) Very good.

HIM. Thank you.

SHE. Perfect specimen.

HIM. I do a considerable amount of walking.

HE. I don't follow you.

HIM. I don't believe in war.

HE. There's no danger of war. Our country is never an aggressor.

HIM. But armies, see, I don't believe in it.

HE. Do you love your country?

HIM. No more than any other, the ones I've seen.

HE. That's treason.

HIM. I'm sorry.

HE. Quite all right; we'll take you.

HIM. I won't go.

HE. Service is compulsory.

HIM. It's my right.

HE. You'll learn.

HIM. I don't believe in killing people.

HE. For freedom?

HIM. No.

HE. For love?

HIM. No.

HE. For money?

HIM. No.

HE. We'll teach you.

HIM. I know, but I won't.

HE. You'll learn.

HIM. I won't!

HE. You're going.

HIM. I'm not.

HE. You'll see.

HIM. I'm sure.

HE. You'll see.

HIM. I'm flatfooted.

HE. You'll do.

HIM. I'm queer.

HE. Get lost.

SHE. I'm lost.

HIM. I'm sorry.

SHE. Aren't you lost?

HIM. I wasn't going anyplace in particular.

SHE. That's unnatural.

HIM. I was just wandering.

SHE. What will become of you?

HIM. I hadn't thought of it.

SHE. You don't believe in anything.

HIM. But you see, I do.

HE. I see.

HIM. It's just that no one else seems to believe -- not really.

HE. I see.

HIM. Like this pride in country.

HE. I see.

HIM. And this pride in blood.

HE. I see.

HIM. It just seems that pride is such a pointless thing; I can't believe in killing someone for it.

SHE. Oh, my goodness, honey, it isn't killing; it's merely nudging out of the way . . .

HIM. But we don't need it.

SHE. Think of our position, think of me, think of the children.

HIM. I am.

SHE. You're shiftless, is what it is.

HIM. I'm really quite happy; I don't know why.

SHE. Well, how do you think I feel?

HIM. Not too well really.

SHE. Where does it hurt?

HIM. Nothing to worry about.

SHE. Yes sir.

HIM. Thank you.

SHE. And that's all for the morning; Mr. Trader is on line six.

HIM. Thank you; send Wheeler in.

HE. How are you, old boy?

HIM. NOT WELL, I'M AFRAID.

SHE. Don't be, it isn't serious.

HE. Just been working too hard.

SHE. Why don't you lie down?

HE. Best thing for you.

SHE. I know, but he was quite handsome; a gentle man.

HE. Bit of a radical though; not good for the family.

SHE. I know.

HE. You're better off.

SHE. I have a life of my own. HE. You have a life of your own.

SHE. He was such a lost lamb.

HE. Never agreed with anyone.

SHE. Arguments everywhere we went.

HE. What kind of disposition is that?

SHE. I don't know what I ever saw in him.

HE. You need someone who knows his way around.

SHE. I do.

HE. I do.

(a pause)

SHE. I don't know why you can't be a man.

HE. Keep in step.

SHE. Toe the mark.

HE. Draft status?

SHE. Stick out your tongue.

HE. You'll learn.

SHE. What'll become of you?

HE. I see.

SHE. Think of the children.

HE. Best thing for you.

SHE. I do.

(pause)

SHE. Where?

HIM. Wandering.

HE. I see.

HIM. They'll believe anything anyone tells them.

HE. I see.

HIM. I mean, that can't be the way people want to spend their lives.

SHE. That's all for the morning.

HIM. Quite happy.

HE. Best thing for you.

SHE. I do.

HE. I do.

(pause)

SHE. Where have you been?

(pause)

HIM. Can it?

BLACKOUT.