

BOB

No, you don't.

JOHN

All right, maybe not.

(They kiss)

JOHN

What is it?

BOB

Nothing.

JOHN

What is it? I've never seen you resist me.

BOB

I was only surprised for a moment.

JOHN

By what?

BOB

I was taken aback by the stubble
On your chin, that's all. It was quite rough.

JOHN

And?

BOB

Nothing. Are you growing a beard, my John?

JOHN

No. I just haven't shaved in a couple of days.

BOB

Oh, I understand.

JOHN

And if I was to?

BOB

Was to what?

JOHN

You remind me of your book just now:
*But a love like that, of course, had limits,
 For time transformed the boy to rougher forms.
 And sadly, as young Love sprouted whiskers,
 Realizing all that nature had in store,
 Elder lover quickly lost all interest;
 And, similar to a clever florist,
 A man of means in Athens cast away
 His boys before they wilted, and so set upon
 The memory of blooming youth he loved the time
 Before, the time before, and the time before.*

BOB

I think you make the common mistake
 Of confusing an artist with his art.
 You know how passionate I am for you.
 It is my dream to grow old with you.

JOHN

Easy for you to promise me that, why,
 You've already fulfilled your half of the pledge.

BOB

I'm glad to be made aware how low you view me.

JOHN

Should I see you as any different, Bob?
 Or shall I just wait to be cast away?

BOB

What has changed you all of a sudden?
 You always loved my passion for antiquity,
 But quickly put your finger to my lips
 If I ever made mention of the future.

JOHN

Tomorrow never worried me because
 I knew it would be spent with one I trusted.

BOB

Where does this come from all of a sudden?

JOHN

My brother warned me yet again of you,
 And for once I've had reason to believe him.

BOB

Your brother? That imbecile?

JOHN

Take that back.

BOB

I would if that wasn't exactly what
You called him on the way over.

JOHN

I didn't

Mean it. He's just vulnerable.

BOB

Perhaps,
But maybe he is merely over-sheltered,
Smothered by your Mother's soft deceptions.

JOHN

She only wishes to protect him.

BOB

See?

The rest of this family treats him as a child,
Or worse, like putty in their very hands,
But you're still moved to take his advice.

JOHN

Mock him again and I am through with you.

BOB

Fine. I shouldn't get more involved in this.
But wasn't it your mission tonight
To persuade your brother away from the lies?

JOHN

It's much more complicated, now.

BOB

Perhaps.

But if Lawrence remains immortal to
Your brother until the end, -

JOHN

I'm trying, -

BOB

A night like this could destroy the young man.

JOHN

They're coming now.

BOB

Be a man, -

JOHN

Hush. He'll hear you.

(Enter LAWRENCE, SAM, LUCIA,
SVEN, and JOAO, sharing
umbrellas.)

LAWRENCE

(As he enters)

I would love to claim I got the idea
In a moment of untouched inspiration,
But I have to admit I hatched the plan
When the doctor attempted to shave my head.
"Your hair, or your life" He gravely summarized
As I began my sprint from the hospital.

MARCELLA

Oh, hello boys, are we interrupting?

SAM

No, they're working, preparing the room.

LAWRENCE

And a fine job of it they're doing.
Is that the odor of chrysanthemums?

JOHN

Those are the flowers you wanted, aren't they?

LAWRENCE

I didn't want them - I required them.
That is a deathly beautiful flower.
Photographer, take a sweet one of me, -
But it just stopped raining.

BOB

What a relief.

LAWRENCE

Not at all. I thought a good storm would be
A great intensifier of the drama.
The one night it stops raining on this damn coast!

SAM

It could start back up again.

LAWRENCE

Let us hope.
But Lucia, could you arrange these flowers?
They require the touch of an artist.
Lucia?

LUCIA

Huh?

SAM

Lucia.

LAWRENCE

You're blushing.

LUCIA

I'm not.

BOB

I had the same reaction, my dear.

SAM

And he hasn't even finished that one.
There's proof he's still at the peak of his powers.

LAWRENCE

I guess I will never finish the thing.

LUCIA

And I think it's best that you never do,
For the safety of future audiences.

LAWRENCE

It's one of the more provocative works.
I admit I had to paint her from
The corner of my eye.

JOAO

Why'd you do that?

SAM

Be careful questioning him so freely.

LAWRENCE

Nonsense. These men are my new friends. Now, Joao,
Could you stare at that image for three weeks?

(SVEN takes a photo)

LAWRENCE

Please, no photographs of my works.

JOAO

Sven!

SAM

Give me that damn camera! How dare you, -

LAWRENCE

Sam! It's fine, son. Relax. You're beginning
To make me nervous. Just don't publish that one, boys,
The public will have to pay to see it.

LUCIA

Do you always paint with a blurry eye, Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

Only when painting mesmerizing beauty
And the disgustingly grotesque do I
Refuse to look my subject with all eyes.

JOAO

Why?

LAWRENCE

When I see beauty for all she is,
My boredom soon becomes her quite ugly.
While the longer I stare at the grotesque,
The sooner I discover monstrous beauty.

LUCIA

Then you're a remarkable deconstructionist.

LAWRENCE

Nonsense. I am merely impatient.
When the mind is always seeking something new,

No time remains for purpose and reason
And all I see are blurred, obscure, -

LUCIA

Beautiful, -

LAWRENCE

Works in progress.

SAM

Dad, but you've finished so much.
Countless works hang on walls of storied museums.

LAWRENCE

But was I ever able to complete them?
Or have my works been torn away from me,
By my own base desires for money, fame,
And the incessant want to never fully
Confront the limits of my limited
Potential as an artist who could only
Distract, for a moment, and nothing more?

SAM

Are you feeling all right, Dad? Are you in pain?

BOB

But your faults make you so fascinating.
A finished piece could be misconstrued
As a vain desire for immortality.
Be honored you're not the next Bouguereau.

LAWRENCE

I'd have loved to have been the next Bouguereau.

SAM

Father isn't the next anyone!

LAWRENCE

And only a hack wants to be the next me.

(LAWRENCE sits in a chair.)

SAM

Oh, Dad.

(SAM rushes to his aid.)

Are you all right?

LAWRENCE

Only a hack.

SAM

Get away from him, you damn reporters,
How close do you need to come? Are you blind?

LUCIA

I'll get Marcella.

(LUCIA exits.)

LAWRENCE

I don't need her. Let me go.

JOHN

He's fine. Won't you let him go?

SAM

You shut your mouth!

BOB

Now's not the time for passion.

LAWRENCE

The perfect time!

SAM

Don't speak, Father. You'll only make the pain worse.

LAWRENCE

Will you quit worrying for this false pain?
The throbbing of my brain is nothing to
The horror that comes if you dull my spirit now.
Up, up, let me up.

SAM

You need rest.

LAWRENCE

Let me up!

(Enter LUCIA with damp cloths, and
MARCELLA, with a bottle of pills,
and water.)

MARCELLA

What have I missed?

SAM

Give me the pills.

(SAM takes a couple out of the bottle, and
LAWRENCE slaps the pills out of Sam's hand)

LAWRENCE

No! Mind alone.

SAM

But if you took these, everything would feel fine.

LAWRENCE

Mind alone!

MARCELLA

It will ease the pain, Lawrence.

SAM

You'll be yourself again; when you wake up
Tomorrow morning you'll feel so much better!

LAWRENCE

Let me go, Sam!

SAM

No!

LAWRENCE

Get your damn hands off me!

SAM

But you're weak, you, -

LAWRENCE

Wretched leech of a son

Let go of me!

(SAM releases him)

MARCELLA

He's just in so much pain, Sam.

LAWRENCE

I'd be in less if I could have a breath.
I'm sorry. But if, -

LUCIA

Let me cool your forehead.

(She tends to Lawrence forcefully)

LAWRENCE

The girl has miraculous technique.
Thank you, Lucia. Thank you, that's fine.

LUCIA

Are you sure you are in your right mind, Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

Yes. Yes, I am, thank you.

LUCIA

I could do more.

LAWRENCE

No. Please, no. I'm fine for now, Lucia.
But I've little endurance left, and less time.
Sons, will you help your father to his feet?
Photographer, this should make a fine one.

JOHN

Sam.

SAM

What?

LAWRENCE

I won't make a scene.

SAM

Oh. Of course.

LAWRENCE

Thank you. Well, now that I'm back on my feet,
There is so much more to be done, or else
I'll never see this waxing work in full.
But mark my words, we've half the time, no more.
Ladies, please finish arranging these flowers.

Men, reporters, to the great room of the estate.

(Exit all but LUCIA and
MARCELLA. They begin arranging
the flowers.)

MARCELLA

What a relief that ended the way that it did.

LUCIA

Marcella, Yo tengo unas preguntas -

MARCELLA

Of course, but please, in English. It's been
So long since I've been home I fear I can't
Say things just as I feel them anymore,
And I'm ashamed to even hear myself.
Isn't that sad.

LUCIA

It is sad, but natural.
And one day I will feel the same, and not
Be able to lament.

MARCELLA

We've our clumsy English.
But I speak prettier with a loosened tongue.
Lawrence hides his private reserve in here.

(She finds a bottle from the lower shelf)

MARCELLA

Would you like a glass?

LUCIA

Another? Thank you.

(Marcella pours two glasses)

MARCELLA

I think that it's rather good stuff, and
The grapes are grown just over that hill.

LUCIA

Sam and I once looked at that winery.

MARCELLA

It is really such a fine luxury
 To have good wine in the neighborhood.
 We used to set off back across the sea
 On quests for a vintage not poured from a jug.
 But now we have the ease of convenience.
 Still, those were such wonderful excursions.

LUCIA

My Father once showed me the silliest photo
 Of him and Lawrence, with these hideous
 Wine-stained moustaches crashing tandem
 On some ancient Italian bicycle.

MARCELLA

I was the one who took that one, we were
 Hopelessly lost on a highway outside
 Florence. The heat was unbearable, and
 The wine made us red as ripe strawberries.
 I'm surprised the shot came out in focus,
 In my mind that day is just a pleasant blur.
 We had such glorious times with your parents,
 I wish they had come to celebrate tonight.

LUCIA

They had every wish to, but Father has
 His little show opening the next month.

MARCELLA

That's right. The retrospective. I forgot.
 How lovely to be so appreciated.
 Lawrence wanted to attend, but
 Cancer seems to have gotten in the way.
 But it's best he has tonight to himself,
 Without the presence of such a rival.

LUCIA

I'm flattered that you see him so highly,
 But my conscience tells me I must concede
 That Lawrence, for his faults, has far surpassed him.
 My Father now labors only with charcoal,
 And rails like a jealous teetotaler
 Against the innocent, youthful, pleasures.
 Meanwhile, Lawrence remains inspired.

MARCELLA

And look who Death finds first - the man who

Doesn't want to be found. Such sorry luck.

LUCIA

Marcella, I admire you.

MARCELLA

Do you?

LUCIA

You can talk of your husband's coming death
As if it was some casual misfortune.
If it were my Sam that was meant for that
Dreadful symbolic box, I doubt I could
Even look at that thing, -

MARCELLA

Oh, sweet Lucia.

I learned a lesson years ago that only
A magician's wife could ever know.
When a girl is in love with a master
Of illusion, she waits until the trick's
Performed before she lets herself be fooled.
And this night, this box, well, you know it's all -

LUCIA

I know, -

MARCELLA

Then what's there to, -

LUCIA

I'm still

Not sure it's a healthy response to, -

MARCELLA

Oh?

Would you rather him weep, and elegize?
Perhaps I've been away from home too long
But I happen to like the way he laughs
Through all of this, it's very American.

LUCIA

But Sam isn't laughing.

MARCELLA

He's exhausted.

LUCIA

And you don't worry?

MARCELLA

Of course I worry.

LUCIA

So I'm not alone?

MARCELLA

You're never alone.

Oh, -

LUCIA

Then will you finally speak to me
With honesty?

MARCELLA

Lucia, I'm surprised.

LUCIA

I'm sorry. I'm just losing patience.

MARCELLA

I understand. But can we talk tomorrow?

LUCIA

That is what everyone always says here
When something needs dealing with is forgotten:
Not now, tomorrow, the next day, or after.
You sing to each other of nothing that matters,
Praying those empty feelings will be concealed.
But that sorrow can't forever hide from time;
That emptiness will take form, and swell, and
Become something much more than talk can cure.

MARCELLA

(As she exits)

Soon you will have your pleasure then.
In an hour, perhaps, or a month, he's gone,
With the half of me gone with him, and finally
You'll have the tears from me you want.
But afterwards, whatever I've managed
To preserve of me will be happy to
Discuss your happy plans, and full future.
Until then, will you not play along?

LUCIA

Wait! Yes.

MARCELLA

Don't you think I wish the best
For you, Lucia, wife to my son?
Do you doubt I yearn for a grandchild?

LUCIA

Not for a moment.

MARCELLA

Then, although I know
This word's been overused, please be patient.
I beg you to be patient for just a
Little while longer. I promise you
That we will have plenty, soon enough. All right?
Sam is coming down the hill. Be good to him.
He needs you more than he will ever know.

LUCIA

My God, he almost looks cheerful,
Just As if nothing had ever happened.

MARCELLA

You have to trust I'll take care of you both.
Tomorrow the answers you yearn for will come.

(SAM enters with a large
painting.)

SAM

Hello. Am I interrupting?

MARCELLA

No.

LUCIA

Never.

MARCELLA

Which one is that, sweetheart?

SAM

The self portrait.

LUCIA

I recognize it.

MARCELLA

Where will you hang it?

SAM

Father wants to see it front and center.
Or, just behind him, as his outline states.
Hanging prominently on the back wall,
He writes. Or I think that's what he writes.

LUCIA

He looks like a child at play, interrupted.
Why doesn't it hang in a museum?

SAM

Johnny would tell you he wants it here because
He'd miss himself too much if it were taken.
He tells us that since the piece was finished
He's used it as a mirror.

MARCELLA

Which is a lie,
But an amusing thought considering
It resides in his private dressing room.

LUCIA

He does resemble the boy in that picture.

SAM

What do you think? Does this look right, my loves?

LUCIA

Perfect!

MARCELLA

And on your first try!

SAM

I've had practice.

LUCIA

Your Father's back to check on your progress.

(Enter LAWRENCE, JOAO, and
SVEN.)

LAWRENCE

(To JOAO, as they enter)

How can anyone find that stimulating?
Art is more for the senses than the mind.
Now, if some self-hating lout is moved to damn
My work for its community disservice,
Let him wallow in his guilt; I'll laugh at him!
But when an artist, one who once could dream,
I find has confessed all reveries, I weep
For him, for he's lost, tragically, deep pleasure.
But finally I must damn him, as well, for he's
Now but a blot on my noble pursuit,
And time is but a vapid waste on him.
Oh, but I like that picture there, Sammy.

SAM

Thanks, Dad. I think it's right where you wanted it.

LAWRENCE

Just about.

(Lawrence starts adjusting the picture himself)

LAWRENCE

You've earned yourself a break, Sam.

SAM

I don't need a break, Dad.

LAWRENCE

Sure you do. And
Lucia, too. Perhaps, Joao, they could take a break
Together!

SAM

Come on, Dad.

LAWRENCE

But I've claimed this was
A Bohemian household.

MARCELLA

Lawrence.

LAWRENCE

What?

MARCELLA

I need to speak to you.

LAWRENCE
About what?

MARCELLA

I need
To speak to you in private.

LAWRENCE

Very well.
Joao, Sven, you may report on these two lovebirds.

LUCIA

No questions! This will be a closed door meeting.

LAWRENCE

Uh, oh. And only Sam to answer her!

MARCELLA

Lawrence!

LAWRENCE

What?

SAM

Come on, Mom. He's innocent.

LUCIA

We'll be off, then.

JOAO

When will you want us back, Sir?

LAWRENCE

Soon. I have some designs as to where
The camera shall be placed.

JOAO

Excellent, Sir.

(All exit except MARCELLA and LAWRENCE.)

LAWRENCE

It looks as if it will rain again, now.

MARCELLA
Oh?

LAWRENCE
See the crown of light around the moon?

MARCELLA
Enough predictions. It's only us.

LAWRENCE
I know.

MARCELLA
It's time we told him.

LAWRENCE
Told Who?

MARCELLA
Sam.

LAWRENCE
About what?

MARCELLA
You know.

LAWRENCE
No. What?

MARCELLA
What we feared.

LAWRENCE
Oh. But why now?

MARCELLA
Lucia.

LAWRENCE
She knows?

MARCELLA
She will. And soon.

LAWRENCE
But how?

MARCELLA

She drives herself to all these tests.

LAWRENCE

She does?

What do they tell her?

MARCELLA

That's the problem. Nothing.

LAWRENCE

So she knows it can't be - but it's only been...

MARCELLA

Two years!

LAWRENCE

Not so long. It must have taken us, -

MARCELLA

A month!

LAWRENCE

After the wedding, but I recall
Quite a long time before it was allowed -

MARCELLA

Are you making a joke of this?

LAWRENCE

No. It's only - Why is this coming up now?
Tonight, of all nights?

MARCELLA

I said. Lucia.

LAWRENCE

When has she been at these tests?

MARCELLA

Since you've been

In hiding -

LAWRENCE

Seclusion.

MARCELLA

And Sam's been working.

LAWRENCE

You allowed her to see some quack?

MARCELLA

She went alone.

LAWRENCE

But you know they can't have absolute results.
Science can't know the absolute.

MARCELLA

I don't care.

They console her with promises of new
Medications, but it's Sam, you see?
It's what we feared.

LAWRENCE

So my blood's as mortal

As my art.

MARCELLA

That's the least of our worries.
Lucia makes me feel so damn guilty,
Like we told him some awful lie instead
Of our simply being cautious with the truth.

LAWRENCE

That's right. We were.

MARCELLA

But we were wrong.

LAWRENCE

We weren't!

MARCELLA

Lucia's right. You have to tell him.

LAWRENCE

Me?

MARCELLA

It's your responsibility, Lawrence.
You were the one who found him that day,

fifty yards in front of his motorcycle.

LAWRENCE

Enough.

MARCELLA

Bloodied, out on the road out there,
One hundred and fifty feet in front -

LAWRENCE

Enough!

MARCELLA

And you were the one who the doctor spoke to,
And saw the pictures, and heard the injuries,
And then told Sam, with your smile, that he
Had but a scratch on him. That it was a
Miracle, and he must be meant for greatness.

LAWRENCE

It was a miracle! I stand by that.
And to reveal to him the minor chance, -

MARCELLA

It's not a minor chance, it's true!

LAWRENCE

But not then.

And it would have ruined him, to have that
Suspicion, at fifteen.

MARCELLA

Then you were right. Then.
But if this lie's allowed to change -

LAWRENCE

(As he moves to adjust the self-portrait)

I know.

I'll think of a way to handle this, I swear.
But I have some urgent work to do in here.

MARCELLA

What urgent work? Come on, it's only me!
You've got better plans? Your quaint little show?

LAWRENCE

I see. First, you lure Sam away from failure

With the distraction of this damn coffin -

MARCELLA

I only suggested you take him on, -

LAWRENCE

You begged me! It was only a whim before
You hatched this farce to make him feel useful,
Instead of out there, down the hill, using
His hands for something not handed to him!
And now you put him in my hands - a grown man!
Are we all just here for your entertainment?
Am I just one more of your smothered sons?

MARCELLA

Have you ever grown? What else do I call you?
I've coddled you, infant, and your whims, for years.

LAWRENCE

How dare you, -

MARCELLA

Don't tell me I've not raised you!
But, as a Mother, You're my great failure.
I never met the boy in that picture,
But he's more man than I ever got to know.
Tonight I've played the artist's wife as well
As I've played it, though it's years out of fashion.
I've been silent, demure, and reverent
For all of this dreadful mockery.

LAWRENCE

You've always loved it.

MARCELLA

I wasn't so perceptive.
Now, I know a hack when I see one, Lawrence;
And this childish plot of yours is sickening.
But I'll let you fulfill your fantasy
If, for a moment of experience,
You talk to your son about things only
A father should reveal to him. Even though
Part of me doubts you have the bravery,
I've no choice but to allow you the chance.

LAWRENCE

How dare you speak to me like this, woman?

If I was a more vulgar man, I would, -

MARCELLA

Would what?

LAWRENCE

I would be more honest with my actions.

MARCELLA

Do you want to hit me, Lawrence?

LAWRENCE

If I was a

Less civilized man, -

MARCELLA

You've been uncivilized

Before. Remember?

LAWRENCE

You're baiting me, I see.

We were only children then, you know that.

MARCELLA

You were only a child then! And what
About ten years ago, in this very room?
You were more a monster than a boy that night.
But at least you were honest - Now you hide
Your violence behind thinly veiled insults,
And calculated speeches, like some
Delusional little twerp who can't accept
His mediocrity.

(A furious pause.)

MARCELLA

Your amusements

Bought us all these pretty, petty distractions.

But it's only me who's provided the rest.

I'll let you play tonight, so long as you

Don't make a mess. But tomorrow, Lawrence,

I will expect you to do as you're told.

(MARCELLA exits.)

LAWRENCE

Marcella! Marcella! Come back, woman!

Do you think you want honesty, Marcella?
I can be honest! I can be powerful!
My talents aren't only for amusement, woman!
You'll regret you ran away from me!
You'll see my power, girl. You'll see it, now.

(LAWRENCE finds a pen and
paper, and, using the coffin
as a hard surface, begins to
write furiously as the lights
fade.)

ACT THREE

(The studio is empty. All the works in progress have been uncovered, and the space is drenched in color. Rain falls on the roof. We hear JOAO and SVEN outside.)

SVEN

(As he slips)
No, no!

JOAO

Yes, yes!

SVEN

(Falling)
Damn you!

JOAO

What? You've fallen.

SVEN

No. I slipped.

JOAO

The difference?

SVEN

But a slip needs but mud.

The fall asks for sin,

JOAO

And a sauced giant.

SVEN

Who remains innocent, none the (he falls again) Damn it!

JOAO

(singing, as they enter)
*The rain it falls, again Slav's fallen
For he looks afar too often from -*

SVEN

Stop!

What? JOAO

SVEN
You're mocking.

JOAO
I'm singing, I'm loving!

SVEN
Those aren't the words.

JOAO
See how I change for you?

SVEN
Well, change back, to its original state.

JOAO
I cleanse myself for he that drinks of mud.

(Singing)
*The rain, it falls, again I've fallen
For I gaze afar too often
From the road turned mirrored ice;
But I can't help but mind my love.*

*If I did count my plodding steps,
I know that I would fall much less,
But then I'd mind what steps remained,
And I would rather mind my love.*

*My love, she lives behind the storm
My gaze dissolves in clouds, forlorn,
I pray she waits to mend my wounds
And I must live to mind my love.*

SVEN
What have you done with the instruction manual?

JOAO
You don't get a manual when you buy
It from the back of a truck.

SVEN
I don't know

If I can do this.

JOAO

What are you talking about?
That one takes a moment, still, and this one
Lets a bunch of them move together, and
In twenty years you'll see yourself in one
Of them, and weep. There's no difference, really.
Besides, we're putting it on the damn tripod.
You've nothing to do.

SVEN

Fine, but if he yells, -

(They stop in a corner)

JOAO

There! He wanted it right there.

SVEN

(As he takes the cover off)

Oh, no, it's wet!

JOAO

(He hands him his hanky, then inspects the paintings.)
I bet that one's worth a lot of money.

SVEN

He likes himself best from that angle.

JOAO

Fine by me. It stays there though, he said
Not to move it once we begin. Nervous?

SVEN

Do you think he's sincere about his plans?

(JOAO shrugs)

Then shouldn't we call the police?

JOAO

Why?

SVEN

Why, it's a homicide, isn't it?

JOAO

No.

SVEN

It's not funny, Joao. It's unnatural!

JOAO

You're absolutely right. But do you know
What else isn't right?

SVEN

What?

JOAO

Two trained actors
Sacrificing their dignity, on a
Holiday, for absolutely no pay!

SVEN

We would still get paid.

JOAO

We would not get paid!
And do you know what else is unnatural?

SVEN

What?

JOAO

Two handsome, purely innocent men
Being arrested for conspiracy.

SVEN

But this isn't our idea. We're merely
Innocent bystanders.

JOAO

You're exactly right.
But innocent bystanders keep their mouths shut,
And admire the wreckage. That's our job.
Or would you rather join the carnage?

SVEN

No.

JOAO

Then stop talking and start rolling that camera.

SVEN

Ah, hell! I refuse to stoop to this!

JOAO

Your expectations were always high, -

SVEN

Shut up!

(SVEN exits. Then, in a procession, enter BOB, LUCIA, JOHN, SAM, and MARCELLA.)

(Each family member carries a sealed envelope. Upon their turn, each opens up their envelope and reads the enclosed poem.)

LUCIA

*The Honest Memoirs of Lawrence Williams,
As written tonight by Lawrence Williams*

As a boy

*My cousin told me I'd no cause to pray,
Cause I could crawl under the house for that,
As older folks always hid down there what
They'd like to forget, but won't throw away.
Unafraid, I snuck into the basement,
And could tell the box they wanted to hide
From all the rest; and I opened it wide,
And saw her - And wondered what her smile meant.
That small picture told me from where I came;
Gave cause to bright eyes, and light hair a mess,
Amidst other things told within a frame,
And I'd have kept it had it shown forgiveness.
Soon I heard a voice, and closed the box tightly,
Before stepping up the stairs so lightly.*

BOB

As a dreamer

*I had no cause to do the world some good,
(From birth was done what deeds could not repay)*

So I wandered deep into the dense wood
 Of fancy, hoping I would lose my way.
 I never could bring myself not to return,
 But I did bring pictures of what I'd seen,
 And from others curious I did learn
 That I was not alone in need to spurn
 The pain-vulnerable Earth for a while,
 In search of untouchable diversion:
 A hint of sweet to temper nature's bile,
 A moment always pure despite perversion,
 And a reason, simply, to continue -
 That's all I want - to need nothing from you.

MARCELLA

As a lover

Fame is but a dream for a lonely man,
 I thought as I forgot the golden fleece
 And gave myself away to her. I ran
 To her, and hoped that I should never cease
 To be in wonder of this girl who seemed
 So far beyond what I myself alone could
 Picture within a mind that always dreamed
 Of beauty that a cruel world never would.
 And each time I try to paint her, and know her,
 All that I reveal is my crude arrogance.
 Yet I shall never cease to study her
 Intently, waiting for the slightest glance
 That lets me closer to this Marcella -
 She remains a mystery - Que Bella.

JOHN

As a careerist

The right man asked me, had I any faith?
 I said, only cowards sought amnesty
 From the outside in. But how could I make
 So foolish a plea for such vain honesty?
 I dreamed myself as a man of difference,
 Only they truly believed, for envy
 Of the power, and the glorious vanity!
 And it sickened me to view their deference.
 So I sneered at them through the distant smiles
 Of pretty things they knew they could not know.
 And quiet rage swelled upon cool tiles
 Of vast halls; while in some more private row
 A rich man longed to slash my perfect face
 But knew he paid too much to mar her surface.

LUCIA
 (Whispering)
 Sam. Sam!

JOHN
 Sam it's your turn.

SAM
 No.

MARCELLA
 Sammy.

SAM
 No.

JOHN
 Open it, Sam.

LUCIA
 The camera's rolling.

MARCELLA
 He won't speak.

JOHN
 Open it, Sammy.

LUCIA
 Just open
 It Sam, and this all will soon be over.

(SAM opens the envelope, and looks over the poem.)

MARCELLA
 Read it, child, it's not so hard.

JOHN
 Read, Sam.

MARCELLA
 Please, Sam.

LUCIA
 It's easy, Sam.

JOHN

Please, Sam.

SAM

I can't!

JOHN

Then hand it to me. I'll finish this thing.
I can finish him, if that's what he wants.

As a father

*I had no care for his looks or spirit.
I only wished he would not hurt his Mother.
And he was born, and he was fortunate.
Time passed, and soon he had a little brother.
I felt like I could live for ever
In their reflective little eyes. But they
Changed and left my image quickly, and never
Have I known them since. A stranger stays
Inside my house, and a stranger comes to
Visit me. The smart one knows better - the smart one -*

SAM

Read it, John.

JOHN

*The smart one knows much better
Than to love me, while the quiet craftsman, who
Refuses to see me honestly, fetters
Himself to an illusion of me that
No one else believes.*

SAM

Finish it!

JOHN

I can't.
He's just so sick, Sam. He doesn't mean it!

LUCIA

Read it, John!

JOHN

I can't finish this. I can't.

MARCELLA

What has that man said about my son?