

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DAVE PILLARD	M, 20s, a comic losing his mind
THE HOLE	An entity unknown
OLLIE	M, mid-20s - 30s, Dave's Ex, played by The Hole

The following characters are played by TWO PUPPETEERS. These two are the real entities that exist at all times throughout those roles and any mention of the puppeteers.

TONY	M, a puppet
MADISON	F, a puppet
DELILAH	F, 20s, Dave's friend
DAD	M, 40s and up, Dave's father

SCENE 1

AT RISE: A relatively young stand-up comic, DAVE PILLARD, is on stage, all attention on him. Waist up, he's dressed for performance. Below, as if he didn't expect anyone to ever see him in his entirety, he's in his underclothes.

DAVE

So, uh, did anyone watch *Caillou* growing up? Wow. A lot of *Caillou* fans out there. Did you know his middle name is Luke? It's short for Leukemia. Speaking of, uh, little bald baby bitches: *Avatar: The Last Airbender*. For those of you who know, the basic premise is there are these four nations that control each of the elements, and magic is called bending. So you have waterbenders, firebenders, earthbenders, and airbenders. As time goes by, they discover all these subtypes of bending like bloodbending and metalbending. There was this sequel, *Legend of Korra*. They made all these technological improvements. They've got radio and cars and lights and the whole nine yards. So with that there's a new, even more dangerous kind of bender... The fender bender. Thank you.

He freezes. Dave isn't alone. If we weren't aware before of this before, we are now. Two puppeteers are there. They don't use their puppets. Not yet. These are comments on the internet.

PUPPETEER 1

Dude this blows. L-o-l. Is it supposed to?

PUPPETEER 2

Nah. Check out his channel. It's not ironic; he just sucks. All his vids are like this.

PUPPETEER 1

He takes months to upload too. L-m-f-a-o. Imagine taking that long and coming up with this. Nancy Reagan-level skills at suckings.

PUPPETEER 2

L-m-a-o. Maybe he'll catch the Asian shit and stop posting. That'd be funny.

DAVE

Fuck. Assholes.

He unfreezes.

We find ourselves in a studio apartment, one for a neurotic creative. There's equipment for film, music, and art. There's a kitchen space, a small "bedroom," and a main area.

It's winter 2021 in Kentucky. The COVID-19 pandemic rages beyond these walls.

It's the time to create. You have to create.

If you don't make a masterpiece, you might as well die.

Dave sits on the couch. His laptop and phone are nearby. Death awaits.

One of the puppeteers raises their puppet, TONY, an Italian bastard. It's time for the consumption to begin.

TONY

Well maybe if you actually put some fuckin' effort in, ya goddamn Guido. Awww, baby gonna cry?

DAVE

I am trying.

TONY

I like you kid. But how come I ain't ever laughed at you?

DAVE

Whatever.

Dave goes for his phone. Paradise is hidden within. The pain would end if only...

The second puppeteer gives life to their puppet, MADISON. She's the sort to sell you on the joy of a cult.

TONY

Can't try with this, can't try with that, but tried too hard with him. Why? 'Cause he's tall? Got a big dick? It wasn't that big.

MADISON

Tony. No need to be so vulgar. It's because he's blond. Blond guys are dreamy. But he won't text.

DAVE

Fuck both of you.

MADISON

No. Come on, Davey. Look, let's watch some TV, okay? Let's put this away.

TONY

I could go for a smoke.

All three are on the couch. Though the TV turns on, we neither hear nor see anything of it.
Perhaps Dave smokes. Perhaps not.

TONY

Y'know what I could really go for? Davey. Y'like sucking Ollie off, don't'cha? Y'miss it.

MADISON

The mouthfeel.

TONY

Yeah. All soft and hard. Stretching.

MADISON

I want snacks.

TONY

Fruit.

MADISON

Pineapple.

TONY

I've been eating pineapple.

MADISON

Mastication is musical. The beat of the chew drowns out the nothingness of space.

TONY

Who cares what those faggots online say? You've got talent.

MADISON

When the universe stops creating, it's dead.

TONY

Talented goddamn tongue.

MADISON

We're withering away.

TONY

No point having a gift if you won't use it.

MADISON

We should eat.

TONY

Get a taste of me, Davey.

MADISON

My stomach is empty, David. I could devour an entire waiting line at Disney World.

TONY

Baby, come on.

MADISON

But there are no lines now.

There's a knock on the door.

Dave places on a face mask. He goes to answer while the puppets stay at the couch. There's no person there, just a small set of groceries. He takes them in and starts wiping them down with anti-bacterial wipes.

Is it selfish to die? It's selfish to die. He doesn't want to be selfish. He wipes.

MADISON

You should start baking. They look so happy.

TONY

You know what would make me happy? If you turned the sound on. Why I gotta read subtitles? TV's not s'posed to be books.

MADISON

I hear everyone is into making bread. Sourdough with breakfast would be grand.

TONY

I have something sour for you, boy.

MADISON

Buns baking in the oven...

DAVE

Shut up.

MADISON

Rude.

TONY

Learn some manners, cocksucker.

MADISON

No need to be mean to him.

TONY

He likes it.

Dave returns to the couch with a beer.

DAVE

I like drinking in peace.

TONY

Maybe we'd shut up if you put the fuckin' sound on. That's why your comedy is awful. You watch stuff on silent. It's about delivery! You couldn't fuckin' deliver a baby if it was pushing out your uterus, that's how bad you are.

MADISON

Deaf people can be funny.

TONY

Yeah? Well, he's neither.

MADISON

I'm so hungry.

A text notification goes off.

When it does, somewhere in the apartment, *he* appears. THE HOLE. An entity. Is it Lacan's Das Ding or the abyss? A monster or an angel? He's somehow beautiful and horrid all at once. Well put together, perhaps in a suit. And yet if it's something in a suit, it's melting. Chthonic.

The Hole has a violin, yet it doesn't play. It speaks as OLLIE, Dave's ex.

Each line is a text on Dave's phone, precipitated by a notification sound of some sort.

OLLIE

David.

I can't keep apologizing for things I've already acknowledged.

I'll get your stuff to you.

And the money.

But I'm going to have to go no contact with us. We can't be in each other's lives. Don't talk to me again.

Have a nice rest of your week.

Dave attempts to text back.

DAVE

I'm not asking... I wish you get to be happy, I just... None of that. Just say, "Okay." Okay. Okay.

There isn't a message back.

MADISON

Guess he texted. I told you he would.

TONY

Told you to fuck off, didn't he? That Will kid tried to warn you when you were a kid. Told you you're annoying with the texting. Too much.

MADISON

I think it's cute. You suck at speaking so you send these super long messages.

TONY

--that Ollie always hated.

MADISON

True. No one wants to read all of that, honey.

TONY

Look at him. He's getting fat.

MADISON

Ollie liked a little chub.

TONY

You want him to fuckin' balloon with that baking nonsense.

MADISON

At least then he'd be making something! You just want him to laze around sucking cock.

TONY

He's got one fuckin' talent! So what if I want him to use it?

Dave heads toward the "bedroom."

MADISON

Don't leave.

TONY

Runnin' is Ollie's thing, ya fuckin' thief.

When he enters the bedroom, Dave is on the phone with his mother. She loves him. He loves her. They can't see each other. She'd kill him.

DAVE

Hey, Mom. I...

She saw his comedy routine that he put online.

Oh. What, uh, what'd you think?

She has her favorite stand-up comics and her favorite specials. None of them have anything to do with her son.

Yeah. I'll watch. I'm... It's hard without an audience, you know?

But that's the reality of it. The world is dying. He's dying. The world would kill him. Dave refuses to perform on video-streaming. His jokes aren't to his mother's taste, but he knew that already. He knew that. He did. So it shouldn't hurt. She's just being honest. But he was getting laughs before the pandemic from some people, so it's fine.

Okay.

She loves her son. They love each other. But no one really cares about the dreams of children. So they ask, "How are you?" to change the subject.

I'm good. Staying in like a good boy.

To be good is to obey. To obey is to have someone to obey, someone whose protection you can rest inside.

Yeah, no, he's hasn't been by in a bit. He's, uh, keeping my lungs in mind, you know? 'Cause he works with all those... He's fine. I'll tell him you asked.

Love can't sustain without touch. His mother knows that. It snaps. They have to see each other.

DAVE

We're fine. Video days and all. There's this new app where you can watch streaming stuff at the same time. We threw on *Black Swan* the other night. It's a Natalie Portman-- Never mind. He hates scary stuff so it was cute.

Cute is good. It doesn't let you survive though.

Have you found a job?

Isolation is crashing through the world. You can grow up on your own, now.

I'm looking.

She'll send him some info.

Okay. I love you, too. Bye.

He lays in bed.

The Hole admires him.

The night passes. Or maybe it doesn't.

Dave can't sleep.

He lays in bed.

DAVE

GodDAMNIt David.

SCENE 2

Out in the main area, Dave workshops some comedy. The puppets watch.

DAVE

When my high school best friend told his mom we'd be rooming together in college, she asked him if he was worried. He asked why. She said I might rape him since I'm a homosexual. That's funny, right? Great punchline. Because we laughed about it. My friends laughed about it. I joked back, "Maybe I will," and we stopped laughing about it. I wasn't funny. That's why I became a comedian! So I could... He got a girlfriend and said being with her was like being with me, only she'd suck his dick. I once got in a dress for a charity thing. It was this orange prom thing. He took one look at me and went, "I'm uncomfortable with how good you look in this." Anyway, he turned out to be a homophobe.

TONY

Booooo. I'm booing at you, not the story.

MADISON

It's not funny, sweetie.

TONY

Big fuckin' surprise.

MADISON

Add some more to the vision board. Get some better inspiration. Make a little person laughing. That'd be cute. I love little people.

TONY

Midget fucker.

DAVE

I thought it was funny.

Dave goes to a partially done collage of comedy things: comics, quotes, images.

TONY

The fuck you doin'?