

**Sample Plays from *TOO MUCH LIGHT MAKES THE BABY GO BLIND*
Written by Bilal Dardai**



My Many, Many Rubicons

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BILAL *and* DAN *stand on opposite sides of the stage with pieces of chalk.* BD *draws a line on the floor in front of him.*

DKH: What are you doing?
BD: I'm drawing a line.
DKH: What line are you drawing?
BD: The one I won't cross.
DKH: Not even for—?
BD: No.
DKH: What about—?
BD: No.
DKH: Or—?
BD: Maybe. Maybe for him. Maybe.
DKH: Huh.

DKH *draws a line on the floor in front of him.*

BD: What are you doing?
DKH: I'm drawing a line.
BD: What line are you drawing?
DKH: The one you won't cross.
BD: The one *you* won't cross?
DKH: No, the one *you* won't cross.
BD: I've already done that. I've already drawn that line.
DKH: This is a different one. This is a different line you won't cross.
BD: There's no need for that line.
DKH: Why not?
BD: Because I'll never cross *this* line.
DKH: So you say. This line is here in case you cross that line.
BD: You don't trust me not to cross this line.
DKH: It's not about trust.
BD: I drew this line. This line means something to me. If I ever cross this line what's to stop me from crossing that line?
DKH: (*draws another line in front of the first line*) This line. This line will stop you.
BD: I'd probably cross that line too.
DKH: (*draws another line*) Then this line.
BD: You're not hearing me. If I ever cross this line, this line I drew for myself, it's unlikely that boundaries created for me by others will present a deterrent. (*Beat.*) I notice that *you* don't seem to have any problems crossing those lines.
DKH: Why should I? They're not my lines.

BD: But they still represent lines that are further than the one I won't cross.

DKH: That's your perspective. From my perspective these are lines I cross all the time.

BD: Do you even have a line you won't cross?

DKH: Sure. It's not here.

BD: Can you draw it here?

DKH: I'd need to determine its relative position to all of your lines in order to accurately convey my own line.

BD: But you drew most of my lines!

DKH: Sure. But since I don't know what your line means, I don't know what any of these lines mean either. The only thing I know for certain is that you won't cross *that* one.

Pause.

BD: Erase those lines, Dan.

DKH: No.

BD: Come on.

DKH: No.

BD: Erase them, Dan!

DKH: *Make me.*

BD *contemplates crossing his line. He does not do so.*

CURTAIN

I touch you. Therefore, it is. (*Je te touche. Donc ça existe.*)

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Everybody except TREVOR onstage and nearby when this is called. One of the Neos has been designated "It" prior to the show. When the play is called, this person immediately tags somebody else and cries "You're It!" A game of Tag occurs onstage for 10-15 seconds or so, each time including the cry "You're It!" TD enters on the lip and watches this occur. He smiles widely.

TD: Hey! Can I play?

In response, whoever is currently It runs up to TD, tags him and cries "You're It!" before retreating. TD does not give chase. He stands at the lip and gradually his smile fades to a placid contemplation. A pre-recorded French narration plays as English super-titles are projected at center. TD responds to the narration with his expressions.

PROJECTION	NARRATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only now did he realize the truth. - He had become "It." - Once he had been Trevor. - But now only "It." - How had he come to this? - He had wished to participate... - ...and had lost his identity. - "It." "It." "It." - The world had plans for him now. - Whereas Trevor had been free... - ..."It" had a job to do. - "It" must pursue. - "It" must touch. - Only then could "It" be Trevor once more. - But what then? - Would Trevor once again seek "It"? - Would he fear the return of "It"? - The cycle of madness was everlasting. - Unless. - "It" made a choice. - "It" could choose to remain "It." - Forever. - Yes. - Forever. - Sacrifice himself to "It." - Forever. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenant seulement, il se rendait compte de la verite. - Il etait devenu "Chose." - Autrefois il etait Trevor. - A present, il n'etait que "Chose." - Comment en etait il arrive la? - Il avait souhaite participer... - ...et avait perdu son identite. - "Chose". "Chose". "Chose". - Le monde avait des projets pour sur a present. - Tandis-que Trevor etait libre... - ..."Chose" avait quelque chose a faire. - "Chose" doit continuer. - "Chose" doit toucher. - C'est alors seulement, que "Chose" pourrait redevenir Trevor. - Mais alors, quoi? - Trevor chercherait-il alors "Chose"? - Craindrait-il le retour de "Chose"? - Le tourbillon de folie etait eternel. - A moins que. - "Chose" decida. - Que "Chose" resterait "Chose." - Pour l'éternité. - Oui. - Pour l'éternite. - Se sacrifiant pour "Chose". - Pour l'éternité.

Projection ends.

TD looks at the room, and with great nobility, strides offstage.

CURTAIN

Lather, Rinse, Regret

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BILAL stands in a spotlight behind a table. On the table is a tub full of water, a washboard, a rag and a bottle of shampoo. He puts on a pair of plastic gloves as he starts speaking. SEAN and JONATHAN wheel on the large metal coat rack behind him. Draped over the top bar is an American flag. Over the course of this play, BD will remove the flag from the bar, and vigorously shampoo it in the tub. Maybe it looks like he's waterboarding the American flag. Maybe.

BD: Maher Arar stood in front of a Congressional Panel minus nearly a year of his life, which he left behind in a Syrian prison along with scraps of his sanity. The gentleman from Massachusetts looked down at Maher Arar and said to him:

JM: "Let me apologize to you and the Canadian people for our government's role in a mistake."

BD: Because we kidnapped an innocent man and handed him to a foreign government to be worked over for information he did not have. We are very *sorry* about that, said the man from Massachusetts. And as displays of regret go, this was a remarkable performance. If one were being cute, one might have called it an extraordinary rendition. (*Beat.*) Then the gentleman from California added, with Maher Arar still in the room:

SB: "Yes, we should be ashamed."

BD: But?

SB: "That is no excuse to end a program which has protected the lives of hundreds of thousands if not millions of American lives."

BD: And although I'm not from California and I wouldn't have voted for him even if I were, I feel this need to apologize to Maher Arar, to say "I'm sorry about him. I'm sorry about that." I'm sorry about the past seven years. I'm sorry that 3,000-plus Americans died in a preventable onslaught of fiery horror, I'm sorry that it drove so many of us brass-knuckled and blood simple, blindfolded behind the wheel of a roaring H3, driving like maniacs through the back alleys of our patriotism. I'm sorry that by the time most of us had stopped seeing red...and white...and blue, there were another 3,000-plus Americans lying in caskets and

I'm sorry that the people we claimed to have liberated continue to die at alarming rates. I'm sorry that our lawmakers lacked the collective spine to deny confirmation of an attorney general who wouldn't admit that a method used during the *Spanish Fucking Inquisition* just might be torture. I'm sorry that we took our principles for granted. I'm sorry that we allowed ourselves to be co-opted by a population of bed-wetting four year-olds, staring at the night light and agreeing to do anything, *anything* if it will keep us safe from the monster in the closet, people who were of absolutely no use in a war against terror because terror had already defeated them. I'm sorry if you think me saying these things mean I hate America. I'm sorry if you didn't love America enough to have pulled it aside and said "Hey...you're being an obnoxious asshole. I'm worried about you, and I want to help." I'm sorry that my voice wasn't loud enough to travel from here to Capitol Hill, to pierce through the white walls of the building, to hover two feet above the floor and shout YES, MR. ROHRABACHER, SHAME WAS A PERFECTLY VALID EXCUSE TO STOP COMMITTING THESE SORTS OF CRIMES, AND NO. I WILL NOT APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING THEM CRIMES.

(Pause. He has been holding the flag under the water for far too long. He pulls it out and begins to drape it over the bar of the coat rack to dry.)

BD: And I'm ready now. I'm ready to feel proud of my country again. I am ready to know that maybe I can finally travel elsewhere in the world without having to say "I'm an American." *(Beat.)* "Sorry."

(He stands on the coat rack, holding the side bars, and is wheeled off as he speaks his last line.)

CURTAIN

For Our Next Trick, Cynicism

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Anybody can do this. A Neo shuffles a deck of cards, and then performs the following trick.

“MAGICIAN”: For our next trick I will need a volunteer from the audience. Hi, what’s your name? Hi, _____, I’d like you to pick a card.

(They do so.)

Now look at that card but don’t tell me what it is.

Now show the card to the audience but don’t let me see.

Now assign a gender to that card. But don’t tell me what it is.

Now give that card a name. But don’t tell me what it is.

Now give that card a little kiss.

Now tell the card you love it.

Now tell the card you’re going to miss it. *(Beat.)* But that you know this is for the best. *(Beat.)* Tell the card that you’re sure you’ll see it again very soon.

Now say goodbye to the card.

Now put your card back in this deck.

(They do so. MAGICIAN shuffles.)

Now I want you to close your eyes and concentrate really hard on the card you picked.

(MAGICIAN pulls a card. It is probably not the correct one.)

Open your eyes. Is this your card?

I know. Sad, huh?

CURTAIN

Bruises, Blemishes

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A series of tableaux. BILAL speaks to the audience while PHIL and KURT create images of roughing him up, playground style. Each transition is handled violently, with pushes and shoves. There is an oil drum onstage.

Tableau 1: *BD backed up against a wall.*

BD: His name was Jason. He repeatedly pushed me up against the building during recess. I once gave him a small red treasure chest, originally found in a box of Cap'n Crunch, filled with about 50 cents in pennies. We spent an hour in Principal Mikulcik's office and he left me alone after that. I don't know why he did it. Maybe he was saving up for a bike.

Tableau 2: *BD held from behind, one Neo with a fist wound up to gut-punch.*

BD: His name was Aaron. I'd bike past his house on my way to Matt Horeni's and he'd throw large rocks at me as I went by. He hit me once in the shoulder and knocked a spoke off the front wheel, and I started taking a longer way to Matt's instead. I don't know why he did it. Maybe he was racist.

Tableau 3: *BD pinned down on his stomach, one Neo on his arms and the other grabbing his head.*

BD: His name was Junior. He sat next to me in English, making rude remarks about my mom, and he shoved me into walls when we passed each other in the hallway. I got transferred to another English class and he got disinterested. I don't know why he did it. Maybe because he had to go through life with the name Junior.

Tableau 4: *BD turned upside down.*

BD: His name was Mike. He'd mess with my food during lunch and knock me over during gym class. At the end of my junior year I struck him in the head with a combination lock and that seemed to get him off my case. I don't know why he did it. Maybe because it was high school and I was fat and somebody had to.

Tableau 5: *BD stuffed in the oil drum.*

BD: I don't know their names. There are 26 of them, and they are all Republican legislators in the state of Michigan. A few weeks ago they helped pass something they called "Matt's Safe School Law," named after a bullied teen who later committed suicide. The bill included a loophole granting legal protection to bullies who argued that their behavior stemmed from "moral or religious convictions." I don't know why they did it. I don't know why Republicans in Tennessee and Washington did the same thing a few months later. Even if these provisions don't end up in the final law I will never understand why they did it in the first place. Maybe they thought it would be a winning issue next election. Maybe they believe it's just a natural part of growing up. Or maybe they're a pack of cruel, ignorant sociopaths. And maybe we should stop allowing these people to hold fucking office.

CURTAIN

How the drunken video gamers from my apartment the other night
might stage the climax of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

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*The final scene of HAMLET is set onstage as follows: JOHN as **Hamlet**, ELIZA as **Laertes**, GENEVRA as **Gertrude**, KURT as **Claudius**. **Hamlet** and **Laertes** face off with swords, **Claudius** and **Gertrude** sit on chairs on the lip, holding goblets, wearing crowns.*

BILAL and MEGAN stand in the audience, directing. Neither is "acting" drunk.

CLAUDIUS: *(raising a goblet)* "Now the King drinks to Hamlet." Come, begin. And you the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAMLET: Come on, sir.

LAERTES: Come, my Lord.

MM: So what happens now? How does this work?

BD: The two of them have to fight.

MM: How do I do that?

BD: You just make them fight.

MM: But how do I do that?

BD: I'm telling you.

MM: What am I supposed to do here?

BD: I'm trying to tell you.

MM: How come they aren't doing anything?

BD: Look, I'll take Hamlet, you take Laertes.

MM: Which one's Hamlet?

BD: That one's Hamlet.

MM: Which one?

BD: That one.

MM: I want to take Hamlet.

BD: Fine. You take Hamlet, I'll take Laertes.

MM: Here, then switch places with me.

BD: We don't have to switch places.

MM: Switch places with me.

BD: All right, all right.

(They switch places.)

BD: So you tell Hamlet to fight Laertes and I'll tell Laertes to fight Hamlet.

MM: How do I do that?

BD: You just tell him.

MM: But what do I do?

BD: Just tell him.

MM: Fight Hamlet!

BD: No, you're Hamlet! Tell him to fight Laertes!

MM: Hey, Hamlet! Fight that guy!

BD: Laertes, fight Hamlet!

(HAMLET turns away from LAERTES and swings his sword at the air. LAERTES is facing the right direction but is completely out of range.)

BD: You're doing it wrong!

MM: You're not even facing the right way!

BD: No, that's you, you're Hamlet!

MM: Where is he supposed to go?

BD: Move closer to Laertes.

MM: Okay. Hamlet! Move over there.

(HAMLET moves downstage, away from LAERTES.)

BD: No! Up left! Up left! Up left!

MM: He's going up left!

BD: That's down right!

MM: What's over that way?

BD: Bring him back over this way!

MM: *(directs HAMLET towards the area by the tech booth)* I want to see what's over there.

Hamlet, go over there!

BD: There's nothing over there!

GERTRUDE: *(rising, holding her goblet)* The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet. *(She drinks from her goblet.)*

BD: Make Hamlet come back over here! Gertrude just drank the poison!

(HAMLET proudly raises a random prop item from the side.)

MM: See! Look! He found something! You said there was nothing there!

BD: Get back over this way! Hurry up!

MM: Are you sure there's nothing else over there?

BD: Come on! Hurry up! You're ruining it!

MM: Okay, okay! Hamlet, get back over there.

(HAMLET returns, still proudly displaying his item.)

MM: So what do we do now?

BD: Make Hamlet fight Laertes!

MM: I thought we did that!

BD: No, we *still need to do that*, before—

(GERTRUDE dies. CLAUDIUS pulls a sword from under his chair and slays both HAMLET and LAERTES. His eyes bulge and he laughs mechanically, repeatedly, like a basic sound file from an old arcade game. The lights slowly fade out.)

BD: There! Are you happy? Claudius won. Are you happy? Now we have to start over.

MM: You start over. I'm done with this stupid play.

CURTAIN

finesse

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Music playing¹. A blank table at center stage and a chair a bit behind it. STEVE enters wearing a hat. He rolls the hat down his arm and places it on the table, upside-down. He sits down, removing a deck of cards from his back pocket, and proceeds to casually attempt to throw them into the hat.

RYAN enters carrying a chair and wearing a hat. He nonverbally interacts with SM, asking if he can sit and join in. RW flips the hat off of his head, places it next to the other, and sits. SM shifts over and hands RW half the deck. They both attempt to throw cards into the hat, politely congratulating the other if they make anything in.

BILAL enters, carrying a chair and wearing a hat. He nonverbally asks if he can sit and join in. SM simply removes his hat and places it next to the others. SM and RW shift over, RW hands over half his deck. BD and RW continue. BD seems unsure what to do with his deck. Finally, he stands on his chair, lets out an almighty yell, and then leaps into the air, slam-dunking his cards into the hat. He then proceeds to commit what is often referred to as “excessive celebration.” This can be verbal, it can involve getting high-fives from the front row, it should be truly obnoxious. He runs off. RW and SM watch him as he goes.

CURTAIN

¹ Pink Martini, “Hang On Little Tomato”

Aside from the Soliloquy, how was the Play?

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BRENDA, BILAL, and LEAH *sit around a table with drinks.*

LU: The play used this device. A theatrical device. You know that thing in the play sometimes when an actor starts talking to themselves but nobody else onstage seems to hear them?

BA: A soliloquy.

LU: That's the one. A soliloquy. The play used a soliloquy. It's so incredibly fake. Like even if you accept that you're watching them vocalize their thoughts it's happening in the same amount of time it takes for other people onstage to be going about their regular lives... (LU *begins to drop in volume, and is then speaking silently.*)...so like does this one character just think that slowly or do all the other characters move that fast? And another thing...

LU *continues as if listing, with no voice whatsoever, a series of complaints about the use of soliloquy.* BD *continues looking at her and periodically nodding his head.* BA *leans back and watches LU as she speaks.*

BA: My, my, my. Just look at you over there, Leah. Continuing to act as though you're listing a series of complaints about the use of soliloquy without saying a single word aloud, so the audience can hear me speaking instead. I recall the first time we were onstage together, you and I, way back in September of 2011. I remember the way you used to say a line and then I'd say a line in response and everybody in the audience could hear the words we said to each other. Times sure have changed, Leah. They sure have changed.

BD *turns to face the audience.* LU *continues "talking."* BA *looks at LU and nods her head occasionally, possibly "saying" something as well.*

BD: This isn't another soliloquy. I'm speaking directly to you, the audience, so it's more of an aside. You know how every so often you'll hear somebody talking about some obnoxious meta-theatrical bullshit they saw onstage? This is what they're talking about. This bit where I employ an aside to tell you, the audience, the difference between an aside and a soliloquy? Obnoxious meta-theatrical bullshit. And you know something? I'm the one who wrote this play. And you know something else? I'm probably going to write something meta-theatrical in the future, too. Because I really, really enjoy this stuff. A lot. Think about *that* after I've stopped looking directly at you.

He turns back to LU. The conversation continues.

LU: And it was real clever, you know? Just real fucking clever.

CURTAIN

