

Dilettante

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

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Manuel sits on a couch and watches TV. The camera moves past him into the television. On television, Manuel sits on a couch and watches TV. The camera swings around and focuses on Manuel. The camera swings back around, and pans from the television to the window beside it. Manuel comes to the window and opens it. He begins to climb out the window.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Manuel's body swings out of the window.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Manuel's feet disappear from sight as he jumps out of the window.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Manuel's feet land onto soft grass. The camera focuses on his face in a close up, and pans away to reveal he is in a graveyard. The sound of crows cawing grows thunderous. Manuel's head slowly moves toward a tree branch. On the

tree branch, a crow stands crowing. Manuel lights a cigarette and looks back up at the crow. The crow smokes a cigarette too. Manuel inhales on the cigarette.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Manuel exhales at the entrance to a house. He opens the door.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Manuel enters the house wearing a crow mask. People all around smile and laugh and dance and have a great time. Manuel, wearing the crow mask, approaches people and they hand him a beer. He drinks the beer and they wrap their arms around his shoulders, laughing with him. Someone proposes to go outside. Manuel follows the person outside.

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

Manuel goes outside and they offer him a pipe of weed. Manuel smokes the pipe and lights a cigarette. The person next to him asks and he hands another over. He smokes more of the pipe. Someone opens the door and startles Manuel. He looks up. The mask is gone from Manuel's face, only a few feathers remain taped to his face. He follows that person inside. A POV shot from the table looks up at Manuel. Manuel looks down at the table, and perpendicularly is written "BOREDOM" in letters made of cocaine. Manuel takes the entire word in one sniff.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Manuel lights a cigarette in the car. The side-view mirror overlaps the frame to show his hand sticking out the window with the cigarette. Several shots of the road overlap each other as he drives home.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Manuel's head rests on the couch. His eyelids droop. His face lighted by the glare of the television. On television, a sitcom plays in full luminescent vivid color, overly saturated.

JILL

Jack and I went to the dance, and Jack's ex-girlfriend, Samantha was there. Jack told me, Jill, I don't love you, I love Samantha. And we got into this huge argument right there in the middle of the dance floor. Well, Jack stormed off and I came tumbling after.

The audience laughs. Jill falls into a couch.

JILL

Oh, the perils and throes of love. Is there anything anyone should be concerned with, beside relationships? With me and Jack, Jack climbs up a hill, and I follow him up there toward true love. But then, he finds some other coquettish clown and goes down, and I go right after him. What do you think, Bill?

BILL

Jill, I think your tale is a little too reminiscent of Sisyphus.

The audience laughs.

JILL

But wasn't Sisyphus happy?

BILL

Maybe his happiness derived from his unhappiness.

JILL

Oh, Bill, you have such a way with words.

Jill kisses Bill. The audience swoons.

Manuel's eyes close. He drifts into sleep.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

Manuel's lids open. He sits upright to find himself in the graveyard all over again. The crows squawk. The camera spins very quickly. The canvas is to the right, and an open laptop sits on a grave. The camera slows and pans in on the laptop. Google.com is open on the laptop. Manuel types in, "Meaning of Life." His eyes rapidly search for meaning. His lips read the text.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE - DAY

The camera focuses on the placard reading 'Philosophy.' Manuel wears the crow mask. The camera looks up at the momentous literature on the subject. He picks out Aristotle's Basic Works and Platonic Dialogues.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The clock ticks away. A spiral is in the center of the clock. Manuel opens Aristotle's works. He begins with the introduction. He reads a line or two, and opens the dictionary and searches for a word. Dilatory. Prudence. Tenacity. Think of more. He arrives at page 1 of the book, finally. It is dark outside. He slams the dictionary shut, he slams Aristotle's work shut.

INT. BOOKSHELF - DAY

The camera pans across empty bookshelves to rest on one book: "See Spot Run." Manuel sets Aristotle's Basic Work beside it.

INT. LIVINGROOM - DAY

Manuel flips on the TV and flips through channels. For each word a different hue of gray behind it. "Inanity," "Distraction," "Indolence." He wears the crow mask. His phone rings, color blooms from it, he answers.

MANUEL

David! How are you? Yeah, of course. Come over.

The camera swiftly twirls to show a nude David.

DAVID

Manuel! My friend! How are you? I haven't seen you lately.

The camera twirls back around to show Manuel without the crow mask.

MANUEL

I have been stricken with a malady.

David sits on the adjacent couch.

DAVID  
What's wrong?

MANUEL  
Dysphoria.

DAVID  
A terminal illness! What's the prognosis?

MANUEL  
Death, I fear.

DAVID  
A ubiquitous burden. What are you doing to overcome your new awareness?

MANUEL  
I'm not sure. I've tried ignoring it, but it looms. First, I focused on materialism and imbued my life in the latest fashions.

DAVID  
Aesthetics is very important.

MANUEL  
Yet, regardless of the things I wore, the shows and museums I attended, my friendships, my essence did not change. So, with these superlative labels on my chest, I discovered a new form of immediacy toward happiness. These name brands and fashions were an expedient to relational happiness. But no sole relationship made me happy; I needed more or all. And this venture entertained me. Debauchery became tantamount, and each new conquest greeted with emphatic applause by my peers.

DAVID  
Yet after all, what is Don Juan's end?

MANUEL  
Exactly. And I believed empiricism, experience, was expedient to understanding. But why take LSD if one can watch a documentary?

DAVID

Well, for one Stravinsky on shuffle is more terrifying.

MANUEL

And even, suppose, I found that elusive one, the final relationship of my life. What if after frequent turbulence, she played the Kreutzer Sonata with another man and I became insane? Thus, I realized before seizing upon a committed relationship, I must find personal harmony. But there is no harmony, everything is chaos, and I am going to die. How do you occupy your mind? How can I forget my blight?

DAVID

The fear may be immanent; it's an inevitable end. And during life, one may feel qualmish alienation at the thought of an abrupt and fruitless descend. And certainly, death is a thing to dread, and the past is regrettable and the future is unforeseeable and hope, though omniscient, is a traitorous being. So, what to do as a lifespan looks down at you and snarls its lip? What to do?

MANUEL

Yeah! What to do? Is it all meaningless, all living for naught? When, after billions of years of evolution I feel so distraught? After millennia of progression, advanced crop rotation, reality television and absurd societal mannerisms I sit here with you and how can I even wonder what to do? Should I even be prudent or run in circles endlessly? We are just like the ants, scurrying to obtain food and shelter and live out our existence to some impotent boon.

DAVID

Maybe from a floor-to-ceiling window in a skyscraper human beings appear as ants. And how can one empathize with such a busy mass? But, if all ants had potential to be curious, imagine, and create should they remain obstinate? You are correct, we have progressed, so let's find a true love, and not like Don

Juan's fleeting, but a passion for progression.  
Let us create a new kind of art.

MANUEL

But what do I love? My life seems lived in  
vain. I have done nothing but distract my  
brain. What have you done?

DAVID

Maybe it is not apparent, a subconscious tick.  
But search and study and you will discover it.  
And your past may have been wrought with  
diligent effort applied for naught. But I have  
found love, and worked hard, and in the end  
nothing was perfect. What have I done? Mainly  
puerile activity to keep my brain busy and to  
win the affection of ants.

MONTAGE Fast Motion

DAVID

Yet, here I am, living and well. And the worst  
possibility is one day I awake to find my body  
metamorphosed into a giant insect, or I am ate  
by a crocodile, shouting clever aphorisms and  
epiphanies from inside to an apathetic horde of  
family and friends. And if that is the worst,  
yet I find solace, why not take on the  
endeavor? Unfortunately, I must leave. I hope I  
have offered something.

MANUEL

Endeavor?

DAVID

Endeavor.

MANUEL

Diligence?

DAVID

Diligence.

MANUEL

Tenacity?

DAVID

Tenacity.

MANUEL

But that's such an exertion.

David leaves the room. Manuel wears the crow mask.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Manuel sits reading Aristotle. He is on page two. A large stack of philosophical text is on the table beside a dictionary. He flips into the dictionary. He sets Aristotle on the stack and leans back, defeated. He lights a cigarette. He looks into the sky and closes his eyes. Brilliant flashes of crimson and red flash by. He rubs his neck and looks back down. The bible sits beside the textbooks. Quick exchanges between his eyes and the book, an obvious comparison between the sizes. He picks up the bible and the philosophical text disappears. He opens the bible, reads a page or two, and the dictionary disappears. The camera pops up from behind the bible and focuses on his eyes.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

MATCH CUT: The camera pans away from his eyes and circles around him and a low angle reveals he stands in front of an hundred foot cross. He holds the bible. He walks toward the church.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Manuel stands inside of a large church, singing gospels and hymns. A drawing of a monkey approaching a pulpit. Manuel sings more hymns in different churches. A monkey in a catholic collar speaks. A monkey in a turban speaks. A monkey in a suit speaks. A monkey in a kippah speaks.

MONKEY

Read the Holy Book transcribed through God.  
Believe in God. Every other God is wrong. Every  
other God is wrong. Science is wrong.  
Progression is wrong. Believe in God, or you  
will suffer. God is always watching. God is  
everywhere. There is an afterlife, and unless  
you believe in God it will be terrible. Devote  
your entire mortal life to God, and after you



die you will be happy. Science is fallible, God is not. Every other God is wrong. Every scientist, every edification and enlightenment, all we know and have learned about our universe is wrong.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Manuel sits before a large burning fire. He rips pages out of a science book and throws it into the fire. He takes Beethoven vinyl and throws it into the fire. He throws Bird and Diz into the fire. He throws Zappa into the fire. He throws Dali and Picasso into the fire. He throws Vitorio De Sica into the fire and Fellini and Godard and Bunuel. He looks down at his bible. He flips through it.

CHANTING

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

GOD

And in the end, the Alpha, the Omega, the Almighty will return to earth, and every doubter and non-believer and everyone who does not follow God's laws and who does not sing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," will perish mortally and eternally. Believe!

He throws the bible into the fire. The fire roars. He wears the crow mask.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Manuel walks out of the church.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Manuel pours water over the fire.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Manuel sits alone. He spots the canvas. He smiles. The canvas is complete. He buys books on painting. History of . . . Art. Etc. He assembles another canvas. He looks at the blank canvas. The crow mask lies idly beside it. A fade begins.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A knife slides through the canvas. Fingers rip away the material.

DAVID

Epilogue:

Thus he finds a love, ostensibly persisting,  
apparitions of immaculate sublimation.  
He repudiates lethargy; without desisting,  
crafts a piece deserving presentation.  
A modest show, a crowd unresisting  
smiles at the motley conglomeration,  
Though too callow, all flee posthaste;  
What's art worth if it does not sate?

Life so errant, tomorrow so equivocal,  
sneers and snickers coated with incessant  
prate;  
erudite criticism from sophist societal  
virtuosos evokes uncertainty on chosen fate.  
Following completion, satisfaction ephemeral,  
persisting seems an imbecilic gait.  
Tenacity wanes, desired idealism a farce,  
that epigram only sparks a ludicrous lark.

Sloth is a well fitting suit,  
leave creation for the gods,  
studying stars is vain and uncouth.  
We've already progressed beyond pigs or dogs.  
And by now philosophers are without moot  
topics beside rotating crops.  
Anyway, there are pretentious people working  
to leave us content with lifetime shirking.

Raise your voices, join in the song,  
To distraction, sitcoms, and beer.  
Why give a fuck, now all sing along,  
All labor is pointless we cheer!  
Imprudence, procrastination is not wrong,  
let's idly gripe till we disappear.  
Provided I pray, some deity will save,  
skim and impose till I float from my grave.

Shout out loud, refute the clowns,  
To ignorance, decadence, and scatological  
comedy.  
Don't give a shit, let our voices resound

Fuck effort, ruminate solely on moments  
arbitrary.  
Live for the moment, in empiricism let's drown.  
Remain static, ignore criticism, illiteracy is  
my homily.  
Officiously sneer at every disparate fool,  
and never reflect. Stay draconian, dude.