

“BLISS”

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 60 MINUTES

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SUMMARY

Questioning the value of happiness, *Bliss* also explores the basis of our addiction to opioids as an aversion to the hidden trauma we all carry.

The entirety of *Bliss* occurs on, in, before, behind and around a single couch.

In the very near future a special compound for opioid addicts is created. Addicts are granted amnesty to separate from society and receive continued and ongoing use of the drug they crave. What could go wrong?

Bliss asks: is there a point when the pain of regret counteracts the intense effect of the drug? Or do we as humans exist solely as a condition of pleasure?

CHARACTERS (30)

DOVE, early 30s

2-236, late 20s or early 30s

COMMUNITY, early 30s

All roles are considered race and gender neutral.

TIME

The very near future, when there is no time.

SETTING

A single couch.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Bliss premiered April 2018 as produced by Swandive Theatre, directed by Damon Runnals, and featuring the following cast: DOVE, Meg DiSciorio; 2-236, Paul Rutledge; COMMUNITY, Jamie Case.

THE PLAY.

A living room.

There is a single couch.

We see DOVE sitting on one end of the couch. She has a large, beaming smile on her face. Looking around, making sure she isn't watched, the smile begins to fade.

We hear voices of the characters. While this sound plays DOVE attempts to leave the couch. But DOVE can't escape the couch. She can't disengage or fully separate. And this is not because of any physical restraint. It's because of what DOVE has become.

DOVE [VO/OH]

Happiness has no cure.

Happiness has no resolution.

Because it can't be stopped.

It can't end.

Unless there's pain.

Happiness will always win, though.

Because it's easy.

Because it's so close.

It's just a couple pills away.

Go on...take 'em.

Be happy.

Be the white, soft snow birds.

COMMUNITY

[From inside the couch] Heeeeeeeere we go!

DOVE retreats to a corner of the couch.

DOVE [VO/OH]

The ones that fly to the distant cold.

COMMUNITY emerges from inside the couch. She's balancing a slew of cookies on a half-crocked pill box.

COMMUNITY

Ohhhhhhhhh-kay! Now!...ooh. This looks tacky. Is this tacky? Yeah, this is tacky. I should've cut a side from one of the moving boxes to at least make a nice serving tray and look hospitality. But would you believe of all things this pill box was on one of my countertops? Just sitting there. So random.

DOVE

Nice you got a kitchen.

COMMUNITY

Right? Totally blissed out by that. My very own kitchen. Didn't expect that. And it's not like I asked for it, but...

DOVE

Comes with the job.

COMMUNITY

Right??? Beyond blissed. Especially since I like to cook. *Love* to cook. I was thinking how nice it would be to get here and maybe chef up light munchies for people, or little dishes, but then I get here and see it's like nothing but cookie tins and dough rollers so I guess nobody wants to be reminded of...okay, yeah, so, leftovers from what I didn't eat on the transport out.

DOVE

S'fine.

COMMUNITY

And they didn't stock any dishes! I'm a terrible host. Don't tell anyone this was how I treated my first visit, okay?

DOVE

Oh no, this isn't a visit, a real visit, or anything like that, I was just stopping by.

COMMUNITY

Exactly!

DOVE

Not like an official thing, you know, not like an actual *visit*.

COMMUNITY

Right, no.

DOVE

No, just a...hello.

COMMUNITY

Hel-lo!

DOVE

Just to welcome you, you know, here.

COMMUNITY

This whole thing is amazing, isn't it? This place?

DOVE

Sure.

COMMUNITY

No, I mean it, like a dream, like a big beautiful trippy dream where you wake up and you're still in the dream but you're living it. That ever happen to you?

DOVE

Um...

COMMUNITY

Sorry, ugh, I sound like an idiot. Do I sound like an idiot?

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

I'm really more composed than this but it's just you caught me at a...being here!
And my first visitor!

DOVE

Not a visit, just hello.

COMMUNITY

Oh absolutely, just hello, I got it, I get it, because...how about this, how about we agree that this isn't anything official.

DOVE

That's cool.

COMMUNITY

Wouldn't want word getting out, here she is, your brand new Community, all bright and shiny new off the transport, *to monitor mission conformity of resident users.*

DOVE

...right.

COMMUNITY

And already coming off like some first-time juicer. I really want to make a good impression with everyone. I want them to feel like I'm one of them, like I'm one of you, not just a monitor for the powers that be. Because I've heard how things can get here.

DOVE

Like what.

COMMUNITY

That the working residents, once you get past the initial grace period, how you can harbor a bit of distrust towards Community. That you don't always share what you feel in their official visits with me. Especially because some of you aren't blissed out, you know how some of you are almost...

DOVE

What.

COMMUNITY

Regretting they came. Wanting to leave and go back.

DOVE

I wouldn't know.

COMMUNITY

But you must know everyone. Having been here.

DOVE

People come and go.

COMMUNITY

Any ones in particular? Did you know the prior Community?

DOVE

...um...

COMMUNITY

Of course you did!, he was the assigned!...okay, you know what?, let me...make up for my lack of composure and silly, random blurtings with...

COMMUNITY delves into the couch and retrieves two juice tubes.

COMMUNITY

...ohhhhhhhhh-kay!...far less tacky. Whaddya think!

DOVE

What's that.

COMMUNITY

I like to cook. For family. New family. You.

DOVE

Oh.

COMMUNITY

I get that everyone has their own routine. Where they like to do it. With whom.

DOVE

Right.

COMMUNITY

I've been trying to mix my own. You won't tell anyone will you?

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

You want to? My juicer’s probably at the bottom of some moving box. Assuming it even made it. There were a lot of people on my transport.

DOVE

How many, exactly.

COMMUNITY

Juicers?

DOVE

People. On your transport. Coming here.

COMMUNITY

Mmmm, a lot?

DOVE

Like 50?

COMMUNITY

I’m not really supposed to say, you know, the rules here, not supposed to talk about anything *before*, but I’d estimate...*thousands*?

DOVE

...thousands.

COMMUNITY

It’s really something. Did I tell you I decorated my juicer right after learning I was appointed here?

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

I can go find it.

DOVE

Oh, no.

COMMUNITY

[The vial] C’mon then, you and me.

DOVE

Well, see, I’m just here as a hello.

COMMUNITY

I know but this is what we're here for, right?

DOVE

Only once a day.

COMMUNITY

The official juicing, sure, but people probably figured a way to sneak extra. Tell me: do we drink it, line it?

DOVE

Injected. The juicer, your box. Once a day.

COMMUNITY

Unless...they aren't happy. You say some people aren't happy?

DOVE

...I did?

COMMUNITY

That some people here aren't blissed out.

DOVE

I guess there's some.

COMMUNITY

Who might want to leave. Maybe they have...what's the word...regret.

DOVE

Maybe, I don't know.

COMMUNITY

Do they say that at the factory? You work at the factory.

DOVE

Yeah.

COMMUNITY

And that's where they're saying they want to leave?

DOVE

Not that people say it.

COMMUNITY

But if they did say it, where would they go?

DOVE

Out?

COMMUNITY

I get it. The juice box misfires and they get so baked they slip past the perimeter to wilderness.

DOVE

Do you know where we are?

COMMUNITY

Maybe that's what happened to the former Community. Well, we're past that now because I'm here and couldn't be more blissed about it. And you're at the factory!

DOVE

I'm not important.

COMMUNITY

C'mon, Parts is supposed to be making big strides. I bet you see and hear a lot, doing...

DOVE

Injection.

COMMUNITY

And you said your handle here is...?

DOVE

Dove.

COMMUNITY

I like that. Any significance?

DOVE

Not really.

COMMUNITY

Well.

DOVE

Well.

COMMUNITY

Well, if you ever want to come back and talk. An official visit. A room with an actual window. Above ground. Sunshine. A certain dish you want me to cook. We can talk. About anything we're allowed to talk about.

DOVE

...I guess there's something...not that I would've asked...but...do you know what happened to the other Community?

COMMUNITY

The one I'm replacing?

DOVE

Do you?

COMMUNITY

Only what you know. That one day he wasn't here anymore. Simply gone. That and they fast-tracked my transport here to backfill his spot. But you must have known him.

DOVE

Not really.

COMMUNITY

But you came for regular visits, right? [Digging into the couch] Your file must be here somewhere—

DOVE

—you know, I should go, I should get off the couch and head to...

COMMUNITY

The factory.

DOVE

Things are happening.

COMMUNITY

So I'm told.

DOVE

You are.

COMMUNITY

Community, right?

DOVE

Right.

COMMUNITY

Well.

DOVE

Well.

COMMUNITY

One last thing, before you go, Dove, because I’m curious, now that this place is up and running, now that it isn’t some wild idea or crazy vision or experimental proposal or controversial debate but a living and breathing colony for opioid addicts...a safe space to just have the stuff juiced into your body once a day...a place that accepts what can’t be stopped or cured...if someone that wasn’t your new Community came to your couch and asked...how would you describe this place?

DOVE

...one big beautiful dream(!).

COMMUNITY

Great. I’m so glad to hear that. So I’ll see you soon?

DOVE

Around. I guess.

COMMUNITY

Of course. Around. Have bliss today, Dove.

*2-236 emerges from behind the couch,
crawling outward into the scene.*

DOVE

Have bliss today, Community.

*COMMUNITY goes into the couch,
disappearing from view.*

2-236

Yyyyyyyyyyy-o!

DOVE

...

2-236

Yo Yo.

DOVE

...

2-236

Dark out. So.

DOVE

...

2-236

We need a chair in this jaunt.

DOVE

We only get one piece of furniture.

2-236

How many times you tell me? S'alright, I'm like a kite. Up!

DOVE

I told you?

2-236

Perfect, today. All ways of bliss. Gathered at the rally this morning, sun all yellowish and circle-y and what not. Then we went to this room, like a huge-ly room, and I was like what's our deal, and then I saw everyone like [no response] looking at some super screen, and we just kind of [no response] and binged all day on Laverne and Shirley. That Squiqqy be the dankness.

DOVE

You juice yet?

2-236

But then they ran some Happy Days and that shit just don't make sense.

	DOVE
You juice yet?	
	2-236
Forgot.	
	DOVE
You forgot.	
	2-236
No, I...forgot...I got you a cookie.	
	DOVE
You at the end of your burn?	
	2-236
C'mon. 'Sa cookie.	
	DOVE
Not hungry.	
	2-236
Cookie make you feel better then. Have a snaccident. For real, these crumbs is A1.	
	DOVE
How burnt are you right now?	
	2-236
On a scale of one to ten: yes.	
	DOVE
Still.	
	2-236
Burning down blaked street. You?	
	DOVE
Something like that.	
	2-236
Damn. You get used to it, huh.	

DOVE

You survive the grace period and make staff position and get a special mix. They mix a juice that’s right for you.

2-236

Want me all of that.

DOVE

Don’t talk like that.

2-236

Why not?

DOVE

Not around me. And get away from the couch, make my brain itch.

2-236

Gonna be security. When I make past grace. I see them security flukes leaning against walls all day, burning good. Lean and burn! ‘Cept on my way back here I saw was this dude on the ground, bleeding out his head, rolled over and bleeding out to the ice. And then just before reaching the ‘vator to come down here was another dude also bleeding out his mouth.

DOVE

Security collects the bodies at night.

2-236

Damn.

DOVE

So you didn’t juice today.

2-236

Was thinking I’d get back here, share a cookie, rock the couch.

DOVE

You sleep on the floor.

2-236

Yeah, but the floor.

DOVE

Won’t be much longer.

2-236

S’cool, I’m warm. Don’t feel nothing.

DOVE

I’m leaving!

2-236

This high is so polluted! C’mon, let’s hit the box.

DOVE

Couch is yours when I’m gone.

2-236

You going?

DOVE

I gotta get off this couch.

2-236

You don’t wanna juice?

DOVE

I gotta get off this thing. I gotta go.

2-236

Where you gonna go, huh?

DOVE

I did something stupid today.

2-236

Break out the juice box and forget it.

DOVE

Really! Stupid!

2-236

Chill. Shit.

DOVE

There’s a new Community now.

2-236

New what?

DOVE

She got here fast. I'm in trouble!

2-236

Cuz you make me sleep on the floor?

DOVE

You don't understand,

2-236

Understand couch better than floor.

DOVE

She's gonna find out!

2-236

I's just bringing you a cookie.

DOVE

Hey! I'm not messing around.

2-236

Damn.

DOVE

Look, we...we gotta talk.

2-236

All I been trying to do since I got here. Share some words, bite some crumbs, juice like a goose. But you sit there all moody, scratching your arm, the couch for yourself, make me crash the floor.

DOVE

I need to make sure.

2-236

'Bout what.

DOVE

That you weren't planted. That you're safe.

2-236

I saw you, okay? You seemed like someone needing to be talked to.

DOVE

They sent you.

2-236

I'm here to be *here*. Like everyone else. Like you. I won. You're going to that colony! No more rehab, no more scrambling for scratch, no more lies, it's our way to live, they give the burn and all we have to do is enjoy.

DOVE

Before you made transport here, were people talking about numbers?

2-236

...numbers.

DOVE

Your handle.

2-236

Yeah?

DOVE

2-236. A number.

2-236

Yeah?

DOVE

Because of how many.

2-236

What is this.

DOVE

I went to see the new Community, alright? She said on her transport were *thousands*. This place can't handle thousands.

2-236

This why you're upset.

DOVE

I'm upset because...I'm leaving. I'm going.

2-236

You ain't gonna get far.

DOVE

You know where we are.

2-236

Lady, they find out I say anything at all, it breaks the main rule. Divulging personal history. Discussing about outside the colony. Who you were before. They send you back.

DOVE

Back is where I'm headed. I need to go back.

2-236

...this some test, ain't it.

DOVE

No.

2-236

This how they weed us out? This place too small to hold everyone, the numbers growing, so when the burn starts to drop, go underground to some cold small room, one couch, where the sad lady you come to cheer up makes you sleep on the floor, say whatever it takes to get that juice box?

DOVE

...why you keep coming here.

2-236

Something wrong with being friendly?

DOVE

You keep coming here.

2-236

You ain't blissed out like everyone else.

DOVE

I'll help you with that.

2-236

What.

DOVE

I can't explain it all now because you're on it full.

2-236

What kind’a help I need help with.

DOVE

We have to get out of here.

2-236

A place with two couches?

DOVE

This place isn’t what they said it would be. And I’ve seen something.

2-236

And I ain’t some low-function junkie who’s gonna break rule by talking to you about whatever you think you’ve seen.

DOVE

I saw a chart.

2-236

And I see pink giraffes and moonbeams all day long but I ain’t tripping over it.

DOVE

Alright, look, I...left something behind. Important. I thought being here would make me forget. But I can’t forget. The burn isn’t enough.

2-236

That’s why you wanna leave.

DOVE

And I think I know what’s really going on.

2-236

We gonna hit the box?

DOVE

I gotta get off this couch.

2-236

You wanna juice or what! Cuz I’m starting to feel a serious drop in the high.

DOVE

I need you to help me get back.

2-236

The only thing I’m gonna help you with is getting bliss. That’s why we’re here.
We get it free, no more pain, no more problems, no more anything except getting bliss.

Long pause.

DOVE probes into the couch, retrieves an injector.

2-236

Whass’at.

DOVE

New injector I’ve been working on my own.

2-236

Like...

DOVE

You attach it further up your arm.

2-236

And?

DOVE

You’ll see.

2-236

Better?

DOVE

Quicker.

2-236

But better.

DOVE

Better than what they got at the factory. It changes everything.

2-236

...see?...this is what we’re doing here.

DOVE

Come on the couch and I'll show you.

*As COMMUNITY emerges from the couch
we see 2-236 get high.*

*DOVE prepares the injector needle to 2-
236's upper arm and links to the juice box.*

*Then 2-236 scans in to the box with retinal
verification. The juice box delivers.*

*As the following continues DOVE then shifts
the injector to her arm, and goes through
the same process.*

*But DOVE is not as affected and shows no
reaction from the infusion.*

COMMUNITY

There's something I've come to understand. More like appreciate.

Opioids don't create addiction. We create addiction.

They hit the bliss center of the brain, sure. And they make a lot of people not sad.

Like coffee. Not so poisonous it would destroy us. Not so addictive they didn't
make industry of it. Rewrote society around it.

But what would happen one day if coffee tasted 10 times better?

What would happen if coffee tasted 20 times better?

If it brought a sense of joy that made nothing sad anymore.

Wouldn't your blood be that?

Wouldn't everything about you be for the most important reward. The only
reward.

You say: America is Puritanical and sobriety is morality but I say reality is reality.

You can't stop 20 times better.

COMMUNITY [CONT.]

Not when it makes me feel like this.

So there is no ‘getting better.’

There’s only send them away.

Send me away.

DOVE

Hovering by the distant fields.

COMMUNITY

As a small test, first.

DOVE

White. Soft.

COMMUNITY

Just a small test.

*DOVE stirs, claws, lumbers and slides along
the couch.*

DOVE

Distant, alone, towards the cold.

COMMUNITY

...and here we go!

*COMMUNITY has drawn from the couch a
pile of cookies on the side of a moving box.*

COMMUNITY

Ohh-kay! Now, oooh, this looks tacky. Yeah, this is tack-y! Especially because I love to cook. Love to! I used to help my mother make our big family meals. I’d make dishes I felt would appeal to them, would bring a smile to their face. Nobody does big family dinners anymore. I feel it’s kind of a social cost for the way kitchens have gone. Not that I’m complaining, I mean I have one here, right?

DOVE

Hello.

COMMUNITY

My first visitor!

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

This is wonderful!

DOVE

No, I'm...hello.

COMMUNITY

Hel-lo!

DOVE

To welcome you.

COMMUNITY

And that is so kind. Kindness. Hospitality. A civilized means of exchange. You see what sticks, even here? Humans are the best! So: you know what I'd like to do?

DOVE

Have a cookie?

COMMUNITY

Look at your file.

DOVE

Oh.

COMMUNITY

Sure!

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

I need to know about everyone, right?

DOVE

Just hello.

COMMUNITY

No, I know that, not an official visit, but at some point Community needs your story, right?

DOVE

I'm not—

COMMUNITY

Ohhhhh, you're important. We're all important here. New society. Values and beliefs and structural order contradicting what everyone else back there still has to endure. [Almost sotto] Besides, they're watching to see what happens.

DOVE

They are.

COMMUNITY

The people who said this would work. The people who said this wouldn't work. This isn't good riddance. This isn't even good fortune. This is...well you know what I think? We're testing all the assumptions the world has taken for granted.

2-236

Hey.

COMMUNITY

Ending the tyranny of sadness. Smiting the dark stench of the soul! Crushing the façade of progress and just allowing ourselves just to be happy.

2-236

Hey, lady!

COMMUNITY

The most basic human impulse.

2-236

I'm freezing!

COMMUNITY

Your file's gotta be here somewhere.

2-236

How come I'm so freezing?

DOVE

It's probably not here.

COMMUNITY

You're gonna be my little oasis of humor. Didn't think I'd get funny here.
Kindness, pleasantness, empty smiles, sure, but I didn't think humor.

DOVE

I'm not trying to be funny.

COMMUNITY

[Searching the couch] I doubt the former Community hit the big delete key before disappearing.

2-236

Why'm'I so freezing?

DOVE

Shhh!

2-236

HEY! LADY!

DOVE

Shut up!

COMMUNITY

Sorry?

2-236

What did you do?

DOVE

Nothing.

2-236

This don't feel like nothing.

COMMUNITY has retrieved from inside the couch a file, perhaps strangely and weirdly computerized, colorful.

COMMUNITY

Let's say hel-lo! to...

2-236

You did something to me.

COMMUNITY

...that's weird.

2-236

I need the couch.

DOVE

No!

COMMUNITY

Most of your file's missing.

2-236

A blanket.

DOVE

We don't have blankets, I told you!

COMMUNITY

Parts. Couch assignment. But no record of visitations.

2-236

Crawl into a cushion.

DOVE

Quiet!

COMMUNITY

Not one visit.

2-236

Nice cushion.

DOVE

You just gotta make it through the first night, okay? After first night you'll be better.

2-236

That's what you said last night!

DOVE
...what?

2-236
You said that already!

DOVE
When?

2-236
The other nights!

DOVE
What other nights?

2-236
You're so cracked!

COMMUNITY
Hope this isn't the case for everyone.

2-236
I'm gonna talk to somebody about this!

DOVE
You talk to anyone and I'll tell them you told me first!

2-236
I didn't tell you nothing!

DOVE
All about how many are coming here, that you're gonna somehow report back to the world, that you stole that injector from me!

2-236
Burning hot cold sweat ice.

DOVE
It's withdrawal.

2-236
What?

DOVE

I'm in the middle of something here.

2-236

Withdrawal?

DOVE

Chill your shit, man.

2-236

God, I'm so strung.

COMMUNITY

Minneapolis?

DOVE

...oh....yeah.

COMMUNITY

Never been there.

DOVE

...it sucks.

COMMUNITY

I'm sure there's nice parts.

DOVE

Not the parts I ended up.

COMMUNITY

You'd come out of a vocational program? Interior mechanics. Then worked at a cabinet-making shop? Sounds nice.

2-236

Gotta stand up.

DOVE

Lot of...standing around.

COMMUNITY

Let me guess: new technology, standing around, watching machines perform your tasks, leaving you just to push buttons. Lot of idle time to pursue...other avenues of fulfillment.

DOVE

That isn't it.

COMMUNITY

Must've been a healthy wage.

DOVE

If the world's sick how can anyone be healthy?

COMMUNITY

Yes! I couldn't agree more. That is very profound. World sick, us unhealthy. Is that why you quit?

DOVE

The boss was always telling me what to do.

COMMUNITY

Some people don't respond well to authority. Makes them nervous. You're not nervous are you?

DOVE

No.

COMMUNITY

So you started your own company making custom cabinets for high-end homes.

DOVE

Selling to rich people.

COMMUNITY

What went wrong?

2-236 is now close to COMMUNITY.

DOVE

I suck at rich people. If I didn't like 'em, if I thought they were stupid or if they got mouthy about what they wanted I'd tell 'em to screw off. Then the recession. We lost money, a lot, and I got stressed, so I stopped sleeping, stopped eating, couldn't leave my bed for weeks, people came to sell my tools to pay what I owed and I was just really depressed. You know, depressed.

*COMMUNITY has shifted her position,
away from 2-236.*

COMMUNITY

You said ‘we.’ Was there someone else with you? Was there someone else depending on you?

DOVE

Not supposed to talk about it here.

COMMUNITY

But you can talk about it with me. That’s what Community is here for.

DOVE

Listen to me: I’ve learned things here. The world is a sickness. The sickness and the disease. But the cure is worse than the disease.

COMMUNITY

Heroin? You don’t seem straight H to me. iAroma? Shards? Flakka? Velvet? Deathamphetamine?

DOVE

I’m not proud of what happened, alright?

COMMUNITY

If you don’t mind my saying...you just don’t seem happy.

DOVE

I’m fine.

COMMUNITY

That’s what I mean. You’re ‘fine.’ People aren’t here to be just ‘fine’.

DOVE

I’m happy.

COMMUNITY

I'll tell you something about happy. All I wanted out of life was to bring people together through taste. Cooking to me was always laughter, beauty, done with a full heart. Afternoons with my mother, cooking for evenings with the full family. That was happiness! Whatever happened to happiness? Where'd it go? Families no longer together like that. I lost that. Maybe everyone else did, too. Whatever it was that held them together, gone. It doesn't take long to find their way to what the world is getting sick on. Crafted by silent cooks in dark kitchens. The most fun available on Earth! Happiness forever! That they tell us is wrong to have. But the table is set, an incurable society desperate. So this place. A compromise. A small test. To see what happens when those who can't go without it are given only it. While we cook it for the rest of the world. It's only a matter of time. One big kitchen, one item on the menu. So this kitchen can't have its bakers flake. It can't have a family member pull away. We can't have someone disrupt the coming age of bliss.

DOVE

...I should go.

COMMUNITY

Factory?

DOVE

Things are happening.

COMMUNITY

So I hear. You?

DOVE

Some.

COMMUNITY

When was the last time you left this couch?

DOVE

...

COMMUNITY

Have bliss today, Dove.

DOVE

Have bliss today, Community.

COMMUNITY dives into the couch, as...

*2-236 crawls, claws, lumbers and slides
around the couch.*

DOVE

Get off!

2-236

Stop!

DOVE

Get off!

2-236

Stop it!

DOVE

Get on the floor.

2-236

Couch!

DOVE

Floor!

2-236

Just let me sit a second.

DOVE

On the floor!

2-236

S’freezing!

DOVE

Tough.

2-236

...why you doing this. Huh? Why you cracking me like this?

DOVE

They’re doing this! Them!

2-236

Who them?

DOVE

The corporate greed killers who brought us here.

2-236

We brought ourselves here! We applied. We begged to be picked.

DOVE

You're seeing things wrong.

2-236

See I'm freezing.

DOVE

You can't be here. You gotta go.

2-236

Too late. I already been here nights now.

DOVE

On the floor. Right now or I say something.

2-236

To who? The person you'd tell is sitting right here.

DOVE

I will.

2-236

You won't.

DOVE

Makes you so sure.

2-236

'You're the only person I can talk to.'

DOVE

Who said that.

2-236

You.

DOVE

Never.

2-236

Lady, your blood's so bugged you don't know which up is down. Your brain is flaked.

DOVE

You don't know jack about me.

2-236

I do, though. Everything you haven't told me is plain. You're just like me. Trying to get distance. To separate. We both got that. Make us the same.

DOVE

You should just go.

2-236

I can't just walk out, alright? We're past that now. Whatever you've been doing to me the past bunch of nights really hurts, you know? You're hurting me. When all I've been trying to do is help you.

DOVE

You wanna help?

2-236

Yes.

DOVE

...if you stay you gotta hang on. If you stay you gotta do this with me.

2-236

Do what?

DOVE

Get off the box.

2-236

...thought you meant the other thing.

DOVE

Oh.

2-236

That’s how they get us. Their leverage. Figured I wouldn’t care about that. That I’d get here and all the old things like movement, speech, time, air, *discovery*, all that wouldn’t exist anymore. I could just juice and burn. But after a while...you can only be separate so long. [Pause] You don’t like me.

DOVE

I don’t like anybody.

2-236

Were you?

DOVE

What?

2-236

Paired with someone.

DOVE

When I got here.

2-236

Was bad?

DOVE

Never went. Some strange guy? Some strange couch? Who knows what could happen.

2-236

How’d you burn if you didn’t have your box yet.

DOVE

Scavenged. Smiled when I had to. Kept quiet.

2-236

But you survived the grace.

DOVE

Barely.

2-236

Got yourself staffed to factory.

DOVE

...please don't get close.

2-236

One couch, no blankets, small room. In the dark and the cold. That's how they make it stick.

DOVE

How would you know.

2-236

They take it away.

DOVE

They can't take it away. That's the whole point, here, putting us on it and keeping us on it.

2-236

They take it away. They take us away. Because there's more...there's more people coming.

DOVE

You know.

2-236

I can't talk about it.

DOVE

You just said! Did you see?

2-236

I guess. I saw a chart. It didn't look at all like place.

DOVE

Yes.

2-236

You gonna let me on the couch, or what?

DOVE

They said they were trying to make something for us instead of jail. A responsible solution. A colony. Pharmatherapy.

2-236

Yeah. That’s right, I remember now, Pharmatherapy.

DOVE

A living test. An experiment. Run by the chemical companies.

2-236

Send the addicts, see if we can take it while we make it.

2-236

Disease and cure, recover instead of recovery.

DOVE

But it isn’t right here. People dying in the streets. Gone by morning.

2-236

And I won’t mind being one of them. I even know how I’m gonna die. I’m gonna flare. I’m gonna vape in a flash of burn. The most glorious scorch. GIVE IT TO ME.

DOVE

...I know what you’re going through. It’s hell but you gotta hold on.

2-236

How many nights you think I already held on? How many couches I begged for? Floors I ended up on? I lost count. You know how many of us prayed to be picked? And it was me. It was my name. And I said yes and I’m here. I’m here with you. Maybe I didn’t realize how much I couldn’t be distant. Don’t you feel that, too?

DOVE

Maybe.

2-236

All I know is I’m here with you. All I did was try and bring you a damn cookie!

DOVE

...alright...just...sit there.

2-236

...yeah?

DOVE

...there.

2-236 comes back onto the couch.

DOVE probes the couch and retrieves from its interior a small blanket. She places the blanket on 2-236.

She moves to the opposite end of the couch.

This holds.

DOVE

You aren't like the others.

2-236

I don't know others.

DOVE

Factory people. Way they say things at me.

2-236

Why work there.

DOVE

Wasn't my choice.

2-236

Still.

DOVE

Guess pharmatherapy needs the addicts making the addiction. Delivery kits, juice boxes, wires, batteries. The injectors.

2-236

You were medical before.

DOVE

Housing.

2-236

Like roofs and shit?

DOVE

Cabinets. Shoot up in my shop, alone, the only way to do it. Cut wood and get hit. Then I'd somehow go to houses for install. I'd always stare out open windows to the fields. New houses always getting built by open fields. And the way the sun would butter the wings of white snow birds flying. Diamond white, to beyond. Up and far.

2-236

Higher than you.

DOVE

Safer.

2-236

Distant.

DOVE

Nothing's alone enough for me.

2-236

That why you started. To be alone.

DOVE

Only time I was happy. I hated being happy.

2-236

Why I'm gonna be security.

DOVE

Yeah? You don't seem security.

2-236

I don't feel the other thing they tell me I'm here for. They switched on me.

DOVE

You must've been picked for some reason. They don't bring in any random junkie.

2-236

Not supposed to talk about it.

DOVE

Woman takes you off the floor and gives you a couch and tries to help.

Pause.

2-236

I'm not used to that. I'm used to things taken away. You know what it was for me? Discovery. Learning something new about the world. Helping others do the same. I was a math teacher, community college. I was always good at math. I loved it. I loved making others love it, you know, the kids trying to hold on, the ones still trying to find themselves. I guess I went a little too far, some of the kids having trouble at home, giving them a place to crash. They said it crossed the line, and they took the classroom away from me. I was a good teacher. Still, I'd never get another job after that. When the thing you love can no longer exist, when you dread finding other ways to refit yourself to the sludge, the race, the world as it is...one of my former students was shuffling his bottle, making profit on the bottom of his scrip. I guess he saw me for who I was, a pain you have to know from to tell from. Showed me how to peel the coat, bust the Oxy rail raw. Free, the first one. You start one day you don't remember who you are without it. Norcos, diamorph, K8 dillies, half the price but *that* rush: unbeatable. They're back home trying to find a cure for us? *This is the cure for them*. If there's something that makes you this, that takes away all pain, why wouldn't you just do that thing? There's nothing to discover anymore. So tear my knuckles apart, stick all the needles in the world through 'em, make me forget what I lost, the hidden pain, the one up here we've all got. You say you left something behind? Happiness is to forget. And right now, whatever you did, I'm starting to remember.

DOVE

Maybe the pain means you're okay.

2-236

How's that.

DOVE

Cuz happiness doesn't change. Happiness is always the same. Pain changes. Makes us who we are. I got picked from all those applying for amnesty. Because of what I can make. And I thought I could get here and just be happy. But I left something behind.

2-236

I thought I was leaving something behind, too. Discovery through numbers. I also see numbers...

DOVE

...

2-236

...they told me they want me to watch. To watch for people who aren't happy.
They want me to have visits.

DOVE

...visits...

2-236

Community.

DOVE

...what?...

2-236

As your Community.

2-236 delves into the couch and withdraws a chart.

COMMUNITY [OFF]

Ohhhhhhhhh-kay!

2-236

I made you this chart.

COMMUNITY appears from the couch, now balancing a potpourri of opioids and paraphernalia on a silver platter.

COMMUNITY

Now!...oooh, this looks...not tacky. Cute? O-pihany on a platter? Score on a spread? Plow on a scow? Flower bliss daze doze dime down raw crunk phat junk tap-time roller-fine hot-buzz 40-fuzz, all tough street-slang and butch-bargain brain-belch nonsense for one thing, for one thing, for only one thing...

DOVE trying to stuff 2-236 and the chart into the couch.

COMMUNITY

...because we're wired for ONE THING. Now you can call it whatever you want but it's the most basic utility we charge each other. That we *take* from each other. Cuz it's still a market economy. For you to be up someone else has to be down. Which is why I want to talk about this 'we.'

DOVE

I gotta get to the factory.

COMMUNITY

That make you happy?

DOVE

It makes me here.

COMMUNITY

And here makes you happy.

DOVE

Here makes me here.

COMMUNITY

[The platter] With these old drugs? Now we've got the juice box...

COMMUNITY returns the platter to the couch.

COMMUNITY

...soon to be in everyone's kitchen. They'll talk about the days of bottles in a bathroom *cabinet* as remembrance. The juice box in the kitchen will be their new morning wash, their evening prayer, wired to retinal scans from inside their fridge and it's gonna make machine decisions and inject your daily dosage, zing-o! A slight cold prick and *burn*. So we're getting it right here first, the right mix for the right people, before it becomes coffee, the oil for the engine of the world!...I've said too much. But you knew this, right? You figured this place out? No more illegal, everyone medicated. You just have to be *born*. We're making God. See where I'm going?

DOVE

...

COMMUNITY

Talk about 'we.'

DOVE

Nothing to say.

COMMUNITY

We all have regrets.

DOVE

I guess.

COMMUNITY

...a child.

DOVE

...my daughter.

COMMUNITY

Age?

DOVE

Was 10.

COMMUNITY

Was?

DOVE

Lost track of time. I didn't even tell her I was leaving. I let her go.

COMMUNITY

Only if you still buy into that whole family values crap. That's gone. We're changing it.

DOVE

I went to where she lives. I stood outside for a while. Then I went to the transport station. To sign the forms.

COMMUNITY

Clean?

DOVE

Got cooked with some freaks across the street beforehand. Showed me how to mount a superpop.

COMMUNITY

One last hurrah.

DOVE

We were soaring. Just in case. Figured I'd die. That it was all some lie.

COMMUNITY

The lie is believing a truth you know to be false. Where is she.

DOVE

With her grandparents.

COMMUNITY

That happens a lot. Probably cuz they never scored a batch. Never felt this way.

DOVE

Told me they were taking her because I was hurting her. I didn't even argue.
She's been living with them. They told her I was dead.

COMMUNITY

I gotta tell you: you are.

DOVE

I didn't even say goodbye.

COMMUNITY

There's no need to say goodbye. There's no need to remember. There's no need to
taste anymore. That's the beauty of what's coming. We won't have memory, or
regret. We'll just be happy.

DOVE

I don't believe that.

COMMUNITY

That why your file's missing?

2-236

Shhh!

COMMUNITY

Half erased?

2-236

Say nothing!

COMMUNITY

The only file like that.

2-236

[The chart] Right here!

COMMUNITY

Do you want to tell me?

DOVE

Yes! I want to tell you! I want to tell you...we're not dead. There are parts of us still alive. Parts of us that still taste!

COMMUNITY

You came here to be high for the rest of your breaths.

DOVE

I wanted to be alone.

COMMUNITY

Take what we make and shoot up alone? You want to be apart from society but pretend society has an obligation to keep you?

DOVE

The pain decided to fight.

COMMUNITY

We can fix the formula.

DOVE

You can't fix what this place will make you. You won't be able to sit there and listen to everyone juiced and blissed out for days and days. You'll miss the pain.

COMMUNITY

I left more than a child.

DOVE

You'll miss them. You'll want it back.

COMMUNITY

I'm here now.

DOVE

I've been here and I saw a chart.

2-236

Don't!

DOVE

It was big. More than here.

2-236

She knows!

COMMUNITY

I know there are oceans of useless junkies out there. I know we can't salvage all those walking corpses.

DOVE

[Taking and showing the chart] THIS...what is this.

COMMUNITY

...another colony.

DOVE

...a second colony.

COMMUNITY

But not for research.

DOVE

...a camp.

COMMUNITY

You're already dead. We're already dead.

DOVE

Thousands.

2-236

You're telling her everything!

COMMUNITY

Getting comfort and joy once a day for free? There's no one tending the light at the end of the tunnel. People are doing it to themselves and blaming us!

DOVE

I gotta get off this couch.

COMMUNITY

For some kid you left behind?

DOVE

You'll *want* your pain back.

COMMUNITY

Then get off the couch!

DOVE

You'll *need* your pain back.

COMMUNITY

Stand up!

DOVE

I'm going away.

2-236

Don't you see who she is?

DOVE

Off this couch and back!

2-236

She'll send you to the chart!

COMMUNITY

Would you feel different if you said goodbye to her before coming?

DOVE

I don't know.

COMMUNITY

Is that what you told the former Community?

2-236

No!

DOVE

...yes.

COMMUNITY

Before he left?

2-236

Damnit!

DOVE

I wanted him to go with me.

2-236

A bigger high, the highest high yet!

COMMUNITY

But you're not with him.

DOVE

He came to me, here, many nights.

COMMUNITY

You and him.

DOVE

It was hard at first. Hazy. Distorted. Then yielding. Then intense.

2-236

Your power.

DOVE

Daring.

2-236

Dove.

DOVE

Like we were children, innocent, rushing.

2-236

Dove.

DOVE

Like we rediscovered everything about pain and ourselves.

COMMUNITY

How were you able to do that?

DOVE

Because I weaned us from the juice box. A special injector I built that absorbs the juice while tricking the box that its contents got delivered in full. You place it higher up your arm for it to work. The box thinks it's delivered all its poison through the skin but the injector sucks at least half. We never get the full dosage.

COMMUNITY

So this whole time you’ve been half-off the box.

DOVE

It still hits but you build resistance.

COMMUNITY

You half-return to the pain.

DOVE

I wanted his help to go back.

COMMUNITY

But he said no.

DOVE

He came for many nights. We scowled. Then calmed. Then looked at each other. I think it had been a while since I looked at another person, into another person. We would talk. It became intoxicating.

2-236

Like I found myself by discovering another.

DOVE

The more alive we became—

2-236

—the more alert—

DOVE

—the more aware, the more we regained ourselves. Two lovers stranded within the storm as its brewing.

2-236

We can’t stay, love.

DOVE

[To COMMUNITY] Have you ever felt like that?

2-236

They’re going to find out.

DOVE

[To COMMUNITY] You don’t know what you’re missing. The *taste*.

2-236

I haven't been doing visits.

DOVE

[To 2-236] Where have you been?

2-236

Observing. Examining the perimeter. Watching transport operations.

DOVE

You didn't come last night.

2-236

Here. Double oatmeal raisin.

DOVE

I was so worried.

2-236

I know, but I feel I'm being watched.

DOVE

By who?

2-236

Everyone. Everything! The bad news is with all the incoming bodies that perimeter security has increased. The good news: I'm thinking the system here is still new enough to have oversights. I was by transport arrival, pretending to be blitzed, and watching their protocol, their movements. There's so much attention to everyone coming in that there's gaps in going back. I figure there's a way we can transport back.

DOVE

How's that going to work?

2-236

We board as assumed identities. As security.

DOVE

There's no way.

2-236

It's the only way.

DOVE
How?

2-236
I’m still working on that.

DOVE
It won’t work.

2-236
Of course it’ll work. It has to now.

DOVE
What about accessing some communication console? An executive office, send an
outbound—

2-236
—to who?

DOVE
—I don’t know, the news?

2-236
And say what?

DOVE
A government official.

2-236
That’s just not going to do anything.

DOVE
Someone will listen.

2-236
Only if we’re there to tell them. Only if we tell them in person. We applied and
got selected and committed and got stamped and transported and saw and avoided
and hid and discovered and got half-clean and escaped and came back and it’s
worse than any sane person could believe.

DOVE
Big Pharma out to heal the world with their product that made everyone sick in
the first place.

2-236

Exactly.

DOVE

...[resignation, flopping on the couch]...

2-236

We bring stuff with us. Materials. The juice box. My chart. Your injector!

DOVE

Why can't we just escape? Why do we have to warn others?

2-236

I feel we have a responsibility. Now that we're awake it's like drowning in the mirage and resurfacing to spring-lake waters. They'll listen. But we've gotta move. I don't want to lose you.

DOVE

I don't want to lose this, either.

2-236

This.

DOVE

You.

2-236

They're going to catch on sooner or later. I could get reassigned, you could get...

DOVE

...[the chart]...

2-236

I'll trash our records. Your file. We'll go back *full* clean.

DOVE

We'll start over.

2-236

We'll get your daughter.

DOVE

I've got some money. I stashed some in a cabinet that got installed in someone's house. We may have to...

2-236

We'll figure a way. We'll get back. We'll walk. We'll score some...*IDs*. We'll live.

DOVE

Where.

2-236

Wherever you want.

DOVE

It's not that easy.

2-236

Wherever you want.

DOVE

...a place with sky.

2-236

Okay, well, that's like everywhere outdoors.

DOVE

Real sky. Fields. Maybe I'll study birds.

2-236

For a living?

DOVE

For a life.

2-236

I'll teach math. Somewhere. My own little classroom.

DOVE

A former junkie colonist fugitive.

2-236

I don't care, it's what I'm gonna do. I'll make 'em do numbers old school, longhand, like I used to have my students do. Making them figure out the square root of 5 longhand, that was my favorite.

DOVE

...two two three six.

2-236

Two two three six oh nine seven seven to be exact.

DOVE

I didn't say goodbye.

2-236

We're going to say hello. Every night.

DOVE

I like to watch people from a distance.

2-236

I like to help people up close.

DOVE

I like to stand in the sun.

2-236

I like to make surprise comebacks.

DOVE

I like to make forks and spoons from oak.

2-236

I like to do puzzles.

DOVE

I like to dance.

2-236

You do.

DOVE

I like to turn off all the lights and turn up the music really loud and dance. I miss that.

2-236

Can I be there?

DOVE

With my daughter. The three of us.

2-236

What happens when she gets tired of dancing and falls asleep?

DOVE

I won't need to be alone anymore. I won't need the snow birds to lift me.

2-236

I would do it all again, all of it, everything, to come here for you.

DOVE

You are crazy.

2-236

No drug can beat this. No drug can replace the pain, the bite, the sour, the sweet.

DOVE

...my sweet.

2-236

Look, you won't see me for a while. I'm going to do some more observing. To find our escape. I could be gone for days. I might even have to ride the transport as security to try it first.

DOVE

No.

2-236

Whatever you do, don't lose heart. Don't lose faith. And don't hit the box. Even if it looks like I haven't come back, keep clean.

DOVE

And you.

2-236

[The injector] I've got mine.

DOVE

As well.

2-236

Are you with me.

DOVE

Are you with me?

2-236

Yes.

DOVE

Yes.

2-236

We’re going to be happy. Our happy.

2-236 goes into the couch.

DOVE

Then he was gone.

COMMUNITY

And that was the last time you spoke.

DOVE

I’ve lost track of days. I forgot about time.

COMMUNITY

So you came here after I arrived. To welcome me.

DOVE

To see if he left anything behind.

COMMUNITY

Maybe he did.

COMMUNITY takes the half-crooked pill box. Flips it over. There’s writing on the back.

DOVE reads this, reacts.

DOVE

...what are you going to do?

COMMUNITY

Me? Nothing.

DOVE

...but...

COMMUNITY

Why would I do anything? If you want to leave, if you really don't want to stay, why would I stop you?

DOVE

...you'd let me go.

COMMUNITY

Did you do something wrong to somebody? Who did you hurt?

DOVE

Him. All the people that mattered.

COMMUNITY

He's gone. So you can go home. Go back to your old life.

DOVE

But I could tell about what I know.

COMMUNITY

What if you do?

DOVE

Nobody here will stop me.

COMMUNITY

Nobody outside will listen. There's something more powerful now than the truth. And that's what we're perfecting here. All the divisiveness, the anguish, you want to go back to misery mania? Humanity will soon end itself. The window of existence is closing. There, you're condemned. Here, you're happy as you go out.

DOVE

So you're letting me go.

COMMUNITY

I'm sure the next transport leaves soon. I'll get you cleared with security.

DOVE

...

COMMUNITY

This isn't a trick. This isn't a test. [Pause] It was happy meeting you.

DOVE

When I get back...I'm going to enjoy that first home-cooked meal. Why don't you come with me.

COMMUNITY

I'm happy here.

DOVE

I know the way.

COMMUNITY

I said: I'm happy here. And everyone else will be, too. It's only a matter of time.

DOVE

Time is what I'm going to steal back. Good luck with the rest of whatever you call life here. As for me, I'm going home. I'm going home.

DOVE stirs, shifts...and rises from the couch.

DOVE then stands. She begins to shuffle, amble, take steps, and moves, her legs awakening, coming to life. DOVE then manages to off.

A moment.

Then DOVE returns to view. Standing there. DOVE enters, waits, then slowly moves back to the couch.

Then DOVE sits. She takes out her injector. She then extends it to COMMUNITY.

COMMUNITY

That didn't take long.

DOVE

I don't want to remember.

COMMUNITY

I understand.

DOVE

Can you tell them.

COMMUNITY

Of course.

DOVE

Even if it kills me.

COMMUNITY

You're doing the right thing.

DOVE

You'll make sure.

COMMUNITY

Mission conformity of resident users.

DOVE

...but we need the pain. Don't we?

COMMUNITY

This *is* the pain.

COMMUNITY positions the juice box, and from the interior of the couch produces her own injector, which she attaches.

And we watch DOVE scan in and receive a full juicing.

DOVE [VO/OH]

Happiness has no cure.

It can't be stopped. It can't be ended.

It can't even be understood.

Happiness will always win.

Because it's easy.

Because it's so close.

DOVE [V/O] [CONT.]

Be happy.

Be happy.

Be happy.

Lights shift.

*COMMUNITY has opened a window and
sunshine spreads through the room. We
might hear a bird chirping.*

*DOVE sits on the couch. She has a large,
beaming smile on her face.*

DOVE

Sorry?

COMMUNITY

...hmm?

DOVE

You were saying something.

COMMUNITY

...I was...

DOVE

Yes.

COMMUNITY

Right, um...

DOVE

About meeting everyone.

COMMUNITY

I'm trying to.

DOVE

It's very happy.

COMMUNITY

Look, Dove, I asked you to come here...

DOVE

For a visit.

COMMUNITY

No, not that, because...you're not paired.

DOVE

I'm alone!

COMMUNITY

You wanna be?

DOVE

I'm very happy.

COMMUNITY

Have you ever been paired?

DOVE

I don't...

COMMUNITY

Do you remember?

DOVE

Now that I think about it...wasn't there?...

COMMUNITY

They found his body at the other colony.

DOVE

Such a shame!

COMMUNITY

Don't you know about the other colony?

DOVE

I don't think so.

COMMUNITY

You will...soon...all of you.

DOVE

Are you okay?

COMMUNITY

Have you been hearing things at the factory? Has anyone at the factory talked about going back?

DOVE

[Her upper arm] What's this?

COMMUNITY

Nothing! [Pause] I need to find someone. To help. I have to get off this couch.

DOVE

I should get back. To the factory. So many things are happening!

COMMUNITY

...right.

DOVE

I'll see you!

COMMUNITY

Around. Maybe.

DOVE

Have bliss today, Community!

COMMUNITY

Yeah. Bliss.

Lights begin to fade as DOVE rises from the couch, without hesitation or hitch, and goes to full off.

We see COMMUNITY alone, perhaps scratching herself, shivering, cradled by the couch, as lights reach...

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.