

## Walden Play Script – Ryan, Isaac, Maddison, Charlotte

### **The Madness of Walden**

Isaac: Henry David Thoreau

Ryan: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Anger

Charlotte: Ghost, John, and Guilt

Madison: Woodchuck and Loneliness

### **Scene 1 (Present/Introduction): -**

Ghost: \*to audience\* It is 1848. We are in the bedroom of Henry David Thoreau at his little cabin alongside the shores of Walden Pond. Henry has been holding himself in isolation, slowly deteriorating into madness. Let's check in on how he is doing now.

\*Knocks on bedframe, Henry wakes up, looking about wildly. \*

Henry: What do you inquire, who is at my doorstep at this hour?

\*Henry sees his brother John in the doorway\*

Henry: John?! How are you here? You are dead. You died! \*whisper\* or am I dead?

Ghost: No, you are not dead, I am just a figure you have created inside your mind.

Henry: Not again! Not again! Why, oh, why am I dreaming about you again, these thoughts plague my mind from day to night from fall to spring please, oh please, just leave me alone!

Ghost: But Henry, I am here to help you. Why have you not yet left Walden Pond?

Henry: I don't need help! I have not left because the Pond is where I belong. This is what I am supposed to be doing. The outside world ... you would not understand. It is horrible, horrible.

Ghost: But there is so much more for you to know, so many other lives to live.

Henry: I am happy at my pond, not anywhere else. Not where the rest of society is crumbling under itself, or even worse these dreams you continue to plague me with even after you left me.

Ghost: Henry, answer me truthfully, are you happy or are you hidden?

Henry: I. Am. Happy.

Ghost: Let's see about that. Come with me.

Henry: Where?

Ghost: To where your troubles and doubt began.

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\*Ghost and Henry move off stage. Thoreau's bed gets taken off. Transitioning to the past in the Thoreau house. Chair and bookshelf cart brought in. Ghost becomes alive off stage. \*

### Scene 2 (Past):

\*John is sitting in a chair. He is very sick. Thoreau walks in.\*

Henry: Hello John. How are you feeling?

John: \*choked\* A little better than yesterday, I think.

Henry: Good, good, good. Our school is going well. We took the kids to the woods today. They seemed to enjoy learning about its history.

John: I am glad. I wish that we could have gone there when we were younger.

Henry: When you get better, I will take you.

John: Thank you. I- \*falls off chair\*

\*Henry runs to John who is on the ground and kneels beside him\*

Henry: John! What happened? Are you ok?

John: makes random noises- choking Charlotte

\*John falls silent and limp\*

Henry: John? John! \*crying\*

\*Crying time (15 seconds)

\*Maddison runs across with a sign "2 days later". John goes offstage behind the sheet that Madison holds with the two days later\*

Henry: \*Still crying\*

\*Emerson enters stage right, head buried in a newspaper\*

Emerson: Henry, Henry, look I made the paper again. "Mr. Emerson has once again -"

Henry: \*lets out a choked sob\* Oh. Interesting.

Emerson: Henry? What happened? Are you ok?

Henry: Why oh why do you come into my dwelling, boasting about your own accomplishments and priorities before looking at me, seeing the state of my life? My whole world has been torn apart just recently and here you are boasting about your own accomplishments. Just leave.

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Emerson: what's wrong?

Henry: What's wrong? That's it? John is dead, that's what's wrong.

**Emerson: \*\*GASP\*\* Oh nature. Henry that is horrible. I- I am so sorry.**

Henry: You don't know how hard it is for me, he was my whole world. There is nothing you can do. Absolutely nothing. Nothing will fix this. I am done. I couldn't even take him to the...

Emerson: \*softly\* take him to what?

Henry: The woods, that's it. I know what you can do. Give me access to your woods.

Emerson: you know you are welcome there. Why-

Henry: no. I don't want to visit there. I want to live there. We always preach self-reliance, well now I will go rely on myself. Obviously, society has nothing to offer me.

\*Henry gets up and starts messing with the books on the cart\*

Emerson: I won't say no to you. But are you sure this is what you want to do.

Henry: \*do NOT turn around\* Yes.

Emerson: Okay, I will allow you on the land. Just, you know, make sure to reach out every once in a while. I don't want you to go insane.

Henry: \*STILL don't turn around. \* Ok. Thanks for the land. Now, is there anything else you want to talk to me about.

Emerson: I didn't really have anything for you. But are you sure there is nothing else for you to say to me? Your brother just died!

Henry: Yes. Now if there is nothing else. The door is behind you, and I am surprised you are not yet through it.

Emerson: Ok. Um. Well, I am here if you need me. Goodbye Henry.

Henry: Goodbye.

\*Emerson exits stage left with the chair that Thoreau was sitting in. \*

Ghost: Do you see what I mean yet?

Henry: I don't know what you even are. There is no such thing as ghosts such as you, much less than the babble you spout.

Ghost: I am here, aren't I? And I am here for a reason.

Henry: All you have done is drag up painful memories. Why do you want me to hurt? Just let me go home.

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Ghost: I don't want to see you hurt.

Henry: Then why did you leave.

Ghost: I can assure you it wasn't by choice. And trust me, you **need** to see this.

\*Ghost grabs Henry's arm and drags him off stage\*

### Scene 3 (Present):

\*The pond is placed in to right side and trees are placed throughout the center and left. Thoreau comes walking on from side stage over to the tree with the ax in his hand. He raises it to swing, hesitates then lowers it to the ground.\*

Henry: What is the ethics of this? Why must a life be cut short so that another can be extended a little bit longer? What do you think? No no, you cannot think. Does level of consciousness matter in ethics?

\*woodchuck moves out from inside the tree (I cannot picture this in my head)\*

Henry: Hello little guy.

Woodchuck: Hello? Really? This tree has stood here for hundreds of years and you are debating chopping it down?!?

Henry: Well yes. I need it.

Woodchuck: Well, that self centered. I need this tree too.

Henry: Is that not self-centered itself?

Woodchuck: It is my home. You already have plenty stacked on top of one another.

\*Thoreau snaps then does an evil grin at the woodchuck\*

Henry: I have an idea. I won't leave you without a home because I will just eat you instead.

\*Thoreau nods his head like he just said something awesome\*

Woodchuck: You are insane. Were you not just wondering whether it is ok to cut the tree down.

Henry: time and circumstances change

Woodchuck: we have literally been here for a minute.

Henry: right right right. No. wrong. Wait. Why not \*pause\* I just thoreau you?

Woodchuck: No please don't **chuck** me in the lake.

\*without hesitation, thoreau stoops down, plucks up the woodchuck, and thoreaus him in the lake. Henry picks up the ax and starts swinging at the tree. This continues while ghost comes on stage\*

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Ghost: This is year three of walden pond. As you can see Henry has started to lose himself to the wild. And now comes a moment of sanity.

\*Henry stops hacking at the tree and stumbles to the lake before falling to his knees.\*

Henry: Oh my nature. What have I done? I am sorry Mr. Woodchuck.

\*henry breaks down in sobs (and try to be convincing isaac pls)\*

Henry: I-I dont know what I was thinking when I did this. Please come back Mr. Woodchuck.

\*Henry sudddenly stops crying and stands up\*

Henry: Annyyyways. I must get supper on the table. I doubt it will be woodchuck. I guess I must go check on my beans.

\*Henry exits off stage and then re-enters with ghost\*

Henry: Does that really happen to me?

Ghost: A week from today

Henry: My nature. And all of this is true.

Ghost: Every single bit. You are going insane and if you don't change your ways, I fear what will happen to you.

Henry: No. You must be lying. You are just a figment of my imagination. I cannot trust anything you say.

Ghost: Does that not prove my point. If you still don't believe, I am sorry to say you must see what happens next.

\*Ghost leads henry offstage. Dont move anything on set. \*

### **Scene 4 (Future):**

\*Lights come on and henry is standing in the middle of the stage talking to himself.\*

Spas about Loons, Trees, Woodchucks, Lakes, John, Dinner, Society, and Property – literally tweak out

Henry- improv – you can mention loons, trees, lakes, woodchucks, John and his death, listening to emerson (sometimes whisper, shout and say random stuff in between). You can spasm every so often.

\*Ghost enters the scene as henry continues to spasm and shout.\*

Ghost: Welcome to the future. What we are seeing here is year seven at walden pond. While there were some guests in the first couple years, wondering what Henry's purpose was at the lake, they have slowly stopped visiting as henry descends farther and farther into madness. As a result, henry has taken to using himself for company, having long stopped visiting his mother and others in town. At this point, there is no saving for Henry except for a cold grave.

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Henry: screams STOP very loudly and long.

Ghost:... and it looks like that is coming soon enough.

\*ghost steps off stage. Henry's screams continue.\*

\*when he yells "john" emotions run on\*

\*Loneliness, guilt, and anger run onto the stage with the foam weapons. They will (not actually hard) hit Henry. Henry lashes out, whacking the weapons (this should take a bit)\*

\*After about twenty seconds, Henry sinks to the ground and screams. Emotions continue whacking him. Slowly, Henry stops screaming and thrashing around and eventually you can sprawl flat on the ground. After a few more seconds, the beating stops and the emotions switch to screaming\*

Loneliness: All alone now!

Anger: You did this to yourself.

Guilt: You should have kept teaching them. Where are those children now?

Loneliness: Is it not pathetic that your brother was your only friend in the world.

Anger: I cannot believe you let everyone else leave you. All those townspeople. Your mother.

Guilt: You wanted isolation from society and look at that. You got it.

Anger: And you destroyed everything good with it. \*kicks Henry (pls do not do this hard)\*

Loneliness: It is really all your fault that you are now dead in the woods. And would we not say that death is the best isolation from the rest of world.

\*cut out the lights. These voices continue in a whisper shout.

Guilt: Your mother already had your brother die because of you and now you hurt her more by leading yourself to this.

Loneliness: And keep this in mind, it was you who led to this

Anger: And poor old Emerson, who has lost your brother, his child, and now ... you.

All three (slowly fade the voices): all your fault. All your fault. All your fault. All your fault. All your fault.

\*a couple of seconds of silence.\*

Henry: screams

Scene 5 (Present/Reflection):

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\*lights come on and henry wakes up from his bed\*

Henry: that is not happening. Please tell me that did not happen. \*start to pat yourself down like you are making sure you are in one piece. Look at your wrist like you are looking at a watch\* There is still time. I must make sure this does not happen to me. Watching was enough. But what to do, what to do. I know! I must get to emerson. This can still be undone! \*continue in a whisper\* or at least I hope.

\*henry stands up and walks off stage. Bed gets pulled off stage. Emerson's door is placed on. Henry walks back up and knocks on the door. Emerson opens the door and steps out.\*

Emerson: Henry? What are you doing here?

Henry: I am so so sorry. I, if I had known what would happen to me, to us, I never would have left.

\*Henry steps forward and wraps emerson in a hug, emerson hugs back.\*

Emerson: Hey, its ok. Whats going on?

Henry: I should have reached out. I should have done **something**. Please forgive me. First my brother, and then your child. I just, I couldn't do it. But now I realize that I left you.

Emerson: it is ok. I have spent the last few years just worried about you. You know, I told you to reach out and talk to me. And when I gave you access to those lands, I expected you to retreat, but never for that long. I was starting to get really worried.

Henry: My time in the woods was valuable, but it was also too much. I took it to far and cut off everyone I care about. Wait, have you heard from my mother

Emerson: Have you not heard?

Henry: No. What has happened?

Emerson: Oh Henry, I am so sorry. Your mother. She passed away three weeks ago. It was peaceful.

Henry: So I am too late. Oh nature, I am so sorry.

\*henry collapses to his knees and emerson kneels down beside him. .Ghost walks onto center stage.\*

Ghost: So what have we learned and what have we seen.

While we isolate ourselves, our purpose in life is grinded by the machine.

Don't close your eyes, hide from this meaningful scene,

what henry has learned, is information we all need.