

The Crying Club

by

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CHARACTERS

JOHN MILTON 17th century British author.

LIONEL 9 year old boy who dresses exclusively in
bow ties and speaks only in Kurt Cobain
quotes.

AMANDA 27 year old marketing executive with nothing
to cry about.

DON 49 year old American who is buying wine.

SETTING

A candlelit 17th century wine vault, tucked away off a busy
London thoroughfare.

TIME

A time where there appears to be no time. Or the present.

THE PLAY

(Lights rise on a candlelit wine vault. There are groups of people huddled together throughout the room. They are all crying. Crashing choral music is playing. MILTON is sitting at a desk writing, and sobbing. AMANDA is chopping onions, and trying to sob. LIONEL is walking around the room with a clipboard, and looks like he should be sobbing. DON is browsing wines, and is relatively happy.)

DON

(He aimlessly pulls down bottles of wine only to put them back. He looks around for someone to help him and sees LIONEL.)

Excuse me, do you work here?

LIONEL

If you ever need anything please don't hesitate to ask someone else first.

DON

Right.

(He looks around and sees no one else willing to help because they are all sobbing.)

It looks like everyone else is kind of busy.

LIONEL

We have no right to express an opinion until we know all of the answers.

DON

Is '94 a good year for Chateau Angelus? I'm trying to impress some friends at this dinner party I'm headed to.

LIONEL

Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are.

DON

I'm supposed to bring the wine. They're the snobby type. British. You know, stupid American can't even get a decent bottle of wine. Don't want everyone laughing at me.

AMANDA

(Seemingly coming out of nowhere.
Chopping onions and trying to sob.)
We certainly wouldn't want that.

LIONEL

We're so trendy we can't even escape ourselves.

DON

Exactly. So you know the type. I miss the days when wine was red or white. I'm really more of a beer man myself. Just easier. Not the same type of social pressure with beer. Maybe we should've gone to Berlin.

AMANDA

Everything is happening in Berlin. London is such a dungeon. Just my luck. Born British a hundred years too late.

(MILTON steps forward. He addresses the audience. The other characters can see Milton, but there is something about him that keeps them from interacting, perhaps the sight of a blind man sobbing.)

MILTON

He that has light within his own clear breast may sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day; but he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts benighted walks under the mid-day sun; himself his own dungeon.

(He returns to his desk, picks up his pen and begins sobbing.)

DON

Wow, that guy's pretty good with words. Is he your friend?

LIONEL

A friend is nothing but a known enemy.

DON

Cheer up kid. It's a beautiful day.

AMANDA

He thinks he's Kurt Cobain reincarnated.
(Trying to force tears.)
Depressing isn't it?

DON

(Referring to the onions Amanda is chopping.)
Should I get one of those? To preserve the flavor?

AMANDA

The flavor? I'm so fucking British I can't even cry!

DON

Right.

LIONEL

The worst crime is faking it.

AMANDA

You're nine years old!

LIONEL

Wanting to be someone else is a waste of the person you are.

DON

This kid is deep.

LIONEL

The duty of youth is to challenge corruption.

AMANDA

He's a fraud.

DON

He does kind of dance about if you know what I mean.

AMANDA

What?

DON

Not very direct. Been trying to get a straight answer about this '94. I guess that's just cultural differences.

MILTON

(Stepping forward.)

Let not England forget her precedence of teaching nations
how to live.

(Returning to his desk.)

DON

I think I'm just going to get this '94.

LIONEL

I'm so happy—

DON

Thanks kid.

LIONEL

-because today I found my friends - they're in my head.

AMANDA

I need more onions!

DON

I'll say.

AMANDA

What do you know about sadness? Mr. American Dream, Mr. I'm
Buying Wine for a Dinner Party? Mr. Late Capitalist
Machine? I don't know myself. I don't know what feelings
feel like. I can't even cry!

DON

I knew a guy from Tulsa like that. Had clogged tear ducts.
Real painful, you know. He had to do everything he could to
avoid getting sad, 'cause if he started to cry his ducts
would just swell up and I guess the pressure was just
something else.

AMANDA

This is a crying club! And I can't cry! God, you Americans!

LIONEL

I'd rather be hated for who I am, than loved for who I am
not.

DON

Thank you son.

(He gives Lionel a slap on the back.)

LIONEL

I've always had a problem with the average macho man - they've always been a threat to me.

DON

I'm not gonna hurt ya fella. We're friends. But I'm not getting in your head.

(He laughs. Lionel wants to laugh but can't muster up the strength, instead he just gets more sallow.)

AMANDA

How can you just brush off everything? Why are you so afraid of your feelings? Your emotions? Why are you so afraid of yourself? Why didn't my parents hug me more!

MILTON

To be blind is not miserable; not to be able to bear blindness, that is miserable.

DON

(Wiping away a tear.)

Beautiful. I like that guy.

AMANDA

You can cry!?!

DON

Always been a bit of a sentimental. Not much for the boo-hooing though.

MILTON

He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king.

DON

(Further tearing up.)

Do you write greeting cards?

AMANDA

Stop crying!

DON

I thought you said it was a crying club?

AMANDA

It is.

LIONEL

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't after you.

DON

Seriously, does that guy work for Hallmark?

AMANDA

That's John Milton!

DON

What's he got to be sad about? Everybody loves...who's John Milton?

AMANDA

He wrote Paradise Lost!

DON

Oh. I didn't see that one. So why is he crying?

AMANDA

We are here to get in touch with our inner gloom. To let out the sadness that is crippling our lives. To cry with like minded brothers and sisters, to grieve what has become of our world, our lives. What do you hear all day? Hmm? To be good, to be proper, to be correct. Look at the world! Corporations and governments are telling you how to act, what to buy, how to feel. And the message is always the same - feel good, feel good, feel good. Don't worry, be happy! Thanks to advertising and the fucking prime minister we don't know how to feel anymore. We are rebelling. This is the revolution!

DON

Sorry. I'm not crying anymore.

AMANDA

Why not?

DON

Why should I be?

AMANDA

Why shouldn't you be?

DON

You told me to stop crying.

AMANDA

WHY CAN'T I CRY!?!

DON

What do you have to be so damn sad about anyway?

AMANDA

Unbelievable! I'm 27!

DON

I'm 49. I'm a lot closer to the end than you.

AMANDA

Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Robert Johnson, Kurt Cobain! All that genius wasted. All dead at 27! What have I done with my life?

DON

Are you a musician?

AMANDA

I'm in marketing! Isn't that fucking depressing?

DON

Of course, if you actually have a life you don't need to invent excuses. A second mortgage, one kid in college and two more getting ready, a receding hairline and a fortune wasted on a second honeymoon in London to try and save a marriage hanging by a thread should be enough to make any man cry.

AMANDA

I'm not a man!

DON

My wife's sleeping with the guy I'm buying this wine for. And you know what? I don't care.

LIONEL

My generation's apathy. I'm disgusted with it. I'm disgusted with my own apathy too, for being spineless and not always standing up against racism, sexism and all those

other -isms the counterculture has been whining about for years.

AMANDA

I want to embrace my sorrow!

MILTON

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.

LIONEL

I had a really good childhood up until I was nine, then a classic case of divorce really affected me. I really haven't had that exciting of a life. There are a lot of things I wish I would have done, instead of just sitting around and complaining about having a boring life. So I pretty much like to make it up. I'd rather tell a story about somebody else. I started being really proud of the fact that I was gay even though I wasn't. I won't eat anything green. It's okay to eat fish because they don't have any feelings.

If you die you're completely happy and your soul somewhere lives on. I'm not afraid of dying. Total peace after death, becoming someone else is the best hope I've got. I'm too busy acting like I'm not naïve. I've seen it all, I was here first. Rather be dead than cool. In Webster's terms, 'nirvana' means freedom from pain, suffering and the external world, and that's pretty close to my definition of Punk Rock. So if it's illegal to rock and roll, throw my ass in jail!

(He carefully takes the '94 Chateau Angelus wine bottle from DON. He examines it and then tenderly smashes it on the ground before walking off.)

DON

I told you that little guy was deep.

AMANDA

What is wrong with me? Why did I have to have a normal childhood? A proper education? A good job? A great boyfriend? Have you ever heard something so unbelievably depressing? WHY CAN'T I CRY!

(She storms off.)

MILTON

(He pulls a wine bottle down.)

The mind is its own place and in itself, can make a Heaven
of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

(He gives the wine to DON and then
disappears into the club.)

DON

Ah, '96. Better year. You've all been real helpful. I
haven't felt this good in years.

(Blackout.)

THE END