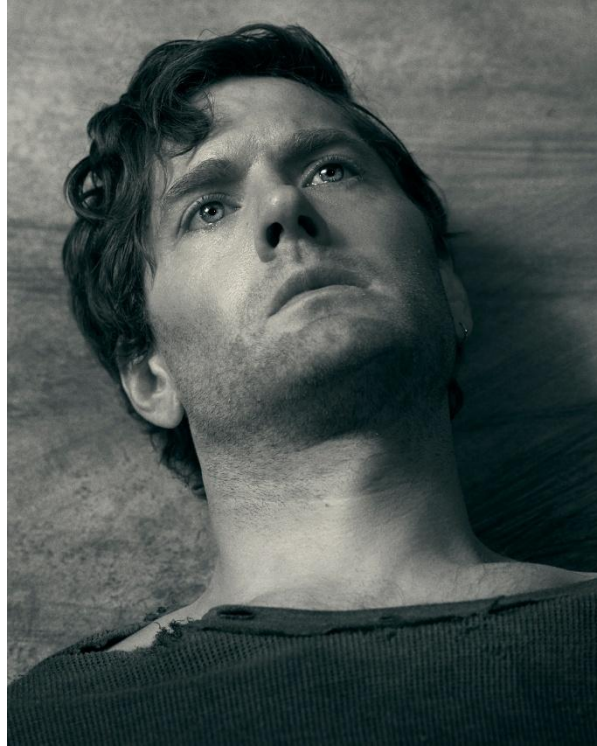


**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

Access Information Pack



Romans

A Novel

By Alice Birch

Directed by Sam Pritchard

Contents

This document is a visual guide to support your visit to the Almeida Theatre. There are three sections:

About the Almeida Theatre

How to get here

Information about the theatre

The Production

Content guidance

Performance conditions

What happens in the play?

The set

The characters

Plot synopsis

Sonic story

About the Almeida Theatre

How to get here

The Almeida Theatre is on Almeida Street in Islington. The postcode is N1 1TA. It is a large, white concrete building and it is situated halfway up the road.

The outside of the theatre looks like this:



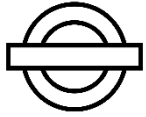
Journey to the theatre

The nearest underground stations are **Angel** on the Northern line or **Highbury & Islington** on the Victoria line, and London Overground.



You can find more information on our website here:

almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/



Highbury & Islington Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what Highbury & Islington station looks like outside.



Follow the path out of the station to the right onto Upper Street.
The theatre is about 1 kilometre down the road on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Highbury, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is Union Chapel.
It is near bus stop G.



If you don't want to walk, you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at St Mary's church - bus stop N – for the theatre.

This is where Upper Street
crosses Islington Park Street
and Canonbury Lane.

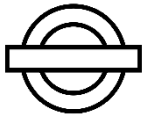


This is Islington Town Hall.



This is what Almeida Street
looks like as you arrive at the
theatre.





Angel Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Angel** station looks like outside.



From Angel station, turn right onto Upper Street and cross the busy road at the pedestrian crossing.

Continue along Upper Street for about 1 kilometre.
The theatre is on the left on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Angel, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is the main bus stop across the road from Angel station – bus stop Y.





If you don't want to walk you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at bus stop P, opposite St Mary's church.

This is Islington Green.



This is St. Mary's Church.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.



About the Almeida Theatre

Information about the theatre

You can watch a video tour of the building on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/access/>

Inside the main entrance of the theatre, there is a foyer where people can wait. This is what the foyer looks like.



It can get quite busy here before the start of the play.



When you arrive, the front of house team will greet you.



There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. They are very happy to help you.

Almeida Theatre staff wear black t-shirts with white writing.




If you need help with your ticket, you can speak to the box office team. It can be quite noisy at the box office, and you may have to wait in a queue. Their desk looks like this.



If you have a digital ticket, you can find it in your email inbox, and it will look like this.

**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

Romans, a novel
Relaxed Environment



Performance date
Wed 1 Oct

Start time
7:30 PM

Section	Row	Seat
CIRCLE	F	12

Please use on street entrance


Mr Al Meida

Order No: 1137734

£ 0.00 **Ticket type:** Complimentary

Latecomers may not be admitted
[Click here to read our full terms and conditions](#)

Box Office **020 7359 4404**
Almeida Theatre, London N1 1TA
almeida.co.uk

 **ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Front of House assistants will scan your ticket as you enter the auditorium.



The entrance to the stalls is via the ramp to the right of the foyer.



The entrance to the circle is on the outside of the building located to the right of the main entrance.



There is step-free access to the foyer and stalls. There is one accessible toilet at the back of the foyer.

This is the café and bar, where you can buy hot and cold drinks and food.





If you have any questions or feel worried about your visit, please do contact us at access@almeida.co.uk or call our box office on 020 7359 4404.

Opening Hours

You can find our Box Office opening hours on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/booking-information/>

The Almeida Café & Bar opens two hours before every performance and remains open until 11 pm, with the kitchen closing 30 minutes before the show starts.

The auditorium opens 30 minutes before the performance begins – you are welcome to take your seats from then.











The Production

Overview

Romans follows the lives of three brothers, Jack, Marlow, and Edmund Roman, tracing their experiences of masculinity across different eras. The play is divided into five parts, each drawing on a distinct literary style that has shaped the Western canon - the body of works traditionally considered to be the most influential in European and American literature since the nineteenth century. Within each part, three parallel plots unfold, following the separate journeys of each brother.

Content Guidance

Romans contains:

	Sudden lighting changes		Haze
	Loud music		Smoking and drug-taking
	Guns and gun shot sounds		Stage blood
	Depictions of child abuse and suicide		Sexual and misogynistic language
	Shouting, screaming and intense emotional outbursts		
	References to parental death, the death of children, colonial violence, sexual violence and mental illness		

The Production

Performance Conditions:

Relaxed Environment Performances

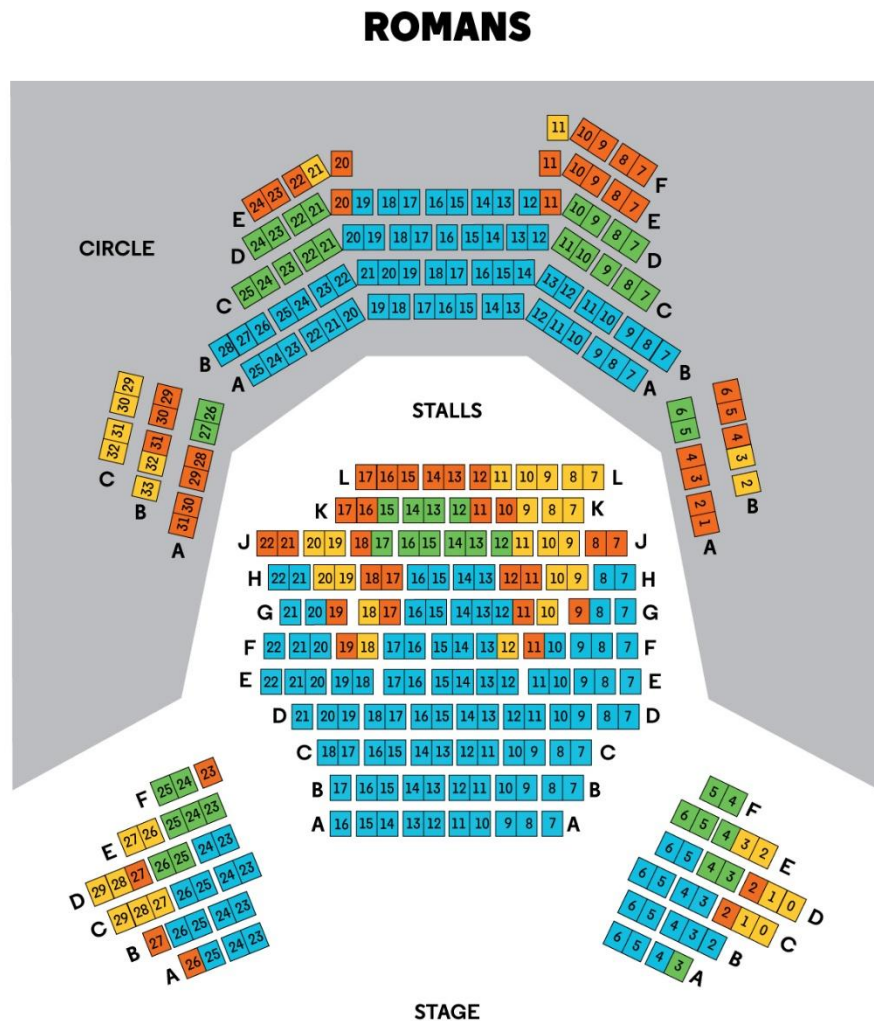
The duty manager will make an onstage announcement before the performance to explain what a Relaxed Environment performance is. They will explain:

- The house lights will remain at a low level throughout the performance.
- Audience members are free to make noise, move about or come and go to take breaks and access the facilities as needed.
- If you need to step out of the auditorium for a break, there is also a TV monitor in the foyer to watch the performance from so you don't miss **any** of the action.



Seating

Seating for this production is arranged in the stalls in three blocks of seats, with aisles at either end of the rows. Further seating is available in the circle level above.



Running time and interval

The performance runs for approximately 3 hours. The first half is 1 hour and 15 minutes followed by a 20-minute interval and the second half is 1 hour and 25 minutes.

What Happens in the Play?

The Set

The main central area is dominated by a rectangular platform, about eight metres wide and three metres deep, which is raised about thirty centimetres higher than the surrounding stage floor. The surface of the platform, like the floor around it, is covered by a wash of dark tones. During the action the platform often revolves. The back of the space is surrounded by a tall screen about eight metres in height that wraps right around the back of the space following the shape of the theatre's curved back wall.



What Happens in the Play?

Short Synopsis

Part 1

Part 1 is set in winter and adopts the form of a nineteenth-century novel. It begins at the family's home in the English countryside in 1880, with Jack narrating his childhood from an adult perspective. After the death of their mother, Penelope Roman, during childbirth, and later after the suicide of their father, Henry Roman, the three brothers begin to follow different paths.

Part 2

Part 2 is set in spring and is written in the style of a modernist novel, a form that often experiments with fragmented narrative. It charts the brothers' entry into adulthood. Jack fights in wars, becomes a mountaineer, travels the world by sea, and begins a career as a writer. He publishes two books, marries Clarissa Castorp, and has a daughter, Miranda, before later sending Clarissa to a sanatorium. Marlow travels to the Amazon, where he commits atrocities in the rubber trade. He builds a business empire and, in Mexico, meets Rosa, whom he marries; together they have eight children.

Part 3

Part 3 is set in summer and follows a postmodern structure, a fractured narrative that blurs the boundaries between reality and illusion. It centres on the commune Jack has established in the Roman family home. Esther, a documentarian and admirer of Jack's work, interviews him and the commune's

other members as they prepare dinner. Together they take LSD and experience a shared hallucination.

Part 4

Part 4 is set in autumn and is written in a metamodern style, a form that shifts between irony and sincerity, dismantling and remaking the novel itself. It moves between three locations: a restaurant where Jack meets his daughter Miranda, a private members' club where Marlow appears on a 'manosphere' podcast (an online network of communities promoting anti-feminist, misogynistic views of masculinity), and a church hall where Edmund runs naturalist workshops for participants struggling with their mental health.

Part 5

Part 5's cyclical ending turns back to winter. Jack, Marlow, and Edmund reunite in their childhood home, where Jack hopes to reconcile with his brothers.

Characters

There is a cast of 9 actors. Three of the actors each play one part with the others playing more than one role. Occasionally the action is underscored by moments of choreographed movement, and there are moments where objects are represented symbolically by gesture.



Jack Roman



Marlow Roman



Edmund Roman

- Jack is played by **Kyle Soller**
- Edmund is played by **Stuart Thompson**
- Marlow is played by **Oliver Johnstone**
- John Roman, Henry Roman, Charles, Manolin, Benny, and Patrick are played by **Declan Conlon**
- Mr Poole, Ramsay, Leo, James, and Johnny are played by **Jerry Killick**
- Emilio, Officer, Timothy, Joe, and Tommy are played by **Olivier Huband**
- Clarissa Castrop, Lucy and Miranda are played **Agnes O'Casey**
- Rosa, Anna, and the Waitress are played by **Yanexi Enriquez**
- Esther and Marianne are played by **Adelle Leonce**

Sensory Overview

Lights

- Prolonged periods of dim lighting
- Sudden snap lighting changes
- Lights casting shadows on walls
- Occasional bright lighting states
- One moment where very bright light shines directly on the audience

If you are affected by any of these elements, you are welcome to take breaks at any time.

Sound

- Shouting, screaming, and intense emotional expression
- Low, tense music and sound moving around the space, including the noise of screaming
- Loud musical
- Gunshot sounds and sound effects

Thematic Content

Violence & War

- War, genocide and colonialism
- Suicide and death (including maternal and paternal death)
- Military uniforms, guns and stage blood
- Physical violence and threats
- Scarring from physical abuse
- Bullying and emotional manipulation

Sexual Violence & Misogyny

- Implied sexual abuse against children
- Sexual assault
- References to women's bodies (objectifying and sexualised)
- Strong and misogynistic language

Substance Use

- Consumption of alcohol and drunkenness
- Depiction of drug use (LSD, ketamine)
- Smoking on stage

Intimacy & Emotional Themes

- Depictions of intimacy
- Mention of group sex
- Depictions of grief, panic, distress, aggression
- Exploration of parental loss and fractured family bonds
- Scenes where minimal clothing is worn

Effects & Staging

- Use of haze effects
- Actors use the auditorium aisles throughout to enter and leave

Plot Synopsis

Part 1 - Winter

There are 6 scenes in Part 1.

Scene 1

Music, haze, mentions of child death and violence, misogynistic language.

Adult Jack arrives through the darkened auditorium and addresses the audience directly, describing his father's love for masculinity and sons.

Scene 2

Raised voices, violence against a child, mentions of war, death, violence, civilian death. Mention of maternal death.

In 1890, Jack, aged 10, wanders near his family home in the English countryside. He encounters his Uncle John, fresh from war, his uniform bloodied. (We later learn that John is Jack's uncle, his mother's former lover, and Jack's real father.)

Jack compares John to his own father, who runs a printing press, and wonders why his father is not the kind of heroic man John seems to be. Fascinated and unsettled, Jack plays with John's gun as John teaches him how to aim and fire, thrilling and terrifying the boy with his violent energy.

As they talk, John learns that Jack's mother is in labour, and that his own father, mother, and sister have all died during his absence at war. Jack offers to fetch food from home, but when he returns, John has vanished, leaving Jack uncertain as to whether his uncle was real, a ghostly vision, or a figment of his imagination.

Scene 3

Mentions of maternal death, funeral, grief.

Adult Jack narrates, recalling that nobody believed him when he said he had seen his Uncle John in the fields that day, and describes searching for John for hours, but never finding him again.

That same day, Jack's mother dies giving birth to his younger brother, Edmund. Jack remembers the house filling with grief and his father collapsing into despair. In the weeks that follow, Jack roams the countryside still hoping to find his uncle.

A month after his mother's death, his father overcome by loss and burdened by failing business, sends Jack away to boarding school, paid for by his maternal grandparents.

Scene 4

Physical violence against a child character, implied sexual abuse against a child, bullying, mention of a child wetting the bed, scars on character's body (lashes across the back), mention of parental death, mention of paternal death via suicide, mention of parental drunkenness, semi nakedness, use of a Christian proverb to threaten a child, bullying, threatening, blackmail.

1897. Jack is 17 years old, his younger brother Marlow is 10 years old, they are both students at Cowan School. Marlow has wet the bed on his first week of school and his teacher Mr Poole bullies, hits and threatens him for doing so. Mr Poole invites his older brother Jack, he bullies, threatens and hits Jack, asking him to stand in an awkward position. He threatens Jack that every time he tries to defend Marlow, he will hit Marlow. Mr Poole reveals that Jack used to wet the bed when he first joined Cowan School, he forces Jack to reveal why he

stopped wetting the bed. It is implied that he stopped because Mr Poole sexually abused him which Jack never admits. Mr Poole exits with Marlow and it is implied that he is going to punish Marlow by sexually abusing him too leaving Jack helpless and alone.

Scene 5

Mention of physical violence, bullying and war.

Adult Jack recalls that Marlow never wet the bed again and indeed later thrived at Cowan, excelling academically with his teachers. We also learn that Marlow developed a natural flair for sadism, persecuting the younger boys, and quickly rising to become Head Boy. Jack, by contrast, recedes into obscurity, his teachers struggle to recall him, his achievements, or even his failures. He leaves Cowan remembered only as the elder, less impressive brother of Marlow Roman and heads off to fight in the Secon Boer War (1899-1902).

Scene 6

Descriptions of war, violence, use of a gun, drunkenness, parental suicide and muffled gunshot sound effect, mention of war injury, sexual language

In 1902 Jack, aged 22 returns home after two years away fighting in the Second Boer War. He finds the once-grand family house in decline having been left to fall into a state of disrepair by his father, Henry Roman, who greets Jack with bitterness and hostility. Their reunion is combative with Henry mocking Jack's military service.

In their argument, Henry reveals that years earlier, Jack's Uncle John and Penelope (Jack's mother) were lovers, but when Henry was wounded in war, she nursed him, and he seized the opportunity to take Penelope from his brother. Henry admits she never loved him as much as John, but she was his for life, and not John's. Henry then suggests that Jack may be John's son.

They are interrupted by Jack's youngest brother, Edmund, now aged 10 wearing their dead mother's clothes. At Henry's insistence they no longer call Edmund by his name but call him Penelope. The sight shocks and deeply unsettles Jack.

Henry, overcome with drink and despair, takes Jack's gun and turns it on himself, shooting himself in front of his sons.

Part 2 - Spring

Death, colonialism, violence, racism, sexual abuse, homophobia, manipulation, coercion, mention of war, sounds bombs and gunfire, isolation, loneliness, police inspection, references to murder and suspicion of murder, implied police arrest, and implication of postpartum depression.

Part 2, 3 and 4 follow a non-linear, structure cutting between the three brothers' experiences rather than presenting them in sequence. Jack is now aged 27, Marlow 20 and Edmund 17. They are each in three separate places writing letters to each other. Jack is in the Alps, Edmund in London and Marlow in the Amazon.

Scenes

Jack is climbing a mountain in the French Alps with Ramsay, a mountaineer and war veteran. Edmund is walking from his countryside home to London, hitchhiking then hiding in a train compartment. In the Amazon Marlow has joined the rubber trade and is committing atrocities against native people there.

Edmund, who is gay meets a man called Charles in London who touches him without his consent.

In the Amazon Marlow encounters a native man named Emilio. Emilio recounts the atrocities that Marlow and his fellow colonisers inflicted on his people and land. He speaks of the Tupi-Guarani creation story, rooted in harmony with the

earth and its origins. This perspective stands in stark contrast to Marlow's approach, treating the land as something to exploit, as resources to be claimed.

Edmund and Jack meet in London, it is implied that Edmund was homeless before this point. Jack has paid Edmund's rent for a room in London for six months and Marlow has arranged for Edmund to work for their father's friends the Bradshaws. They encourage Edmund to pursue a relationship with the Bradshaw's daughter Molly.

Jack photographs Edmund in prison without his consent.

Jack travels by sea with Manolin, a war veteran and becomes sick, he hallucinates about his Uncle John and Edmund. Meanwhile Marlow drills for petroleum gas in Mexico and has colonial endeavours in France while Edmund meets the Bradshaws, their daughter Molly and becomes an assistant projectionist at the cinema. Edmund meets a man called Leo at the cinema; they begin a romantic relationship and Leo later sexually assaults him.

Marlow builds a business empire across the world and Clifford, an Irish human rights activist reports against his war crimes and colonialism and complicity in genocide but dies fighting for justice.

Three of Edmund's neighbours are murdered and his is arrested on suspicion of the murders. The officer asks if he is gay.

Jack has become a writer and meets Edmund in prison. Jack has written a book that was not successful. Marlow has arranged for a lawyer for Edmund and criticizes him for his behaviour and the choices he has made. Edmund is apologetic and feels guilty.

Jack publishes a second book that is hugely successful about Edmund with Edmund's photograph on it. He meets Clarissa Castrop, the daughter of a Swedish banker at a society party and they fall in love. Meanwhile, Marlow meets Rosa, a woman in Mexico and woos her. Rosa describes their meeting as

something closer to kidnap than an ideal love story. Both couples get married and Clarissa gives birth to Melissa Roman while Rosa gives birth to eight children over several years. Both women describe their experiences of marriage and their trauma during pregnancy and motherhood. Clarissa describes how Jack is disinterested in parenthood leaving her to raise Miranda alone. He travels the world engaging in sexual relationships with various other people then sends her to a sanatorium, and returns to the Roman home to become the leader of a commune or cult.

Jack has published his third book which is about Clarissa Castorp as she is being subjected to electro convulsive therapy in the sanatorium.

Edmund writes a letter to Jack describing his loneliness, isolation and living as a wild animal as his brothers establish their families.

INTERVAL

Part 3 - Summer

Part 3 continues from the ending of Part 2, but signals a fresh phase into a different moment and set of circumstances.

Semi-nakedness, references to sex and drugs, depiction of dead rabbits, use of profanity, mention of war crimes, genocide and colonial violence, implication of orgies/group sex, sudden screaming, drug use (LSD), loud music, mention of a comet rising, description of death, description of sexual abuse of a child from a male family member, implied hallucination, mention of repeated imprisonment.

In 1970s Yorkshire we return to the Romans countryside home that's now been turned into a commune. Jack has become a cult leader and lives with four other adults who are commune members. Esther a documentary maker, has been invited by Jack to interview him and his commune members. It is revealed that she is a big fan of his books. He has returned from the pond in a swimming costume and is getting dressed as Esther interviews him and the others. Timothy is the son of Emilio; whose family were victims of the colonial violence and genocide in the Amazon that Marlow Roman was responsible for. Timothy is looking for ancestral healing; and his presence at Jack Roman's commune whether intentional or coincidental is not confirmed. Esther reveals that when she interviewed Marlow Roman he was dismissive of Jack. Esther stops her questioning and participates with the commune members as they all take LSD. This launches Esther into a monologue about her life events. They all hallucinate a rising comet.

Part 4 - Autumn

In Act 4 we switch between two different settings, a restaurant and a private club, but the boundaries between the settings blur as characters in one location listen to or observe those in the other.

Graphic descriptions of hunting, butchery, and skinning animals, alongside the use of obscenities and offensive language. The purchase and consumption of alcohol, and drug use (specifically ketamine), and the spraying of champagne. A joke referencing paedophilia, mentions of assassination attempts, and depictions of a mental breakdown expressed through pessimistic and despairing language. Use of sexist and misogynistic language and attitudes. Gunshot sound effects, and loud techno music.

Moments of partial nudity, explicit descriptions of sex and sexual language, as well as references to death, killing in war, police arrest, and fear of dying.

In 2025, Jack and his daughter Miranda Roman, who share a strained relationship, meet at restaurant in London. Miranda is a successful writer and has been nominated for the Booker Prize for her latest book. The waitress serving them is a huge fan of her work. Jack, who has won a Pulitzer Prize for his work, is only recognised by the waitress as someone who was cancelled for a cult he created in the 1970s. The father and daughter describe their hurt feelings and Miranda scolds her father for his involvement in the commune, suggesting he should be in prison for the harm he caused to vulnerable people.

Next door to the restaurant is a private members club where Marlow and two podcast hosts, Patrick and Joe, host a podcast show called 'In Deep'. They have a producer called Johnny. Marlow is a guest on their show and describes his journey to becoming one of the top richest five people in the world. The tone of their conversation is misogynistic and the podcast is a representation of the manosphere.

Meanwhile, Edmund has reinvented himself as a naturalist, running workshops that use acting as an animal as a form of therapy. In a community hall in London, he works with Thomas and Tommy, two men struggling with their mental health. Edmund instructs them on the process of becoming an animal with Thomas embodying an urban fox and Tommy and Edmund as badgers.

Tommy's wife, Marianne, suddenly arrives, interrupting by offering her husband sandwiches and asking how he's feeling which upsets and unsettles the men, particularly, Edmund.

The action shifts to a private members' club where Marlow, Patrick, Joe, and Johnny record another episode of their podcast. Their discussion turns to physical health, including explicit descriptions of Marlow's body.

Meanwhile, Marianne and the waitress record a short podcast of their own. Each presents a version of sexual liberation and womanhood, inspired by familiar media archetypes. Marianne speaks in a seductive tone, recalling a sexual encounter, while the waitress describes her fantasy of being a housewife and stay-at-home mother. Marianne goes on to recount an incident in which she was arrested by a police officer and feared for her life.

The scene then returns to the restaurant. Jack tells his daughter, Miranda, that he is unwell and has been coughing blood. One by one, the others leave until Jack is alone on stage.

Part 5 – Is this winter?

References to death, climate change, and the denial or dismissal of climate change. Very bright light directed at the audience.

Jack, Marlow, and Edmund return to their childhood home. Jack, now gravely ill, hopes this meeting will heal old wounds and bring the brothers back together. But instead of reconciliation, the gathering reopens past betrayals and resentments.

Marlow, powerful and unrepentant, clashes with Jack, while Edmund, fragile and unsettled, is caught between them. The brothers argue over their mother, their father, Uncle John, and the legacy of cruelty that has shaped their lives. The decayed house becomes the backdrop for a reckoning with family history, identity, and mortality, as each brother struggles to assert his version of the truth.

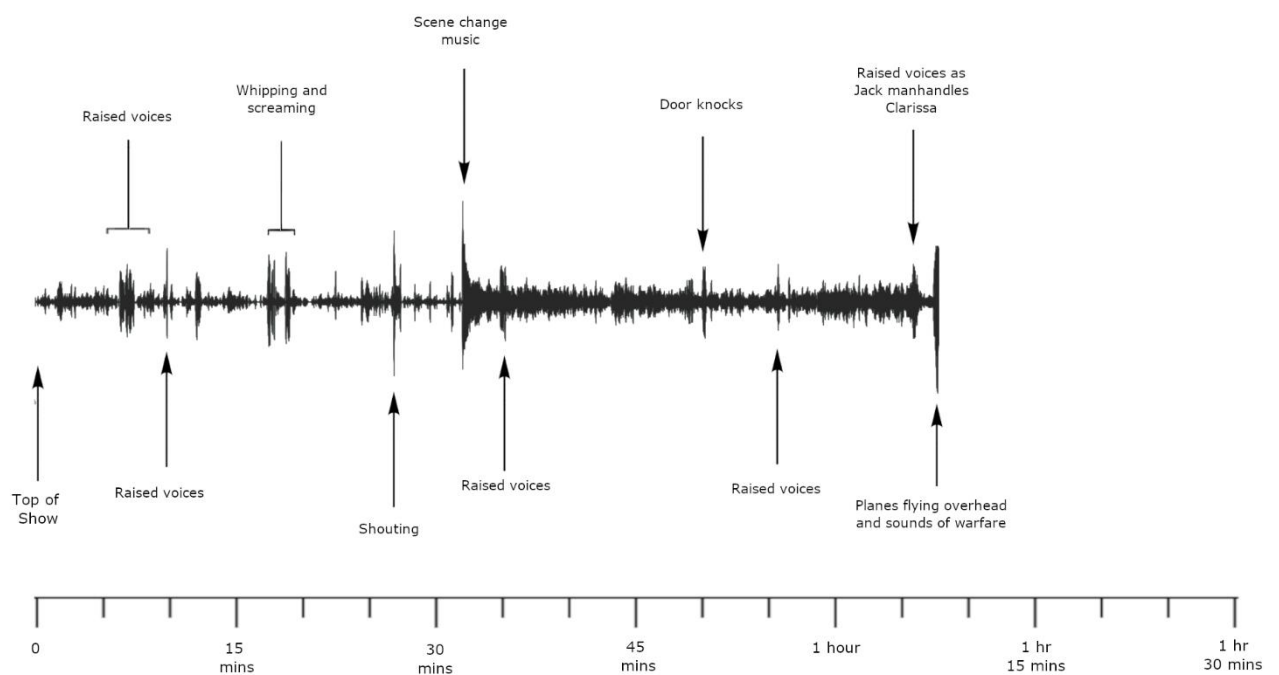
The light slowly fade to black.

End of Play

The lights brighten on stage and the actors take their bows and leave.

Sonic Story

Part One and Part Two



Parts Three, Four and Five

