

Quartet

The setting is bare, perhaps a couple of chairs, nothing more. The characters can stand or sit as required. Between each scene, there should be a short blackout, long enough to permit a change in position of the characters, but which serves mainly as a punctuation mark in the dialogue.

I

- Leibniz** Suppose that there be a machine, the structure of which produces thinking, feeling, perceiving; imagine this machine enlarged but preserving the same properties, so that you could enter it as if it were a
- John** A building of some kind, a building that is a machine
- Jane** A machine for living?
- Leibniz** a mill. So that you could enter it as if it were a mill. This being supposed, you might visit it inside
- Hume** For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other
- John** The sun and the sand
- Hume** of heat or cold, light or shade
- John** the golden sunshine of your pipesmoke smile
- Hume** love or hatred, pleasure or pain
- Jane** I can't remember being unhappy
- Leibniz** but what would you observe there
- John** Father. On the beach. In one of those ridiculous bathing suits, rumpled at the elbows. Hands on hips. Pipe in mouth.
- Jane** but then I can't remember being happy either.
- Hume** I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception
- Jane** Just emptiness. Or absence. Like I wasn't there at all.
- John** Summer-blue sky. Lobsters in pots. The end of happiness.

Jane They were always so busy, the grown-ups.

John Was that the year of the General Strike?

Jane Daddy, the poet. Everyone else circling him warily.

John 1926? I would have been five. No, that can't be right. Too young. I was older. Definitely older.

Jane Such a shy little thing I was. Surrounded by all these mysterious big people, talking about things I couldn't understand, whispering darkly in the corridors of the house. Daddy at the centre of it all, frightened, coughing, like a dying sun.

John Old enough to notice.

Leibniz Nothing but parts which push and move each other, and never anything that could explain perception.

Hume If anyone upon serious and unprejudicial reflection, thinks he has a different notion of the self, I must confess I can reason with him no longer.

II

John Jane!

Jane I'm here, John. It's alright, darling, I'm here.

John I was suddenly alone. Afraid.

Jane It's alright. I'm here now.

John I thought I'd lost you.

Jane I'm here. I'm here.

John And where is here?

Jane I'm not sure.

John Wherever it is, you're here with me, right.

Jane Right, I'm here.

John And who are they?

Jane I don't know.

John Hey there.

Leibniz Me?

John Yes you. Who else?

Leibniz I thought maybe you meant him.

Hume Who me?

Leibniz Yes you. Why not?

Hume Good day to you all.

John Is it day? Is it?

Hume It is not night. That much is clear.

Jane Where are we? Where is this place?

Hume Well, this is, um, I'm afraid I do not know. Sir, where are we?

Leibniz I do not know. (*to John and Jane*) Do you, er?

Jane No. Haven't got a clue.

Leibniz How extraordinary.

Hume Allow me to introduce myself. Mr David Hume, of Edinburgh.

John The David Hume?

Hume A David Hume, most certainly.

John The philosopher?

Hume Philosopher, historian, inveterate player of backgammon.

Leibniz A philosopher? How interesting.

Hume That's what most people say. Before changing the subject.

Leibniz Oh no, well I mean it most sincerely.

Hume Really? It's just that most people, well, you know.

Leibniz Oh I know. My employer, the Duke, he doesn't know what it is either. 'When are you going to finish that family history for me', he says. Family history. He has no idea. When I have so much more important things on my mind.

Hume So you're a philosopher too?

Leibniz Philosopher, mathematician ...

Hume Splendid.

Leibniz Metaphysician.

Hume Ah.

Leibniz Gottfried Willhelm von Leibniz, court historian to the Duke of Brunswick and keeper of the ducal library. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

Hume Leibniz?

Jane Oh I get this now.

Leibniz You have heard of me perhaps.

Hume I have heard of Leibniz, yes. Stole the calculus from Newton and passed it off as his own.

Leibniz I did not steal it!

Hume But you cannot be Leibniz.

Jane This is a dream, right?

John In the same room as two philosophers? More like a bloody nightmare.

Leibniz What do you mean, I cannot be Leibniz? You confuse me perhaps with my father. He was a philosopher too you know.

Hume No, no, I mean, Leibniz died, when was it, sixty years ago?

Leibniz Yes, you are thinking of my father. He did die, so I heard. Not sixty years ago though, surely not.

Hume I've never heard of your bloody father. You, you died.

Leibniz Granted, in many respects I am a crushed man, bereft of patrons, abandoned by the Duke as he ascends to the throne of England, but as you can see I am still very much alive.

John You're both dead, you fools.

Hume Oh, I'm on my way but I'm not dead yet.

John Long gone.

Jane What year do you think this is?

Hume My dear, what a preposterous question.

Leibniz Yes, quite foolish.

Hume Quite, quite foolish.

Leibniz Though you seem a little confused you know.

Hume I am not confused.

Leibniz Well, then, tell us pray, what year is it?

Hume Oh very well. It is 1776.

Leibniz 1776. How funny. You English and your sense of humour.

Hume I'm Scottish.

Leibniz English, Scottish, what does it matter. (*baleful silence*) What? Did I say something wrong?

Hume Some would say so, yes.

Leibniz So this is 1776, is it? The future. It's not how I imagined it. Very ... plain.

Hume So what year do you think it is?

Leibniz I'm not even going to dignify that with an answer.

Hume Because you don't know.

Leibniz I know perfectly well thank you.

Hume Go on then.

Leibniz 1716.

John Wrong!

Jane It's 1955.

John 1961.

Hume 1955. That's a good one. It's 2076. 3145. 5719.

Leibniz I've had enough of this dream now. I want to wake up.

John You can't wake up from my dream.

Hume Oh, so it's your dream.

Jane I'm going to wake up now.

Leibniz I think you'll find, Frau 1955, that I'll be the one to wake up.

John You two can bugger off for all I care, I want to keep this dream for me and her.

Jane I won't ever leave you.

John But you did. You did.

Hume I'll wake up when I wake up. I'm enjoying this immensely.

Leibniz I know this is my dream. All this is a facet of my experience, is it not?

Hume From where I'm standing, sunshine, you're just a figment of my imagination.

Leibniz How dare you call me a figment? You don't even know what year it is.

Hume I'm not the one who thinks it's 1716.

Jane It's 1955 actually.

John 1961.

Leibniz I'm going to wake up now.

Hume This is my dream and you're not going anywhere.

John (*shouts*) Stop!

(*silence*)

John This all started so well, just me and you. Why did they have to come along? I know this is a dream because you left, you left me, darling.

Jane I won't go anywhere.

John But you did, didn't you. (*Turns to Leibniz*) Why don't you just piss off?

Leibniz A strange dream for me to be having. Peopled by such strange-talking phantoms from the future.

Jane But it is not your dream is it? It is mine.

Leibniz Not yours. It must be mine, for I am real.

Jane And I am not?

John You can't be my love.

Jane But I am.

Hume (*laughing*) A pretty philosopher's conundrum.

Jane I am no figment of anyone's imagination.

Hume I can say the same, but little hope to persuade you of that, still less to demonstrate it. I dream of three people vehemently insisting that they are real. Perhaps I fell asleep reading Descartes. Or perhaps it was the oysters I had for dinner.

Leibniz Or perhaps we all stand in heaven, awaiting God's judgement.

Hume I prefer the oysters.

Leibniz That is so English –

Hume	Scottish!
Leibniz	No taste for the metaphysical.
Hume	A strange continental taste. Can't stomach it meself. Like snails. Or sauerkraut.
Leibniz	Or oysters.
Jane	To put it in the demotic
John	The demonic, don't you mean.
Jane	What the fuck is going on? John, what is going on?
John	I don't know. It's impossible, impossible. You said you'd never leave me.
Leibniz	1955 you say?
John	1961.
Jane	1955. What of it?
Hume	Poppycock and nonsense.
Leibniz	The future. What, two hundred and, um
Hume	Here speaks the continental mathematician.
Leibniz	Be quiet you English sot.
Hume	Scottish. And where I come from, to be a sot is no insult, you, you metaphysician.
Leibniz	Also no insult. Where I come from.
Hume	If it's abroad then what do I care.
John	I would like to wake up now.
Jane	And then where would I go? My darling.
John	I don't know. I don't know. I don't know anymore.

III

Jane Who did he say he was again?

John Fancy pants.

Leibniz Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz. Privy Counsellor of Justice, court historian to the Duke of Brunswick and librarian of the ducal library. At your service.

John Bloody German peacock.

Jane Not German, though, anachronistic. Eighteenth century. The map of middle Europe is a mosaic of tiny principalities.

John Tiny broken biscuit crumbs.

Jane Germany does not yet exist.

John As a biscuit?

Jane As a country.

John Not my cup of tea.

Leibniz Tiny principalities, yes, tenuously united in ever-shifting coalitions, too complex for anyone to understand, constantly riven by tiny little wars.

Jane Hanoverian. That's right.

Leibniz Just the situation for an ambitious young man to get ahead.

Jane How can you say that? Given the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Leibniz Circumstances, yes. There are always circumstances, don't you think? And they do prevail so. What can one do but make the best of them?

Jane Cold-hearted.

Leibniz Necessary.

John Does it matter? It's all just words. Birds fluttering out of reach.

Leibniz Ah, Plato's aviary. Do we have another philosopher in our midst?

John Philosophy makes me sick.

Jane Truer than you know.

John I prefer history. Of the family kind.

Leibniz He had me write a history, you know.

John You said.

Jane Who?

Leibniz Who do you think? The Duke. My father.

John Oh, it was like that was it?

Leibniz I mean it is he that both bears me and raises me.

Jane Sounds more like a mother.

Leibniz A history of the principality. Of the family. Of all the jewel-seduced and empty girls taken to the marriage bed and their plump and hearty children. Names. Events. Family trees.

John Stories.

Leibniz Facts. One after the other. On and on. Endlessly back and back in ever more dreary cycles of lust and greed.

John You don't like your position then.

Leibniz I adore my position. I just hate my work. Such a monstrous and demanding task. Weighing me down. Keeping me from my true calling.

John As a peacock?

Leibniz As a philosopher.

John I'm not sure I like you. Too full of yourself. Not exactly modest.

Leibniz Princes do not pay for modesty.

John And insincere.

Leibniz How else can a man rise in society?

John Peacocks in the library shitting out words.

Leibniz What does he have against philosophers?

Jane His father was one.

Leibniz Ah, yes. Sir, my father was also a philosopher. Tell me, have you studied the works of your father?

John Why on earth would I do that?

Leibniz To learn of course. Why else does one study?

John There is nothing I need to learn from him. Nothing, do you hear?

Jane Hush John.

Leibniz And you, madam?

Jane Me? I'm just a poor poet's daughter. Chasing words through the air.

John Like birds.

Jane Gone.

John All gone.

IV

Hume When I was young, my family thought the law a suitable career.

John Who now?

Jane He said, don't you remember?

John Some other pompous eighteenth-century prig.

Hume David Hume, sir. A man of mild dispositions, and of an open, social, and cheerful humour. Or so they say. I don't quite see it myself.

John But not modern, eh, up to date. Tempered in the war. Like me.

Hume I am fortunate not to have had to fight. War is foreign to me. No experience of it. Although I was secretary once, to a general. We engaged in an expedition which was at first meant against Canada, but ended in an incursion on the coast of France. I forget why. Rather jolly on the whole. Almost the only interruption my studies have received during the course of my life. But it allowed me to return to Scotland master of near a thousand pounds.

Jane The life of a man of letters.

Hume Is very pleasing to be sure. But not always easy. I struggled in the beginning. Until my glorious military career. And the success of my *History of England*. How was your history, Mr Leibniz?

Leibniz I confess it was never finished. In fact, it was barely started. Despite my years of work. I could never quite gather it into the appropriate form.

Hume Still, the law. It would have been disastrous. Like my foray into business. No, no, philosophy, that's the way to spend a life.

John Not another one.

Hume I think I made some contribution; perhaps I am remembered?

John Is that what matters?

Hume On the whole I think not. To live well, to be cheerful.

Leibniz To rise. To succeed.

John Cheerfulness is a mask. And success eats away at your insides until there is nothing left but a hollow shell. A cheerful, successful hollow shell.

Jane Are we still talking about history?

Hume I think our topic has changed.

Jane To what?

John Fathers.

V

Jane Where are we? Has anyone thought to wonder?

Leibniz We are dead, are we not?

John You are, that's for sure. (*to Hume*) And you. I'm not so sure about us. Perhaps you too my love.

Jane This must be a dream.

John Yes, perhaps.

Leibniz Or heaven. Perhaps we are with God.

Hume It is a possibility that must be considered.

Jane But you are an atheist, isn't that right?

Hume I would hardly be so bold. I merely assert that we can know nothing about the nature of God. One can know nothing without experience; what experience can we have of God?

Leibniz Only an atheist would deny that we have experience of God. The world is full of God. His works are everywhere.

John With all the pain and suffering in the world, that is hardly a recommendation.

Leibniz My friend –

John 'I have become God, the destroyer of worlds'.

Leibniz Not a destroyer. A creator. Of this, the best of all possible worlds.

John How can you say such a ridiculous thing?

Leibniz Because I use my reason.

John Over-rated.

Leibniz Not by you, that much is clear.

Hume Reason cannot tell us either that there is, or that there is not, a God. Or an afterlife for that matter.

Leibniz And yet here we are.

Hume We are undeniably, as you say, here. And the question remains. Where is here?

Leibniz That is not the real question. The real question is why?

Hume Why what?

Leibniz Why has God brought us together?

Hume Your question is of course based on the assumption -

Jane The answer is what we decide it will be.

John There is no answer.

Hume Or even if there is, we can never know it.

Leibniz There is no trace in the machinery of any of it.

Jane Of what?

Leibniz Our thoughts and passions. Cut open a man's head and -

John You have done this, have you?

Leibniz Of course not. My point is, all you will see is blood and brains.

Jane That is true enough. I've seen that. John, I have, you know I have.

Leibniz The whole psychological world simply disappears on closer inspection.

John Vanished in the air.

Jane Like birds.

John Gone.

Jane All gone.

VI

- John** It was a summer holiday. Mother and her new lover. Father and the nanny. Me and my sisters. All of us together on the beach. Charting the outlines of a new morality of freedom.
- Leibniz** One does not make a new morality by calling immorality moral.
- John** All of us trying so hard to be happy. Undercurrents, though. Dark glances between the grown-ups that I didn't understand.
- Leibniz** We have no choice. Morality is laid down by God.
- Jane** Father, why hast thou forsaken me?
- John** Who was this new man with his hand on my mother's knee? Does father not see? He seems happy enough, giggling with nanny, no top on, what must they think?
- Jane** So many questions, and no answers.
- Leibniz** The bearded father in the sky, I grant you, ridiculous. But the sustaining cause of the universe. Now there is a God worth worshipping.
- Hume** Stuff and nonsense the whole damn lot of it.
- John** I felt obscurely confused. Something was wrong but I didn't know what it was.
- Leibniz** After all, why is there something rather than nothing?
- Hume** What kind of question is that? I mean, what would an answer be?
- John** Not until later when it all fell apart.
- Jane** I came home from school alone.
- John** As it was bound to, I can see that now.
- Hume** Sometimes there are no answers. Not that we can reach at any rate. And there's an end to it.
- Jane** Mother wasn't there. Nothing unusual in that. But I expected to hear father. If he was writing, there would be the clack-clack of the typewriter. Otherwise, he'd be drinking. Noisily. But there was silence.

Leibniz Nothing happens without some reason.

Hume Reason is over-rated, I often find.

John Unfastened slowly bit by bit. Until we all flew apart.

Jane I went to his study. I had, I had some picture from school I wanted to show him, silly really,

John Like birds.

Jane Some birds I had drawn. I wanted to show him. That's what I told myself anyway, but I knew something was wrong. I knew I needed an excuse to open his study door.

John I knew from the start, really I did. Even as a child. That it would all end badly.

Leibniz The reason for the universe is God. Constrained by his nature to create the best of all possible worlds.

Jane He was sat at his desk, in his chair, with the top of his head blown off. He'd been dead some time, the gun in his mouth was cold. I checked. It seemed like the sensible thing to do. I couldn't touch him though. I put my drawing on his desk, quietly, like I might wake him, and went downstairs to wait for mother.

John Throughout the thirties. The whole terrible, torn decade. They didn't talk. Just communicated by solicitor's letter. Me backwards and forwards between them like a suitcase that never gets unpacked. Was this the new morality? The end of sexual jealousy? Endless dreary questions. Your father said that? Well that's just typical. Your mother did what? Really, John she should know better, don't you think? Ten years and more. After the war, I thought, we've all been through that, enough's enough, let's just try to pull this family together. Gather the threads. Tie it all up nice and tight. Never mind the years of acrimony, mother's latest drunk lover, father's new young wife (not the nanny by the way, she didn't last very long). By then I could do anything. I had been to war and come back alive. And I had met Jane. My beautiful poetess.

Jane Our words are all that are left once we're gone. Words on a page. I see him in his books. The beauty. The longing. The despair. All of it.

John It didn't work. I clung to Jane, but everyone else went flying off.

Hume It wasn't like this in my day, young man. Not for me anyhow.

John Never married?

Hume Never did.

John Nor did we. Was that wrong do you think?

Leibniz Everything that happens happens for a reason. The fundamental principle of my philosophy. My key to unlock the secrets of the universe.

Jane Jesus, I think need a drink.

VII

John I made a vest. Something practical, it seemed to be required.

Jane We've all got skeletons in the closet. I know that.

Hume My dear.

John A vest. Out of string.

Jane Not everyone's got a father who killed himself, granted. That's a fairly large skeleton as skeletons go. A large and bloody skeleton.

John Tied together. Little pieces tied together. Mother was quite impressed.

Jane I dealt with it quite well I thought. Considering I was twelve.

John I see it as a metaphor. For wearing.

Jane You know, I started drinking, smoking, I became recklessly promiscuous, with all sorts of unsuitable men, old enough to be my –

John My metaphorical vest.

Jane I got lost. And then, I was seventeen, I met John. My dear sweet kind and confused gentle lost John.

John The knots need to be tied very tight you see. And so small. Otherwise they could come undone, and then where would we be?

Jane I'll never leave you, never.

John But you did, you did.

Leibniz I am surprised you cannot see it.

Jane See what?

Leibniz The inevitable result of a twisted morality.

Hume Jesus, man, have a heart.

Leibniz A heart? We all have our bed, how do you say, and have to lie in it, is that not right?

Jane Oh yes? And what is so good about your time, tell me that.

Leibniz We do not have this, this madness.

Hume Europe ripped apart by the Thirty Years War. Destroyed. Corpses left to rot by the roadside. The whole of Europe descended into madness.

Leibniz The Peace of Westphalia ushered in a new era of peace and prosperity.

Hume But still the tiny little wars.

Leibniz There is always war.

Hume Even in a new era of peace and prosperity.

Leibniz What followed the war was not perfect, of course not. Do you think I am a fool? But all that suffering, monstrous as it was, led somewhere. Somewhere better. Where did your suffering lead you?

Jane I think you know.

Leibniz Why are you a poet?

Jane Why do you ask?

Leibniz Poetry lies I think. Not like philosophy.

Jane I wake up and something crosses my mind. Or the sun shines on the window in a particular way. Such little things. Unless I wrote them down they would be gone forever.

Leibniz Perhaps that would be no loss.

Jane But the world is made up of those tiny moments. Not grand theories and pronouncements. Raindrops in puddles. A word whispered in your ear in the dark.

Leibniz I never saw my parents again. After I took up my position.

Jane What happened to them?

Leibniz They lived. They died. It doesn't matter. They were not important to me.

Jane And you talk to me about morality.

Leibniz It was a different time.

Hume One of peace and prosperity.

Leibniz You make your own luck.

John You arse. You liar. You pompous peacock.

Leibniz And who are you, sir? I have introduced myself, you know who I am. But who, pray sir, are you?

John Metaphysical magician.

Leibniz Carping from the sidelines.

John Does your understanding comprehend this vest?

Leibniz I don't know what you mean.

John Hah!

Jane John.

John The knots need to be tied very tight. You do see, don't you.

Jane I do, I do.

John He doesn't understand.

Hume The continental metaphysician, beaten by a vest.

Leibniz You haven't beaten me you know. You have lost.

John My vest. My metaphorical vest.

Leibniz This is madness. The sleep of reason.

John The preening peacock doesn't understand.

Leibniz There must be order. Don't you see? Otherwise there is chaos.

John Exactly. Hence the vest.

Leibniz This vest is just a net to catch the disordered thoughts that flit through your mind.

John Or to catch fish in.

Leibniz To keep you safe.

John Will the metaphor wear it do you think? To catch fish? I think it will.

Leibniz But it is pointless.

Hume A pointless fish? I think I'm lost.

Leibniz There is no chaos, and all confusion is merely apparent, rather in the way that there might seem to be confusion in a pond seen from a distance, when you can only see some confused movement, a heaving, so to speak, of the fish, but can't make out the fish themselves.

John You've gone and spoiled it now. Going all high-falutin' like that.

Leibniz It is illusion. I have seen chaos. Believe me. I have seen it. It is an illusion. It must be. It must be.

John I don't understand. Who is the winner now?

VIII

Hume There is so little we can know, do you not think?

Leibniz No sir, I do not. Reason is the key to unlock the door of knowledge, and it reveals the structure of the world.

Hume That view has a certain naive charm

Leibniz I do not care if it is charming, I care that it is correct.

Hume Oh well it ain't that, that's for sure. Quaint maybe, correct no.

Leibniz Quaint? Quaint, sir?

Hume Maybe not quaint. Dangerous. Old-fashioned, certainly. Continental.

Leibniz It saddens me to see how the forces of atheistic scepticism have such power over your corrupted mind.

Hume Corrupt? I am not the one who prostitutes themselves to the idle whims of princes.

John Are they still at it?

Jane Yes.

Leibniz If this is the future then I want no part of it.

Hume That is just as well, sir, for the future needs no part of you.

John Grown-ups shouting at each other. This reminds me of my childhood.

Jane Everyone's childhood is shit, isn't it? It's just something to get out of the way.

John Is adulthood any better?

Jane Perhaps not.

John We were OK though, weren't we?

Jane Yes, darling, we were OK.

John I mean, we argued a lot, though, didn't we.

Jane Yes we did.

John Do you remember that time, I'm not sure what I had done, maybe said 'good morning' in the wrong tone of voice or something, and you, you stormed out, it was pouring with rain, we didn't see you for three days, we thought you were, we thought you were, you know

Jane I was drunk, John. I hardly knew what I was doing.

John And I wasn't quite ... either, you know, I was trying, trying hard to pull things together, tightly, very tightly, they had all flown apart, blown away in the wind

Jane Like birds

John Enough about the bloody birds.

Jane All gone.

John I didn't know where you were. I hardly knew where I was, but then you'd be there and it didn't matter, and then you weren't and I didn't know, I didn't know.

Jane It's OK, John, it's OK.

John Why did you leave me?

Jane I told you John, I was drunk

John I don't mean then. I mean later. For good.

Jane (*a long silence*) I didn't leave you. I mean, I did, I know, but it wasn't you I was leaving, it was everything, the world, my life, my self, everything.

John Did I not make things better for you? Bearable at least?

Jane Better, much better, you wouldn't believe. But bearable? No.

John The children found you. Laid out on the bed.

Jane I didn't know.

John At least you had the decency not to blow your brains out all over the study wall. That's something at least.

Jane Jesus, what a bloody mess.

John How could you do that to them? After everything? How could you do that to me?

Hume Your touching faith in the power of reason is little short of ridiculous.

Leibniz What is ridiculous is that you would denounce reason and call yourself a philosopher.

Hume	Perhaps sir we can agree that a distinction is required.
Leibniz	At last you speak in a manner appropriate to your calling.
John	Here we go.
Hume	If you mean by reason nothing more than careful discussion, then of course, sir, I have no quarrel.
Jane	Put the bird on the table and hold it down.
Leibniz	I am glad you admit at least that much.
Hume	But reason plays such a small role in the genesis of our human beliefs.
Jane	Cut off its wings to discover how it flies.
Leibniz	Beliefs are deficient in so far as they are not based on reason.
Hume	Then throw out the entirety of our beliefs about the world sir and morals, for reason plays no role in the origin of any of them.
Jane	Poor little bird bleeding on the table.
Leibniz	But the structure of the world. It must be rational, must it not?
Hume	Who can say anything about the structure of the world?
Jane	Why not just let it know the sky?
Hume	All we can describe, sir, is the structure of our minds.
Leibniz	Then there will be so much that we can never know.
Hume	That, alas, is the truth of the matter.

IX

John	This, this is the problem you see. Escape. I need to leave the beach. There is the sand, and the sea, and the sun in the sky. I am terrified of the sea. It is endless, endless, and never still. You must learn to swim, says Daddy. I don't want to I say, but you must he says. He drags me down the beach. I am terrified of the sea. I scream. His pipe clamped
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grimly in his mouth. No, Daddy, no. The rest of them watch but they do not move. It's for your own good, he says. I am terrified of the sea, roaring and alive like a liquid tiger. He drags me by the arm. I am kicking and screaming, screaming so loud, no, no. The rest of them watch but they do not move, watching as he picks me up. I'm over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, hammering on his back, sobbing no. I've pissed myself I think. He wades out a little way then grabs a leg and an arm, swinging me backwards and forwards a few times. I am terrified of the sea. There is nothing to do, he lets me go. For the briefest moment I am flying in the air, arms and legs flailing, face to the sun. My worst fear about to be realised and there is nothing to do. This is a kind of freedom. Giving up, letting go. The freedom of futility. And then the icy slap of the sea on my back, and I am under the water, my mouth full of water, I sink, but not very far, it isn't deep you see, after all that, and I find the bottom and I stand up, the water only just over my knees. I start laughing and he scoops me up into his arms, holding me up to the sky, his pipe still clamped in his mouth, smiling broadly, my brave, brave boy. We laugh together. I walk back up the beach and I realise, I'm not terrified of the sea any more. Now I'm terrified of my father.

X

Leibniz	Suppose that there be a machine, the structure of which produces thinking, feeling, perceiving; imagine this machine enlarged but preserving the same properties, so that you could enter it as if it were a
John	A building of some kind, a building that is a machine
Jane	A machine for living?
Leibniz	a mill. So that you could enter it as if it were a mill. This being supposed, you might visit it inside
Hume	For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other
John	The sun and the sand
Hume	of heat or cold, light or shade
John	and the endless sea
Hume	love or hatred, pleasure or pain
Jane	I can't remember being unhappy

Leibniz	but what would you observe there
John	In Daddy's arms. On the beach. In one of those ridiculous bathing suits, ruffled at the elbows. Pipe clamped firmly in his mouth.
Jane	but then I can't remember being happy either.
Hume	I can never catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but the perception
Jane	Just emptiness. Or absence. Like I wasn't there at all.
John	His brave, brave boy. Smiling on the beach for the photograph. Summer-blue sky. Lobsters in pots. The endless sea.
Jane	They were always so busy, the grown-ups.
John	The year of the General Strike?
Jane	Daddy, the poet. Everyone else circling him warily.
John	I would have been five. Or was I older? I don't know. Perhaps that's right.
Jane	Such a shy little thing. Daddy frightened, coughing, like a dying sun.
John	The end of it all in any case.
Leibniz	Nothing but parts which push and move each other, and never anything that could explain perception.
Hume	If anyone upon serious and unprejudicial reflection, thinks he has a different notion of the self, I must confess I can reason with him no longer.