

**Nausea - adapted from the eponymous work by Jean-Paul Sartre**  
**Karly Hou**

*In a reading-room. **Tonine Roquentin** sits with a book in a corner. A **Corsican** man works behind a desk, stamping the latest acquisitions of the library. An **old man** sits at a table with a book, tapping his finger. A **girl** is reading a novel upside-down. Outside, it is almost dusk, and the sky is darkening quickly.*

*It is a quarter to seven. All four are in the room working at their respective activities. From time to time, each one looks up, glances rapidly and scornfully at the other three as if afraid of them, then returns to their work. Here and there, the old man bellows out a laugh and the girl trembles.*

*The old man finishes his book and puts it down. He taps his finger on the table with sharp, regular beats while gazing forward. The Corsican takes a quick glance at the clock.*

**Corsican:** Closing time soon.

*The girl lowers her book to look at the Corsican. Then she returns to her book with focus. The old man continues tapping, as if without hearing. Roquentin lowers his book to alternate between looking at the three others.*

**Roquentin:** It is now too late or too early for anything I want to do. An odd time.  
Today it is intolerable.

*Time freezes (everyone else in the scene is frozen). Roquentin gets up from his seat to stand in front of a mirror on the wall. He examines his reflection uneasily, his face so close to the glass it is almost pressed against it.*

**Roquentin:** Look at my face. I see a slight tremor,  
the insipid flesh blossoming and palpitating with abandon.  
These eyes, especially, horrible seen so close.  
They are glassy, soft, blind, red-rimmed,  
they look like fish scales.

**Roquentin:** You don't put your past in your pocket; you have to have a house.  
I have only my body: memories pass right through.

*Roquentin lingers a moment longer, touching his reflection. He slowly wanders back to his seat, distracted, and lowers into it. He puts his book into his lap, but he cannot focus, he is gazing forward like the old man. Time resumes and the others return to their activities.*

**Corsican:** Closing time.

*The old man shakes his head undecidedly. The girl pushes her book away without getting up, staring ahead like the old man. The Corsican looks baffled. He stands up, takes a few hesitating steps, then turns off the light switch. The lamps at the reading tables go out. Only the center overhead bulb stays lit.*

**Old Man:** *(quietly)* Do we have to leave?

*The girl stays seated, one hand on her book, staring forward. A moment later, the old man gets up to put on his coat. As he steps toward the door, Roquentin suddenly bursts from his chair and leaps toward the man with a hand outstretched.*

**Roquentin:** *(loudly, aggressively)* Hey!

*The old man begins to tremble.*

**Roquentin:** *(politely and matter-of-factly)* A great menace weighs over the city.

*The two walk side-by-side, out the door, matching strides. The library falls dark as they exit. Outside, evening has fallen and it is raining softly. Lamp-posts light the square peacefully and passer-by are walking with umbrellas. Someone is whistling in the background. Roquentin stands still and gazes to the side.*

**Roquentin:** Nothing seems true; I am surrounded by cardboard scenery which could quickly be removed.

**Roquentin:** My pipe first catches the eye by the brightness of its varnish; you look and the varnish melts.. Everything is like that, everything.

*In the distance, someone's violin playing can be heard. Roquentin turns (to face the audience).*

**Roquentin:** I hear music.

**Roquentin:** To think there are idiots who get consolation from the arts. And the concert halls overflow with humiliated, outraged people who close their eyes and think that beauty is compassionate to them.

**Roquentin:** And this music—is it compassionate?

**Roquentin (a change of tone):** I recall a day with Anny...

*Roquentin turns and begins walking slowly offstage, deep in thought. She emerges from the other side of the stage, dressed as **Anny**. FLASHBACK to Anny (still sung by Roquentin, but in a different character—it's in her head).*

**Anny:** What a fool you are! Naturally I don't need to see you. I need you to exist and not change.

**Anny:** It isn't good for me to stare at things too long. I look at them to find out what they are, then they disgust me.

**Anny:** You're not like me at all. You complain because things don't arrange themselves around you like a bouquet of flowers.

**Anny:** No. You haven't found me again.

*Anny exits stage. FLASHBACK ENDS. **Roquentin** reappears, snapping to the present.*

**Roquentin:** I am so forgotten. That amuses me. A pale reflection of myself ... the 'I' pales, pales... Nobody lives there any more. No one.

**Roquentin:** The world is waiting, holding its breath, making itself small—it is waiting for its convulsion, its Nausea.

*Roquentin walks slowly, aimlessly, for a while. Everyone else has disappeared, it is as if he walks alone. The rain falls on him. After a while, the rain stops, and he stops walking. He stands, facing the side.*

**Roquentin:** The rain has stopped, the air is mild, the sky slowly rolls up fine black images: it is more than enough to frame a perfect moment.

**Roquentin:** I don't know how to take advantage of the occasion:

*Roquentin turns around and resumes walking, slowly.*

**Roquentin:** I shouldn't complain: all I wanted was to be free.

**Roquentin:** I walk at random,  
calm and empty,  
under this wasted sky.