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For my mother, Joan Yaeger Dudley, who first showed me the world.

Cast of Characters

ANNA, female, high school junior

JENN, female, high school junior

PAUL, male, 20 years old

ELIOT, male, 18 years old

ALETHEA, female, a mermaid

CARLA, female, high school freshman

KIM, female, high school freshman

KRIS, sex uncertain, age uncertain, a scientist

INUIT 1*, non-speaking, covered head to toe in winter clothing

INUIT 2*, non-speaking, covered head to toe in winter clothing

DR. STARILER, female, 30 years old, a marine biologist

MAX, male, high school junior

** May be doubled with speaking characters (suggested: Paul and Carla).*

Setting

The play moves fluidly across the globe, from the inside to outside, on land to underwater, the beach to the air, the hot sun to a snowstorm. Cheap theatricality should be employed. Large or permanent sets are discouraged. Someone shaking a can of ripped white paper for snow, a dark blue light for underwater, a deck chair for the beach: design should be minimal, metaphorical, and theatrical. The use of sound and light to create space would be ideal. Transitions should be quick: the use of clever costumes and representative props would be helpful to speed the jumps in time and space. It's a play, it takes place in a theatre, one without a big budget (you know, a theatre).

The tableaux at the beginning or end of each scene should be treated as still photographs.

Notes On Punctuation

Punctuation is used to indicate delivery, not to conform to the rules of grammar.

“—” *is an interruption*

“...” *is a short pause*

“//” *is the point at which the next character’s line of dialogue should begin, creating an overlap in speech.*

Acknowledgments

Circumvention received its world premiere on May 18th, 2007 in the First Annual Keen Teens One-Act Play Festival, presented by Keen Company and Playscripts, Inc. It was directed by Mark Armstrong, with the following cast and staff:

CARLA Emily Buttner
ALETHEA Bernadette Carter
PAUL, INUIT #1..... Rene Cirino
MAX Emory Cohen
KIM, INUIT #2..... Annamaria Diaz
KRIS Hayley Lemkin
DR. STARILER..... Julianne Mandara
ANNA..... Torey Marks
JENN Catalina Puente

Spanish Translations.....Andrea C. Thome
Keen Teens Program Director Blake Lawrence
Production Assistant..... Denise Blacker
Sets Erica Hemminger
Costumes Renee Mariotti
Lighting Peter Hoerburger
Sound Ted Pallas
Documentarian Sandi Bachom
Fight Choreographer Noah Starr

About Keen Teens

Keen Teens is a unique program that combines both production and publication for new plays written by professional playwrights specifically for teen actors.

Playscripts, Inc. and Keen Company identify and commission playwrights to create new additions to the canon of plays available to high school performers. The playwrights' only guidelines are that the plays should be approximately 30 minutes long, have a cast size of at least 12, and reflect Keen Company's mission of producing sincere plays that are generous in spirit and provoke identification.

Keen Company casts teenage actors from New York City and the surrounding area for the World Premiere productions Off Broadway on Theatre Row, giving students the opportunity to work with professional directors and designers. Playscripts, Inc. then publishes the plays and makes them available to other theater groups interested in licensing the plays for future production.

Keen Teens was conceived by Keen Company (Artistic Director Carl Forsman, Executive Director Wayne Kelton) and Playscripts, Inc.

CIRCUMVENTION

by Anton Dudley

(Lights Flash. Tableau: ANNA, wet hair, arms behind her back, eyes closed, holding her breath.)

1.

(ANNA stands in a pool of light. Her hair is wet. She has one arm behind her back. In her visible hand, she holds a small disposable waterproof camera.)

ANNA. Don't laugh at me. I still play with dolls. Not lots of dolls or stuffed animals or anything but. Just this one.

(She reveals, from behind her back, a Barbie-sized mermaid doll, which she clutches in her hand.)

She's not like any of my other dolls. Partly because I don't really have any anymore. But when I got rid of them, around the time I started high school, I kept this one. I don't really know why. I never played with her all that much when I was younger. She wasn't very pretty, I thought. Because of her long leathery tail; she never fit in at the doll tea table, or in the doll SUV, and she couldn't wear ball gowns, and she never got any looks from the Kens or my brother's GI Joes. I mean, can you imagine what their children would have looked like? And I didn't spend much time with her, because, she isn't very soft. Sure, she's got the long, brushable hair, but...that tail and, her skin. Her cold porcelain skin. And she never seemed very happy. Her face was always sort of tight and unwelcoming. Probably because she always wanted to be in the water.

I hate the water. I'm terrified of it.

I live in one of those states: American, not mental: that doesn't touch the ocean. And I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel it: this feeling of being locked in. Locked up. But somehow that's safe, isn't it? Not like the ocean.

It's the big unknown right? The ocean. The seven seas. It's all just a death waiting to happen. And what's worse, to enter this world, this world of water, you have to be practically naked. Vulnerable. And it's dark and strange, full of all these things, and, of course, it won't let you breathe. You gotta hold your breath, close your eyes, swim as fast as you can and hope you make it to...to where? I don't know, the other side? You just got to hold your breath and race as fast as you can in hopes that you make it out alive? Well. When I put it that way, the ocean's a lot like high school. Hm.

Anyway, I didn't get rid of her, for some reason, whatever reason.

Some days I stay home from school. On the days when I do this, I like to take pictures of her in the bathtub. Underwater. It sounds crazy, I know, but...for some reason, whatever reason, I like to take pictures of myself and her together underwater. It's the closest I ever come to being brave.

2.

(JENN suddenly appears. The space around ANNA is larger.)

JENN. Where on Hoopa's Green Hoopa were you?!

ANNA. *(To audience:)* Jenn, my best friend. She doesn't like to swear, so whenever she gets worked up, she says 'Hoopa', no one really knows why.

JENN. Okay, hello while you're being all expositional and stuff could you maybe steer some of that over my way and enlighten me as to why you missed the class trip to the aquarium?

ANNA. She also tends to use a lot of words when she gets angry.

JENN. You do realize you're totally getting suspending for cutting right?

ANNA. I can't imagine they noticed.

JENN. Whoa. What the Hoopa is that in your hand?

ANNA. Nothing.

JENN. Oh Anna. You've done some pretty lame stuff in your life but please don't tell me you blew off the aquarium to play with a doll.

ANNA. I wish I'd never told you about her.

JENN. Yeah, that goes for both of us. What were you thinking, are you insane?

ANNA. Come on, Jenn, I wasn't about to spend the day at the aquarium.

JENN. You weren't about to spend the day with our class in some non-classroom environment is what you mean.

ANNA. No.

JENN. Well why else, huh, Anna?

ANNA. The water?

JENN. Anna. You love the water. Look at you. You've been submerged with that Swim-Along Sheila doll all afternoon, haven't you?!

ANNA. No.

JENN. You have posters of ocean life all over your room. We're going to Mexico for Winter Break so you can finally see the ocean! What do you mean you're afraid of the water, for Hoopa's sake, Anna, your hair's wet!

ANNA. I'm not going to Mexico.

JENN. What?! All we've ever done is talk about this trip—what it means to our friendship—and taking it before our senior year, so we'd have all those excellent stories to impress freshmen guys with?

ANNA. I don't think I need to worry about impressing freshmen, Jenn, that's your dream, not mine.

JENN. No, of course. Why would you try to impress freshmen when you're too busy rejecting a junior.

ANNA. What does that mean?

JENN. Max? He likes you.

ANNA. No he doesn't.

JENN. Yeah, he does. And you totally should like him: the guy's an ocean nerd. I mean, he's applying to go to college on a boat so one day he can work for Greenpeace or something right?

ANNA. Max Woodhall does not like me.

JENN. Maybe if you left your house for once you'd realize he does.

ANNA. He can have any girl he wants, he doesn't want me.

JENN. I know, it's totally insane, but still, you should have seen him today at the aquarium. "Where's Anna?" "Hey, Jenn, where's Anna?" "Jenn, did you know that sharks shed layers of teeth just like seals shed layers of fur and by the way where's Anna?"

ANNA. He did not.

JENN. You know what, I am so not going to stand here and convince you a guy likes you when I still don't have a boyfriend myself; dealing with your insecurity is totally not my issue, especially when it means making myself feel lame in comparison? All I will say is that your fear is really lame—because somewhere in your aquarium-like mind you've decided to dwell in this delusion of yours that no one likes you when "A" Max is all about you and you don't give him the time of day for what reason, I have no idea, and "B" you're dissing your best friend, who's been planning and saving for two years to go to Mexico with you for Winter Break so you can see the ocean. That's your dream, Anna, but rather than make it come true, I think you're actually happy to sit alone in your bathroom and pretend the rest of the world doesn't exist.

ANNA. I just can't, Jenn, all right? I can't.

JENN. Why not?

ANNA. I don't know, okay? I'm just afraid.

(Pause.)

JENN. You know what? It's not okay. Give me that Hoopa camera.

ANNA. No it's mine. Jenn!

(JENN snatches the camera away from ANNA.)

JENN. Because I'm going to Mexico, and I'm going to take a picture of the ocean for you. Underwater. I am going to show you what it's like to be in the ocean. I am going to give you what you really want, because that's the kind of friend I am. It'd be nice if I had a friend like that one day, but until then—

(JENN looks at the camera.)

JENN. Oh Hoopa, I didn't know they even still made these. Ever hear of the digital revolution?

ANNA. I've been saving it.

JENN. Yeah. Well, I hope in return, it can save something else.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: ANNA holding the mermaid doll. Looking lost and alone.)

3.

(It's hot. JENN is dressed for the beach, she has a canvas bag over her shoulder, the underwater camera hangs from around her neck. She stands, facing an attractive young man, we'll call him PAUL, he could be South American, but we're not quite sure. PAUL speaks Spanish. As JENN speaks, she consults a travel dictionary. NOTE: italicized lines in brackets are unspoken and for translation purposes only.)

JENN. Hace mucho calor aqui. It's really hot here. Hace mucho calor aqui.

PAUL. Si. *[Yes.]*

JENN. El sol. El sol es muy caliente aqui. The sun. The sun is really hot here. El sol. El sol es muy caliente aqui.

PAUL. Si. *[Yes.]*

JENN. La comida. La comida es muy caliente aqui. The food. The food is really hot here. La comida. La comida es muy caliente aqui.

PAUL. Eh, a veces. *[Uh, sometimes.]*

JENN. You. You are really hot. Really Hoopa hot. Um, here.

PAUL. Huh?

JENN. *(Recovering:)* El arte. El arte es muy caliente aqui. The art. The art is really hot here—

PAUL. El arte? *[The art?]*

JENN. So, uh. Como se llama? What's your name? Como se llama?

PAUL. Mi nombre es Pablo. *[My name is Paul.]*

JENN. Pablo.

PAUL. Pablo. *[Paul.]*

JENN. Pablo. Me gusta. I like that. Me gusta.

PAUL. Me gustas. *[I like you.]*

JENN. Huh?

PAUL. Me gustas. *[I like you.]*

(JENN flips through her book, mouthing the words PAUL has just said.)

PAUL. Aqui. Déjame mostrarte. *[Here. Let me show you.]*

(PAUL steps towards JENN and hugs her tightly.)

JENN. *(To herself:)* Dude. I love Mexico.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: JENN embracing PAUL.)

4.

(PAUL and ELIOT sit on the floor of a hotel room eating Cheetos and drinking cans of orange soda. Jenn's canvas bag sits between them. They are laughing and not paying much attention to the mess their snacking is making.)

ELIOT. She actually thought you spoke Spanish!

PAUL. You should have seen the look on her face. You should have seen her everything else, // man it was amazing.

ELIOT. Are you in love?

PAUL. What? Love? No. Everything but. Open the bag // let's see what I got us.

ELIOT. I stuck my head in while you were in the bathroom, it's mostly feminine hygiene products and crap // for the beach.

PAUL. Nothing of value?

ELIOT. Credit card. And // a bit of cash.

PAUL. Give it. Give it!

ELIOT. And this romance novel, *Jack of All Trades*. Didn't know they'd published your autobiography.

PAUL. Whoa! There's like three hundred // dollars in here.

ELIOT. You can't use the credit card.

PAUL. I can use three hundred dollars.

ELIOT. The hotel's due at the end of the week.

PAUL. Relax, I got it covered.

ELIOT. It doesn't leave us with much.

PAUL. Much for what?

ELIOT. Vacation.

PAUL. What else do we need money for?

ELIOT. I don't know, // to go places?

PAUL. You want to buy souvenirs?

ELIOT. I didn't say that no, I meant // other things?

PAUL. Beach is free. Girls are free. And now with this, hotel is free.

ELIOT. There's other stuff.

PAUL. Like what? ...Postcards?

ELIOT. No, things to see like museums and // I don't know, dinners.

PAUL. Eliot, no one comes to the beach to go to a museum.

ELIOT. Ruins?

PAUL. Why do you want to see something that's ruined?

ELIOT. History, other cultures. The way someone lives when it isn't like your own.

PAUL. Yeah, that sounds really interesting // I'd rather work on my own life.

ELIOT. It does to me, I thought we were doing this together.

PAUL. Huh?

ELIOT. What?

PAUL. What'd you say?

ELIOT. I don't know.

PAUL. ...Dinners?

ELIOT. Don't you think it'd be fun to eat somewhere nice?

PAUL. Nice?

ELIOT. Just once while we're here?

PAUL. You sound like my grandma.

(Pause.)

PAUL. They aren't going to let you in anywhere nice. You're all orange.

ELIOT. Huh?

PAUL. Tongue, lips, hands. You look like an orangutan.

ELIOT. Since when did you watch the Discovery Channel?

PAUL. You want to get some beer?

ELIOT. No.

PAUL. When'd you get so boring Eliot? You're not yourself.

ELIOT. I'm more myself than I have been.

PAUL. You're not freaking out because I took the girl's purse. That was our plan, right? We planned this: paying for our vacation?

ELIOT. She was rich, right?

PAUL. I swore on the code of Robin Hood, I'd only rob the princesses. Come on, let's hit the pool bar.

ELIOT. I'm going to stay here. Maybe read this book.

PAUL. Now you really are my grandma.

ELIOT. Why, you don't like her?

PAUL. Huh?

ELIOT. Nothing.

PAUL. Okay, I feel like the weather's changed in here // for no reason, I thought I was doing what we planned. What we agreed to.

ELIOT. Nothing's wrong, go to the pool bar, drink yourself into oblivion, hook up with some girl and rob her blind, just try not to steal her heart, okay? Clearly we have no use for that.

PAUL. Are you done?

ELIOT. Sorry. Just...talking.

PAUL. Here. I thought you'd like this.

ELIOT. What's that?

PAUL. You'd think a rich girl would have a better camera. I found it in her bag and I thought of you. You like all those fish and underwater films, right? I saw you reading that old Aquaman comic on the plane. Go crazy. I'm going to catch the end of Happy Hour.

(PAUL throws the camera to ELIOT who catches it with one hand. PAUL turns and goes.)

ELIOT. Hope it makes you happy.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: ELIOT holding the camera. He is orange.)

5.

(Night time. A bright moon, its reflection shattered on the ripples on the ocean waves. ELIOT sits on the beach, by the water's edge, clutching the disposable camera in both hands. He closes his eyes and whispers something to the camera, then pulls his arm back as if he is about to pitch a baseball. Out of nowhere, ALETHEA appears. She seems different, somehow. Her skin is cold, her hair untamed.)

ALETHEA. What are you doing don't do that!

ELIOT. Huh?

ALETHEA. You're about to throw something in the water what are you doing don't do that.

ELIOT. I'm. It's. It's fine, it's protected, it won't get ruined.

ALETHEA. You think I give a crap about your thing about it getting ruined I don't care about that I couldn't care at all about that I care about the ocean.

ELIOT. Huh?

ALETHEA. You're polluting the ocean. If you don't want me to scratch the skin from your skeleton you'll stop.

ELIOT. Whoa, Lady, look, I didn't mean anything by. You don't know me. I recycle. A lot. And I'm a vegetarian, you can't just go yelling things and threatening people like that.

ALETHEA. So if you care so much why are you doing that?

ELIOT. I'm doing it because I care.

ALETHEA. No you don't you can't you're human humans don't care about anything.

ELIOT. Okay, you're scaring me.

ALETHEA. Why did you say that?

ELIOT. Because you are?

ALETHEA. No not that about caring why did you say that about caring?

ELIOT. Because I do?

ALETHEA. Tell me how tell me how or I'll rip the skin from your skull.

ELIOT. Okay, I think you would really benefit from anger management classes.

ALETHEA. Tell me!

ELIOT. Okay, fine, I will, why not I'm humiliated enough, it's just. The ocean. I've always believed the ocean is alive, like the water. I've always believed it's the world of dreams, and if you cast your dreams into the ocean, they'll come true. Maybe.

ALETHEA. *(Signaling the camera:)* So that's your dream?

ELIOT. Sort of. It's a symbol, I guess. I don't know why I'm telling you this.

ALETHEA. Because I threatened to shred your skin.

ELIOT. Oh, I've been threatened with worse, that's not it.

ALETHEA. Because it's important to you and you have to tell someone?

(He looks at her for a moment and smiles.)

ELIOT. Yeah...maybe.

ALETHEA. What's it a symbol of?

ELIOT. My grandmother used to say that every time we embrace someone we love, a part of our soul remains on that person. So. As you grow up. Your skin thickens. With each touch, your skin thickens another layer, until you wear an armor of souls, made up of pieces of the people you love. And if you ever want to see someone who you love very much, but who is not nearby, all you have to do is rub your hands together and their soul will appear.

ALETHEA. What does that have to do with the symbol?

ELIOT. I've never been touched by the person I love, but that person gave me this camera. I thought. It's stupid, I know. But it's the only thing this person has ever given me. A gift. It's the only thing we've shared. So I thought if I throw it. If I throw this into the

ocean, into the world of dreams: maybe the dream would come true. Maybe our souls would finally join.

ALETHEA. And you think that symbol holds both of your souls, together?

ELIOT. There's only one way to find out.

(ALETHEA puts her hands over ELIOT's, which, in turn, hold the camera. ALETHEA begins rubbing ELIOT's hands very slowly. The speed and intensity increases as ELIOT starts to rub his own hands together, over the camera, beneath the labor of ALETHEA's hands. The friction escalates to an almost unbearable pace. ALETHEA takes one hand of ELIOT's into each of her own and quickly pulls them apart, like the immediate pop of a flower bursting open. The camera falls to the ground; something has been released. ALETHEA and ELIOT look up into the dark night sky.)

ELIOT. *(Quietly amazed:)* I see them. Mine and his. Our souls.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: ELIOT and ALETHEA looking at the stars.)

6.

(Underwater. A tight, dark blue spotlight on ALETHEA. She is running quickly in place; she will continue running in place throughout the entire monologue. By the way, she's furious.)

ALETHEA. I am so stupid.

He seemed different.

That human.

He seemed different from all the rest.

The ocean is emptying.

Species disappear everyday.

Creatures I once knew very well are now gone and replaced by.

Junk.

Trash.

Bottles and bags and sewage and.

Plastic cameras.

But he seemed different.

I've never met anyone like me before.

And I thought, "could he be? Like me? Is it possible?"

I led him into the water.
So desperate to show him my true self.
And immediately I changed, as I always do.
My legs bound together and the scales and fins returned.
But he didn't change.
He remained.
Human.
I panicked.
He took a picture.
I fought him for it.
We wrestled.
He ran.
But the camera flew into the ocean.
And now I can't find it.
I'll swim a hundred leagues a minute if I have to.
I'm going to find it.
I'm not going to be responsible.
Responsible for killing, polluting, offending.
Revealing.
I'll never try again.
I'll stay alone if I have to.
Forever.
Some risks are not worth taking.
Safety, above all else, is—

(A pop of a flashbulb. ALETHEA is disoriented for a moment, then passes out.)

(Lights Flash. Tableau: ALETHEA passed out on the ocean floor.)

7.

(A beach on the Mediterranean Sea. CARLA and KIM sit on the beach at the edge of the sea. They face the water, eyes closed murmuring something, almost inaudibly, to themselves. A bucket or can sits between them. After a few moments of this, intuitively, they stop murmuring simultaneously. They open their eyes, simultaneously.)

CARLA. Did it work?

KIM. I don't know.

CARLA. I can't see anything.

KIM. Me neither.

CARLA. Maybe we didn't do the mixture right. Where's the spell the old lady gave us?

KIM. Here.

CARLA. Okay, I'll read, you check.

KIM. Check.

CARLA. No, you don't check until I've said something to check.

KIM. Check.

CARLA. No, stop it, that's not what I mean, I mean I read out the ingredient and if it's in the "cauldron" you say check, all right?

KIM. Check.

CARLA. You're so repeating ninth grade. *(She reads from an antique scrap of paper:)* "Two seashells."

KIM. *(Looking around in the "cauldron":)* Check.

CARLA. "The used napkin from a seafood restaurant."

KIM. Check.

CARLA. "Essence of chai, a tea bag will do."

KIM. Check.

CARLA. "A splash of water from the Mediterranean Sea."

KIM. Check.

CARLA. A pair of men's underwear.

KIM. Check.

CARLA. "Bake beneath the Mediterranean sun."

KIM. Check.

CARLA. "Place on sand at the edge of the sea."

KIM. Check.

CARLA. “Face the water. Close your eyes. Align yourself with someone of the same dream. Repeat the incantation fifteen times.”

KIM. We did.

CARLA. What?

KIM. I mean check.

CARLA. So where’s our merman?

KIM. The old lady said if we did all this he’d appear.

CARLA. I don’t see him.

KIM. Maybe we’re supposed to go into the water to find him.

CARLA. Nuh-uh, my spray tan will wash off.

KIM. I don’t get it.

CARLA. You must’ve done something wrong.

KIM. Me?

CARLA. Yuh-huh.

KIM. I did everything right, I always do everything right, it’s why you’re friends with me.

CARLA. Well...maybe you don’t have the same dream as me, maybe we’re not aligned.

KIM. Carla, I totally want to see a merman just as much as you do.

CARLA. Well I don’t get it. I paid that old woman a honk load of cash and we did everything right and tomorrow I’m getting on a plane and the only reason I agreed to come on this stupid vacation with my parents instead of going skiing is because I thought I’d get to see a merman. And I haven’t and now I have to go home and spend the rest of the holiday at Grandma’s house wondering why everything she cooks is made with lard. I mean ‘Whaa!’ Winter Break only comes once a year. What a complete waste of a vacation.

KIM. You met me.

CARLA. Kim. I live in LA. You live in Delaware. I’m never going to see you again.

KIM. Why do you wear spray tan if you live in LA.

CARLA. Hello skin cancer? I have very sensitive melanins.

KIM. ...I think it's melanin.

CARLA. Whatever I'm smart I have a three point hell-oh!

KIM. I'm sorry it didn't work out.

CARLA. Our friendship?

KIM. No. The merman.

CARLA. Oh.

KIM. Our friendship?

CARLA. What. What about it?

KIM. Well, I was gonna like, email you when I got home.

CARLA. Email's lame, I only text.

KIM. So I'll text you.

CARLA. Why, it's not like we're gonna see each other ever again. You already said you come *here* every year for vacation and no offense, but I am so not ever going to Delaware.

KIM. Why do you say that?

CARLA. It's Delaware.

KIM. No, why do you say we're never going to see each other again?

CARLA. We're not, though, right?

KIM. Well, I know we've only known each other for a week, but, we've spent the entire time together, I mean, honestly, Carla, we've tried to incant a merman.

CARLA. Kim. I don't really hold on to things. I just do whatever's in the moment.

KIM. Why?

CARLA. Because that way you never lose anything. Sure we could text or whatever but let's be honest, that'll stop one day and then what, we'll wonder what went wrong or worse we'll try to keep something going that can't because all we really have in common is this beach and a week of our lives, one week out of, what, like four and half thousand.

KIM. Don't you think real connections have to do with more than just time and place?

CARLA. I don't like losing things, Kim, so I put myself in a position where I don't have to.

KIM. Okay, but you're not always in control of that, huh? What if one day you wake up some place you don't like and there's no one you connect with. Who'll there be to help? You've abandoned the only memories you can conjure up to make you feel safe and not alone.

CARLA. You sound way too old to be a freshman.

KIM. I like keeping in touch with people I meet. It makes the world seem smaller, less intimidating.

CARLA. Well, sorry you wasted your time with me.

KIM. I didn't think I had.

CARLA. You can think whatever you want but, it takes two to tell the truth, else you're just in your own world.

(Pause. Something has washed up on the sand.)

CARLA. OMG. What's that?!

KIM. What?

CARLA. There. In the water, what is that?

KIM. Something's washed up from the sea.

CARLA. It's a tail! Look it's a tail!

KIM. Get it!

CARLA. OMG OMG OMG!!!

KIM. Quick, the waves are coming in.

CARLA. OMG-G-G-G-G! Wait, where'd it go?

KIM. Here it is, here!

(KIM and CARLA rush to the sea's edge. KIM picks something up, it's the camera.)

CARLA. It's not a tail what is it? Is it a message in a bottle? Read it, what does it say?

KIM. No. Just a piece of trash someone's thrown in the water.

CARLA. Give it to me.

KIM. No.

CARLA. Whatever, you said it was trash.

KIM. So?

CARLA. So throw it away and give it to me.

KIM. Maybe I want to keep it.

CARLA. No, it's mine.

KIM. You said you don't hold on to things. It's my memory.

CARLA. And I paid for it. I paid that old woman a lot of money.

KIM. You paid her for the spell, so keep the spell. I found this, I'm going to keep it.

CARLA. The honk you are! Give it!

KIM. No!

CARLA. Give it you little Delaware Troll, it's mine, I paid for it it's mine!

KIM. No, I found it it's mine!

(Lights Flash. Tableau: CARLA and KIM fighting for the camera.)

(An airport security line. CARLA stands behind KRIS. We are not sure if KRIS is male or female, and certainly, to KRIS, it does not matter. They both hold carry-on bags. KRIS is nervously nibbling peanuts [or whatever the actor wants to nibble, pretzels or candy, I wouldn't want someone to not get cast as KRIS 'cause that person happens to be allergic to peanuts!].)

CARLA. Um, excuse me, Miss...ter...miss...ter...eee? The line has moved a little, could you step up.

KRIS. Peanuts. More peanuts.

CARLA. Um, okay, there are probably places where you can buy more on the other side of security // you know, so if you—

KRIS. Peanuts. More peanuts.

CARLA. Look, if we don't move forward // they might suspect something and—

KRIS. I need more peanuts.

CARLA. Is everything okay?

KRIS. Never. I've never. In a plane?

CARLA. You've never flown before? Why not?

KRIS. You can't trust the fuselage. I'm a scientist. I know.

CARLA. Uh-huh. Well, there's really no need to be afraid. I fly all the time. Where are you headed?

KRIS. Arctic Circle.

CARLA. Oh. Vacation?

KRIS. Studying the glacier melt. Drowning Polar Bears.

CARLA. Oh. Uh-huh. Interesting.

KRIS. Terrifying. I've never been out Boston. I read about life, I don't actually. Live.

CARLA. Oh.

KRIS. Got a grant. Two hundred thousand dollars.

CARLA. Wow.

KRIS. Two hundred thousand dollar grant. Going to live in a tent. A tent in the Arctic Circle.

CARLA. Wow, yeah that's—wow.

KRIS. Terrifying.

CARLA. So, if you're terrified, why are you going? The money?

KRIS. Money, pssh! Money will be the death of everything.

CARLA. So, why?

KRIS. You have to do it, don't you? Just once? You have to live, right? Get out of the house and live?

CARLA. Uh-huh, yeah, you sort of do.

KRIS. Yeah. But you don't have to do it in the Arctic Circle.

CARLA. No. No, that's probably not necessary.

KRIS. Where are you headed?

CARLA. LA. Just coming back from vacation. Fourth one this year.

KRIS. Why do you travel so much?

CARLA. I get bored easily.

KRIS. Only boring people get bored.

CARLA. Hey!

KRIS. That's what my mother always said. The world is too interesting. If you just live outside your own experience, you'll never be bored. Boring people are people who don't change. She was smart. I'm a scientist and I know smart, she was smart.

CARLA. So, you got bored?

KRIS. I got worried I was missing something. By never being terrified. It works two ways. Fear. It either debilitates you or makes you do something. It just depends what kind of fear it is.

CARLA. (*Quietly, almost to herself, realizing something:*) Yeah.

KRIS. What's happening? What's going on?

CARLA. Oh, it's for security. We have to take our shoes off.

KRIS. Oh no.

CARLA. What?

KRIS. When I get scared, my feet sweat. They sweat and get stinky.

CARLA. Thanks for the warning.

(They put down their carry-on bags.)

KRIS. I guess you're not afraid of anything, huh? Traveling all the time.

CARLA. Oh. I don't know.

KRIS. I wish I wasn't so afraid.

CARLA. I'd say you have to be pretty brave to live in the Arctic Circle.

KRIS. I packed everything I need. Tools, oxygen, coats, tent, maps, moist towelettes...everything I need to be buried alive for six months. Whoa!

(KRIS falls over trying to get a shoe off.)

KRIS. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm such a klutz.

CARLA. No, no, it's okay. Just. Up you go, there.

KRIS. Wow. You're strong.

CARLA. I'm a swimmer.

(Mistakenly, thanks to KRIS's fall, they both pick up the wrong carry-on.)

KRIS. Wow, I must be getting stronger, this bag seems lighter now. Thanks for the lift.

CARLA. Yeah. Thank you.

KRIS. For what?

CARLA. You made me appreciate something I hadn't. As soon as we get through security I have to text someone.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: CARLA and KRIS, in separate spaces, each with her/his carry-on open, a look of realization and horror.)

9.

(White out. Arctic Circle or somewhere near there. We can't tell, it's all snow and wind. Two INUIT stand stiff, facing each other. Dressed head to toe in snow gear, we can't see their faces or any skin at all. They are bundled for sub-zero temperatures. The wind blows high. Perhaps someone from above sprinkles white paper scraps over their heads for the entire scene. Perhaps they stand in a tub of ice cubes. Any cheap theatrics to get the location across.)

(INUIT 2 holds the disposable camera.)

(Being too cold to speak, the entire dialogue is communicated using large white placards with black lettering. The placards are revealed one by one, as if the INUIT are speaking.)

INUIT 1. *(Written on card:)* "Hey Bob."

INUIT 2. *(Written on card:)* "Hey Joe."

(The scene continues in this way...)

INUIT 1. Big snow!

INUIT 2. Huge!

INUIT 1. What's that?

INUIT 2. Don't know.

INUIT 1. Where'd you get it?

INUIT 2. My pet seal found it.

INUIT 1. Pepper always finds stuff.

INUIT 2. He's a curious seal.

INUIT 1. Where was it?

INUIT 2. Some guy. In a tent.

INUIT 1. Gave it to Pepper?

INUIT 2. No. He was frozen to death.

INUIT 1. Oh.

INUIT 2. *(First card:)* Pepper took it
(Second card:) The guy doesn't need it.
(Third card:) Anymore.

INUIT 1. You like things from far away.

INUIT 2. *(First card:)* Yeah.
(Second card:) One day I'll go.

INUIT 1. Where?

INUIT 2. Far away.

INUIT 1. Cool.

(They stare at the camera for a few moments. The snow continues to fall. No one's going anywhere.)

(The placard dialogue continues.)

INUIT 2. Hey Joe?

INUIT 1. Yeah Bob?

INUIT 2. *(First card:)* Is that a Polar Bear?
(Second card:) Behind you?

INUIT 1. Uh-oh!

(Blackout.)

(Lights Flash. Tableau: INUIT 1 and INUIT 2 running for their lives.)

10.

(The deck of a boat. Ideally, DR. STARILER and MAX are in scuba/deep sea diving gear. MAX's hair is wet. He holds a bundled object in his arms. It could be a baby, on first glance. We will soon learn it is a young harbor seal. It's midday, the weather's fine, maybe

the sea is a bit choppy; we're not that far from land. Somewhere near Portland or Seattle.)

MAX. Dr. Stariler! Is it alive?

DR. STARILER. Where did you find it, Max?

MAX. Its hind flipper was caught in the marker about a hundred yards over there.

DR. STARILER. "Over there?"

MAX. Sorry...forty-six degrees Northwest of the yellow marker.

DR. STARILER. Don't panic. It's alive.

MAX. How can you tell?

DR. STARILER. Look. It's Vibrissae are moving.

MAX. Vibrissae are...whiskers, right?

DR. STARILER. Very good.

MAX. He's got a lot for a little guy, huh? Needs a shave.

DR. STARILER. No, you don't do that. Each vibrissae is attached to muscles and supplied with both blood and nerves. They're basically organs. It's how the seal can see.

MAX. (*Joking:*) Can I keep him? Huh? Huh?

DR. STARILER. Might have to, for a little while anyway. This one doesn't belong here.

MAX. I thought there were like two hundred thousand harbor seals here.

DR. STARILER. Yes, but there are five subspecies. The ones in the Eastern Pacific are *P.v. richardsi*.

MAX. (*Remembering:*) Genus: *Phoca*; Species: *Vitulina*; Subspecies: *Richardsi*.

DR. STARILER. Impressive.

MAX. I'm single handedly trying to bring Latin back from the dead.

DR. STARILER. But this little one is P.v. stejnegeri, from somewhere around the Bering Sea. He's an Arctic seal.

MAX. I thought they didn't migrate.

DR. STARILER. No, they only stray from home when they're searching for food, even then, they wouldn't come this far. It must've got caught in a boat or something. How did you find it?

MAX. I know this sounds strange, but, I'm from farm country? I thought I heard a sheep crying.

DR. STARILER. The pups make that sound when they're calling for their mothers.

MAX. So. I'm his mother?

DR. STARILER. Today you are.

MAX. Yeah, I'm flattered little guy, but I got plans to go to college and stuff. No offense.

DR. STARILER. Let's get it back to shore for some tests. Why don't you feed it some fish for now.

(She hands him a bucket.)

MAX. Sure.

DR. STARILER. This is a story for back at school; you rescued a lost harbor seal. Not a bad way to spend Winter Break, I'd say. You're a good guy, Max, let me know if you ever need a recommendation for those college plans, okay?

MAX. You read my mind. Something's up, he's not eating this.

DR. STARILER. Probably ingested some plastic. It's a major killer of the harbor seals. Bulky plastic in their stomach sends a "full" signal to the brain and their normal eating is inhibited. It's lucky you found it, Max, if something is in its stomach, the seal would have starved to death pretty soon.

(Lights Flash. Tableau: MAX, DR. STARILER, and the seal: a family portrait.)

11.

(Darkness. A phone rings. A single spotlight comes up on ANNA.)

ANNA. Hello?

(A single spotlight comes up on MAX.)

MAX. Hello?

ANNA. Hello?

MAX. Anna?

ANNA. Yeah?

MAX. It's Max.

ANNA. Max?

MAX. From school?

ANNA. Yeah, yeah. I know where you're from you're...from school, Max from school.

MAX. Yeah. It's Max.

ANNA. From school. Hi.

MAX. Hi.

ANNA. Um. How's. You know. How's Mexico?

MAX. I'm not in Mexico.

ANNA. You're not? I thought // everyone—

MAX. Oh, you probably thought that 'cause you can hear the ocean in the background.

ANNA. The ocean?

MAX. I'm on an eco-adventure.

ANNA. A what?

MAX. Yeah, I'm spending two weeks off the Pacific Northwest. Looking at wildlife. The cold ocean.

ANNA. Oh.

MAX. We just saved a seal.

ANNA. You did?

MAX. Uh-huh.

ANNA. Wow. That's. That's impressive.

MAX. Yeah. I think the seal thought so.

ANNA. Max?

MAX. Yeah?

ANNA. Um. No offense, 'cause I'm really glad you did, but. Why are you calling me?

MAX. Oh. It's uh. It's the weirdest thing. But. Well, this is going to sound crazy, but. Did you lose a camera?

ANNA. A camera?

MAX. Yeah, a little disposable, like a waterproof one?

ANNA. Did I lose it?

MAX. Uh-huh.

ANNA. Oh, so you are.

MAX. I'm what?

ANNA. She gave it to you did she?

MAX. Who?

ANNA. You don't. Don't make fun of me. "The cold ocean." Is Jenn there? Are you laughing? I'm not stupid, you know, I can connect the dots, Max, I'm not stupid.

MAX. Anna?

ANNA. "Pacific Northwest," I know where you really are // I'm not stupid.

MAX. Anna, Anna!

ANNA. What.

MAX. I don't really know what you're talking about.

ANNA. Jenn?

MAX. Jenn?

ANNA. Uh—yeah. You're with her. In Mexico. With my camera. *(She covers the phone:)* Eco-adventure my butt.

MAX. Anna, I don't really know what you're talking about, I know Jenn and some of our class went to Mexico but. This is the strangest thing. This seal? The one that we rescued from the bay? It wouldn't eat. It had swallowed something. A plastic camera—we got it out. You know and. I'm a curious guy so. I sort of snuck the camera out and. I got it developed. There was some crazy stuff on the film. You would never have guessed. I mean, the whole world there, in like twelve pictures. Some things I couldn't even guess what they were. But the last picture? It was you. It was sort of blurry but. I could tell it was you. The way you always stand. And your hair. It was wet but. Your eyes. Your piercing eyes. You know, I've seen you a lot and. Well, I could tell it was you.

ANNA. Yeah?

MAX. So, where are you?

ANNA. *(Trying not to laugh at him:)* You called me at home, Max.

MAX. Yeah, well, you're at home, I guess. But. These pictures. How did you get all of them?

ANNA. I lost that camera a while ago.

MAX. I hope you didn't mind that I got them developed, if I'd known it was your camera I wouldn't have // I wasn't trying to spy or anything—

ANNA. No, it's fine, Max, it's fine.

MAX. So. Can I send them to you? I mean, stolen or lost or whatever, they're still your pictures right?

ANNA. Yeah. Yeah, that'd be great, I'd love to see them.

MAX. And Anna?

ANNA. Yeah Max?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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