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AISLE 17B
by John Walch

Cast of Characters

MICHAEL

and

CONRAD, recent college graduates and current roommates, well fed.

MAN, a recent refugee from a collage of distant lands, gaunt and malnourished. Roughly the same age as Michael and Conrad.

Acknowledgments

Aisle 17B was first presented in a showcase production by Austin Script Works—a playwrights’ service organization—as a part of their annual festival of short plays. The production was directed by Robi Polgar and featured: Damian Gillen, Flordelino Lagundino, and Derek Mudd. For information on Austin Script Works visit: www.scriptworks.org.

“Food comes first, then morals.”

—Bertolt Brecht

AISLE 17B

by John Walch

(A narrow strip of light rises on MICHAEL looking out into the audience. He is in Aisle 17B of a large grocery store. A pole stands near the end of the aisle. MICHAEL holds several tins of cat food in his hand and ponders a selection. CONRAD stands beside him with a half full grocery basket.)

MICHAEL. Giblets... What are giblets?

CONRAD. They're like organic Chicklets, what's it matter?

MICHAEL. And where, exactly, is the giblet? On the body, I mean.

CONRAD. Michael, just pick.

MICHAEL. *(Indicating the cans:)* And what's the difference between the *Turkey & Giblets Dinner* and *Fisherman's Catch Banquet*? Taste-wise?

CONRAD. One's a dinner, one's a banquet? Listen, the cat's not going to care, it can't taste the difference.

MICHAEL. She, it's a she. And I'm sure she can. "*Finicky.*" That's what the note says. "*She's very finicky: feed her a half a can per day mixed with warm water.*"

CONRAD. I don't even know why you're taking care of that old lady's cat.

MICHAEL. She's our neighbor.

CONRAD. So we have to be nice? She's not nice to us. Calls the cops every time we have a party, and I see her going in the management office all the time. I know she's the one who got us written up for the "grilling incident."

MICHAEL. We shouldn't have been barbequing on the balcony, it's in our lease.

CONRAD. Which we almost lost thanks to that old bat. She's trying to get us evicted and here you are taking care of her cat.

MICHAEL. We live in a complex, Conrad, what we do affects everybody.

CONRAD. It was a hibachi, not a bonfire. It's like grilling with five Bic lighters turned up on high flame, we weren't going to burn the place down.

MICHAEL. We have to consider the consequences of our actions.

CONRAD. We're out of college now, every decision doesn't have to involve Wittgenstein or be framed by some big ethical choice. I want to start living and doing what makes sense for me.

MICHAEL. And you don't think it makes sense for me to take care of the cat even though I made a commitment?

CONRAD. I think we're having a party tonight and we gotta get home. Now, pick.

MICHAEL. But which brand? Whiskas grinds their *Chicken Giblets Dinner* in gravy and Fancy Feast says their *Chicken and Rice* is slow cooked in broth.

CONRAD. It's an animal, it'll eat whatever the fuck you drop in its bowl.

MICHAEL. So just drop some rat poison in there?

CONRAD. Fine by me.

MICHAEL. I want to get something the cat will like.

(CONRAD grabs a Fancy Feast can from MICHAEL and pops it open.)

MICHAEL. What are you... Ugh... Smell that. What is it floating in?

CONRAD. It's the broth or the gravy, taste it and find out.

MICHAEL. I'm not tasting it.

CONRAD. Chicken? Give you five bucks.

MICHAEL. NO, it's disgusting.

CONRAD. Ten.

MICHAEL. Conrad, I'm not eating the food.

CONRAD. Then how are you ever gonna make a decision, now taste it.

(CONRAD shoves can in MICHAEL's nose. MICHAEL reacts from the smell, knocks the can free, and it falls to the ground—spilling the mysterious liquid. As soon as it hits the floor, a voice on the intercom:)

INTERCOM. Spill on Aisle 17B.

CONRAD. Great, quick, pick something and let's get out of here.

MICHAEL. Now we have to wait for somebody to come clean it up.

CONRAD. Oh, for God's sake, Michael, why do you always have to be so fucking responsible? I'll meet you in meat.

(CONRAD exits. MICHAEL bends down and starts cleaning the mess as well as he can. He notices that some of the liquid has spilled on his shirt, roughly over his heart. He smells it.)

MICHAEL. *Shit.*

(The moment he says this, the pole comes to life and turns into the MAN. The MAN is malnourished and speaks with an unidentifiable accent.)

MAN. Heart, gizzard, liver.

MICHAEL. Pardon?

MAN. Giblets, the stuff inside. Good. I take care of.

(The MAN pulls a yellow pouch from his coat. The pouch is emblazoned with an American flag and other writing. He pulls a spoon from the pouch and starts cleaning the mess, transferring the food from the floor back into the cat food can. He does this with efficiency and singular focus.)

MICHAEL. That was quick. Usually, you spill something and it takes an hour for some high school kid to show up...

(Beat.)

You're not from the store, are you? ...Hello? Sir? You don't have to do that.

MAN. You dropped, I pick up.

MICHAEL. No, they'll send someone by with a mop.

MAN. No mop! I mop... you hold.

(MAN gives MICHAEL yellow pouch to hold and continues cleaning. MICHAEL reads printing on yellow pouch.)

MICHAEL. "This food is a gift from the people of the United States." ...Oh my god, you're from that place...

MAN. That place.

MICHAEL. With all the fighting.

MAN. Yes, that place with all the fighting and where food falls from sky.

MICHAEL. *(Indicating magazine in basket:)* How'd you get here?

MAN. You dropped, here I am.

(MAN continues to scoop cat food back into can.)

MICHAEL. I read an article in the magazine section that says the food drops aren't helping and that they're dangerous.

MAN. Empty stomach is danger.

MICHAEL. So it helps?

MAN. Me it helped, my Princess it did not...

MICHAEL. Your Princess? The cat?

MAN. *(Carefully spooning up the last of the liquid from the floor:)* ...Broth. Good, yes?

MICHAEL. No, that's not broth. Not real broth.

MAN. Looks real.

(MAN wipes droplet of liquid from MICHAEL's shirt and tastes it.)

MAN. Mmmm...good. Broth.

MICHAEL. Oh, don't eat that, it's for the cat.

MAN. Cat?

MICHAEL. Cat. You know, *meow*.

MAN. Meow, cat. Yes, I understand. Food for cat, I do not understand. You say...

(Indicating the aisle of food.)

...all this, food for cat?

MICHAEL. Well, not one cat, but, yes, this whole aisle is food for our cats.

MAN. *(Indicating row on the other side of the light:)* And this? Cat food?

MICHAEL. Dogs. That's food for our dogs. You're in the pet food aisle.

MAN. I see. And what if you do not feed cat and dog?

MICHAEL. They'll die.

MAN. Same is true of me.

(MAN takes pouch back from MICHAEL. He reaches into it and pulls out a small package, opens it, and sprinkles it on cat food.)

MAN. Pepper, make cat food taste better.

MICHAEL. We put pepper in the packets?

MAN. Pepper, salt, 2300 calorie food ration, match, napkin.

(MAN pulls out napkin and prepares to eat cat food. MICHAEL takes can from him.)

MICHAEL. No, you can't eat this.

MAN. But you dropped.

MICHAEL. I'll get you some people food. Just another aisle over.

MAN. I can only eat what you drop. Please.

(CONRAD reenters. His basket is full of meat. MAN becomes pole again.)

CONRAD. Michael, I'm freezing my ass off waiting for you in meat.

MICHAEL. I... uhh... That... what?...

CONRAD. It's a pole, you know, holds the roof up?

MICHAEL. Uh. Never mind.

CONRAD. So, somebody came by and cleaned it up. Great. Make up your mind and let's go. ...Michael, it's not that difficult.

(Pause.)

MICHAEL. You really wouldn't feed the cat?

CONRAD. Jesus, Michael, if you want to feed the cat, feed the fucking cat.

MICHAEL. I asked, would you feed the cat?

CONRAD. If I did I sure as hell wouldn't be worrying over Fancy Feast or Fiskers.

MICHAEL. Whiskas.

(Pause.)

CONRAD. No. I wouldn't feed the cat, okay.

MICHAEL. You say that, but it's not just any cat, if you saw this cat... She's beautiful... Princess.

(As MICHAEL speaks, MAN remains frozen, but begins to speak. The monologues interlock. MICHAEL hears what the MAN says; CONRAD does not.)

MAN. My Princess. She was beautiful. My daughter. My princess.

MICHAEL. That's her name, Princess, and when I come I can hear her mewling at the door. She's so grateful, so happy to see me.

MAN. We had farm, outside of small village. First child was daughter. Everybody say boy is better for farm, but my daughter could not be bettered. She carry two buckets of water from well without spilling drop, she run faster than any boy in village. I start

teaching her to plant when fighting began. With all crops in ground, we had to go.

MICHAEL. I go to the kitchen and pop open a fresh can of food, mix it in the bowl...

MAN. We mix in with other refugees all running from fighting.

MICHAEL. ...and all the while, she's looking up at me with these hungry eyes. Then I put the food down and she devours it.

MAN. Then we get to border, but no more can cross. They keep us there, landmines are spread all over our country. There is little water, less food. Winter begins and aid trucks no longer can get through. / You cannot imagine the starvation—

MICHAEL. *(Simultaneously beginning at /)*

You can't imagine the starvation. And when I feed her...

MAN. —What it's like not to be able to feed your child.

MICHAEL. It feels like the world is spinning in the right direction.

MAN. It feel like world spinning... out of control. Then food begins to fall from sky, like snow on field. It hit ground and sets off landmines, so we know what it means to gather that harvest. We discuss, try to figure a way to pick up pouches without setting off mines. But the children don't understand and they run out into field to harvest the pouches. My Princess runs fastest of them all.

(To MICHAEL:)

Please, the food.

MICHAEL. You wouldn't let it starve and you know it.

CONRAD. It's a cat, it's not mine, and I don't even like the old lady.

MICHAEL. So you would let her die?

CONRAD. Take it to the pound.

MICHAEL. They'll kill her.

CONRAD. Then let it out.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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BUT WHO'S COUNTING
by Larry Loebell

Cast of Characters

WOMAN

Production Notes

For a slightly different version of this play that does not center around the millennium, contact Playscripts

BUT WHO'S COUNTING

A MONOLOGUE ABOUT THE MILLENNIUM

by Larry Loebell

(At rise, an attractive, stylishly coifed, and perhaps slightly menacing WOMAN, in her mid 30s, dressed in elaborate (possibly leather) underwear, strides on to the stage. She is carrying a notebook.)

WOMAN. Before we start, I need to tell you the rules for this scene. This is my scene, but I really don't want to play it like I'm a character and you're the audience. You're gonna see a lot of that tonight and I want to give you something fresh, something different. I could give you a lot of justifications for this—I'm taking down the 4th wall, I'm doing a "meta" play, or we could dispense with the academics and scare the shit out of the National Endowment and just call it performance art. Whatever you want to call it, I'm just gonna talk to you like I'm a regular person in your reality. You'll have to get over the getup. Pretend I'm wearing Bluefish. Life is theater, theater is life. Suspend your disbelief. So we're just talking here like we're best girlfriends and you stopped over unexpectedly and it's a quiet winter evening and I just poured you a killer cup of decaf Ugandan Dark Roast. Which isn't really true since someone wrote this for me to say and I'm not gonna give you any openings to respond, and the coffee you can buy from that guy in the lobby is really crap, but that'll be the tone. Confessional. Confidential. Very Monica. Don't give me that blank look. I know you all watched it. It'll feel like I'm thinking this up on the spot, but it's really rehearsed. It's an aesthetic choice, blending the genuine and the artificially crafted, but that's almost always what life feels like to me anyway. Not that I'm complaining.

Time wise, it is like 9:35 on the last day of 1999. Let's say this black box is the living room of my apartment. I have very cool furniture, befitting an award-winning mid-career architect, which is what I am. I've got a niche—law firm design, so I mostly do interior space in large buildings. My living room reflects my taste: Roche-Bobois chairs, this magnificent antique lacquered table I picked up on my last trip to Japan, hand printed Italian drapes, a huge Sara Steele watercolor of an endangered orchid over the sofa, Noguchi lan-

terns, and Dale Chihuly blown glass nesting bowls as accents. We're in that luxury condo development they built on pier 41 over the Delaware. And I've got the best unit. Through that window I have an unobstructed view of Camden Aquarium, all lit up tonight in blues—meaning clear skies tomorrow. And back there in my bedroom, a man I picked up less than a half an hour ago at a New Year's Eve party at Egypt on Delaware Avenue is waiting for me. But really, I'm not in a rush.

In a few minutes, when we're finished talking, you're gonna leave and I'm going to go through that door and into my bedroom to give that man the fuck of his life. He's getting a little nervous right now wondering where I am, because I've been gone a while. He watched me get into this outfit and now he's wondering if he's made a mistake coming home with me. He's thinking, she looked pretty normal in the bar. She didn't seem crazy. I want to give him some time to get used to the idea that something special is going to happen to him—to both of us—tonight.

I spotted him right away at Egypt. The party was revving up. The DJs were cranking out a nice mix of techno, trance, jungle, ambient, with an occasional oldie thrown in to slow things down. I'd been dancing with a succession of guys when this one caught my eye. He was standing alone and watching the dancers, and I saw him just sort of shrinking. There are certain people who should never go to parties alone. You gotta have the energy to keep yourself in the flow. This guy, I watched him retreat to a table near the wall. He looked all right, a web rat in Dockers and plaid, kinda cute in an "I-know-all-the-hidden-apps-on-the-Palm-Pilot" sort of way. So I watched him. I tried to figure out why he'd come. This clearly wasn't a bar guy. I decided he'd been dumped recently, and that this was his first time out in a while, like he'd just decided there was no way he was going to spend New Year's Eve alone. Particularly this New Year's. But he also wasn't going to spend it with any of his old friends because they'd just remind him of Ellen or Mindy or whoever she was, so he picked this place out of the phone book or he maybe heard about it from some other geek at the pharmaceutical company where he hand-holds the Luddites at the I.T. help desk, or he noticed an ad in the City Paper while he was flipping toward the personals—White Professional Female, huge mamma-

ries, desires recently dumped geeky guy for sex; willing to let you act out your retribution fantasies against your ex on me—hope really does spring eternal, you know...and so he drove in from Tre-dyffrin or wherever. In situations where you have to make judgments about people quickly, you often have to do it without the benefit of back story. I'm pretty good at making them up. You'd be amazed how often I get it right.

Anyway, he struck me as one of those guys who never really feels confident, which I actually like because men who swagger in my experience often turn out to be creeps, so I came on to him. Very sweetly. I wasn't wearing this. He bought me a drink. We talked. We danced a couple of times. He wasn't a very good dancer, surprise surprise, but he was earnest. And his body was okay. Better than I expected. I suggested maybe we go someplace quieter for a private celebration. He thought I meant a quieter bar.

Now, I guess you should know that the reason I know he's waiting patiently in there is because he's tied to the bed. Well, chained, actually. I'm partial to sixteen gauge double weld, with figure 8 links, because they're smooth and relatively light. Also, sixteen fits through the rings on both of the cuff sets I own. And it doesn't look like something out of a Roger Corman babes-in-prison-with-chain-saws flick. It's light duty, like for chaining newspaper boxes to street signs so they won't get stolen. But it does the trick.

I got introduced to bondage a few years back by a guy I let tie me up one night. He was a guy who used to work in my firm, another architect. His niche was parking structures. I knew this guy had a kink because he liked to talk about it over lunch. I wasn't sure he was telling the truth. I thought he was trying to look hip to the gay guys, so I decided to call his bluff. Turns out he's a pretty good top. He's one of those guys who likes to narrate, so he got a kick out of training me, who likes to listen. Not that you'd know that from how many words I'm letting you get in edgewise, but take my word. I was happy to be the bottom—at least once.

This guy, this Tom with the okay body and the pen protector personality and the surprisingly big dick who is in my bedroom—Rothman is it? I need to ask him again—this Harry is my 2000th fuck. My millennium orgasm.

The reason I know he's number 2000—this rigorously orchestrated personal harmonic convergence of calendar and clitoris—is I've been counting since my first time. That was high school with a guy named Martin. Martin Tobin. Jewish Tobin. There are Irish Tobins, too. I've done two of them. Martin was my first real boyfriend. This was 1981, a month or two after the beginning of the Reagan revolution. We were in eleventh grade. Apparently while the Reagan revolution was breaking out on college campuses, and a zillion future litigators and stockbrokers were signing up for the cause, the sexual revolution was trickling down to us high school kids. Martin and I strung out the fooling around a while—manual stimulation, light oral contact, you know the progression. Then one day after school in his bedroom when his parents were at work, it happened. It was fantastic. It was everything a first time should be. I went off like a five dollar firecracker. Everything about it was so sensational—as in, I can remember every sensation—that I never wanted to forget it. So afterward I wrote down everything I could remember. I don't know what possessed me, but I knew that unless I did it would fade. It never has.

Then a couple of weeks later, we did it a second time. I was jonesing for it something fierce only I didn't understand that at the time. I thought I was jonesing for him. But the second time was awful. Everything about it. He was overconfident in a disgusting, now-I-did-you-now-I-own-you kind of way. He was demanding and rushed, not the slightest bit concerned for what I wanted, and I couldn't get him to slow down for love or...well maybe I should have tried money. Anyway, instead of going off like a Roman candle, I fizzled like a five cent sparkler in a spring rain. Pop, hiss, then that sputtering slide into silence.

Then I started hearing what my girlfriends were saying about their boyfriends. All the sudden everyone was doing it and everyone was having the same problems. Some of them said things like 'now that I slept with him he doesn't seem to respect me' and I thought whoa, what's going on here? We're stuck in the '50s. IEEEEEE! With everything going on, second wave feminism, straight talk on sex, Anne Sprinkle doing speculum shows, it's still once you give it up everything changes? All of that hot desire to couple comes back at you as demands for blowjobs? What gives?

What I wanted, what I still want, is to have that first time feeling every time.

Then, right around then I read about this rock star, I have no idea what his name was or what band he was from, who claimed to have had over a thousand women one time only, and to have taken pictures of every one of them. So I decided there's a record to beat. Now, don't be so quick to judge. You never really know where a good idea is going to come from. Marty was the last one I ever did twice.

I did twenty-seven from my high school graduating class. Some of you subscribers had sons at Radnor High in 1982. There's a decent chance I did 'em. Then I did nearly 500 as an undergrad at Penn. Oh, please. Don't look so shocked. It's only a big number when you add it all up like that. It's a big school. I was there for four years. Well, four and a half. I had a bad sophomore slump. That's only a little more than two a week. Do the math. Half of you will wish you had it so good in college. The other half of you, if you're honest, have me beat by a mile. At least for periods of time. And you there, third row, sixth seat. You had that cute apartment at 41st and Pine. I recognized you the minute you walked in. Don't worry. I'm not going to rat you out. But I do have you written down.

I made some minor adjustments when AIDS reared its ugly head, but frankly, it really didn't slow me down much. You just gotta learn to like latex. If you're determined, you get into the high four digits pretty easily.

You might ask, didn't you have bad experiences? The answer is, really very few. Understand that being in control of the scene, making the rules, really determines the outcome. I choose carefully. When you do this all the time, you develop a sense about people, you really do. It's the back story thing. If I'm telling myself the back story and I get stuck on a detail, my warning alarms go off and I change my focus real fast. I pay attention to those little feelings people often regret ignoring.

When I tell this next thing to people they tend not to believe me, but I swear it's true. Every one of my partners taught me something. Every one. And every one of them brought me pleasure. Over the

years, I've tried pretty much everything. Men, women, older, younger, white, black, local, foreign, butch, fem, sexy, savvy, sex changed, sex starved, swingers, solos, slobs, compulsives, strap-ons, straights, rain makers, fisters, you name it. And when we're done, they go in the book. Name, body description, how we met, where we did it, what we did, something about how well I liked it, how well they seemed to like it, and a note or two on whatever made it unique. There's always something that made it unique if you look for it.

One question I'd have if I was you is, why bother to count? My friend Anna told me once that fucking as often as I do sounds like work, and who wants to memorialize the days at the grind. Her word. What she said made me sad for her, for what she's missing. But about the counting, that's just our nature. We have an inborn obsession with counting. We count everything. Time. Money. Floors in the building. Steps to the water cooler. Big things. Small things. What we have. Who we have. What it all adds up to. We like to know our substance, our worth, our location, where we are on the continuum.

What I don't get is why anyone would want to count anything if it wasn't going to be different every time? What's the point? It's like this millennium thing. I like all the hoopla, the debate about if it's this year or next year, even all the Y2K paranoia, the implication that something might happen after midnight to change the world. I like the countdown clocks on every post office and at City Hall, because for once, the message seems to be: pay attention to every day. Everything could change tomorrow.

But it makes me totally crazy that what most people really want is for the next moment, the next day, the next year, the next century to be an awfully lot like their recent memory of the last one. What are you all so afraid of? Once you start to notice that things aren't just passing by, that each thing has a specificity, it's really better. There's not that many things to do in this life. Eat. Work. Take in an art experience now and then. Travel a little, if you're lucky. And fuck. In your hearts, not a single one of you wouldn't like to have that great big rocket booster of an explosion go off every time you shine your skinny at the sky. But the big markers, the years, the

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THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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A FREE MAN IN PARIS
by **Brooke Berman**

Cast of Characters

ISA, 17

JT, her friend from school

MOM

MOM'S BEAU, who also might be a slide projection

Production Notes

The following is performed simply. It is deliberately elliptical and stripped down.

Acknowledgments

A Free Man in Paris was originally produced by the Roundtable Ensemble (Artistic Director, Kelly Moore) from October 17th to Novemer 3rd 2001 with the following cast and staff:

ISA..... Elizabeth Reaser

JT..... Robert Beitzel

MOM..... Linda Larsen

Director Michael Barakiva

Scenic Design Marisa Lowenstein

Costume DesignSarah Jean Tosetti

Lighting Design..... Mike O'Connor

Sound Design..... Eric Shim

Special thanks to Ralph Zito and Kelly Moore.

For James who showed me the Emerald City.

A FREE MAN IN PARIS

by Brooke Berman

Going Out

(ISA is trying to leave house. MOM is watching.)

MOM. Where are you going?

ISA. Out.

MOM. Out where?

ISA. Nowhere. Just out.

MOM. By yourself?

ISA. With friends.

MOM. Do I know them?

ISA. No

MOM. I'd love to meet your friends.

ISA. Sure.

MOM. You know I'd love that.

ISA. Sure. Look, I gotta go—

MOM. Bring them home. Would you like to bring them home?

ISA. Sure. I gotta go—

MOM. Where are you going?

ISA. I told you. Out.

MOM. Did you say where?

ISA. Nowhere. Just out.

MOM. Well, don't be late.

ISA. Okay.

MOM. Because I worry.

ISA. I know.

MOM. Have the car home early. Where are you going again?

ISA. (*Exploding:*) Just out. I am not going anywhere. I am just going out. Just out. JUST OUT. I am just going out. Okay? *That is where I am going.*

MOM. Okay. But don't be home late.

(ISA slams the door.)

(Blackout.)

The Emerald City with JT

(ISA and JT, driving, in the Emerald City. Streets lit by green lights underneath the raised streets in the center of the city. Everything is deserted, magical, green.)

(JT has an earring and a shaved head.)

(They smoke cigarettes and play loud music. They're in the car.)

ISA. Parents are so random. Parents are like, “But where are you going?” I mean, my mom can be great. She was really great a lot when I was... you know. Before she was... you know. But I mean now she's like.... I don't know, she can be great. But she can also be like this totally false being, just pretending to be whatever she thinks a Parent is. And the thing is, she's completely spaced out and self involved. But then, like she checks into The Parent Thing, and she's a mess. Like, things with—you know, her health, whatever—get bad, and she kinda forgets about me for a while. And then, she remembers she's a mom. And this is when you don't want to be around. Because once she remembers, she has to do something to makes herself feel like a mom. And so then, she does these totally random things. Like, she starts asking about where I'm going or what I do or if I'm fucking smoking pot or something. Because she read somewhere that kids use Visine when they're trying to hide that they're using drugs and I have Visine, so therefore, I'm probably like on crack. Which is fucking absurd if you know me at all. Which is EXACTLY the point because clearly she doesn't. I mean, that whole generation is just not okay.

Her concern is ridiculous and random and totally unwarranted. I take care of myself. I take care of her. I take care of you. Everyone is taken care of. But my mom, she's all "Where are you going?"

JT. Don't think about it.

ISA. I'm not.

JT. This is my favorite place.

ISA. Good.

JT. I used to be in a band.

ISA. Great.

JT. We have a CD at Wax Trax.

ISA. Am I supposed to think that 's cool?

JT. Well, yeah. It is pretty cool.

ISA. Sure.

JT. You want to know what I play?

ISA. What are you talking about?

JT. In the band. You want to know what I play in the band?

ISA. Sure.

JT. Yeah?

ISA. Yeah.

JT. I don't play anything. I sing.

ISA. That's great.

JT. Want to hear me sing?

ISA. Sure.

(JT sings something very badly.)

ISA. That's great.

JT. Yeah? Well, I practice. I practice a lot.

ISA. I have to be home by midnight. You know. My mom.

JT. That sucks.

ISA. She worries. I told you. It's random. But I don't want her to worry. She hasn't been feeling well.

JT. No one worries about me. *(He thinks he is bragging:)* I am a free man. A free man. No one worries. No one cares.

(This softens ISA some.)

ISA. You want to come back to my house?

JT. Tonight?

ISA. Yeah. You could sleep over. She's always talking about meeting my friends.

JT. Yeah, okay. Can I drive?

ISA. Do you have to call or anything?

JT. I told you. No one worries, no one cares. No one's there to take the call. Mom's on the run. Mom's gonna be a Buddhist nun. Really. Wants to shave her head and everything. Mom's pretty cool besides that. Speaks a lot of foreign languages. Like eight or something. Anyway. She's not around. No one to call. Mom has no cell phone in the Buddhist temple. Sisters all grown up, could care less. Dad's... who the fuck knows where, no Dad, no Dad to call. But, hey, can I drive? I really want to drive.

ISA. Do you have a license?

JT. No. But driving's cake. I mean, anyone can drive.

ISA. Maybe some other time.

JT. Fine, if you don't trust me.

ISA. That's not what I said. Another time.

JT. I'm not sleeping on the floor.

ISA. Okay. No floor.

(Blackout.)

Rainy Night House

(ISA's ROOM. An attic.)

(ISA spreads her CD collection before them. And old albums too that looked like they either belonged to her mom or she got them at a yard sale.)

ISA. This is the kind of music I like. Rainy Night House. Ladies of the Canyon. Blue. A Free Man in Paris. Like what you said before. In the car. "I was a free man in Paris... Help me, I think I'm falling... It was a rainy night...we took a taxi to your mother's house...and I feel just like that black crow flying through a blue sky." How can I feel that? I do though. I feel it so much— Do you feel everything so much? Like it's pushing against you and has to come out?

JT. I'm not sleeping on the floor.

ISA. So, don't sleep on the floor.

JT. No sofa bed. I can't do that with my neck. Sofa beds are for girls.

ISA. You can sleep in my bed.

JT. Good. Because I am not sleeping on the floor.

ISA. Okay.

JT. And you're not either. No one sleeps on the floor, okay?

ISA. Okay.

(They get into bed together.)

JT. I have a girlfriend. In Paris.

ISA. Yeah?

JT. Well, just so you know. I'm safe. I mean, I'm not gonna try anything.

ISA. I didn't think you were. Besides, I'd kick your ass if you did.

JT. I can be friends with you.

ISA. Sure.

JT. I can be friends with you because we think alike.

ISA. I don't know if we think alike.

JT. Sure we do.

ISA. I don't know.

(Middle of the night. In the dark. She turns to him. Simply. Her gaze is steady, fixed, open.)

ISA. You think she's gonna be okay?

JT. What's wrong with her?

ISA. She's sick.

JT. How sick?

ISA. Really sick.

(She closes her eyes. Now, his remain open.)

(Blackout.)

Morning

(JT wakes up and reaches for his pack of cigarettes right next to the bed. He does not open his eyes to do this. He just reaches, feeling around for them. He slips one in his mouth and, without lighting it, sighs.)

JT. Makes up for all the ones I didn't smoke while I was sleeping.

(ISA is waking up. She looks at him. He is very funny fumbling with the pack of cigarettes, his lighter, etc, all while doing his damndest to remain as close to the state of sleep as possible. He is really very funny.)

ISA. You're funny.

(He finally lights the cigarette. A triumph.)

JT. Oh yeah?

(He takes his first drag. This is blissful.)

JT. How am I funny?

ISA. I don't know. You just are.

JT. Are you a dyke?

ISA. Excuse me?

JT. Are you a dyke?

ISA. I don't think so.

JT. Cause you might be.

ISA. Sure. But I don't think so.

JT. But you didn't try anything. Last night. With me.

ISA. You have a girlfriend in Paris.

JT. Yeah but that's my excuse. You're a free agent.

ISA. No. You have a girlfriend.

JT. If you wanted to—

ISA. You said you had a girlfriend. Besides, I didn't feel like touching you. I just didn't.

JT. Exactly. That's what I'm getting at. No girl has ever slept in the same bed with me without trying something. Even you know, just cuddling. You don't cuddle. That never happens.

ISA. You have a girlfriend.

JT. Yeah. But you didn't touch me and that never happens.

ISA. You didn't touch me either.

JT. That's different. I was being a gentleman. Besides, I have a girlfriend in Paris.

ISA. Do you want to touch me? Right now. Come on. Right now. You wanna touch me?

JT. No. Not right now.

ISA. Okay, then.

(Blackout.)

French Toast With Cornflakes

(The kids and MOM.)

ISA. Mom, this is my friend Jesse. Jesse Thomas.

JT. I go by JT.

ISA. He has a girlfriend in Paris, and he slept over. In my bed. But we didn't have sex.

JT. She's American. My girlfriend. But she lives in Paris. I mean, she's not French or anything. She just like lives there.

MOM. I see.

(MOM is not phased by the mention of sex. She is very mature in this respect. She takes everything in stride.)

JT. Her name is Jeanne. She's pretty cool. I mean, I like her.

MOM. Will you stay for brunch?

JT. Yeah, Man, I'd love to. I love brunch. You having bagels and that fish stuff? I love how Jews have that fish stuff. Wasps can't do brunch for shit, you know what I mean?

MOM. We're having eggs and French toast. Do you like French toast?

JT. I love French toast.

MOM. I make it with corn flakes.

JT. Yeah? The cereal?

MOM. I dip in this corn flake batter. See. Over here.

JT. Wow. Man, this is great. You're really wonderful, you know that?

ISA. Her boyfriend is an asshole. I'm warning you. He'll be here for brunch.

JT. My last stepfather, Man. He was the worst. But my mom booted his ass. He was this fucking *despot*. I mean, just really totalitarian no-good, using my mom, you know—

MOM. Okay, Kids. Go set an extra place. Jesse, I'm glad you're staying. You look like my first husband. Isa, he looks like your dad.

ISA. I'll get place mats.

(ISA leaves, JT stays in the kitchen with MOM.)

JT. Corn flakes. That's so cool. I bet you could do that with all kinds of cereal couldn't you? That's really cool.

MOM. It's a little secret.

(They share a smile.)

JT. Isa says you're sick.

MOM. Do you like different kinds of cereal? I bet it would be sort of interesting if we tried the same recipe with granola. What do you think about that? I mean, we could experiment with all different types of cereal. What kind of cereal do you like?

(He gets it. She doesn't want to talk about being sick.)

JT. Grape Nuts.

MOM. You look like my first husband.

JT. I'm sorry. To bring it up.

MOM. Why don't you go to the table. I'll be right there. Really. It's fine.

(She smiles brightly, a little too brightly--)

(Blackout.)

Brunch

(The MOM'S BOYFRIEND could be real or he could be a slide projection with sound.)

MOM'S BOYFRIEND. —Which is why the white Europeans were better than anyone else. And that reminds me of a story I like about the Spanish conquistadores—

JT. (*To ISA:*) This guy's a loser.

ISA. Yes. We know that this is so.

MOM'S BOYFRIEND. We know that this is so because the darker races—

JT. (*To the stepfather:*) I'm Black, you know. My dad was Black. You can't tell because I look pretty Anglo. But I'm not. Not really. I'm really Black. My dad was this pretty fucking incredible guy. A jazz musician. Fucking Negro, Man. Or like Native American, too. Mixed, I think. He lives in Paris. Or the South of France. My girlfriend lives there too—

MOM'S BOYFRIEND. Young Man, what is the significance of the earring in your ear? I have noticed other young men with these earrings, and I am wondering what they signify.

JT. Sailors who wear gold don't drown.

MOM'S BOYFRIEND. Oh. Are you a sailor?

JT. No. But I come from a long line of sailors. My dad was a sailor. And he was a cowboy too. And a painter. He was both. And totally African. Mostly totally African.

MOM. Where is your dad now?

JT. I don't know. I think he lives in France or something. He's married to some very important rich lady. And he's not supposed to contact us. It's like, part of their marriage contract or something. She's like the daughter of someone really famous and part of the deal was that he totally disown his kids—well, me and then his kids from his other marriage, I don't know them, but he had to totally walk away from us and promise to never see us again or even talk to us to marry this very important daughter of a famous person in France or Spain or something.

MOM. That's so sad. And your girlfriend is in France too? So, I mean, she could walk by him on the street, or in the Louvre, and

just never even know it was him. Life is so...sad and romantic and sad.

ISA. I don't know where my dad is. He's just gone. That's all I know. Just gone.

MOM. Things were fine with us. They were fine. And then suddenly they weren't fine. I don't know how that happened, that they could be fine and then not fine.

MOM'S BOYFRIEND. *(As if he's just heard this for the first time:)* Sailors who wear gold don't drown? Is that what you said?

MOM. Oh, God, Jerry. Weren't you listening? What do you think he just said!? My God. He comes from a long line of sailors. He just told us that. Wake up.

(She sighs.)

(Blackout.)

Just Gone

ISA. So, she says,

“Where are you going?”

“Just out, Mom.”

“Okay. Well don't be home late.”

“I won't” and then “Love you,”
and it's syrupy sweet because she likes it that way, and this takes her attention off where I 'm going.

“Love you too, Sweetheart”

And I'm out the door.

I'm out of the house, into the driveway. I'm gone. I just want to be gone.

I just want to be gone.

I just want to be gone.

Driving is Cake

(JT and ISA in the car.)

ISA. You don't have a license.

JT. Yeah but I can drive. I'm good.

ISA. Forget it.

JT. Why!?

ISA. You said you don't have a license. I don't want to get hurt. Or break the law.

JT. Come on, I really want to.

ISA. Too bad.

JT. You're gonna have to learn to take some risks here. Get hurt. Break the law. Who really cares anyway?

ISA. My mom. I can't break the law cause I have a mom, okay?

But I'll let you drive. Just take it slow. Okay?

(ISA lets JT drive. He drives like a maniac.)

ISA. SLOW DOWN. Jesus. Can you drive like a fucking human!?

(JT grins and drives faster.)

(ISA and JT.)

ISA. No more driving.

JT. You gotta learn to be less careful. Even while you have a mom.

(Blackout.)

Blue

(ISA in her room. Late at night.)

ISA. You come for conversation. I comfort you sometimes. I bring you apples and cheeses. It is a rainy night, and we take a taxi to your mother's house. You turn me on, I'm a radio. I am a rainy night house, a woman of heart and mind, even though I'm just 17. Help me, I think I'm falling. I was a free man in Paris. A free man. Like your girlfriend. And I'm cold blue steel and sweet fire. And it's a Chelsea morning, and aren't we blue? Aren't we very, very blue? We are, aren't we? Here is my song for you.

Lets shut out the whole world. Make them all go away. My parents and school and everyone. Lets make everyone go away. Go away.

And lets make my mom better.

Do you think you can do that for me? Do you think you can make her better.

The Hospital

ISA. This is how the hospital happens. It happens with a phone call. The phone call is from the asshole, her boyfriend. The phone call says your mom fell. It says she's okay, but she fell but she's in the hospital. It is a longstanding problem. It is not about falling. She is not in the hospital because of falling. She is in the hospital because of the longstanding diseases that make her fall in the first place. That is why she is in the hospital.

I call you. I even let you drive.

(JT and ISA sit in the hospital waiting room.)

(Beat. They've been there awhile. They're running out of magazines to read. Her head might be in his lap.)

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GANDHI GOES FISHING
by Al Sjoerdsma

Cast of Characters

BOB

GANDHI

Production Notes

Gandhi Goes Fishing was first performed at Summer Shorts '98 by City Theatre in Miami, Florida; and was subsequently performed at City Theatre's Winter Shorts: Best of Fest '01; Milwaukee Rep.; and Puttin' on the Ritz Festival in Oaklyn, New Jersey.

The play was first produced in New York by Vital Theatre Company, Stephen Sunderlin, Producing Artistic Director, Michael Schloegl, General Manager.

GANDHI GOES FISHING

by Al Sjoerdsma

(Lights up. MOHANDAS GANDHI, as an older man with bald head and wire-rim glasses, stands at the edge of the stage dressed in a loincloth and handmade robe, holding a fishing pole. The line goes over the edge of the stage. He stands holding the pole for a short time, then he reels in the line a bit, stops and waits, reels in just a bit again, stops and waits, reels again. Enter BOB, an American fisherman, in his forties, paunchy, dressed in fishing hat, fishing vest with pockets. He carries a tackle box and two fishing rods. He sets his rods down, opens the tackle box, begins tying tackle of one rod and baiting the hook. Throughout the play, BOB engages in various fishing business, tying tackle, baiting hooks, and casting both rods into the “water.”)

BOB. Morning, Mo.

GANDHI. *(Proper English accent:)* Morning, Bob.

BOB. Great day for fishing.

GANDHI. It is.

BOB. So, what's the word?

GANDHI. There is no word.

BOB. They biting?

(GANDHI shrugs.)

Catch anything?

GANDHI. Not as yet.

BOB. What are you using as bait? Bloodworms? If you want to catch mullet, you ought to be using bloodworms.

GANDHI. What if I'm willing to catch anything?

BOB. Bloodworms.

(Beat.)

The way you're dressed, it looks like the only thing you want to catch is a cold.

GANDHI. (*Chuckles.*) Your spirits seem on the high side this morning.

BOB. Ah, you know. You either laugh or you cry, right? Am I right? I'm hauling truck all week, I can't really say that I blame her.

GANDHI. Your wife?

BOB. Yeah, except the problem is, I *do* blame her. How can I not? Except I don't really know, you know? I got my suspicions. I'm not sure I can stand it anymore. I don't want to talk about it.

GANDHI. Fine.

BOB. I don't mean no disrespect.

GANDHI. I understand.

BOB. Except that, you know, well, you asked.

GANDHI. I didn't really ask, Bob.

BOB. You mentioned my wife.

GANDHI. I was just being polite.

BOB. You want to be polite, Mo? Don't mention my wife. The last thing I need is you mentioning my wife. Are we on the same page?

GANDHI. You bet.

BOB. Beautiful. Let's fish.

(He casts. They fish.)

Now, this is living. Am I right? I've been waiting all week for this. They're out there, Mo. I can feel them in the palms of my hands. They tingle. Waiting for the slightest vibration. Nobody nibbles out there without my palms knowing about it.

(Beat. Sigh.)

Every mile I'm on the road these days, my muscles clench up, even at night, sleeping in my cab. In front of me, all I can see is fish. Through the windshield, fish, fish, nothing but fish. Which is good,

you know, cause if I don't see fish...But it's always fish. Swimming back and forth. Big ones. Little ones. Big ones eating little ones. Right there in front of me in the air.

GANDHI. Your body is telling you something.

BOB. Yeah, I know, but who can listen?

GANDHI. Your problem is that your truck has become your master rather than you being the master of the machine. It no longer simplifies your life. It's become a tool to exploit your life even further.

BOB. Yeah, but what's the alternative? Not everybody can make their own clothes like you do.

GANDHI. Why not?

BOB. Right. Me with a spinning wheel. I can just hear what my kids would say then.

GANDHI. Your kids *may* say you're achieving your dharma by sublimating your bestial self to your human self and are preparing your spirit for your onrushing divine incarnations.

(Slight pause. BOB looks at MO.)

BOB. Come on, Mo, get real, will ya? The only things my kids say is "Who the hell are you?" and "Where the hell you been lately?" Not that I don't deserve it, only being home two nights a week. Except you'd think Gwen'd make an effort to make them realize they're still my goddamn kids. She could if she cared to. I don't know. How did you manage it with Indira when you were on the road with the Great March and all those kind of things? You must've done something right. She turned out Prime Minister.

GANDHI. Indira isn't my daughter. She's Nehru's.

BOB. Well, whatever. What I mean is, we can't all be perfect like you are.

GANDHI. I never claimed to be perfect, Bob.

BOB. Don't I know! If you did, then you wouldn't be perfect. But I don't know what else you want to call it. I mean, you suffered on purpose, for Christ's sake!

GANDHI. Yes, well, suffering is a key element in calling forth a realization of common kinship in the hearts of your oppressors.

BOB. Well, sure, that goes without saying.

GANDHI. A man can't help but feel shame inflicting suffering if the victim welcomes each blow and begs him to administer more.

BOB. I sure wish I could say the same about Barney Griswold. He seems to be enjoying the hell out of inflicting my suffering. You should see him when he comes next door to borrow something or chew the fat while I'm cutting the grass, you know? That smile on his face, that smug little...thing...grinning at me, like he's putting something over on me. Like he's somehow superior cause he works in that office and gets to come home each night. That's inflicting some suffering. I've been thinking about inflicting some suffering of my own.

GANDHI. Are you sure *he's* the one inflicting the suffering?

BOB. What do you mean? I thought we were going to avoid this subject!

GANDHI. You brought it up, Bob.

BOB. The hell if I did! Jesus, Mo, I never knew you were so god-damn nosy. You'd better watch where you're sticking that nose, Mo, or, so help me, I'll...

(Beat.)

GANDHI. You'll what?

BOB. I'll snip it right off. Is that what you want?

GANDHI. Go ahead.

BOB. Don't push me, Mo.

GANDHI. Why not?

BOB. *(Puts up dukes:)* OK, that does it. Put up your dukes!

GANDHI. No.

BOB. Put up your dukes before I cream you.

GANDHI. Go ahead.

(Pause. BOB puts down his fists.)

BOB. You're impossible, you know that? You never get mad at anything.

GANDHI. I get mad.

BOB. Sh. Yeah. "Mr. Fast Unto Death." "Mr. Eliminate the Wrong, Not the Wrongdoer."

GANDHI. I've gotten angry plenty of times.

BOB. Name one.

GANDHI. There was that dispute I had with Rabindranath Tagore in the newspapers.

BOB. Whoop-de-do.

GANDHI. He argued that India was essentially better off with the British presence, with the oppression of the West instead of oppression by the East. We flogged each other pretty well in the pages of "The Modern Review," Bob.

BOB. Yeah, yeah, tell me another.

GANDHI. How about the time the British threatened to implement the Rowlatt Act? That made me furious.

BOB. What was the Rowlatt Act?

GANDHI. It was a recommendation by the ruling power that secret trials and unreasonable penalties be imposed on anyone even mildly suspected of being a subversive or harboring seditious documents or any number of other ridiculous things. We fought back by gathering in the name of "satyagraha," the adherence to truth. Truth above all else. We made the decision to strike, to march, to sell forbidden books, to make salt down at the sea in protestation of the salt tax. All activities intended to be non-violent.

BOB. Well, sure.

GANDHI. Of course, the British didn't believe in non-violence. They waded through us, striking us, crippling us. Many of us

proved to be less than ardent servants to the cause and started to fight right back. The adherence to truth was completely lost in the struggle. That made me almost as angry as the original Rowlatt acts themselves. Because a punch may serve some instant need but it only gets you pounded back harder in the long run. Or the wrong people get punched. Think about *that*, Bob, the next time you make fun of my anger.

BOB. Mmmm.

(They fish. BOB thinks he's got a bite, reels in a bit, tries to hook him. It's no use. There's no fish.)

Listen, Mo?

GANDHI. Yes?

BOB. Do you mind? I know I said not to talk about it...it's just that I worry, you know? Worry at home, worry on the road. I'm not strong like you are. I'm just a small fish, you know? And the small fish always get gobbled up by the big ones.

GANDHI. But, Bob, you are not a fish.

BOB. It's all the same, though, isn't it? The little guy gets gobbled up? Unless he makes himself big, right? I mean, not all machines exploit, do they? Some can even the odds, right? Law of the jungle, right? Survival of the fittest, right?

GANDHI. Not with people. People can overcome instinct, Bob. Sacrifice becomes stronger than strength, Bob. Remember, Ruskin said, "Truly, the man who does not know when to die does not know how to live."

BOB. *When* to die?

GANDHI. In any given endeavor.

BOB. Meaning I should just give up?

GANDHI. Meaning force is not always the answer.

BOB. I could never sacrifice in my life like you did.

GANDHI. You sacrifice when you can. Listen to me. When I was a young man, my mother made me promise to abstain from meat, wine and sex if I was going to do my studying in England.

BOB. (*Impressed:*) Shit!

GANDHI. And doing that enriched all my experiences.

BOB. I could never do that.

GANDHI. What you can do is sacrifice your worries, Bob. Because it's worries only that you have now, isn't it? You don't know for sure that Barney and Gwen are having sex with each other.

BOB. Don't talk like that.

GANDHI. You don't know your kids hate you. You don't know Gwen is tired of you. It's all in here.

(He touches BOB's chest.)

Ultimately we are guided not so much by the intellect as by the heart.

BOB. But, what if she is, Mo?

(Beat.)

I'm so scared that she is.

GANDHI. What exactly are you scared of, Bob? Is it that you're afraid you've lost her love? Or is it a contest you've lost to Barney Griswold? Find the emotion that is causing the fear. Is it an emotion worth keeping? If it is, then you must find your inner light. You know the story of the "rope-snake"? A man walks the road at twilight. A rope lies in his way but the man thinks the rope is a snake. He leaps aside from it, he cowers in fear, he runs for his life. From a rope. You understand?

BOB. I guess so.

GANDHI. What do you really know about this extra-marital "relationship"? What facts do you have?

BOB. No facts, I guess. Feelings. My palms tingle.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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GOD LIKE A JUMPSTART
by Stephen Belber

Cast of Characters

CURVACEOUS

MARY

NORMAN

RANDEE

TONY

Production Notes

The back and forth dialogue should have a race car pace, slowing down only where “beats” are indicated.

GOD LIKE A JUMPSTART

by Stephen Belber

(A spotlight comes up on CURVACEOUS, a svelte young woman wearing a walkman and a fancy robe. Music blares as we see she is standing atop a pew, dancing.)

(Spotlight blinks out.)

(Lights up.)

(A small church with several pews. CURVACEOUS is gone. In another pew we see NORMAN, a young man. He has the two ends of a jumper cable attached to his body, one to his nose, one to his nipple. The other two ends are attached to what appears to be a portable shock machine, or very large car battery. His concentration and intensity are palpable.)

(On a nearby pew, MARY sits, reading a book.)

NORMAN. Dear Lord, it is over. I come to Your house to finish my days, for I have lost my way. My day is dark, my night is bleak, I pick at my scabs, my hair is a mess. I beseech You to besiege me with congruity, harmonize my insolence, cancel all my checks for I know not who I am. But, however, and—if You will not provide me with a purpose on this earth, then no more shall I suffer. I will still cherish you with an immensity of ardor, an obesity of passion, a gargantuan of faith, but no longer can I endure your cruelly fashioned world, your soft but muted answers. For I am out of synch, devoid of purpose, tired like a turkey, and ready to come home.
(Beat.) Donde es la casa de mi padre—

MARY. Excuse me, could you please shut the hell up?

NORMAN. What?

MARY. The hell up. Shut it.

NORMAN. Are you talking to me?

MARY. Yes. Please shush it, I'm trying to read.

NORMAN. This is a house of God.

MARY. An international house of God.

NORMAN. I—

MARY. An I-Hog?

NORMAN. Don't mock.

MARY. "Don't mock"?

NORMAN. Fine! (*As if to leave.*)

MARY. Wait!

NORMAN. What?!

MARY. Why are you wearing those jumper cables?

NORMAN. (*Innocent:*) What cables?

MARY. Those cables.

NORMAN. I'm offing myself.

MARY. That's awful.

NORMAN. I know.

MARY. Can I help?

NORMAN. *Me?*

MARY. We could discuss your problem.

NORMAN. My problem?

MARY. Your problem.

NORMAN. It's a lack of purpose.

MARY. Back of a porpoise?

NORMAN. *Lack of purpose!*

MARY. Oh. (*Beat.*) I'm Mary.

NORMAN. I'm Norman.

MARY. Hi.

NORMAN. Hello. (*Beat.*) What are you reading?

MARY. Judy Blume.

NORMAN. (*In despair:*) Alan Bloom?!

MARY. Judy Blume.

NORMAN. Oh. Aren't you a little old for her?

MARY. Aren't you a little old to realize there's no purpose?

NORMAN. My troubles began with Judy Blume.

MARY. What kind of troubles?

NORMAN. The big kind of troubles; the ones ending in question marks.

MARY. I don't understand.

NORMAN. I was excommunicated.

MARY. From what?

NORMAN. The Mormon Church.

MARY. You're a Mormon?

NORMAN. I *was* a Mormon.

MARY. You were Norman the Mormon?

NORMAN. Yes, until I was excommunicated.

MARY. And now what?

NORMAN. Now I'm lost.

MARY. And found?

NORMAN. Lost and discombobulated. Is that so wrong?

MARY. It's not right.

NORMAN. I'm out of synch with the trees, out of synch with the sky, out of synch with the universe!

MARY. (*Beat:*) Do you like to play with Legos?

NORMAN. (*Sizing her up:*) Who are you?

MARY. I'm amuck.

NORMAN. Don't mock.

MARY. I'm not mocking, I'm amuck.

NORMAN. As in— ?

MARY. Runna.

NORMAN. Oh.

MARY. Yes.

NORMAN. Mary Amuck?

MARY. Chock fulla pluck.

NORMAN. Do *you* have a purpose?

MARY. I don't like pets.

NORMAN. A *purpose*.

MARY. Not even a vague one.

NORMAN. But you came to a house of God.

MARY. I came here to read.

NORMAN. You could read anywhere.

MARY. (*Mimicking:*) "You could read anywhere."

NORMAN. That is so predictable.

MARY. What is?

NORMAN. That attitude.

MARY. "That attitude."

NORMAN. You *must* be here for something more substantial than to sit and read.

MARY. Like what?

NORMAN. Like maybe something holy.

MARY. Give it a rest, the only holy thing in this building is the priest's underwear.

TONY. (*Unseen:*) Blasphemy!

NORMAN. What was that?!

TONY. That was blasphemy!

NORMAN. *Who* was that?

TONY. That was me!

(TONY sits up from behind a pew; he wears a priest's collar and robe.)

MARY. Who?!

TONY. Tony, goddamnit!—pardon the language.

NORMAN. Tony who?

TONY. Tony the priest!

MARY. Tony the priest?

TONY. That's right, Tony the priest, and this is my House of God!

MARY. Jesus—

TONY. GOD!!

NORMAN. What are you talking about?

TONY. I'm talking about my underwear, my skivvies, my briefs, something about my briefs!

NORMAN. She said they were holy.

TONY. Holy?

NORMAN. As in "whole."

TONY. Whole?

MARY. The whole schlemiel.

TONY. The *holy* schlemiel?

MARY. Fully.

TONY. Fully?

MARY. Fully holy, it's a good thing to be.

TONY. Right.

MARY. What were you doing behind that pew?

TONY. Napping! Why do you have those cables on?

NORMAN. I lost my purpose.

TONY. Well of course you did. (*To MARY:*) And why are *you* here?

MARY. I came in here to read.

TONY. That's sacrilege, you schmuck!—sorry sorry sorry, not schmuck, not schmuck. Sinner! That's sacrilege, you *sinner!*

MARY. I'm not a sinner.

TONY. Oh you're a sinner! You're nice-smelling, cute, rather exotic looking, but you're a sinner! A cute, exotic, nice-smelling sinner!

MARY. Who are *you*?

TONY. I'm Tony the Priest!—confused and beleaguered but a holy man nonetheless! Now confess!!

MARY. I'm amuck.

TONY. You can say that again!

MARY. And so is the church.

TONY. John 12:16—“Ask not what your country can do for you”—wait, how the hell does that go?—sorry—**CURVACEOUS!!**

(*CURVACEOUS rises from behind another pew; walkman on.*)

CURVACEOUS. Yes, Tony?

TONY. Take the friggin' walkman off!

CURVACEOUS. (*She is very even-tempered:*) But I wasn't dancing, Tony.

TONY. I could feel the pew vibrating.

CURVACEOUS. But Tony—

TONY. Take it off!

(*She removes it.*)

Thank you. Now—have you seen these two in here before?

CURVACEOUS. I have seen *all*, Tony, and all sits well with me.

TONY. But have you seen *these* two?

CURVACEOUS. These two as are all two.

TONY. Cut it with the Buddhist complacency shit—sorry, sorry, not shit— Cut it with the Buddhist complacency *stuff* and answer the question!

CURVACEOUS. (*To NORMAN, sweetly:*) Hello. Why the cables?

NORMAN. (*Beat:*) Why not?

CURVACEOUS. Oh.

TONY. Answer the question, Curvaceous!

CURVACEOUS. No, Tony, I haven't seen them before. (*To MARY:*) Is that a Judy Blume?

MARY. Of course.

CURVACEOUS. I read that one. Tony, I am familiar with their literature.

TONY. What's the literature?

MARY. "Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret."

TONY. MORE SACRILEGE, BITCH!!—sorry sorry, not bitch, not bitch. Dork!—MORE SACRILEGE, DORK!!—no, not dork...

CURVACEOUS. Try "person."

NORMAN. If I hadn't read that book as a cherubic little thirteen-year-old I never would have been excommunicated.

CURVACEOUS. (*Sweet:*) It's a powerful book.

TONY. Oh for Chrissakes, Curvaceous.

MARY. What's wrong with this book?

TONY. It's blither!

CURVACEOUS. That book enlightened my spirit, Tony.

TONY. Well there you are.

NORMAN. Don't be rude to her.

CURVACEOUS. Thank you.

TONY. Who are you?

MARY. He's Norm the Morm.

NORMAN. I'm Norman—

MARY. "I'm Norman."

NORMAN. —and I'm *really* leaving now. *(As if to plug in cables.)*

TONY. No!! Curvaceous, get my House-Of-God Handbook!

(She puts walkman on and begins to dance away.)

And don't dance!

(She stops, exits.)

Damn girl wants to be a dancer. Here she is always talking about her love of Buddha and yet she wants to be a dancer.

NORMAN. Maybe she wants to be a Buddhist dancer.

TONY. That would be fine if she wasn't such a yuppie.

MARY. Curvaceous is a yuppie?

TONY. Of course she's a yuppie, look at the way she dresses! That's a Versace Buddhist robe she has on—thing probably cost her 600 bucks.

CURVACEOUS. *(Offstage:)* I bought it second hand, Tony!

TONY. How much?!

CURVACEOUS. Not 600 bucks!

TONY. How much, Curvaceous?!

CURVACEOUS. *(Beat:)* 250 dollars.

TONY. You're a yuppie!

CURVACEOUS. *(Dancing back in:)* I'm a Buddhist!

TONY. You're a yuppie!

CURVACEOUS. I'm a Buddhist!

TONY. You're a Yuppie-Buddhist!

CURVACEOUS. Fine, Tony, I'm a Yuppie-Buddhist.

TONY. And stop dancing you, you little Yuppie-Buddhist freak!

(She stops dancing, hands him the book.)

(RANDEE enters, dressed in denim, car grease on her hands and clothes; they all stare at her and she stares at them as she walks right through the church and goes through a door that says "BATH-ROOM.")

TONY. Who the hell was that?

CURVACEOUS. Language, Anthony.

TONY. Who the goddamn heck was that?

NORMAN. Can I please go?

TONY. No! *(Referring to book:)* Now, you came here seeking light and I'm gone plug you in— *(To MARY:)* And as for you!

MARY. *(Sexy:)* Yes, my love.

TONY. I beg your puddin'?

MARY. Never mind.

TONY. *(To CURVACEOUS:)* What'd she just say?

CURVACEOUS. I think she likes you.

TONY. Everybody just listen here for a second! Now I may not be much of a priest, I may not have a particularly interesting life, I may be the loneliest, most potentially psychotic third-gen Italian immigrant ever to light candles, but I vow this instant to change your life!!

MARY. Good.

TONY. What?

MARY. Looking forward to it.

TONY. Oh. *(Coquettish:)* Thanks.

CURVACEOUS. Tony?

TONY. Sit down, Curvaceous, you need this, too.

NORMAN. Lay off her.

CURVACEOUS. It's OK. *(To TONY:)* I need nothing.

TONY. Nothing? No food?

CURVACEOUS. I am spiritually nourished.

TONY. No sleep?

CURVACEOUS. My waking is a dream.

TONY. No sex?—sorry,—no oinky-oinky?

CURVACEOUS. My orgasm is breath itself.

TONY. Oh for Chrissakes!

NORMAN. That's beautiful.

TONY. What if I took away your walkman?!

CURVACEOUS. *Walk-person.*

TONY. There goes your Yuppie-Buddhist dance career.

NORMAN. I've had just about enough of your rudeness.

CURVACEOUS. *(Defeated:)* He's right, I'm lost without my walk-person.

TONY. Thank you. Now as for you, Mr. Buddinski, time for *you* to get in touch with the Lord within—

(RANDEE strolls back out of the bathroom, nods hello to all, notices Norm's cables, eyes them for a moment and exits.)

TONY. Does it ever end?!

MARY. You're full of anger, aren't you?

TONY. I'm full of the Lord within, goddamnit!

MARY. You want me.

TONY. *(Disarmed; intrigued...continuing:)* Right, the Lord within.

NORMAN. I can't take it any more!! I am out of synch with the world, sir, and I came here thinking God would help. If you're as close as I'm gonna get to God then it's time for me to leave!

TONY. *(Close to tears:)* You're right, I stink at this job, stinkity stink stink!

MARY. No you don't, Tony.

TONY. Stinkity blinkity crinkity!

MARY. You're just a little amuck.

TONY. Don't try to drag me into *your* miasma!

MARY. Screw miasma, you've got charisma.

TONY. Charisma?

MARY. Charisma like a Moony.

TONY. What moony?

MARY. Tony the Moony!

TONY. Moonies bite my weenie!!

(RANDEE is suddenly at the door; she speaks with a Texas accent.)

RANDEE. Excuse me, are those jumper cables you're wearing?

NORMAN. Why yes, they *are* jumper cables.

RANDEE. Hi, I'm Randee with two e's.

CURVACEOUS. Randee with two e's?

RANDEE. Yes, Randee with a double-e ending.

CURVACEOUS. Enter, RandEEEE.

RANDEE. Mucho gracias.

CURVACEOUS. May we help you in any way?

RANDEE. What I could really use is them cables.

NORMAN. These cables?

RANDEE. Those cables. I need a jump, jumpstart, my car needs a jump. Drove up here from Texarkana, hell of a drive, car said “Pa-Lunk!” I said, “Woah!” I been out fixin’ with it for near 45 minutes now. You mighta seen me pass through just now, had to borrow the bathroom, grease on the hands, you know how it is.

NORMAN. I’m Norman.

RANDEE. Randee. How ’bout them cables?

NORMAN. Randee what?

RANDEE. Randee Christ—

TONY. Oooh Jesus!

NORMAN. Randee *Christ?!!*

RANDEE. It’s one of them coincidences.

CURVACEOUS. You’re Randee Christ from Texarkana and you need a jumpstart?

RANDEE. Seems to be the case.

CURVACEOUS. Welcome, Randee Christ.

RANDEE. Thank you.

CURVACEOUS. I’m Curvaceous, especially inside.

RANDEE. Who ain’t, darlin’? (*To MARY:*) Good book. What’s your name?

MARY. Mary.

TONY. (*Aside:*) Mother of fucking Christ...

MARY. I’m Mary and I want to be a monk.

RANDEE. Why?

MARY. ’Cause otherwise I’m amuck.

TONY. So you’re amuck—fuck amuck!

MARY. But I seek seclusion.

TONY. So *marry* a monk, you schmuck!

MARY. I'd rather marry a Moony.

TONY. Blasphemy!

NORMAN. Tony the Moony and Mary the Monk—

CURVACEOUS. (*Singsong* :) P-R-A-Y-I-N-G!

TONY. Stop it!

MARY. Maybe they're right, Tony, maybe we *are* in synch.

RANDEE. God on the dashboard.

TONY. But I'm Tony the Priest, the only thing I'm supposed to be in synch with is God.

RANDEE. You can be in synch with anything you want, darlin'.

TONY. What is this, Oral Roberts with an axle rod?

RANDEE. You're scared.

TONY. Yes.

MARY. Why?

TONY. Because the whole thing's a fraud, the church, this collar, Barney the fucking dinosaur!—sorry.

RANDEE. You're frustrated.

TONY. (*Breaking down* :) I'm horny!

RANDEE. Most Moonies are.

MARY. I need to confess something.

RANDEE. Unload your burden, dumplin'.

MARY. Before, when I was sitting here, I prayed.

NORMAN. *You* prayed?

MARY. I prayed.

RANDEE. It's OK, sugarbush.

CURVACEOUS. Did you pray for harmony?

MARY. No, Curvaceous— *(She looks at TONY)* —I prayed for a man.

TONY. Oh dear.

MARY. A man like Tony the Priest—

TONY. Oh geez—

MARY. Like Tony the Pious!!—

TONY. Oh boy!!—

MARY. *(Gleefully exploding:)* Like Tony the PENIS!!

TONY. OH SHIT!!

TONY / MARY. I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry!!

RANDEE. I suggest immediate consummation.

NORMAN. In the House of God?

RANDEE. Speak to him of the spirit, Curvaceous—

CURVACEOUS. There is harmony in the air.

RANDEE. Of the spirit inside—

CURVACEOUS. God is within us.

RANDEE. She's an inherent voyeur.

TONY. She?

RANDEE. Go downstairs and consummate and *then* tell me what gender God is.

MARY. In the church basement?

RANDEE. What, you'd rather have a sock hop?

TONY. But this is a House of God. *(Beat. Looks around.)* OK.

(They exit hurriedly.)

NORMAN. Who *are* you?

RANDEE. I'm Randee Christ and I need a jumpstart.

NORMAN. I want to be more aligned with the world.

CURVACEOUS. *(Dejected:)* And I think I just ran out of batteries.

RANDEE. A double-A dilemma, but what do you want from me?

NORMAN. You're Randee Christ.

RANDEE. Sorry, batteries not included.

CURVACEOUS. We seek charge.

RANDEE. Like a card?

CURVACEOUS. Like a jumpstart.

RANDEE. And I'm Randee Christ. *(Beat.)* OK, Norman, close your eyes.

(He does so immediately.)

(The following sequence starts out slow and builds to a fast-paced, tribal-like chant with RANDEE's preacher-like voice practically hypnotizing NORMAN and CURVACEOUS; as it gains speed, the sounds of TONY and MARY increase in speed and volume from the basement, in synch with the chanting up above.)

RANDEE. Whattayou want, Norman?

NORMAN. Purpose, Randee.

RANDEE. You need to find the purpose,

NORMAN. I need to be in synch,

RANDEE. —so *be* in synch!

NORMAN. I can't be in synch,

RANDEE. You will be in synch when you shed the cables—

NORMAN. Shed the cables?!

RANDEE. Disrobe thyself of cables!

NORMAN. But they're my cables—

RANDEE. Hop into the sink, Norman,

NORMAN. What sink?

RANDEE. Find yourself in synch!

NORMAN. In synch?!

RANDEE. SEE the sink, Norman—

NORMAN. The sink!

RANDEE. BE the sink!

NORMAN. BE the sink?

RANDEE. Think sink, Norman!

NORMAN. SINK!

RANDEE. PLUG the sink!

NORMAN. Plug the sink?

RANDEE. PLUG IT!

NORMAN. I think it's plugged!

RANDEE. IT'S PLUGGED??!!

NORMAN. IT'S PLUGGED!!

RANDEE. Take off your walkman and dance, Curvaceous—

CURVACEOUS. (*Taking it off:*) There isn't a beat!

RANDEE. Find the synch!

CURVACEOUS. The sink?

RANDEE. The syncopation in your soul!

CURVACEOUS. Oh!

RANDEE. Capice?! (*Read: kapeash.*)

CURVACEOUS. Capice!

RANDEE. Dance in synch, Curvaceous, the harmony in the air, the synch within your soul, the book within your head!—and you, Norman, plugged sink and hopeful head, *be* the sink you know you are!

NORMAN. I *am* the sink!

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**THE JOHN PHILIP SOUSA
WORKSHOP**

by Stephen Gregg

Cast of Characters

ROGER: The conductor

FELICIA: The composer

A FLAUTIST

A HARPIST

AN OBOE PLAYER

A VIOLINIST

A PERCUSSIONIST

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4

THE JOHN PHILIP SOUSA WORKSHOP

by Stephen Gregg

(Lights up on five musicians. Seated with their instruments are a HARPIST, a VIOLINIST, a PERCUSSIONIST—snare drum, bass, triangle and cymbal—a FLAUTIST and an OBOE PLAYER. Seated to the side (or maybe in the audience) is FELICIA, a yellow note pad in hand. ROGER is standing downstage addressing the audience.)

ROGER. All right, we come now to the featured event in tonight's program, this year's winner of the John Philip Sousa prize for musical composition. Misericordia Quintet by Felicia Wallengren. Felicia's piece was chosen from over eighteen hundred entries, and so we're very excited to be letting you hear it tonight. We'll hear the piece and then we'll have a brief chat with the composer. Seated to my right are Wycliff Bassing on the flute, Martha Pelt at the harp, Maria Callastoni on the violin, Richard Wyna— Wynacliff is it?

PERCUSSIONIST. Wynacliff, that's right.

ROGER. Richard Wynacliff on percussion, and Leonard Markowitz on the oboe. With no further ado, a reading of the Misericordia Quintet by Felicia Wallengren. In the key of G Pianissimo.

(ROGER picks up a conductor's wand, and motions to the flute player, who begins to speak—not sing—the following, in four/four time. At the first asterisk, the oboe and violin join in. At the second asterisk, the percussion joins in, and at the third asterisk, the harp does the same.)

FLUTE. A flat. A. A sharp. A. A sharp. Down to C. C minor. D. F. A flat. A. A sharp. Up to C. C sharp. C. C. C minor. Up a major third. D. D flat. D. F. G. Down to A. A flat. B sharp. B. B. sharp. B. B. flat. C. C. C. D. * Up to B sharp. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G-flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. C sharp C-C-C sharp. A flat. B sharp. A flat. B sharp. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C sharp. * Down to A. A flat. B sharp. B flat. B flat. C .C. C. D. Up to B sharp. C. D. F. sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. * C sharp — C —C sharp. A flat. B sharp. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C sharp. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C. sharp. Down to A.

A flat. B sharp. B. B. sharp. B. B flat. C. C. C. D. up to B sharp. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G. flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. C sharp-C-C-sharp. A flat. B sharp. A flat. B sharp. A. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C sharp. C. C. D. Up to B sharp. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G. flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. D. G. G flat. C. C sharp. Down to A. A flat. B sharp.

OBOE / VIOLIN. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F. sharp. G. G flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. C sharp-C-C-C sharp. A flat. B sharp. A flat. B sharp. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C sharp. Down to A. A flat. B sharp. B flat. B flat. C. C. C. D. Up to B sharp. C. D F. sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G. flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. C sharp-C-C sharp. A flat. B sharp. A flat. B sharp. C. D. G. G. flat. C. C. sharp. C. D. G. G. G flat. C. C. sharp. Down to A. A flat. B sharp. B. B sharp. B. B flat. C. C. C. D. Up to B sharp. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp G. G flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. C. C sharp — C _ C sharp. A flat. B sharp. A flat. B sharp. A. C. D. G. G flat. C. C sharp. C. C. D. Up to B sharp. C. D. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. F sharp. G. G. flat. Drop to A sharp. A. A flat. Drop to C. D. G. G. G flat. C. sharp. Down to A. A flat. A flat. B sharp.

PERCUSSIONIST. Boom. Ba ba ba bum bum. Boom. Ba ba ba bum. Boom. Ba ba ba ba ba ba. Boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Tink. Tink. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. (*Pause for a few beats.*) Jingle. Tinkle. Tink. Tink. (*Pause.*) Tink. (*Pause.*) Tink. (*Pause.*) Tink. (*Pause.*) Jingle tinkle tink tink chicka chicka tink tink shim shim shim. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Jingle. Tinkle. Jingle. Shim tink tink boom. (*Pause.*) Boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Chicka chicka chicka boom. Shim shim. Tink. Tink. Chicka chicka chicka chicka boom. Crash! (*Pause.*) Crash! (*Pause.*) CRASH! CRASH! CRASH!

(The HARPIST speaks very rapidly—almost violently—in order to keep up with the others. She falls behind, and wherever she is in the actual score she should finish about ten seconds after the other instruments.)

HARPIST. Chord! G. Flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C. sharp. Chord! D. D. flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord!

F. F sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! B flat. D sharp G. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C Chord! F. A sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! B flat. C. G. F Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! G. Flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! D. D flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! G Flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! G. Flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! D. D flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! A flat. C minor. Chord! B flat. D sharp. G. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord! F. A sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! B flat. C. G. F. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! G flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! D. D flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! G flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! D. D flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! B flat. D sharp. G. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord! F. A sharp. G and C sharp. Chord! B flat. C. G. F. Chord! A flat. B flat. G. Chord! C. D. G flat. Chord! G. Flat. A minor. Chord! A flat. C. C sharp. Chord! D. D flat. C. A. F. B flat. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C. Chord! F. F sharp. G and C sharp.

(ROGER leads the applause.)

ROGER. Nicely done. Let me introduce Felicia Wallengren, composer of the *Misericordia*, here to chat with us for a few minutes.

(He leads another small round of applause. FELICIA takes a chair downstage to talk to the audience.)

ROGER. Now just as a point of clarification, I think we should note that the last thing we would actually hear in a performance of this piece is the cymbal crash. Am I correct about that Felicia?

FELICIA. That's correct.

ROGER. Martha fell a little behind. But I think she did an admirable job. Keep in mind that the performers only had two days of rehearsal. Now I've served as a musiturgical consultant on this piece and let me just begin by opening up the floor for general comments. Is there anyone who'd like to start the discussion? *(Long pause.)* Yes...the tentative hand.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1. I didn't understand it.

ROGER. All right. Could I ask, what didn't you understand?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1. The whole thing. I don't understand modern music.

ROGER. All right. That's helpful.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1. I'm not finished. I thought that it was atonal, unmelodic and I felt like you wasted your talent and my time.

ROGER. All right. Somebody else? Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2. Let me say first that I really enjoyed your piece.

FELICIA. Thank you

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2. I enjoyed it a lot, but I did have some problems with it. I thought that—how do you say this? It was a little bit too much one color. You know, it all started to sound alike to me. I thought it was kind of flat.

FELICIA. Roger, could I respond to that? Let me ask you this. I appreciate your comment...uh, I'm curious...is it possible that maybe what you're responding to here—and don't get me wrong, I'm grateful for this opportunity—but do you think maybe it's possible there are things that you didn't hear because it was a reading and not a performance?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2. Oh no. I got it all. I'm somewhat of a musician myself.

FELICIA. I see.

ROGER. Somebody else? Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3. I'm curious. It's such an odd combination of instruments that you used...and I liked it, but I almost wanted more. You know, I felt like there was maybe an instrument or two missing.

(ROGER and FELICIA exchange amused smiles.)

FELICIA. That's actually sort of funny, because originally there were more instruments.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3. How many more?

FELICIA. Well actually, it was a full concerto. But after the first reading we realized that the piano was a little bit uh...

ROGER. Irrelevant.

FELICIA. Right. It was getting in the way. So we took it out, but the piece was still about symphony length, maybe forty-five minutes, and it seems like every reading it gets uh...it gets a little bit shorter and...smaller.

ROGER. More focused.

FELICIA. Right. More focused. Clearer I guess you could say.

ROGER. Which makes it much easier to produce, by the way.

FELICIA. Right. I mean honestly I think this will be pretty marketable, once we get it where we want it to be.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4. Speaking of where you want it...

ROGER. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4. I think it's very close to being ready.

FELICIA. Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4. I think it's very close, although I do think there are a couple of places where it repeated itself. You know, where there's a bit of...I don't know what to call it exactly,

ROGER. Fat?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4. Exactly. Like I noticed a couple places where the F sharp repeats, and I wasn't exactly sure why?

ROGER. I wondered about that myself.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4. But that's not my main point, because as I say, I think you're very close. My larger point is that I'm curious why you chose to use both the violin and the oboe. I'm not sure—

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THE LAST WOMAN ON EARTH
by Liz Duffy Adams

Cast of Characters

EARTHLING: Woman, looks anywhere from late 20s to late 30s.

CAPTAIN: Woman, same age range; an authoritative, martial presence. She's wearing some kind of uniform, probably red.

LUNATIC: Younger man, wearing only something like a Mylar kilt and boots, and flimsy-looking silvery wings.

Setting

Earth, 2509 AD.

Production Notes

The cast must be multi-ethnic. The future is not white.

This is a countdown, meant to be played urgently—almost no pauses.

THE LAST WOMAN ON EARTH

A TEN-MINUTE COUNTDOWN

by Liz Duffy Adams

EARTHLING. *(Shouting over the audience's heads:)* Take off! Take off! I'm going down with the ship! Take yourself off with your infernal future tense, leave me to my eternal peace, ship off, shove off, piss off and kiss off and get off my stinking rock, *end!*

(Ends brain-mail with short sharp cock of head.)

(To audience:) O my beloved ghost sheep. Don't think I would ever leave you. We've only ten minutes but in that time no one will ever have loved you as I will. Soon in some sense we'll be together for all eternity, or we won't, we won't. Either way, an end to all suspense, once and for all, all, all. I'm hoping for oblivion myself, but that's my own damned fault. Never did know when to leave a party.

(CAPTAIN strides in, followed by LUNATIC who runs in a full circle around EARTHLING, ending near the CAPTAIN, staring at EARTHLING.)

CAPTAIN. Listen up, we've got—what?

LUNATIC. *(Eyes on EARTHLING:)* Nine minutes thirty, Captain my Captain.

CAPTAIN. Nine minutes thirty and down-counting, no time for philosophy, my orders are clear, get on the ship.

EARTHLING. And they say charm is a lost art.

CAPTAIN. Did I not say no time? No time! Everyone else has evacuated. In—what?

LUNATIC. Nine minutes twenty, Captain my Captain.

CAPTAIN. —this rock will be a dead world, complete annihilation, there will be no here here, end of the world time, you're the last one left, my orders are clear, it's eviction time, right? get on the god-damned ship.

EARTHLING. Gosh, this is repetitive. Do you know who I am?

LUNATIC. *(On a breath:)* Yeah.

CAPTAIN. You're the oldest, yes, you're the Ancient Earthling, the first to live forever, or would be, the walking millennium, the Venerable Bubula, so goddamned what, we gotta go, in—what?

LUNATIC. Nine minutes mark, Captain my Captain.

EARTHLING. In eight minutes or less you'll leave without me. In the meantime be civil or fuck off. I don't care to spend the rest of my life *arguing*.

CAPTAIN. *(To LUNATIC:)* Go back. Tell them— *(Turns him upstage and murmurs in his ear.)*

EARTHLING. *(To audience:)* O my darling dead ones, don't think I've forgotten you. In the name of everything most earthly and secular-sacred, of dirt and blood and oxygen, I won't forsake you, I won't be saved, we'll go down with the ship together. Not long now. Gosh, you're beautiful. I'm not kidding, you really are. I can see your little hearts pulsing away, right through your sweet spectral bodies. Boom, boom, boom, the rhythm of oblivion. Not long now.

CAPTAIN. *(To lunatic, out loud:)* Go on.

LUNATIC. Ay-yi-yi, Captain, my Captain.

(He runs around in a lurching circle as if trying to take off.)

CAPTAIN. Just walk! Gravity!

(LUNATIC stops, embarrassed, then runs out.)

EARTHLING. Lunatic?

CAPTAIN. Born on the Moon. First time on the Original World.

EARTHLING. What level?

CAPTAIN. What he looks like, first level. No treatments.

EARTHLING. So young. Your boy?

CAPTAIN. My adjunct.

EARTHLING. I meant, you fucking him?

CAPTAIN. What's that, earthiness? (*Cocks head to initiate brain-mail:*)
TIME. GOT IT. END. (*To EARTHLING:*) Eight minutes ten.

EARTHLING. It's going to be an unutterably tedious eight minutes ten if you don't shut up about the fucking time.

CAPTAIN. Just trying to inject a note of urgency.

EARTHLING. It's a clumsy device. We all know how long we've got. Not even long enough for a dying screw. We could manage a nice sloppy kiss. How about it? I know we've just met but as we know, the clock's ticking... Not if I were the last woman on Earth, huh?

CAPTAIN. I've got my orders.

EARTHLING. You're from what, Mars?

CAPTAIN. I'm a Martian, yes. Born and bred red. Why do you want to stay? Suicidal?

EARTHLING. You say it like it's a bad thing. Such a gentle, sibilant word. Soo-i-sssi-De. Ooh, that got you.

CAPTAIN. It's inhuman, immoral, unpatriotic, the worst kind of species disloyalty, number one on the list of prohibited acts, selfish, wicked and vile. Your own planetary CEO specifically denounced it following the last radical purge.

EARTHLING. Where's our Chief now, anyway, half-way to the Outer Rim? "The sky is falling!"

CAPTAIN. She's leading the evacuation, yes.

EARTHLING. As a coward leads the running away.

CAPTAIN. Traitor.

EARTHLING. Me-ow.

(LUNATIC runs back in.)

Hey, loonie, you back?

(LUNATIC flashes EARTHLING a look, runs around in circle, reports back to CAPTAIN.)

LUNATIC. Captain my Captain, ship's lawyers say we can't take her by force—

CAPTAIN. Damn it!

(Pulls him upstage so EARTHLING can't hear.)

EARTHLING. *(To audience:)* I'm sorry, darling departed, I'm so sorry you saw me flirting with that boy. Believe me, he means nothing to me. He's only flesh and blood and appalling youth, and yes, old habits, blood rises, lust leaps, but oh, my dears, my heart is yours. You'll take me in, won't you, you'll wrap me in your night's embrace, we'll sleep together for eternity or so, won't we? So soon, when these fripperies leave and the sky cracks and out comes the yolk of time...all right, that didn't quite make sense, the curse of apocalyptic poetry. You'll forgive me, yes, because I do love you?

CAPTAIN. *(Coming back down:)* All right, look, we've got, what—

LUNATIC. Six minutes twenty, Captain my—

EARTHLING. How old are you, Captain?

CAPTAIN. Second level. Eighty-seven.

EARTHLING. I'm 500 or so. You do stop counting. I could look it up.

LUNATIC. *(On a breath:)* Five hundred and twelve.

EARTHLING. Really? The last 50 or so have been such a blur. Faster and faster.

CAPTAIN. Your point being?

EARTHLING. Blunted, I'm afraid.

CAPTAIN. Look—

EARTHLING. I have looked, dear Captain, and I have seen. I have heard, I have smelt and I have tasted and I have touched. Five hundred and twelve years of mornings—how's your math, Lunar boy?

LUNATIC. One hundred and eighty-six thousand, eight hundred and eighty—

EARTHLING. Wakings up alone or curling into the sleepy warmth, and—how many?

LUNATIC. One hundred eighty-six thousand eight hundred eighty—

EARTHLING. First hot liquid mouthfuls of coffee, and—what was it?

LUNATIC. (*Getting into a rhythm.*) One-eight-six-eight-eighty—

EARTHLING. Baths and—what you say?

LUNATIC. One-eight-six-eight-eighty—

EARTHLING. Plans and—sing it little brother!

LUNATIC. One-eight-six-eight-eighty—

EARTHLING. Fiddling with keys or card-locks or retinal scans and that's only the mornings!

CAPTAIN. You're tired? Is that all it is, you're just tired?

EARTHLING. Fuck yes, I'm tired, I'm fucking whacked but that's not it, that's not my POINT, it's memories, Christ's sake, I'm FULL. Every word you say is lodging itself into a FULL HOUSE. Not a question of good memories, bad memories, acres and acres of ordinary memories, I'm full, it's too much, I don't want any more. From the moment my dad woke me up one midnight and said, look, honey, it's the new millennium, you'll always remember this. And now he's been dead four hundred and forty years and I'm a walking graveyard of memory. I'm the only living human to remember graveyards, or automobiles or cassette players or who the Beatles were. I remember phone numbers and street addresses when there are no longer phones or streets. I remember a sway-backed horse in a muddy field, a flock of tiny black birds over a marsh, burning cold feet in ice-skates as twilight fell. I remember the crash of two thousand and one, the Accidental Armageddon of '23, the great biodiversity crisis of the mid-twenty-first. I can still smell the acrid smoke of the fall of New York. I have a scar on my back from the mutant riots of twenty-three-thirty and a lingering glow in my heart from the first wave of the Re-enlightenment. I remember the great gleaming space-liners taking off full of emigrants when the New

Colonial Period began, the piercing cries of seagulls after the roar of engines died away and the emptiness of the streets afterwards. And I remember everyone I ever fucked and every one I loved, I remember endless snatches of then crucially bitter or joyful conversations, I remember embarrassing moments from centuries ago—natch—I know the lyrics of a billion idiot pop songs, the plots of millions of novels and movies and sense-o-sagas, I know a thousand-year-old children's game. Ashes, ashes, but I don't fall down. (*To LUNATIC:*) How long?

LUNATIC. Three minutes five, Earthling my Earthling.

EARTHLING. The two of you better run along.

CAPTAIN. When you come with us.

EARTHLING. Oh, come on! This is beyond the call of duty. What on Earth—well, you know what I mean—What's it to you?

CAPTAIN. Duty is enough.

EARTHLING. To a Martian maybe. Don't mean jack to a Dirtbag.

CAPTAIN. All right. Well. Fact is. You're my ancestor. You're my direct ancestor.

EARTHLING. I thought Martians frowned on genealogy, especially pre-colonial.

CAPTAIN. They do. I do. A lot of damned nonsense really. Well. That's what I thought. Then I got plugged in to a—this is off the record.

EARTHLING. It'll be incinerated soon with all the rest of my memories.

CAPTAIN. I got plugged in to a piece of contraband genealogical bio-ware. I got hooked. I'm clean now. But I know what I know.

EARTHLING. Oh, anyway, so what? So fucking what? I have as many descendants as a month-old cockroach, what's it add up to?

CAPTAIN. You are needed. We need you. We are losing the home world. No big deal really, not a species survival issue, we have reformed plenty of planets, nicer planets, fresher, better-organized.

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THE LESSONS OF MY FATHER
by Catherine Filloux

Cast of Characters

ODILE: a *pied noir*, French-Algerian woman

MAURICE: her father

HORSE: Odile as a girl

Place

France

Time

Present

Acknowledgements

The Lessons of My Father was first produced in HB Playwrights Short Play Festival 2000 “The Funeral Plays” (William Carden, Artistic Director) at HB Playwrights Theatre in New York City (opening night June 6, 2000), with the following cast and staff:

MAURICE Marvin Einhorn

ODILE Dale Soules

HORSE..... Molly Carden

Director Jean Randich

Scenic Designer..... Vicki R. Davis

Lighting Designer..... Renée Molina

Sound Designer Steve LeSieur

Costume Designer Christopher Peterson

Production Stage Manager..... David Apichell

To Odette Filloux and John Daggett

THE LESSONS OF MY FATHER

by Catherine Filloux

(MAURICE lies in hushed stillness in his coffin. ODILE enters, uncomfortable in elegant clothing, taking a clementine from her pocket. A clock, marking time, chimes.)

ODILE. Papa... Papa... In ten minutes they will take you to the church... For your sake I'm trying not to look pious and hypocritical. *(Adjusting her expression)* It's hard. *(Looking at clementine:)* For you, just like in Heaven.

(She waits, looking at him closely.)

Your joke, your Tall Tale?... You invite everyone to the funeral and have the last laugh... Aren't you going to surprise me?

(She puts the clementine in her pocket and starts to exit.)

I knew I shouldn't have trusted you.

(HORSE, Odile as a girl, runs past her, looking at creatures lying on the floor.)

HORSE. Papa, papa! Come here! What happened to the tadpoles? *(Picking up a creature:)* What is it...?

ODILE. A frog.

HORSE. The tadpoles turned to frogs while we were sleeping...!

(MAURICE bolts upright in his coffin, his younger self.)

MAURICE. And leaped out of their bowl. *(To ODILE:)* As any normal frog would do.

(HORSE gathers the creatures in her skirt.)

HORSE. But what's happened to them?

ODILE. They dried up.

HORSE. Outside of their water home. I'll put them in the ice chest, the cold will bring them back to life, I know it. They're so tiny...

MAURICE. My Horse...

HORSE. I must hurry.

MAURICE. I'm afraid the freezer will not resurrect them.

ODILE. They're dead.

HORSE. Dead, Papa?

MAURICE. Yes.

HORSE. Is it for good?

MAURICE. Yes, for good. Now, *you* are a brave person, my Horse. Death isn't necessarily so bad. Sometimes, you have to laugh in the face of it.

(He laughs with glee.)

ODILE. Laugh?

MAURICE. They're all so pious at those funerals! And so hypocritical! You know what I'd love to do?

HORSE. No.

ODILE. Yes.

MAURICE. Run an announcement of my death in the Oran paper with the date and time of the wake at our house. All the people will arrive with their gloomy, lugubrious faces. *(Miming.)* Your mother will lead them solemnly into the living room and then when they're all here I'll enter, straight and dignified, like this. They'll be left flabbergasted, and I'll have the laugh of my life! The last laugh. *(Laughing:)* Eh? What do you think? Not bad, huh?...

(HORSE giggles.)

ODILE. It's not real.

HORSE. Maman would never agree to let you play the trick.

MAURICE. Here, in Algeria, the *story* is what is important, my Horse, not the reality. It's what we call a *galéjade*. A Tall Tale. You embellish it to fit the occasion. *(To ODILE.)* A good laugh is always more important than anything else. Right?

ODILE. A good laugh, Papa? I'm nothing like you taught me to be.

(MAURICE beckons to HORSE, looking down into a hole as we hear a turbulent sea rushing into the hole with a loud, sucking sound.)

MAURICE. Now, would you be afraid to go down there?

HORSE. Yes, very afraid, Papa.

MAURICE. Pofft, there's nothing to be afraid of. I'll take you down and then you can see for yourself.

ODILE. See what?

HORSE. What do you mean? How?

MAURICE. I'll hold you by your feet and lower you down, then you can have a real good look!

ODILE. At what?

MAURICE. You can do anything.

HORSE. I don't know.

MAURICE. I'll see to it you're not raised as a sissy, but the hard way, hardened to hardship. You must always trust me. I'm your father and I wouldn't wish anything dangerous for you... Don't you want to have a better look?

HORSE. Okay...

(He takes her by the feet and lowers her down into the hole.)

ODILE. Wait a minute.

MAURICE. Well, how is it down there?...

HORSE. I'll tell you in a second, I'm looking.

MAURICE. That's fine, just call when you're ready. *(To ODILE:)* Take the time to have a real good look.

(After a moment.)

HORSE. Okay, pull me up.

(He pulls her out. She wipes spray from her face; ODILE wipes tears.)

MAURICE. Didn't I tell you not to be afraid?

HORSE. Oh, Papa!

MAURICE. See? You can trust me.

ODILE. No.

MAURICE. Always remember, there is no difference between a boy and a girl and what they're capable of doing.

ODILE. No difference. How could you truly say that? What were you thinking?

(She adjusts her tight-fitting clothes. HORSE picks up a schoolbag and starts to run away. MAURICE delivers the scene to ODILE.)

MAURICE. Where are you going, my Horse? Rushing in, out of breath. What happened?

HORSE. Nothing.

ODILE. I was at Lise's.

MAURICE. What were you doing?

HORSE. Homework.

ODILE. Lise had to leave.

MAURICE. Did something happen you're not telling me?

ODILE. Yes, Papa.

MAURICE. What?

HORSE. I don't want to talk about it right now.

MAURICE. Maybe you'll feel better if you say it. You know, you can trust me.

ODILE. I can't.

HORSE. I'm going to finish my homework...

MAURICE. Look what I brought home from the harbor? A whole big stalk of bananas. You can pretend you're in the jungle and each time you pass it grab a banana to eat. Have fun! They can only be good for you. I couldn't resist buying them just to see your reaction!

HORSE. Lise's father came into the room while I was studying...

MAURICE. Go on...

ODILE. Alone. He began to... I didn't know what to do. I was ashamed.

HORSE. He leaned over my chair where I was sitting and... He put his hand under and all over...

MAURICE. It's good you ran away. How did you do it?

HORSE. He moved, to the door...

ODILE. To lock it.

HORSE. I quickly got up from my chair. Ran from the house.

MAURICE. You're a brave and smart girl. I'm proud of you.

ODILE. Why?

MAURICE. Listen to me carefully, my Horse.

HORSE. Did I do wrong?

MAURICE. Most men are not like your friend's father. They're decent and would never do such a thing, but there are a few like him and because of them you need to be extra careful as a young girl.

ODILE. I didn't know.

MAURICE. Of course not, Odile. It was very bad of him to do what he did. Parents' faults fall back on their own children. You can see why I'm going to ask you not to go to your friend's anymore.

HORSE. Yes...

MAURICE. Take a banana.

ODILE. I'm not hungry.

(MAURICE, ODILE, and HORSE face the audience.)

MAURICE. I went to see that man! Slapped him hard across the face.

(ODILE makes the motion of slapping.)

ODILE. Just keep quiet. You know why I'm doing this. Don't ever do such a thing again and if you speak against me for what I just did, I promise in tomorrow's paper your actions towards my daughter will be spelled out in detail.

HORSE. You called him a...

HORSE / ODILE / MAURICE. Bastard!

(ODILE takes the clementine from her pocket and gives it to MAURICE.)

MAURICE. I always thought Heaven would be lined with clementine trees and you could help yourself to as many as you wanted!

ODILE. Papa, we used to ride our bikes to the orchards. There was a priest Father Clement who invented the hybrid tangerine?

(The clock chimes the hour. He gives her back the clementine.)

I must tell you goodbye now. I can't breathe.

(Bright sunlight as HORSE shouts.)

HORSE. We're at the top of the mountain, Papa!

MAURICE. Look at the sea, my Horse! There is the harbor of Mers-El-Kébir and, see, in the distance, Ain-El-Turk where you go swimming? Now, I must teach you how to breathe.

(He swells his chest with obvious pleasure.)

MAURICE. You throw out your chest like this...fill your lungs and take a deep breath... Now exhale!

(He makes a powerful blowing sound as he exhales.)

MAURICE. In order to live well, Odile, all you have to do is learn to breathe. Not just with your body, but with your soul. Passionately. You never let things happen to you.

ODILE. *You* make them happen...

MAURICE. *You* make them happen. Throw out your chest...

(MAURICE and HORSE swell their chests.)

HORSE. ...I am...

MAURICE. Fill your lungs...

HORSE. ...I'm filling them...

MAURICE. Take a deep breath...

(They take deep breaths.)

Now exhale through your mouth!

(They exhale, making a powerful blowing sound.)

HORSE. It makes me dizzy, Papa!

MAURICE. With me here, you won't fall.

(The clock chimes again. HORSE combs MAURICE's hair with her fingers.)

ODILE. To start is, never to end... Along the roads of Oran are the telephone poles your own father installed. Who uses the phones now? Your mother a seamstress, takes you a little boy to the factory, sets you on the table, the seamstresses play with you, teach you to love women. You bring me home tadpoles and a baby stork. At the harbor you look for what is cheap to make us laugh. Your brother flying across the Mediterranean, killed in a fog crash, plane goes down. From that day—the day you and I go to identify his body—you never shave your beard or moustache. Until today when they shave it for you because you are dead.

MAURICE. In order to live well, my Horse...

ODILE. Every piece of history dies, the smoke of the cigarillos you used to smoke, which made your moustache yellow, your laugh, the revolver you kept in your night table, your daughter, they will lower the lid of the coffin and I will never. Never see... See... Never see you...

MAURICE. All you have to do is...

ODILE. *(She sticks out her tongue)* Ahhhggghhh. I'm sick. Langue. Long. French-English-French-English...

MAURICE. Learn to breathe...

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THE MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH
by Sheri Wilner

Cast of Characters

MARILYN, age 45-50

JERRY, Marilyn's husband, age 45-50

ADELE, Marilyn's sister, a couple of years younger than Marilyn

RYAN, Marilyn and Jerry's son, age 24-26

LEILA, Ryan's girlfriend, age 24-26

Setting

Marilyn and Jerry's house.

Time

Present day. A few minutes after sundown on the first night of Chanukah.

Acknowledgments

The Miracle of Chanukah was first performed December 21, 2006 at The Illusion Theater, Minneapolis, Minnesota (Producing Directors Michael Robins & Bonnie Morris). It was directed by Michael Robins, with set design by Dean Holzman, and lighting design by Stephanie Drinkard. The stage manager was Julia Gallagher. The cast was as follows:

MARILYNMeri Golden
JERRY Michael Paul Levin
ADELE Esther Ouray
RYAN Damon Brook
LEILA Hannah Glaser

THE MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH

by Sheri Wilner

(MARILYN, JERRY, ADELE, RYAN and LEILA stand by a menorah and finish reciting the last Chanukah blessing.)

(Note: a slash mark (/) denotes that characters should speak at the same time. If a (/) appears in a character's line, the next character should begin speaking.)

ALL. ...shehecheyanu v'kiymanu v'higi'anu laz'man hazeh. Am-ein. *Happy Chanukah!*

MARILYN. So Leila, did Ryan tell you about his crazy family and the way we celebrate Chanukah?

LEILA. Yes, he did / I think—

JERRY. And you still came? Amazing.

LEILA. I think it sounds great.

RYAN. I told her it was quick and painless.

ADELE. Quick and painless? Since when? It's torture.

MARILYN. It is not torture.

ADELE. (To LEILA:) It's torture.

MARILYN. (To ADELE:) Why? What's so bad?

(ADELE rolls her eyes.)

MARILYN. (To LEILA:) Don't listen to her.

ADELE. Why should she? / No one else does?

MARILYN. Now, this is something I decided our family / should do to make sure—

JERRY. *She* decided. Our opinions don't count for much / around here.

ADELE. How can they count if we're not allowed to have them?

MARILYN. —to make sure the meaning of the holiday isn't lost. (*To ADELE and JERRY:*) This holiday *does* have a meaning, you know.

JERRY. No one said / it didn't.

MARILYN. It's not the Jewish version of Christmas. Presents, presents, presents. And even though people say "Chanukah's not an important holiday," well, that's not entirely true now is it?

LEILA. No.

MARILYN. Significant things did happen. Not just the oil but the Maccabees, the temple, victory for the Jews. It was a big deal.

LEILA. Right.

RYAN. You don't have to be so polite.

LEILA. No / I agree.

RYAN. She's being polite.

LEILA. I'm not. I mean I—

MARILYN. I'm just telling / her.

RYAN. Well enough with the lecture already.

MARILYN. Who's giving a lecture?

RYAN. She's Jewish. She / knows about—

MARILYN. I know she's Jewish.

RYAN. —Chanukah. You don't have to—

MARILYN. I'm setting it up. I'm telling her why we celebrate this way.

RYAN. I told her already.

MARILYN. Well just in case you left anything out.

RYAN. I didn't leave / anything out.

JERRY. Ry, c'mon, did you really think you could circumvent "The Presentation"? It's like trying to stop a geyser / from exploding.

MARILYN. Thanks a lot.

ADELE. I bet you're sorry you started with this family.

LEILA. No, I'm / not.

MARILYN. If you'd all just let me finish.

RYAN, JERRY, ADELE. Finish!

MARILYN. Thank you. Now, very few people know this but—

JERRY. Lucky them.

MARILYN. I'm ignoring you now.

JERRY. *Now?*

MARILYN. But while the candles are burning, you're supposed to sit by them and tell stories relating to the holiday.

JERRY. Which is why we buy such short candles.

MARILYN. You know, memories, things you read, your personal thoughts.

ADELE. Oh jeez.

MARILYN. Anything to make sure that the meaning of the holiday *lands*. You know, before every one goes running off in a million different directions back into their lives and forgets what Chanukah means.

LEILA. I didn't know / that.

MARILYN. (*To RYAN:*) You see? She didn't know. (*To LEILA:*) Did your family exchange a lot of presents?

LEILA. Definitely—

RYAN. Mom.

MARILYN. What?

RYAN. I told you about / her—

LEILA. I have a lot of nieces and nephews, so we all go a bit overboard with gifts for them. This sounds a lot nicer. I wish my family / celebrated Chanukah this way.

MARILYN. Exactly. A lot nicer. See, I'm always looking for ways to bring us closer together.

RYAN.
Oh lord

JERRY.
Oh God

ADELE.
Oy gevalt.

MARILYN. What?!

ADELE. We're close enough for my taste.

MARILYN. You know you don't have to come here.

ADELE. Where else am I going to go?

MARILYN. Exactly. *(To LEILA:)* You see what I'm up against here? *(To the others:)* This family has a lot to be grateful for and it wouldn't hurt any of us to acknowledge it from time to time.

(To LEILA:) That's why a few years ago when I read about this idea—

JERRY. On the Internet.

MARILYN. Who cares *where* I read it?

JERRY. I'm just saying.

MARILYN. Well don't. Anyhow, I got the idea that on at least one night / of Chanukah—

ADELE. Oy, can you imagine if we did this for all eight / nights? I'd kill myself.

MARILYN. —we all get together and the story we tell each other has to be about a miracle that happened to us during the past year.

LEILA. That's lovely.

(RYAN laughs.)

What? It is.

MARILYN. Thank you. I think it's lovely too. You know, to remind us not only about the miracles of Chanukah but about all the miraculous things that God still does for us.

JERRY. We won't blame you if you want to make a quick getaway.

LEILA. No, I / don't

MARILYN. Why do you do that? Undercut me like that?

JERRY. I was joking. Can't you take a joke?

MARILYN. Your jokes have a way of always being at my expense.

ADELE. Maybe that's why I find them so funny.

RYAN. OK, guys, enough.

MARILYN. That hurt me. I just want you to know that hurt me.

JERRY. It wasn't my intention to hurt you.

MARILYN. Then what was your intention?

RYAN. Guys, enough, OK?

MARILYN. This discussion is far from over.

ADELE. Then keep going. I'm in no rush to / do this.

MARILYN. And you're no better. My own sister.

ADELE. Oh, lighten up.

MARILYN. You people are unbelievable. If it weren't for me there'd be no celebration / of any sort.

ADELE. OK, let's not get on that track. A miracle. Someone go, quick.

RYAN. I'll go first.

JERRY. You first? That's a first. He usually goes last.

MARILYN. Again with the irrelevant information—

JERRY. It's not irrelevant. / He

MARILYN. What difference does—?

JERRY. He usually doesn't / even want to—

RYAN. *(Speaking over his parents:)* MY MIRACLE IS...

(Everyone is silent. RYAN is now embarrassed.)

My miracle is...Leila.

MARILYN, JERRY, ADELE. Aww...

LEILA. Ryan.

MARILYN. That's so sweet. She's embarrassed. You're adorable. Isn't she adorable?

LEILA. That shouldn't count.

RYAN. Why not?

LEILA. Because—

RYAN. *(To MARILYN:)* I get to say whatever I want, right?

MARILYN. In this case, yes.

LEILA. But I'm not a miracle. I'm flesh and blood.

RYAN. Well to me you're a miracle. I mean I never thought I would meet anyone...let alone anyone as wonderful as you and that...well, you know...that you would actually feel the same way...about me...and I'm just so...grateful that you're...here...with me.

(LEILA and RYAN kiss.)

MARILYN. We raised a mensch, Jerry, we actually raised a mensch.

JERRY. He's a good kid.

ADELE. You picked a winner, my nephew.

LEILA. I know.

MARILYN. Ok, who's next? Jerry.

JERRY. Why me?

MARILYN. Why not you?

ADELE. Didn't someone use that as a slogan? / A politician?

MARILYN. We're all going to have a turn so just go.

JERRY. OK, fine. My miracle is—

MARILYN. And be serious.

JERRY. I'm going to be serious.

MARILYN. I'm just warning you.

JERRY. Noted. Now can I go?

MARILYN. Yes. If you be serious.

JERRY. Do you see what I have to put up with?

MARILYN. Just go.

JERRY. OK. My miracle is—

MARILYN. And it can't be related to sports.

JERRY. One more comment and I'm not going.

MARILYN. Well you don't have the best track record.

JERRY. It's a miracle I put up with this. With you.

MARILYN. *(To LEILA:)* One year he made it about sports.

JERRY. Yeah, the year the Red Sox won after eighty / six years.

MARILYN. *(To LEILA:)* I don't think it should be about sports.

JERRY. Every one called it a miracle.

MARILYN. It wasn't really a miracle.

JERRY. It was a miracle.

MARILYN. A miracle should be / something that—

JERRY. Every one defines it differently.

MARILYN. But no one would actually say / the Red Sox—

JERRY. Every one did say. / Everyone but you.

RYAN. Mom, let him say whatever he wants.

MARILYN. Fine. / I give up.

RYAN. Dad, go.

JERRY. OK, OK. My miracle is...that I didn't die in the car accident.

MARILYN. Oh god forbid.

JERRY. Given how fast that putz was going, I should have been flattened like a latke but I wasn't and it's a miracle.

MARILYN. That was going to be my miracle.

JERRY. Well I beat you to it.

(*MARILYN and JERRY kiss.*)

MARILYN. Fortunately I have another miracle. (*To ADELE and LEILA:*) Do you mind if / I go next?

ADELE. No.

LEILA. Please.

MARILYN. My miracle is...that the lump in my bladder wasn't malignant.

RYAN. Mom!

MARILYN. What?

RYAN. We don't need the details.

MARILYN. What? What did I say?

RYAN. Just "a lump" would do, we don't need...the geography.

MARILYN. What's so bad about saying "bladder?"

RYAN. Leila doesn't need to / hear—

LEILA. No, it's OK. / It's OK.

MARILYN. That's all you can think about? Your mother evades cancer and instead of being grateful / you're embarrassed?

RYAN. I'm grateful, I'm grateful.

MARILYN. It doesn't sound that way / to me—

RYAN. I'm sorry. Never mind. It *was* a miracle and I'm grateful.

MARILYN. Unbelievable. You're unbelievable.

RYAN. Mom—

MARILYN. I had a scare and with my family history, well there was reason to assume the worst, but it turned out fine.

LEILA. That's wonderful.

MARILYN. It is wonderful. Now if only my son thought so.

RYAN. I do. You know I do. Just forget I / said—

MARILYN. It's your turn, Adele.

RYAN. Mom—

ADELE. Maybe Leila wants to / go next.

LEILA. No, please. Go ahead.

RYAN. Don't be mad.

MARILYN. I'm not mad.

ADELE. Are you two finished?

MARILYN. Yes.

(RYAN *kisses* MARILYN.)

RYAN. I love you.

MARILYN. I know. / Go ahead Adele.

RYAN. Really.

ADELE. OK, OK. My miracle is...that the day I called a realtor—

MARILYN. Oh God, Adele, no.

ADELE. The day I called the realtor because I couldn't stand living next to that crazy bitch / any more—

MARILYN. (*To* LEILA:) You'll have to excuse me sister.

LEILA. (*Laughing:*) That's OK.

ADELE. —is the very same day she fell down the stairs, broke her hip and dropped dead.

MARILYN. Lovely. That's a lovely / story, Adele.

ADELE. Well it's not like I pushed her.

MARILYN. It wouldn't surprise me / if you did.

ADELE. You met her. She was horrible—

MARILYN. Yes. But she died.

ADELE. Well that's my miracle and I'm sticking to it. You're up, newbie.

LEILA. OK.

RYAN. Don't be nervous.

LEILA. I'm not nervous.

RYAN. Clearly anything goes with this gang.

LEILA. I know exactly what I'm going to say. My miracle / is

RYAN. Me. You're going to say me, right?

LEILA. No. I'm sorry.

RYAN. That's fine. But you better make / this good.

MARILYN. Ryan. *(To LEILA:)* Go ahead, dear.

LEILA. My miracle is when my mother died this / past March

MARILYN. I'm so sorry.

JERRY. Yeah, we're...very sorry.

LEILA. Thank you. And well, the day she died—which I didn't know would be the day she died—I brought her a dozen roses. It's something I did every few days. They never lasted very long. It was weird. I thought maybe it was because of all the disease in the air. I don't know...so every two of three days I would buy her a new bouquet.

MARILYN. What a sweet thing.

LEILA. On this one particular day I brought her a dozen white roses—those were her favorite—and put them in a vase beside her bed. She looked at them and suddenly seemed just so peaceful and relaxed...She smiled at me and it was the happiest I had seen her in months. Then she closed her eyes and...was gone. She was...gone.

MARILYN. So sad.

LEILA. The nurses came in and they tried to— But there was nothing they could— They left me alone with her and I cried. I closed

my eyes and cried and when I opened them...there were roses...everywhere. All over the room. The bouquet I had brought her had somehow...multiplied into dozens and dozens and...dozens of roses everywhere.

MARILYN. Oh my.

LEILA. I couldn't believe it. I asked the nurses, "Did someone come in here?" But they all said, "No. No one." I had only been alone in there for a minute. No one could have brought in that many flowers. Then I realized...It was my mother's way of telling me that she was OK and in a better place. That she was happy and free. I was sad but...relieved...exhilarated even. I mean she sent those flowers to me and...I never saw so many roses in my life. There were hundreds. In a blink of an eye. Hundreds.

(Long silence.)

MARILYN. What a beautiful story.

LEILA. Thank you.

(RYAN puts his arm around LEILA.)

RYAN. You never told me about that—

LEILA. I don't tell people who I don't think will believe me. That's why I was so happy when you told me on Chanukah your family talks about miracles. There are so few people who actually believe that miracles can happen, you know?

RYAN. Well...I mean...ah...I mean...ah...

LEILA. Yes?

RYAN. Huh?

LEILA. Ryan?

RYAN. What?

LEILA. *(Studying his eyes:)* You do believe in miracles, right?

RYAN. I...I...I...

JERRY. Maybe we should open presents.

MARILYN. Presents! That's a good idea. Let's open presents.

ADELE. Mine are in the next room. I'll just / go get them.

LEILA. (*To RYAN:*) Do you? Do you believe in miracles?

RYAN. I don't know. I—I guess I—This was her idea.

(He points to MARILYN.)

LEILA. I know but—

MARILYN. I think what Ryan's trying to say is that the stories *we* tell...well, they're things that are *miraculous*. You know *like* miracles, but—

RYAN. Yeah...*like* miracles.

LEILA. But I don't understand. You said...your tumor...

MARILYN. Not every tumor is cancer. I got lucky.

LEILA. Lucky? And the car accident—?

JERRY. Luck. Plus driver-side airbags.

LEILA. And us? The way we met?

RYAN. We met on J-Date.

LEILA. But—

MARILYN. Maybe what we really mean when we say "miracle" is "good luck."

ADELE. Yeah, because you can't really say it was "good luck" that your neighbor died. Miracle sounds less hostile.

LEILA. But good luck doesn't explain the oil. You do believe in the oil, right? That it burned for eight days?

(Silence. They look at each other.)

ADELE. Frankly I always thought it was a bunch of hooey.

MARILYN. Adele.

ADELE. Well she asked.

JERRY. It's what you learn in school. You know, the Bible. Stories.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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VIEWS
by Mrinalini Kamath

Cast of Characters

DAVID, a 21-year-old typesetter

DIANE, his 20-year-old wife, a homemaker and mother of his son.

Setting

A studio apartment. A large set of drapes separates the two halves of the stage. At stage right, we see a sparsely furnished bedroom, with an old full-size bed. The two nightstands, one on either side of the bed, are obviously mismatched, and have a used look about them, as do the lamps on top of them (a different one on each stand). An old dresser and a baby's crib are the only other pieces of furniture present. At stage left, we see a small kitchenette that blends into a dining room. There is a small table surrounded by four chairs.

Time

End of fall, 1991.

VIEWS

by Mrinalini Kamath

(At rise: We hear fire engine sirens, at first faintly, then progressively louder, as the lights come up. We see DIANE standing by the stove, peering into a small cabinet while talking on the phone. DIANE's voice gets louder as she tries to compete with the sirens.)

DIANE. No, Mom, we really don't need any money, we're doing fine. In fact, David should be home from work soon.

(Sirens get louder.)

What? *(DIANE speaks up:)* No, it's fire engines. There must be a fire nearby. No Mom, it's not here. Come on, would I still be on the phone with you? The alarms would've made me deaf by now.

(She leans forward, as if peering out a window.)

Yeah, it's heading down the block. No, I can't see the building from here. God, I feel sorry for anyone whose house catches on fire, but especially in Manhattan, especially at rush hour.

(Sirens start to die down.)

By the time the engines get through the traffic, your house is completely totaled. And if you're trapped in it, you're a goner. Listen, I've got to get started on dinner. I'll talk to you later. Love you too, 'bye.

(She hangs up the phone and opens a cabinet door and looks at various cans of soup and beans. Suddenly, we hear footsteps and a door opening. DAVID enters from stage left.)

Oh, hi honey.

(He walks past her without comment.)

How was your day?

(He keeps walking, pushing the drape aside, walking through, and then pulling it closed behind him.)

David?

(DIANE frowns, putting down the can of baked beans she's about to

open.)

David, is something the matter?

(DAVID has gone into the bedroom and is lying halfway on the very end of their bed, his feet on the floor, shoes still on. DIANE pushes the curtain aside and stands in front of him. He remains motionless.)

DAVID. *(Emotionless:)* Looks like I'm back on the job market.

DIANE. You mean you were fired?

DAVID. Sort of.

DIANE. How can you be "sort of" fired? Either you have a job or you don't.

DAVID. *(Slowly sitting up:)* What I mean, is that I threatened to quit and my asshole boss fired me.

DIANE. You know, it's a good thing Billy's not here. You can't talk like that around him.

DAVID. *(Dully:)* Where is he?

DIANE. At my mother's. I had a bunch of things to do today. So what's the deal with your job?

DAVID. *(Tired:)* What do you want to know?

DIANE. Well, for starters, why you got yourself fired from what is probably the best-paying job you could find.

DAVID. They took away my window.

DIANE. What?

DAVID. My window. Well, my office, to be more specific.

DIANE. How do you take away someone's office?

DAVID. If you're my boss, you find out that some new guy is coming and you look for a place to put him. You notice that almost all the actual "offices," meaning offices that aren't crappy little cubicles, are taken by management, except for one. It's this little one off to the side, not a lot of space, but one *hell* of a view. And the guy who's in it isn't management, just a typesetter who was supposed

to be there temporarily anyway, but you've forgotten all about him, because after all (*His voice rises:*) who gives a shit about a little typesetter—

DIANE. There's no need to yell.

DAVID. (*Calming down a little:*) —so you decide that you'll just kick him out, since you want to kiss the new guy's ass and the little typesetter shouldn't be having a better view than you, anyway. So you kick him out, and you find him a new office, only it isn't really an office, it's just a cubicle where old computer equipment goes to die, lots of useless cords and keyboards—

DIANE. *This is why you quit your job?*

DAVID. (*Ignoring her:*) Oh, and if that weren't bad enough, you no longer have any privacy. Everyone knows exactly what everyone else is doing.

(He lies back down.)

I know that Lydia, the woman in the cube next to me eats lunch at *exactly* one o'clock every day. You know how I know? Because I can actually *hear* her getting up and putting on her coat to go out, I can *hear* the zipper being zipped. What's worse, is that she brings her lunch back to her cube. The noises she makes while eating it...I swear, it's live white rats. She probably bites the heads off and swallows the bodies whole.

DIANE. David, I'm sure it's not as bad as you make it sound.

DAVID. It's not, it's worse.

DIANE. Come on, David, it's not bad enough to quit your job over. Think about Billy...

DAVID. (*Ignoring her:*) So I went to Adams and said, "Look, sir, I understand that the new manager needs an office, but I just can't work without a window." And he looks at me, like...like I'm this annoying piece of chewing gum stuck to his shoe, and says, "Steil, you know that you're not indispensable." So I say, "With all due respect sir, do you really think it's worth the trouble of training some new guy to take over my spot?" And he says...he says, "Oh, I think the company can spare 10 minutes to train someone for your job."

Ten minutes! Who the fuck does he think he is?

DIANE. *(Quietly:)* Your boss.

DAVID. *(Picking up his work bag:)* I don't care, he has no right to say that. It takes months to train someone to use all that computer stuff.

(He proceeds to reach into the bag and pulls out two staplers, a tape dispenser, a box of pens, and other stationery items from the office.)

DIANE. Maybe he'll find someone who already knows how to use all that stuff. Someone who knows something about computers, who doesn't have to learn from scratch.

DAVID. *(Stopping what he's doing:)* The way I did.

DIANE. Well—

DAVID. Great. I come home, hoping for a little understanding—

(He gets up and begins to change into the sweats lying on the bed.)

DIANE. *(Exasperated:)* What I *understand* is that you just quit your job because of a window. I don't get it. There's a recession going on—

DAVID. *(Tired:)* Fuck the recession.

DIANE. Oh, that's real nice, David. Real mature. Why don't you tell that to your son, when he's crying for milk. Even *he* doesn't matter, if you don't have your window.

DAVID. *(Softly:)* You don't understand.

DIANE. Then will you explain it to me, David? What is it that I'm not getting? Tell me why I'm wrong to say that you're being completely selfish—

DAVID. I am not being selfish. I didn't say that I don't want to work, I just said that I want to look for a new job that's all. And there's never really a good time to look for a job.

DIANE. Yes, but some times are better than others, and this is a very bad time, particularly when we have a baby to take care of, and I can't work. It's hard enough for college graduates to find jobs, let alone you.

(DAVID looks at her accusingly.)

DIANE. That's not what I meant—

DAVID. Sure you didn't.

DIANE. David, I'm just trying to point out the facts, that's all. You know that I don't think any less of you—

DAVID. Then why do you keep bringing it up?

DIANE. I don't "keep bringing it up." God, will you calm down?

DAVID. I'm sorry. I'm just letting off steam.

DIANE. (*Coldly:*) Apology accepted, I guess.

DAVID. No, I mean it. I'm sorry I started this whole argument. I just—God, I'm just so tired.

DIANE. Of what?

DAVID. I don't know. My little office, the commute, the people I work with—

DIANE. I think I get the picture.

DAVID. I hate this apartment. I hate Manhattan.

DIANE. You were the one who wanted to live here.

DAVID. I know.

DIANE. You were the one who said, "Let's get out of Brooklyn, let's be closer to what's going on, let's get away from our parents."

DAVID. I know.

DIANE. God, for the rent we're paying here we could have easily had a large—

DAVID. (*Interrupting her:*) I know.

DIANE. So what's changed?

DAVID. What do you mean?

DIANE. Well, you thought it was all okay before, and now all of a sudden it's so bad. Something must have changed.

DAVID. I don't know. I guess I've changed. (*An afterthought:*) And it wasn't all okay before.

DIANE. What do you mean? I've never heard you complain about everything before.

DAVID. Let's go to Montana.

DIANE. What?

DAVID. Or maybe Washington.

DIANE. David—

DAVID. Someplace nice, with big, wide-open spaces, where you can have a backyard.

DIANE. (*Impatient:*) David—

DAVID. Washington's got great apples, no pollution, nice weather. It would be heaven.

DIANE. Are you crazy?

DAVID. Hey, maybe we could start an orchard. We'd grow our own food, work for ourselves. Billy would have acres of space to play in.

DIANE. What are you going to do about your job?

DAVID. (*Coming back to reality:*) What about it?

DIANE. How are you going to get it back?

DAVID. (*Amazed:*) How am I going to get it *back*?

DIANE. Yes.

DAVID. Have you heard *anything* that I've said?

DIANE. The rent is due in two weeks.

DAVID. So, I'll find another job.

DIANE. What if you don't?

DAVID. I will. Besides, if all else fails, I can go temp somewhere.

DIANE. Temping doesn't give any benefits.

DAVID. So?

DIANE. *(Sighing:)* Benefits include health insurance, David. We can't afford not to have that.

DAVID. We'll just have to be careful.

DIANE. Careful? How can you be careful?

DAVID. You know...we'll just have to make sure we don't get sick or anything.

DIANE. What about accidents? What if Billy hurts himself? How are we going to pay—

DAVID. Goddamn it, Diane, can't you just look after him?

DIANE. Not every second of the day.

DAVID. Oh, come on.

DIANE. No, I mean it. I can't watch him like a hawk all *day*.

DAVID. Fine. I'll figure out some way to pay for health insurance.

DIANE. How?

DAVID. I don't know. I'll think of something.

DIANE. *(Shaking her head:)* The only way we can afford it is if we don't have to pay for it.

(She leaves the "bedroom," pulling the drape closed behind her, so she can't see DAVID.)

DIANE. You're tired, and probably hungry. We'll have dinner, you'll get some sleep and then you'll understand what I'm saying. I think in the morning you'll see reason and go ask Mr. Adams for your job back.

DAVID. *(Staring at the curtain:)* Oh my God.

(Gets up and walks over to the dresser, where he starts banging his head.)

DIANE. *(Calling back:)* Did you say something?

(DAVID pushes aside the drapes and comes over to DIANE's side.)

DAVID. Do you want me to be happy?

DIANE. (*Surprised:*) Of course I want us to be happy.

DAVID. No, I mean...wouldn't it be nice if I woke up every morning really wanting to go to work, instead of just wanting to call in sick?

DIANE. That would be terrific.

DAVID. That's all I'm trying to do. Find something meaningful, something I like. I don't think that's too much to ask, do you?

DIANE. No—

DAVID. God, I'm so happy to hear you say that.

DIANE. —but you have to be realistic—

DAVID. Of course.

DIANE. —and quitting on the spur of the moment because you've lost your window, just doesn't make sense. It's a *window*, for Christ's sake.

DAVID. (*Deflated:*) It's not about the window. I thought you understood that.

DIANE. I'm sorry, David, but I don't. Your job might not be the most exciting, fulfilling work, but it pays pretty well, the benefits aren't bad and the hours are regular. You've got a healthy two-year-old boy and a wife who loves you, who really wants to understand you. Granted, the apartment isn't the biggest, but it's decent and in a good area.

DAVID. What's your point?

DIANE. My point is...what are you looking for? Things aren't that bad. In fact, I'd say that they're pretty damn good. Why do you want to mess things up by looking for more than—

(She breaks off.)

DAVID. Go on. More than what?

DIANE. More than what you can get, that's all. I mean, for who you are, you've done really well.

DAVID. For who *I am*? And what is that, exactly?

DIANE. A high school graduate who didn't go to college.

DAVID. Thanks for bringing it up. Again.

DIANE. Well, you asked.

DAVID. You know, I would think that you, of all people, wouldn't want to go there, since it's all your fault.

DIANE. All *my* fault?

DAVID. Yes.

DIANE. How is *your* not going to college all *my* fault?

DAVID. Because you're the one who was pregnant.

DIANE. You're saying that I got pregnant all by myself, no help from you.

DAVID. No. Obviously I don't blame only *you* for getting pregnant—

DIANE. Oh, well, thank you for pardoning me.

DAVID. —just for making me marry you.

DIANE. I *made* you marry me?

DAVID. Yeah, you did.

DIANE. That's really funny, because I seem to remember *you* proposing.

DAVID. Well, of course I proposed. What else was I supposed to do?

DIANE. What?

DAVID. (*Mimicking her:*) "David, what am I going to do? I don't want to have an abortion and my parents'll kick me out." And then my dad, with his, "You know what you have to do, son." How the hell was I supposed to go off to college with all of *that* hanging over my head?

DIANE. (*Quietly:*) What are you saying?

DAVID. (*Realizing what he just said:*) I'm...I don't know what I'm saying—

DIANE. Really? I think I do. I think you're saying that you married me out of guilt.

DAVID. No, no, that's not—

DIANE. What was I supposed to do, tell you what you wanted to hear so you could go off to Georgetown and play basketball? Well, I'm sorry David, but for some crazy reason, I felt I had to tell you the truth, and that is exactly what I told you. I could never have had an abortion. If I ever had any doubts about it before, now that Billy's here, I *know* I could never go through with it. And my parents would've kicked me out. I told you the facts. If you married me because you felt guilty, that is *your* fault, not mine. I didn't force you to have sex with me, and I certainly didn't put a gun to your head telling you to propose to me. (*Pause.*) You know, I would've liked to have gone to college. Maybe I didn't get a scholarship to some hot-shot university, but I could've gone to college, could've made friends, could've had *fun*. But I made my choice, and now I have to live with it. You made yours.

(Both are silent.)

DAVID. I didn't mean that.

DIANE. (*Tired:*) You didn't mean what?

DAVID. Any of it...like I said, I'm just feeling a little down right now, and I've been taking it out on you. I'm sorry.

DIANE. Whatever.

(She picks up a can-opener and starts to open the can of baked beans on the counter.)

DAVID. No, really. I've...I've had a hard day, you know? I think I'll uh, go out. Yeah, I think I'll go up to the roof and look at the view.

DIANE. Okay.

(She empties the can into a saucepan and then goes to the refrigerator and removes a loaf of bread, for baked beans on toast.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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