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Cut off as I am, it is inevitable that I should sometimes feel like a shadow walking in a shadowy world. When this happens I ask to be taken to New York City. Always I return home weary but I have comforting certainty that mankind is real flesh and I myself am not a dream.

—Helen Keller

In memory of my mom, Phyllis Lane, with love & gratitude

Cast of Characters

Heart of the City was originally written for an ensemble of 6 actors (3 Females/3 Males). A larger cast may also be used.

Woman 1 plays the following roles:

SHOSHANA, Sue's former self, late teens / early twenties. An Old World Jewish immigrant with a heavier Eastern European accent than Sue.

JEMMA, a smart impertinent 14-year-old, who has been ignored way too long.

HEATHER, 20s, British. An enthusiastic, quick-witted, cheeky saleswoman.

RECEPTIONIST, female, off-stage

Woman 2 plays the following roles:

LYNN, 30s to 40s, Jewish, feels deeply with a strong intensity to her eyes. Wants a child but has had several miscarriages. Married to Michael. Sue's daughter.

ELIZABETH, 30s to 40s, well put together and trying a little too hard. Has experienced a few too many disappointments in life and love, yet trying to maintain a sense of hope.

Woman 3 plays the following roles:

SUE, Lynn and Bobby's mother. A Jewish woman formerly from Eastern Europe. Still has an accent.

NOLA, tough exterior / vulnerable beneath. Has lived all her life in Brooklyn, 50s to 60s.

Man 1 plays the following roles:

CARLOS, late teens/20s. A young, sexy, gay immigrant from Spain who finds joy in people and life.

BOBBY, Sue's son: the "good one." A project manager at an advertising agency. Excellent at his job but would rather be working someplace else.

NOAH, a teenage boy, around 15 years old

Man 2 plays the following roles:

MICHAEL/MIKEY, 30s to 40s. Lynn's husband. Trying to find his way.

BOYFRIEND #2

Man 3 plays the following roles:

MAX, an intellectual romantic, whose book knowledge exceeds his life experience, 50s to 60s.

HARRY, 50s to 60s. A Dad from an earlier time. A nice, friendly guy with an edge underneath. Never learned how to express his emotions.

DR. MENDELSON, a leading psychiatrist in Barcelona

BOYFRIENDS #1 & #3

Setting

New York City. The present.

Production Notes

The original production was designed with a simple unit set—using two benches, two chairs and a minimum of props. The staging should be simple and fluid, and aid in the movement of the characters and stories.

While scene titles are included in the script, they are not to be included or projected in production. *The Unicorn*, the book read by Max & Nola, was created by Eric Lane for this play.

Acknowledgments (continued)

Heart of the City received developmental readings at: New York Theatre Workshop, The Adirondack Theatre Festival, Ensemble Studio Theatre, The Makor Center, Hudson Stage Company and Washington Shakespeare Company.

The play was written during artist-in-residency fellowships at Yaddo and St. James Cavalier Centre for Creativity in Malta.

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Heart of the City was originally produced by Fern Kershon and Orange Thoughts Productions at the Theatre at 30th Street in New York City, June 2009.

HEART OF THE CITY

by Eric Lane

City of Lost Souls

(Two strangers, MAX and NOLA, sit on the #4 train into Manhattan. Night.)

MAX. New York is a city of lost souls.

NOLA. What the fuck are you saying?

MAX. It's like jet lag. Jet lag isn't jet lag. It's just like your soul hasn't had enough time to catch up with your body.

NOLA. Huh?

MAX. Same thing with the trains. It's like your body's already at 59th Street, but your soul's still hovering over the platform at Borough Hall.

NOLA. You're from Brooklyn, right?

(He nods.)

NOLA. Then what the fuck you using words like "hovering." You're supposed to use words like "Coney Island." "Canarsie." "Knish." Who in Brooklyn ever uses words like "your soul?"

MAX. All I'm saying is—

NOLA. If you're so smart, where is my soul right now, huh? Where now?

MAX. It's in your eyes. Your beautiful green eyes.

NOLA. *(Smiles.)* Ah, get outta here.

Heaven

(NOLA and MAX exit, as CARLOS enters.)

CARLOS. *(Speaks to the audience:)* When I am 15 years old, my mother, she find the gay porno pictures of me in back of my drawer. A friend, he took them. He is older.

Mi familia, they are so upset, they all take to they bed for a week, because in Espain, that is what we do. Then my parents they decide to take me to Dr. Mendelsohn, a leading psychiatrist in Barcelona.

(CARLOS – 15 years old and scared – stands in the doctor's office.)

(DR. MENDELSON enters. *He is distinguished and trustworthy.*)

DR. MENDELSON. Carlos, you are a young man with many years ahead of you. I see your parents upset. They think they have done something wrong. Some blame the mother. Some blame the father. Some blame nature or God. Over the years, I have seen many cases like this. In fact, I have just returned from a major international conference on human sexuality in New York City, and all I can say is, honey, it is heaven for us there.

(CARLOS looks up startled. Then smiles.)

CARLOS. (*As adult:*) I visit Dr. Mendelsohn for the next 3 years.

(DR. MENDELSON exits.)

CARLOS. When I am 18, I pack my bags and head to New York City. Here, I do not find heaven, but I look.

The Coat

(CARLOS exits. SHOSHANA speaks as she enters. *She carries a man's old gray wool coat and places it on a chair, which she stands behind.*)

SHOSHANA. When I am a girl, I come. No bags to pack, just hands in my pockets. We meet on the bus, Brooklyn, after the War. He wears a coat, gray with white hairs running through.

(SUE enters. *She picks up the coat and sits in the chair in front of SHOSHANA. SUE holds the coat.*)

SUE. Such a coat I fall in love with.

SHOSHANA. Him later, but that coat. A man who wears a coat like that I could fall in love. But the coat first. Him later.

SUE. He shows me a hundred dollar bill and I am—

SHOSHANA. Scared.

SUE. In heaven. What did I do that God should send me such happiness?

SHOSHANA. Who is this man with such a wealth and what he should want I do?

SUE. An angel, I think.

SHOSHANA. A gangster maybe. I hear of such men and now here I am and I am shaking that maybe a shootout, I think. On the way out

the door, James Cagney and Edward with the G. should be waiting on the street.

SUE. He carries a hundred dollar bill.

SHOSHANA. One hundred dollars. I have never see such a thing.

SUE. A one with two zeros. I check.

SHOSHANA. He likes he should be the big shot.

SUE. My big shot. He takes me out for Chinese food. What Jewish girl from my neighborhood has ever gone out for pork fried rice?

SHOSHANA. I say little.

SUE. I eat, oh, like I never eat before.

SHOSHANA. A few bites maybe. I pick. What do I know? Fried cat I could be eating for what I do not know.

SUE. Such smells. And tastes. But more than that, Manny makes me laugh.

SHOSHANA. It has been a long time since I have laugh. And Manny, he sees something in me, behind the eyes, and soon I begin to laugh.

SUE. We laugh so. And I get hungry.

SHOSHANA. All those years of fear. Of hiding. Of so thin if I turn sideways I disappear, gone.

SUE. I eat. Now I eat.

SHOSHANA. Food goes in and it stays and I grow. Big.

SUE. You ever see a fat girl in love? Gorgeous.

SHOSHANA. So gorgeous. Women at the A&P want to ram me with their shopping cart, that's how gorgeous.

SUE. But now, now I turn sideways and no one sees. "So thin. So svelte," my sister Anna says, but not like she knows. He's gone. That's the weight I lose. It was him inside me slowly slips away, and now like a beanpole, a noodle I should be without him inside.

In my dreams it's night, just after sunset. The sky turns that incredible blue.

SHOSHANA. So blue.

SUE. Just the thought of you fills my heart.

The Box

(SUE, carrying the coat, and SHOSHANA exit.)

(LYNN enters. She carries a small wooden box—about 3"x3"x6".
MICHAEL, her husband, enters.)

MICHAEL. There's no place to bury it. We live in an apartment. Where are you planning to bury it?

LYNN. I don't want him buried. I'll scatter the ashes.

MICHAEL. (*Simply:*) Lynn—

LYNN. He needs a name.

MICHAEL. Lynn, you have to stop this.

LYNN. This. This is how I can stop this. Adam. Alex. Alexander. Benjamin.

MICHAEL. Don't—

LYNN. (*Gradually increasing speed:*) Kyle. Max. Stephen. Marc. Jesse. Phil...

MICHAEL. Please, Lynn—

LYNN. (*Faster:*) John. Sam. Edward...

MICHAEL. Lynn!

His name is Michael.

LYNN. Michael. After his father.

MICHAEL. After me. Yes.

(*A moment.*)

LYNN. (*Re: their son:*) Michael. (*She gently touches him. Re: her husband:*) Michael.

(*He gently touches her.*)

City of Lost Souls # 2

(LYNN and MICHAEL exit.)

(*The #4 train into Manhattan. A new night. MAX enters and sits on the train.*)

(*NOLA enters. She waits for the "subway doors" to "open." She enters the car and sits.*)

(*MAX reads aloud from his book "The Unicorn."*)

MAX. (*Reads:*) "Il y a deux genres de beauté," a dit l'Unicorn. "Beauté du visage et beauté de l'esprit. Qu'aimez-vous?"

NOLA. You. What the fuck you saying now?

MAX. (*As he moves a little closer, NOLA shifts a little away. MAX speaks from memory—not reading:*) "There are two kinds of beauty," said the Unicorn. "Beauty of the face and beauty of the spirit."

NOLA. Yeah, and the rain in Spain stays mainly in my fuckin' ass. Again with the language.

MAX. "Which do you cherish?"

"Which do you cherish?" repeated the lost Princess, so she would remember to decide.

(Closes the book.)

MAX. I want you to look at me.

NOLA. I'm lookin'.

MAX. What do you see?

NOLA. Some old fart who thinks he's Maurice Chevalier.

MAX. What else?

NOLA. Your shirt needs pressing.

MAX. And...

NOLA. You had egg salad for lunch.

(She points to a spot on his shirt. He looks down. She lifts her finger and bonks him on the nose, à la the Three Stooges.)

NOLA. Got 'ya.

(She laughs.)

MAX. I want you to close your eyes.

NOLA. Oh yeah, right.

MAX. Close 'em.

NOLA. Are you *trying* to annoy me or is this just you?

MAX. Please...

(She holds her bag tighter. Closes her eyes.)

MAX. Now, what do you see?

NOLA. Dark.

MAX. And...?

NOLA. I don't know... dark.

MAX. And...?

NOLA. And what?

MAX. A man who sees joy in your spirit. Tenderness beneath the rage. And a heart longing to be caressed.

(NOLA opens her eyes. Looks right at him.)

NOLA. Don't fuck with me.

(She is dead serious. He holds her look. NOLA takes her bag and stands at the "subway doors." They "open." She exits the train.)

Faces

(MAX exits. CARLOS enters.)

CARLOS. *(Speaks to the audience:)* It is great but more faster. The Big Apple. Here, there are so many of people—all of them run so fast. A train is to leaf—quick run. A party is to start—quick. I like to stop in the middle sidewalk and to watch them run pass. It make me laugh. It make them mad.

The faces, they are so beautiful. From all over the world. It is like they check at the gate—you must be fantastic or they send you back to New Jersey, goodbye. I look to the faces. I stand and I look.

Fingerprints

(CARLOS exits as SUE enters. She carries an old glass bowl.)

SUE. You keep your palms wet. You roll it in your palms and keep them wet—no fingers. One year, my friend Fanny invites us over for Passover, second night, there are fingerprints all over the matzo balls. "What? Fanny, you don't know—no fingerprints." But she doesn't know, what does she know? Hard as rocks and fingerprints. I couldn't even eat it. Couldn't eat it.

"Next year," I tell her. "Next year I'll make you some right, you'll see. You patchkie around with it, it gets hard. What do you have to play with it? You make the ball, stick it in the water—there, you're done."

Watch out for this bowl.

(SUE sits, holding the bowl.)

You break this bowl, it's gone. You can't find bowls like this anymore. They used to give these away at the movies. Not the whole set,

just part. Next week you think, I don't want to see that new movie, but I want to finish that set, ah we'll go.

(SHOSHANA enters. Quietly moves and stands behind SUE's chair.)

Manny and me, we'd go. The movie's dark, you're sitting with dishes on your lap, you forget about it. You get up—maybe to get some candy, go to the bathroom—they come crashing to the floor. The whole theater, everybody yells out, "Mazel tov!" Middle of the movie, cowboys riding on the sunset, dishes crashing. Oh, we used to laugh. We used to laugh so. The whole theater, Manny, me, Aunt Anna, everybody,

SUE & SHOSHANA. "Mazel tov!"

SHOSHANA. But after the War, Anna and me, we go to the movies and that's when we realize, when we see,

SUE. the newsreels and we see what—well, if they had told us during the War, I mean, we knew things were bad, but if we knew, if they told us what was really going on, we would've thought they were making it up just to scare us. I wouldn't've believe it. But the newsreels start to come back,

SHOSHANA. and the pictures of the camps,

SUE. the men and women, those children, the ones who are alive, like death warmed over.

SHOSHANA. Like sticks and bones and a pair of eyes staring out.

SUE. Anna's holding my arm so tight while we're watching, so tight like if she lets go... I can still feel it at night sometimes—sometimes I'm lying in bed, that's how tight. That year she comes to the seder, but she won't make it herself. Not anymore.

SHOSHANA. "Where is he now?" she tells me.

SUE. "I know back in Egypt," she says. "God saw the lamb's blood over our doors. He passed over our houses and spared out firstborn. But I can't help thinking, where is he now?"

(She stands.)

Watch out for this bowl.

Watch Your Step

(SUE and SHOSHANA exit as CARLOS enters.)

(He speaks as he goes to stand at the entrance of a tent, greeting "the guests" as they enter.)

CARLOS. "Watch your step.

Watch your step please.

Please watch your step."

(To audience:) It is benefit night for the charity Kidneys for the Kids. They tell me I am to assist the top chef, but there is a crack across the floor to the tent so I stand and warn the guest to—

(To guest:) "Oh, almost lose you. Watch out."

(To audience:) So many beautiful people and prizes. You buy the raffle ticket and you can win anything—a skybox at the Knicks basketball, a cooking lesson with a vegan, or a date in Central Park with a woman who is beautiful. And all the money goes to the kidneys of the kids. It is like "The Price is Right" but for helping. Fantastic!

I get to greet everyone. "Hello."

So much of my jobs, it is to say 'hello.' This is not my only job. I work as a receptionist at an exclusive gym, a maitre d' at a tapas bar, I teach gay ballroom dance lessons to the seniors. And I am the personal assistant to Miss Carol Channing for one week. But today, it is "watch your step." And you know what...? I like it. Because it is me who is watching.

(He watches a cute guy passing by.)

"Watch your step..."

The Statue of Bolivar

(As CARLOS exits, ELIZABETH enters.)

(The statue of Bolivar. South entrance of Central Park at 6th Avenue.)

(ELIZABETH looks off for her date, who is late. She sits on the park bench.)

(JEMMA enters. She wears a backpack and her iPod earbuds. She sees ELIZABETH, who checks her watch, then check herself in her compact mirror. ELIZABETH fixes her lipstick.)

JEMMA. That shit'll kill 'ya. (Removes earbuds.)

ELIZABETH. (*Surprised:*) Excuse me.

JEMMA. Lipstick. There are studies. Lab rats. The shit they developed, you don't wanna know.

ELIZABETH. You're right. I don't.

JEMMA. Government studies. Big bucks for putting Revlon on rat lips. Some world, huh?

ELIZABETH. I suppose.

(*ELIZABETH checks her watch again.*)

JEMMA. It's still the same time only 30 seconds later.

(*JEMMA shows her watch.*)

ELIZABETH. Thank you.

JEMMA. You like Bolivar?

ELIZABETH. (*Points to Jemma's watch:*) Yes, it's lovely.

JEMMA. Not the watch. The General.

(*Sits.*)

Simon Bolivar.

(*Indicates the statue:*)

Big-ass statue and nobody even bothers. El Liberator. The George Washington of South America. Won independence for Bolivia, Panama, Columbia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru.

(*Takes out Tic-Tacs, shakes out a few, then chews them.*)

You want a Tic-Tac?

ELIZABETH. No thank you. If you don't mind...

JEMMA. I don't mind. What else I got to do?

ELIZABETH. I meant I'm waiting for someone.

JEMMA. He ain't showing.

ELIZABETH. That's a terrible thing to say.

JEMMA. True.

ELIZABETH. You don't know that.

JEMMA. I know.

ELIZABETH. You don't know that.

JEMMA. I know.

ELIZABETH. You don't know that!

(A beat.)

JEMMA. I know.

ELIZABETH. Why don't you go away?

JEMMA. Can't.

ELIZABETH. I'm sure there's another plaque somewhere in the park you can memorize. Bethesda Fountain or Cleopatra's Needle. A wealth of information for a young girl of your perspicacity.

JEMMA. Nah, I'm meeting somebody.

ELIZABETH. He won't show.

JEMMA. He's a she.

ELIZABETH. Either way. She's not coming.

JEMMA. You don't know that.

ELIZABETH. I know.

JEMMA. You don't know that.

ELIZABETH. I know.

JEMMA. You don't know that 'cause she's here.

ELIZABETH. What? Are you meeting some imaginary friend—?

JEMMA. Nice to meet you, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH. Excuse me? How do you know my name?

JEMMA. Elizabeth M. Cunningham. The M's for Marie.

ELIZABETH. How do you—? Who are you?

JEMMA. Jem Hollingshead. Ring a bell?

ELIZABETH. Look, I don't know what you think you're—

JEMMA. My dad's your date. At least he was supposed to be. Nicholas I. Hollingshead. I for Ivan. Can you believe naming your kid Ivan? I don't have any kids. I'm not gonna. Fish is o.k., but kids suck. I hate kids. I hate cheese. I hate jelly. And I really hate it when my food touches.

ELIZABETH. So where's your father?

JEMMA. Where's he always...? Work. Too busy. Story of my life. Something came up so guess who gets to go in his place. I mean if you're gonna go to a benefit and buy all the raffle tickets, at least go out on the date when you win it. Instead of sending me.

ELIZABETH. Why would he buy all the raffle tickets and then send you?

JEMMA. He'd send me to take a crap for him if he could figure out how.

ELIZABETH. Well, thanks for the information and the apology.

JEMMA. You're better off. He's an asshole.

ELIZABETH. He's still your father.

JEMMA. He's still an asshole.

ELIZABETH. I tend to agree.

JEMMA. Like if you're gonna bid on a date for some lame-ass charity, at least pick one with a decent T-shirt.

ELIZABETH. (*Rises:*) It's not "lame-ass." It's a very worthy cause.

JEMMA. (*Rolls her eyes.*) Kidneys for kids. Yeah. Try wearing *that* to gym class. You don't look so good, you wanna sit back down?

ELIZABETH. No, I'm fine.

JEMMA. You don't look fine. You look like somebody just gave you a big-ass wedgie and you're hoping nobody noticed. (*Rises.*) So where are we going?

ELIZABETH. I don't know where *you're* going, but I'm heading home.

JEMMA. He'll cancel the check. If you don't take me.

ELIZABETH. He wouldn't dare.

JEMMA. You don't know him. Growing up with the middle name "Ivan." That shit's deadly. He's probable to do anything. Trust me.

ELIZABETH. The date's off.

JEMMA. I'll tell.

ELIZABETH. Go ahead.

JEMMA. And some baby needing a new kidney instead's gonna wind up with monkey glands. What kinda shit is that to live with?

ELIZABETH. I'm sure they'll work it out.

JEMMA. I mean you. Knowing you coulda helped but turned your back at the exact moment of need. That's a heavy burden to bear.

ELIZABETH. I've borne worse.

JEMMA. Tell me about it.

(*Sits.*)

JEMMA. And cheese. Did I mention that? I hate cheese.

ELIZABETH. I hate your Dad.

JEMMA. Welcome to my life. We could kill him.

ELIZABETH. Right.

JEMMA. Serious. I could. I'm still a juvenile. You could watch. There's no way you could've stopped me. You tried, but I was out of my mind. Years of neglect culminating in one final swipe of the axe.

(She demonstrates giving him a whack with the axe.)

ELIZABETH. You'd go to jail.

JEMMA. Good behavior, I'm outta there in no time. TV deal covers the legal fees. A TV movie. Anne Hathaway plays me.

ELIZABETH. Who plays me?

JEMMA. Susan Lucci.

(ELIZABETH just looks at her.)

JEMMA. O.k. Betty White. I don't know. Somebody. Who do you want?

ELIZABETH. I have no idea.

JEMMA. C'mon, you must've thought about it.

ELIZABETH. Never.

JEMMA. Some night when you're lying in bed with your cat between your legs and you can't fall asleep 'cause you keep thinking about that asshole who stood you up—even though you told yourself not to believe. Even though you knew it wouldn't work, part of you, some part still hoping, believing that maybe—

ELIZABETH. I don't have a cat.

JEMMA. No?

ELIZABETH. No.

(A beat.)

ELIZABETH. I have two cats.

JEMMA. Two cats and you never thought about who'd play you in the TV movie...? I find that hard to believe.

(ELIZABETH just looks at her.)

JEMMA. What?

ELIZABETH. Susan Sarandon.

JEMMA. (*Not quite buying it. Over articulates each letter.*) O-K.

ELIZABETH. What?

JEMMA. Nothing.

ELIZABETH. Not nothing. I detect a certain air of sarcasm in your voice.

JEMMA. That's not sarcasm. That's life. So where we going?

ELIZABETH. How old are you?

JEMMA. 14 but that's not my fault.

ELIZABETH. 14. Jeez.

JEMMA. I won't ask how old you are.

ELIZABETH. No?

JEMMA. You'd probably make me guess, then get all offended and shit. No thank you.

ELIZABETH. That's what? 7th grade.

JEMMA. (*Incredulous, corrects her.*) 8th.

ELIZABETH. 8th grade.

JEMMA. You like to row?

(ELIZABETH *just looks at her.*)

JEMMA. What? That's good exercise for you.

ELIZABETH. I'm not rowing.

JEMMA. Bicycle...? We can rent them. Rollerblades...? (*Laughs slightly.*) Merry-go-round...?

(*No response.*)

JEMMA. That's o.k. We can just sit here.

ELIZABETH. (*Sits with her.*) I'll give you ten minutes.

JEMMA. Two hours.

ELIZABETH. Ten minutes.

JEMMA. You'd spend at least that with my Dad, and he's a dick.

(*A beat.*)

ELIZABETH. One hour.

JEMMA. One hour. O.k.

ELIZABETH. (*Looks at Jemma's watch.*) Starting now.

(Neither speaks.)

(After a moment.)

ELIZABETH. How'd he do that? Bolivar. Win their freedom.

(JEMMA shrugs.)

ELIZABETH. Wouldn't that be something?

JEMMA. What?

ELIZABETH. To do something so extraordinary that people build a statue.

JEMMA. Yeah and pigeons shit all over it.

(ELIZABETH looks at her, then laughs.)

JEMMA. What?

ELIZABETH. I think you're missing the point.

JEMMA. Which is...?

ELIZABETH. Nothing.

JEMMA. Yeah. Nothing.

(They sit together. Look out.)

Before Dreams

(ELIZABETH and JEMMA exit. HARRY enters.)

(A park bench. Day. HARRY sits, places a napkin on his lap. He peels and eats an orange.)

(MICHAEL [MIKEY] enters and goes to him. The dialogue is conversational.)

MIKEY. I'm looking for my father. Do you know where he is?

HARRY. I don't know. What does he look like?

MIKEY. You.

(A beat.)

HARRY. I haven't seen any men around here that look like me. Are you sure?

MIKEY. *(Sits.)* I haven't seen him in many years.

HARRY. Since when?

MIKEY. Since I was 9.

HARRY. That's a long time.

MIKEY. Yes.

HARRY. How do you know what he looks like now?

MIKEY. I see him. In my mind. Every night before I fall asleep, he flashes before my eyes. For a split second. As clear as if he were sitting here next to me.

HARRY. Maybe it's just a dream.

MIKEY. I'm still awake.

HARRY. Maybe you're just dreaming you're awake. I've dreamt where I ask someone to pinch me so I'll know I'm awake. They do, and I know it's real. Only it's still a dream. Just real in there.

MIKEY. He ages. Each night he gets another day older. I've seen it over time.

HARRY. A day's not much time.

MIKEY. A lot can happen in a day.

HARRY. When it comes to aging, a day's not much time.

MIKEY. Look at today. I found you.

HARRY. I was just sitting here.

MIKEY. So was I.

HARRY. Peeling an orange.

MIKEY. Searching for a clue. The way he holds his head—his neck craned forward like that. My dad used to sit in this contraption to help the pain in his back. Like a pulley. One end with a strap under his chin. The other, a bag filled with 25 pounds of water. The rope would go up, across and back down, pulling his neck up, stretching it like this—

(He demonstrates—pulls his head up straight, elongating his spine.)

I used to think it'd pull his head off. Just snap off, but it never did.

HARRY. I wouldn't think.

MIKEY. *(As kid:)* Hi Dad.

(As dad:) Hi Mikey.

(As kid:) What's up?

(As dad:) Nothing much. You know I love you.

HARRY. He said that?

MIKEY. What?

HARRY. "You know I love you." He said that?

MIKEY. Sure.

HARRY. I find that hard to believe. "You know I love you," with his neck all pulled like that?

MIKEY. He could still talk.

HARRY. Doesn't seem likely.

MIKEY. I'm telling you, we'd talk to each other.

HARRY. Doesn't seem like the kind of thing he'd say with his neck all tense, does it?

MIKEY. I'm telling you, I was there.

HARRY. Maybe "Hi." Or "How was school?" Or "Can you switch the channel, poops?" But a statement of love. Of affection. I don't think so.

MIKEY. Were you there?

HARRY. I didn't say—

MIKEY. Then you'll just have to take my word for it.

HARRY. I don't have to do anything.

MIKEY. No. You don't. But I still see you.

HARRY. When?

MIKEY. Before I fall asleep. Still know that it's you. Why do you come to me? Why at that last moment, just before I start to dream? Before I can ask you.

HARRY. Ask what?

MIKEY. Why you had to go?

HARRY. I had to go.

MIKEY. Why it was so hard?

HARRY. Hard?

MIKEY. To tell me. Anything. Like that strap was always around your chin. Always a weight attached.

(HARRY folds up his napkin with the remaining orange inside. Starts to leave. MIKEY rises.)

MIKEY. Where are you going?

HARRY. I have to go.

MIKEY. Why won't you talk to me?

HARRY. We talked.

MIKEY. Tell me.

HARRY. What?

MIKEY. What I want to hear. Something. Anything.

HARRY. What do you want to hear?

MIKEY. You know.

HARRY. I don't—

MIKEY. You know or you wouldn't be here.

HARRY. Maybe I'm not.

MIKEY. I know I'm awake. Pinch me if you want. Go ahead.

HARRY. I told you that doesn't work.

MIKEY. Then tell me. Now.

HARRY. I told you.

MIKEY. Tell me it's o.k.

Tell me it's all right.

Tell me you miss me.

Tell me you're sorry.

Tell me you love me.

Tell me to switch the channel.

Tell me.

Please.

Just tell me.

(HARRY is gone.)

Waiting

(MIKEY exits. SUE, LYNN, and BOBBY enter.)

(Doctors' office waiting area. BOBBY, LYNN, and their mother SUE sit, waiting to go inside.)

(BOBBY is working. LYNN reads a magazine.)

(With her elbow, SUE nudges LYNN, who tries to ignore it. SUE nudges her again.)

(LYNN looks up from her article, looks at her mother.)

LYNN. I'm not asking.

SUE. So don't. Who asked you anyway?

(LYNN goes back to her article. Then:)

SUE. See how long it's gonna be.

LYNN. I just asked them two minutes ago.

SUE. Two minutes ago. Lynn, it wasn't two minutes.

LYNN. Ma, trust me.

(A beat.)

SUE. So you don't want to ask?

LYNN. No, I don't want to bother them.

SUE. What bother? You're just asking a question. What's a question?

LYNN. There's no reason.

SUE. The reason is I want to know.

LYNN. Fine. So *you* ask.

SUE. Fine. I will.

LYNN. Ma, don't—

SUE. What, we're sitting here two hours already. I want to know when they're going to see me.

LYNN. It hasn't been two hours.

SUE. Two hours and I want to know.

LYNN. Ma, I just asked them. How many times do you need to—

SUE. But no, we should just sit here like a noodle—

LYNN. They said as soon as she's finished with—

SUE. Like a worm, waiting—

BOBBY. Like a worm?

SUE. An insect. A g-nat, maybe. Like a trio of g-nats. That's how we should wait.

LYNN. Like a trio of g-nats.

(LYNN laughs slightly.)

SUE. What? You think it's funny? This is how you want you should be treated?

BOBBY. Ma, it's o.k. She's a specialist.

SUE. Miss Fancy-Schmancy Specialist. She should specialize in punctuality. That's what she should specialize. (To LYNN:) So, you asking?

LYNN. How about Bobby? I'm sure he wants to ask.

SUE. Leave your brother alone. He's a very important artist.

BOBBY. Ma, I work for an advertising agency.

SUE. What? You think that's easy?

LYNN. He told me he loves asking them. He said it's his favorite thing to do.

SUE. Your brother's busy. Now shh, enough.

BOBBY. *(Continues working. Not looking up.)* Um hm.

LYNN. *(Under her breath, in a sing-song annoyed kid's voice:)* Leave your little brother alone. Bobby's busy.

(BOBBY just rolls his eyes. LYNN flips the pages of her magazine.)

SUE. Linnie, what?

(LYNN just looks at her.)

You don't look so good.

LYNN. No, I'm fine.

SUE. You'll be fine. You'll see. The women in our family, they don't have such a problem.

LYNN. I know. You told me.

SUE. Sometimes these things happen, then next you know, mazel-tov.

LYNN. Uh huh.

SUE. You'll see. You remember my friend Fanny—

LYNN. *(Takes out her cell phone.)* Ma, can we not talk about this right now?

SUE. Three times, then one day—

(As LYNN dials her cell phone.)

SUE. Linnie, who are you calling... Michael?

LYNN. I'm just checking my messages.

SUE. I thought you're not supposed to—

LYNN. It's o.k. I asked. Out here it's—

RECEPTIONIST. *(Off-stage:)* Sue Wischer—

(Pronounced: wish'-er. SUE nods. LYNN puts away her cell. SUE starts to get up. Stops.)

LYNN. Ma—

(LYNN and BOBBY quickly go to her. SUE takes a breath. The pain passes. She regains her composure and indicates it's all right.)

SUE. Help me up.

(LYNN and BOBBY help SUE. They start to head off to the exam room.)

The Chair

(SUE and LYNN exit.)

(Afternoon. BOBBY enters the hi-tech store. He looks around, then heads over to two massage chairs, sits in one. He takes off his shoes, which he leaves on the floor in front of him.)

(Bobby's picture I.D. from work is clipped to his bag. He takes out a pair of headphones from his bag. Checks them for 'left' and 'right,' then puts them on for music.)

(He settles down into the massage chair.)

(HEATHER, a saleswoman, enters and goes to him.)

HEATHER. Act interested.

BOBBY. (Removing headphones:) What?

HEATHER. Pretend you're interested. My manager's watching... Ask me a question.

BOBBY. Um, does this chair come in any other colors?

HEATHER. The Inner Harmony Massage Chair comes in two soothing colors: sensuous midnight leather and plush dakota suede.

(She gestures for more.)

BOBBY. What about the settings?

HEATHER. The easy-to-adjust massage settings allow maximum—all right. Cheers.

(Her manager gone, HEATHER sits in the chair beside BOBBY.)

BOBBY. That's it...? Aren't you going to try to sell me the chair?

HEATHER. She's gone.

BOBBY. Even so. I could be interested in buying one.

(HEATHER just looks at him.)

BOBBY. I could be.

HEATHER. At \$3,000? Not likely. Besides, I've seen you in here before.

BOBBY. So...

HEATHER. Often.

BOBBY. I may've been passing by...

HEATHER. Quite often. Almost every day for the past 3 months, in fact.

BOBBY. Not every day.

HEATHER. No, once in a while you pop over to our store on 57th. You always stay at least one full massage cycle.

BOBBY. Maybe I sat down for a minute.

HEATHER. Usually two. And occasionally if you think no one's watching, three or—

(Notices store manager off-stage. HEATHER quickly stands.)

HEATHER. Comes with four easy to adjust settings:

(She presses each setting, which BOBBY feels.)

pulse, knead, vibrate and—

(Manager leaves. BOBBY presses a lower chair setting.)

This morning she caught me writing a poem and has been spotting me like a hawk ever since.

(She sits.)

BOBBY. What kinda poem?

HEATHER. Just stuff. It's not as though we weren't slow anyway. Sit as long as you want. Your secret's safe with me, Bobby.

(He looks at her, surprised she knows his name.)

BOBBY. How do you—?

HEATHER. *(She indicates.)* Your employee I.D.

BOBBY. Right.

HEATHER. *(Reads his I.D.)* Stone Advertising—that must be quite pressured. What is it you do?

BOBBY. At work...? I'm an account manager.

HEATHER. Meaning...?

BOBBY. Well, right now, we're introducing a new nighttime shower gel for women.

HEATHER. Sounds simple enough.

BOBBY. You'd think. Only according to my boss, we're not just selling a shower. It's a vertical bath experience.

HEATHER. (*Laughs.*) Yikes! Did you study advertising?

BOBBY. Painting.

HEATHER. What is it you paint?

BOBBY. Not much, lately.

HEATHER. Why's that?

BOBBY. Don't you have to work or something?

HEATHER. I'm assisting a customer. Why don't you paint?

BOBBY. By the time I get home from work...

HEATHER. I think you should paint.

BOBBY. I'm sure there are a lot of things I should be doing but—

HEATHER. A portrait of me. Sitting by a brook, perhaps. Dressed like Ophelia. Flowers in my hair. Light streaming through the trees. Wouldn't that be something?

BOBBY. I'll keep it in mind.

HEATHER. Make you less tense.

BOBBY. Who said I was tense?

(*HEATHER mimics him with his shoulders tense.*)

BOBBY. Maybe I just have a lot on my mind, o.k.

HEATHER. Yes, vertical bath experiences can be extremely taxing.

BOBBY. Not just... Never mind.

HEATHER. What were you going to say?

BOBBY. Nothing.

HEATHER. Fine. Be that way.

BOBBY. Fine.

HEATHER. Fine.

(*A beat.*)

BOBBY. Like my mom.

HEATHER. I'm like your mum?

BOBBY. No. On my mind—my mom. Nothing. I'm sure she'll be o.k.

HEATHER. Is she ill?

BOBBY. (*Notices Heather's manager off-stage:*) Your boss.

HEATHER. Is she?

BOBBY. They're just running some tests. I'm sure she's fine.

(*Notices Heather's manager moving closer. He switches gears. HEATHER rises.*)

BOBBY. I'm definitely interested but \$3,000 seems like a lot for a chair.

HEATHER. I don't think of it so much as a chair but as a horizontal massage experience.

(*BOBBY smiles. HEATHER doesn't turn, but senses her manager leaving, off BOBBY's gaze.*)

HEATHER. Gone?

(*BOBBY looks, nods. She sits. Simply.*)

HEATHER. I'll say a prayer. What's your mum's name?

BOBBY. You don't have to—

HEATHER. If you'd rather I didn't...

BOBBY. No, I didn't mean... Sue. Her name's Sue.

HEATHER. Sue. Got it.

(*A beat.*)

BOBBY. Thank you.

HEATHER. Sure.

(*A slight beat.*)

BOBBY. I gotta go.

(*He starts to put his shoes back on, gather himself together.*)

HEATHER. (*Rises.*) Off to work. So will we be shipping this to your home or office?

BOBBY. (*Rises.*) I didn't say—

HEATHER. Just joking.

BOBBY. Oh... I knew that.

HEATHER. Of course you did.

BOBBY. Right.

(*He exits.*)

Water

(HEATHER exits.)

(Late night. MICHAEL enters in his pajama bottoms and T-shirt. He listens to off-stage for a moment. Things seem o.k. He crosses into the room.)

(LYNN enters. There is a little blood and water splashed on the front of her nightgown.)

(She looks to MICHAEL. Without realizing, he takes two steps away from her. Then steps back again.)

(He moves toward her. As he gets close, she raises her hand slightly to stop him.)

(She slowly moves to sit down.)

(MICHAEL goes and gets a glass of water. He gives it to her. She takes the glass and takes a sip.)

(She looks to him.)

City of Lost Souls # 3

(As LYNN rises, MICHAEL helps her. They exit.)

(The #4 train into Manhattan. A new night from their previous encounter.)

(NOLA enters and takes her seat. MAX enters and stands on the train. Neither speaks.)

(After a moment, MAX reaches into his bag, takes out copy of the children's book, "The Unicorn." He hands it to NOLA. She takes it, looks at the cover.)

MAX. For you.

(She looks at him, then back at the book, says nothing.)

(She puts the book in her bag. The train moves on.)

Learning the Language

(NOLA and MAX exit.)

(CARLOS enters.)

CARLOS. (*Speaks to the audience:*) When I come to New York City, I speak maybe some words. Some words, they sound the same. Like leaf...

(Pronounces it quickly, and with fingers, indicates leaves falling from a tree.)

And leave.

(Pronounces it almost identically, but stretches out word. With his arms, indicates going away.)

Rowboat...

(With his arms indicates rowing.)

And robot.

(Pronounces almost identically, but stretches out the first 'o.' With arms, indicates a mechanical walk.)

A tapas bar.

(Indicates eating food.)

And a topless bar.

(Indicates breasts.)

I watch "I Love Lucy" and my English, it improves. I learn new phrases like, "I has a plan." And "Hurry up, Ethel." My English, it is better. I meet many guys. Some, they are sweet guys.

BOYFRIEND #1. (*Enters.*) I love you, pookie.

(Exits.)

CARLOS. Some, they are hot guys.

BOYFRIEND #2. (*Enters. Southern cowboy accent:*) My stage name is T-Bone, but you can call me Chris.

(Exits.)

CARLOS. And some, well...

BOYFRIEND #3. (*Rolf, the Austrian enters.*) Once I hold my head under water eighty-three second without come up for air. Do you like cheese?

CARLOS. I meet many guys. (*Rolf exits.*) All shape and size. Religion and style. Color and idea. And after ten months I come to one conclusion. Sometimes this heaven...it can be a hell.

Someplace Else

(CARLOS *exits*.)

(*Outpatient Cancer Treatment Center at Hospital. SUE enters with an I.V. stand. She sits.*)

SUE. “Try to put yourself someplace else,” the nurse tells me. “Someplace with comfort.” Next thing I know, I’m playing mahjong at Fanny Weisberg’s off Flatbush Avenue.

(SHOSHANA *enters, goes and stands behind SUE.*)

She brings me a bowl of soup. Now her matzo balls, no fingerprints, but still not as good as mine.

SHOSHANA. I’m next to Manny. He wears that old gray wool coat. Snow falling. His arm, around me. I start to slip. He catches me.

SUE. That stained glass window in our apartment on King’s Highway. It’s like I’m inside there.

SHOSHANA. Safe.

SUE. Safety in the color. In the reds and yellow. A place I could put myself inside when thoughts of—of where I came from became too much.

SHOSHANA. I have two babies. There is no time for sad. I have things to do. Chickens to clean. A mother-in-law to tell me. Nanny Ruchel, ulgh.

SUE. Ulgh, Nanny Ruchel. She was not what you would call “a nice woman.”

SHOSHANA. Sometimes I wonder, is she this way because she is old?

SUE. Barely able to hear, but a hearing aid, forget about. Trouble with her knees.

SHOSHANA. Her back.

SUE. Arthritis—uh, her fingers. And when they cancelled “Peyton Place,” she sat shiva for a week.

(LYNN *enters. SUE looks older, more vulnerable. She looks at LYNN.*)

SUE. (*Re: I.V.:*) What? All done?

(SHOSHANA *exits.*)

LYNN. Just a few more minutes, Ma.

SUE. My water.

(LYNN reaches in her bag for Sue's water bottle. Starts to hand it to SUE, uncaps it for her. SUE takes a sip, hands it back to LYNN.)

LYNN. Did you sleep?

(LYNN sits.)

SUE. Just resting my eyes. Remember Daddy used to say. He never fell asleep. Just resting my eyes.

LYNN. I remember.

SUE. If that nurse comes back, that one with the teeth, don't leave me alone with her.

(LYNN nods.)

SUE. You know when I dream, I still have all my hair.

LYNN. That wig looks good.

(SUE shrugs.)

LYNN. What'd you dream about?

SUE. Who remembers?

(A beat.)

SUE. Nanny Ruchel.

LYNN. Why are you dreaming about her?

SUE. Maybe she wants to get back at me, and saw her chance.

LYNN. Was she always so mean or just when she got old?

SUE. She was a lovely woman.

(A beat. They look at each other and laugh.)

SUE. Nah, she was always rotten. From the day I met her. Never liked me.

LYNN. Why was that?

SUE. (Shrugs:) I took her son away from her. Who knows?

Now, whenever there's trouble, she shows up in my dreams as a crow.

LYNN. Like a crow?

SUE. A big black crow with a farbissina face. Cutting coupons from the newspaper.

(LYNN laughs.)

SUE. You think it's easy cutting coupons with pair of a wings...? She's back. And she's watching me. Through the two holes in the scissors, she's watching.
My hair looks good?

(LYNN *nods.*)

SUE. Maybe on the way home, we stop off at the diner.

LYNN. Let's see how you're feeling.

SUE. A nice turkey club. And an ice coffee with half and half. That's what I want. We could share. Who could eat all that? Enough for two meals, at least. You want, we'll call Michael.

(LYNN *rises. Starts toward the I.V. stand.*)

SUE. He'll come meet us. Maybe on the way home, we stop.

LYNN. We'll see.

You

(LYNN *wheels the I.V. stand, and exits with SUE.*)

(*Lynn and Michael's apartment. Very late night.*)

(MICHAEL *enters. He has been out late. He removes his bag, takes off his coat.*)

(*He removes his shoes, unbuttons his shirt, getting ready for bed.*)

(LYNN *enters, wearing her nightgown and robe. She has been waiting up for him.*)

LYNN. Do you have any idea what time it is?

MICHAEL. I'm home.

LYNN. I know you're home. I want to know where you were.

MICHAEL. Lynn—

LYNN. What...? (*No response.*) What Michael?

MICHAEL. Please, don't start with me.

LYNN. It's 2 a.m. Don't start with you.

MICHAEL. It's not 2 a.m.

LYNN. 2 a.m.

MICHAEL. It's not—

LYNN. (*Shows him her watch.*) What time then? Tell me.

You come home 2 a.m. No call. No nothing. And I'm the bad one for even asking—

MICHAEL. I was riding the subway.

LYNN. (*Sarcastic:*) Please...

MICHAEL. You asked. I told you, now—

LYNN. You think I'm stupid, Michael.

MICHAEL. Let's just drop it.

LYNN. No, I'm not gonna just drop it. Where were you?

MICHAEL. Lynn—

LYNN. What?

MICHAEL. I can't do this right now.

LYNN. When then? When are we supposed to do this?

MICHAEL. What do you want from me?

LYNN. I want to know where my husband was.

MICHAEL. Out.

LYNN. On the subway.

MICHAEL. Yes.

LYNN. Riding the subway.

MICHAEL. Yes.

LYNN. Until 2 a.m.

MICHAEL. Stop saying—

LYNN. (*Shows watch:*) 2 a.m.

MICHAEL. Yes. O.k.?

(*A beat.*)

LYNN. To where?

(*MICHAEL just looks at her.*)

LYNN. You were riding the subway, you must've been heading somewhere.

MICHAEL. I was just riding.

LYNN. Just riding.

MICHAEL. Yes.

LYNN. Not to anywhere. Just on the train.

MICHAEL. The # 4.

LYNN. The express.

MICHAEL. I was coming home and I got to our stop, but I guess, what? I guess I just stayed on. And so... *(He trails off.)*

LYNN. *(Wanting to know, more gently:)* And so...

MICHAEL. So I did.

LYNN. Uh huh.

MICHAEL. That's all. I guess I just rode. And it really didn't seem to matter, I mean, if I stayed on or off, so I just rode. I guess I should've called.

LYNN. Michael.

(She gently touches him. He moves away slightly. LYNN shakes her head, sighs.)

MICHAEL. It's late. I'm tired, that's all.

LYNN. Right.

MICHAEL. Let's just go to sleep, o.k.?

LYNN. I can't.

MICHAEL. Just try.

LYNN. I tried.

MICHAEL. C'mon, I'll rub your back.

LYNN. No.

MICHAEL. Lynn—

LYNN. *(Quietly:)* I still see them.

MICHAEL. Lynn, you're just tired.

LYNN. Not tired. And they're walking toward me.

MICHAEL. It's late. You're just dreaming.

LYNN. No.

MICHAEL. *Think* you see them. You're just falling asleep.

(LYNN shakes her head 'no.')

MICHAEL. Just as I'm falling asleep, I think I see my father. It doesn't mean—

LYNN. No. I see them. Boys. Girls. With their arms reaching out. All five of them heading straight at me, then walking past. And I can't stop them.

MICHAEL. You said five. There have been four. How could you lose another and not even tell me?

LYNN. It's you sweet boy. The last one I lost is you.

I Have a Plan

(MICHAEL and LYNN exit.)

(CARLOS enters.)

CARLOS. (*Speaks to the audience:*) After many months of the dating, I make a list. Things I am to remember. That I have learn. I call it, 'I Have a Plan.' Maybe this will help you.

- #1. On the first date, always meet in the public. It is harder to be stab over coffee then at his apartment.
 - #2. Always meet at a place you have never been. That way, if the date goes bad, at least I try that new restaurant.
 - #3. He must be nice to the waiter. The way he treats the waiter is the way he treats you in 6 months. If he is not nice to the waiter, it is time to go.
 - #4. If he does not make me laugh, goodbye.
 - #5. If I do not make him laugh, goodbye.
 - #6. If he wears shoes with the tassels, goodbye.
 - #7. He must have at least a full size bed and matching sheets. If there is no room for me in his bed, there is no room for me in his heart.
 - #8. If he pays the check this does not make him Mr. Right, but it does make him more appealing.
 - #9. He must make me want to dance.
- And of course,
- #10. There must be magic.

Bolivar #2

(CARLOS exits.)

(*Elizabeth's apartment. Also Jemma's bedroom. 5 days after their first "date."*)

(JEMMA enters, wearing her backpack and iPod earbuds. She sits in a chair, with her backpack and feet up on another. She takes out a notebook and starts to write.)

(ELIZABETH enters on the phone.)

(Jemma's home phone rings. JEMMA pulls out her earbuds, picks up the phone receiver and says nothing.)

ELIZABETH. (After a moment.) Hello?

JEMMA. Yeah.

ELIZABETH. Jemma?

JEMMA. Uh huh.

ELIZABETH. It's Elizabeth Cunningham.

JEMMA. Hold on a sec...

(She does nothing. Then:)

JEMMA. Yeah.

ELIZABETH. Hello?

JEMMA. What?

ELIZABETH. I just said—

JEMMA. Oh, right.

ELIZABETH. How are you?

JEMMA. (Speaks normally, without a stuffed nose:) I got a sinus infection. It sucks. Why?

ELIZABETH. Are you taking anything for it?

JEMMA. That shit'll kill you. I'd rather die from natural causes. If you want to talk to my dad—

ELIZABETH. Actually, I don't.

JEMMA. ...'Cause he's not here. Big surprise. Right?

ELIZABETH. Right. Well, anyway—

JEMMA. He probably won't be home 'til at least 11, so—

ELIZABETH. Well, I just called to say 'hello'—

JEMMA. That's it?

ELIZABETH. Pardon?

JEMMA. I figure you called for something. I mean, you called so—

ELIZABETH. Right. I just happened to notice that the Historical Society is sponsoring a walking tour of the statues of Central Park, and you'll never guess where it starts...

JEMMA. You're not getting all dyke-y on me, are you?

ELIZABETH. Jemma, I just—

JEMMA. 'Cause if you are, it's o.k. I just want to know where I stand.

ELIZABETH. It just sounded like something—

JEMMA. Where?

ELIZABETH. —a young girl would enjoy.

JEMMA. ...Does it start? Where?

ELIZABETH. At the statue of Bolivar.

JEMMA. When?

ELIZABETH. Saturday at noon. Look, if you're busy...

JEMMA. I'll be there.

ELIZABETH. Are you sure you—?

JEMMA. I said I'll go. If I can't make it, I'll just send my dad.

ELIZABETH. Please don't do that.

JEMMA. Don't worry. One asshole in this family's enough.

ELIZABETH. Well, then. I'll see you Saturday at noon.

JEMMA. Right. (*Mumbles:*) Thanks.

ELIZABETH. What?

JEMMA. I said thank you.

ELIZABETH. You're welcome. See you.

JEMMA. Whatever.

(They hang up. JEMMA smiles.)

Before Dreams #2

(ELIZABETH and JEMMA exit. HARRY enters.)

(A park bench. Afternoon. HARRY sits, places a napkin on his lap. Peels and eats an orange.)

(MICHAEL [MIKEY] enters and goes to him. Sits.)

MIKEY. I'm looking for my father. Do you know where he is?

HARRY. I don't know. What does he look like?

MIKEY. You.

(A beat.)

HARRY. If I see anyone around here who fits that description, I'll let him know.

MIKEY. What do you want from me?

HARRY. I don't know that I want anything from you?

MIKEY. Then why do you come here?

HARRY. I was just sitting here.

MIKEY. On this bench?

HARRY. Yes.

MIKEY. Eating an orange.

HARRY. Yes. You're the one who came and sat down.

MIKEY. You want me to go? Is that what you want?

HARRY. Whatever makes you happy.

MIKEY. And what's that?

HARRY. *(Re: orange:)* You want a piece?

MIKEY. No.

And what's that?

HARRY. What?

MIKEY. What you were saying?

HARRY. Did I say something?

MIKEY. Stop playing games with me.

HARRY. Was I playing games?

MIKEY. Stop it. I want to know.

HARRY. Know what?

MIKEY. Why you did it?

HARRY. Did what?

MIKEY. Ran off, Jesus. *(Calmly:)* Why you ran off?

HARRY. You want an answer.

MIKEY. Yes.

HARRY. To understand.

MIKEY. Yes.

HARRY. You should know that one.

MIKEY. I was 9 years old. You have a wife and son. Then one day, gone. How am I supposed to know?

HARRY. Just look at yourself.

MIKEY. Fuck you.

HARRY. Mikey, don't say that.

MIKEY. What?

HARRY. The 'f' word. Don't say that. That's not nice.

MIKEY. (*Incredulous:*) It's *my* fault you ran off.

HARRY. That's not what I said.

MIKEY. I was 9 years old, you asshole.

HARRY. Or the 'a' word. We don't say the 'f' word or the 'a' word.

MIKEY. "Just look at yourself?"

HARRY. That's what I said. All I meant was—

MIKEY. I know what you meant.

HARRY. The same impulse.

MIKEY. As you?

HARRY. Yes.

MIKEY. No.

HARRY. Desire.

MIKEY. No.

HARRY. Need.

MIKEY. I don't need this from you.

HARRY. To escape. To run away. I see it in you. Just one step away from the nearest train. I can see it in your eyes.

(HARRY offers him an orange section.)

HARRY. C'mon, have a piece of orange. Vitamin C.

MIKEY. No.

HARRY. Mikey.

MIKEY. I didn't say—

HARRY. You don't have to. I know.

MIKEY. I'm not going anywhere.

HARRY. Not yet. But soon. And I forgive you.

MIKEY. I don't want your forgiveness.

HARRY. How could you, when you don't know how to give it?

(HARRY leans over and pinches MIKEY hard.)

MIKEY. Ow!

HARRY. Are you awake now?

MIKEY. I want you to leave.

HARRY. You're the one who sat down, remember.

MIKEY. I want you to go.

HARRY. You want me to run.

MIKEY. Yes.

HARRY. To run off.

MIKEY. Yes.

HARRY. Like you will.

MIKEY. I'm not going anywhere.

HARRY. Not yet.

MIKEY. No.

HARRY. But soon.

MIKEY. No.

HARRY. Like your Dad.

MIKEY. Not you. No.

HARRY. Even when you sit there, one foot already out the door. It isn't hard, Mikey. A step.

(HARRY pats MIKEY on the knee and rises.)

HARRY. Closer than you think.

(HARRY takes the remaining orange in his napkin. Exits. He is gone.)

City of Lost Souls # 4
The Chair #2/ Bolivar #3
Gone

(MICHAEL *exits.*)

(*The #4 train into Manhattan. Night.*)

(MAX and NOLA enter and sit on the train.)

(*From her bag, NOLA takes out the book, "The Unicorn." She quotes from memory.*)

NOLA. "Questions. Questions," said the Unicorn. "Why so many questions?"

"Not all of them have answers," replied the Princess.
And they were both silent.

(*She hands him back the book.*)

MAX. I just want you to understand—

NOLA. And they were both silent.

(MAX *says nothing. They ride.*)

(*Hi-tech store.*)

(JEMMA enters, wearing her sweatshirt and earbuds. She goes to the two massage chairs. Plops her backpack on one chair. Sits in the one next to it, tries to settle in.)

(*Lynn and Michael's apartment. Night.*)

(MICHAEL enters. Puts some clothes in his suitcase. He exits.)

(*Hi-Tech store. Continued.*)

(BOBBY enters. He looks around, but finds no Heather. Also, no empty chair. He goes to the two massage chairs. JEMMA, wearing earbuds, ignores him. BOBBY motions to the backpack, hoping JEMMA will move it. Annoyed, she does, dropping it on the floor beside her. BOBBY sits in the empty chair.)

BOBBY. Thanks.

JEMMA. What?

(BOBBY shakes his head 'no,' not wanting to disturb her. His bag on his lap, he takes out a pair of headphones. Checks them for 'left' and 'right'.)

(JEMMA tries to get comfortable in the chair.)

JEMMA. This chair sucks.

(BOBBY puts on his headphones, starts his chair.)

(Arms across his bag, his eyelids slowly close as he sinks down into the chair. Exhales. They both sit, not speaking.)

(Lynn and Michael's apartment.)

(MICHAEL re-enters and packs a few last clothes. He shuts the suitcase, starts to zipper it.)

(LYNN enters. A moment.)

(MICHAEL finishes zipping the suitcase. He takes it, starts to leave. Touches LYNN's arm, as he exits.)

(MAX & NOLA continue to ride the train.)

The Beach

(LYNN, NOLA, MAX, JEMMA, and BOBBY exit.)

(The beach. A sunny day. Sound of the ocean.)

(LYNN helps SUE, who slowly walks with a cane. They sit on a bench on the boardwalk, look out at the water. After a moment:)

SUE. I'm going to die.

LYNN. Ma, you're not going to die.

SUE. Maybe not today or tomorrow but...

LYNN. We just saw Dr. Yeoh. (Pronounced: Yō.) That's not what she's saying.

SUE. (Dismissively:) Dr. Yeoh—

LYNN. Ma, she's head of research at one of the leading—

SUE. She could be head of my tuchas for all she's helped. Like throwing darts at a board, hoping something will stick. No more treatments.

LYNN. What are you even saying?

SUE. I've decided.

LYNN. We'll talk about it.

SUE. We are talking about it.

LYNN. What about Bobby?

SUE. You brother'll do what I tell him. I've had enough.

LYNN. You don't even want to try—

SUE. Ten months I've tried. Enough already. (*LYNN is about to speak.*)
Enough.

(A moment.)

SUE. Forty-three years we lived in that house. Only ten minutes from the beach, and you know what? This is the first time I've been here.

LYNN. Get out of here. Not once?

SUE. Well, maybe for dinner at the restaurant or over to the theater to see *Annie Get Her Gun* with what's-her-name—

LYNN. Lucie Arnaz.

SUE. Lucie Arnaz. But just to sit by the water— (*Shakes her head 'no.'*)

LYNN. So...? What do you think?

SUE. It's nice. It's very nice.

(LYNN just nods. They look out at the beach.)

Take the Lamp

(SUE and LYNN exit.)

(BOBBY enters, carrying a box with objects. He places it down.)

(LYNN also enters with a box, which she puts down.)

(The house in which they grew up. LYNN and BOBBY go through their parents' possessions. They look at things and wrap them as they talk.)

BOBBY. You want the lamp?

LYNN. I don't know. You want it?

BOBBY. If you don't want it.

LYNN. If you like it, then take it.

BOBBY. It's not like I need it. (*Holds it for her.*) What do you think?

LYNN. It's o.k., I guess.

BOBBY. Then take it.

LYNN. Why? You think it's ugly?

BOBBY. No, it's nice. It's a nice lamp. You'll turn it on, you'll think of mom.

LYNN. Maybe you should have it. It'll remind you of her.

BOBBY. It's fine. It's yours.

LYNN. I'm already taking more than you.

BOBBY. I don't care. It's just a lamp. Just take it.

LYNN. If you don't want it.

BOBBY. Fine. I'll keep it.

LYNN. Fine.

BOBBY. Fine.

(From the box, LYNN takes out Sue's matzo ball glass bowl.)

LYNN. What about this bowl?

(BOBBY shakes his head 'no.' LYNN wraps it for herself.)

LYNN. You miss her?

BOBBY. Of course I miss her. She was our mother.

LYNN. Right.

BOBBY. Don't you?

LYNN. Sure. A lot. I just— You want this clock?

BOBBY. *(Shakes his head 'no.')* Take it. Just what?

LYNN. *(Takes out and opens a small box with costume jewelry. As they talk, she looks though, maybe trying on a few pieces.)* Huh?

BOBBY. You started to say, "I just—"

LYNN. It's just different.

BOBBY. Well, duh.

LYNN. Duh, yourself. I just mean—

BOBBY. What?

LYNN. It's like when Dad died, mom was still around. So there was still this connection to him. And like us. Us as kids, I mean. You know?

BOBBY. Sure.

LYNN. But now, it's like I miss her. You know that. But I'm not her daughter anymore. Like the way she saw me, it doesn't exist. And I don't know—It's like there's something kind of freeing in that. That picture she had of me—it's gone. And I don't have to see myself through her eyes. I don't have to see me as a failure.

BOBBY. She didn't see you as a failure.

LYNN. Oh, come on.

BOBBY. How could you even think that?

LYNN. (*Shrugs.*) I just do.

BOBBY. (*Realizing.*) You think she thought of me as a failure?

LYNN. No.

BOBBY. Then why do you say—?

LYNN. Because it's true.

BOBBY. It's not true.

LYNN. In *her* eyes—

BOBBY. I don't know where you came up with—

LYNN. It was always that way. You were the prince. Then there was Lynn.

BOBBY. Why? Just because you couldn't have kids and Michael moved out and that Internet stock didn't work out exactly the way you thought—

LYNN. Thank you.

BOBBY. ...doesn't mean—

LYNN. It was way before all that.

BOBBY. You shouldn't think of yourself as a failure.

LYNN. I don't.

BOBBY. Then what difference does it make what she thought?

LYNN. See, you admit it.

BOBBY. I'm just saying— Did you ever ask her?

LYNN. Yeah, right.

BOBBY. Then how do you know?

LYNN. How did you know anything with Ma? All I'm saying—

BOBBY. What're you saying?

LYNN. Nothing.

BOBBY. Fine.

(*He looks at a stack of kid's paintings on paper.*)

BOBBY. I can't believe she kept all of these.

LYNN. (*Simply.*) Of course she kept them. You painted them.

BOBBY. When I was like 5.

(*Reads painting's title.*)

"Orange Cat in a Snow Storm."

(Laughs slightly.)

Why do you think she kept them all?

LYNN. Why do you think? She always saw you as an artist.

BOBBY. I know.

LYNN. Even when you didn't. Everybody else's mother sees them as this doctor or lawyer. You...the next Picasso.

BOBBY. You think that's easy?

LYNN. What?

BOBBY. Always being the prince.

LYNN. Yeah, it's tough being royalty.

BOBBY. No, I just—

LYNN. What?

BOBBY. Nothing.

LYNN. Keep the paintings.

(He just looks at her. She nods.)

BOBBY. Right.

LYNN. *(From the box, she takes out an old gray wool coat.)* What about this old coat?

BOBBY. It must've been Daddy's. Give it away.

(She puts their father's old gray wool coat in the 'giveaway' pile.)

BOBBY. Whose eyes then?

LYNN. What?

BOBBY. If you don't see yourself through her eyes, whose eyes do you see yourself through?

LYNN. My own.

BOBBY. And do you like what you see?

LYNN. I'm trying.

BOBBY. Yeah.

LYNN. Yeah.

(They continue wrapping.)

Carlito

(LYNN and BOBBY exit, each carrying a box.)

(CARLOS enters.)

CARLOS. (*Speaks to the audience:*) I am walking down the street, and this is when it happens. I am walking past and I see in the window. And I stop. His eye, it catches mine. Like I never see. So dark it is black like the night. His skin, it, how do you say, it shines? It is, you know, shimmer. I go inside and that is it for me. I call him Carlito. It means little Carlos. He is so beautiful. I love to watch him sleep, to breathe, to move. We love to dance. And you know, sometimes heaven, it arrives when you least expect. Just walking down the street and there he is—the most fantastic boa constrictor I has ever seen.

Missing You

(CARLOS exits.)

(MICHAEL enters and stands outside, by “the door” to LYNN’s apartment.)

(LYNN enters and is surprised to see him.)

MICHAEL. Hey—

LYNN. Michael, what are you doing here?

MICHAEL. I just wanted to talk to you.

LYNN. Why didn’t you call?

MICHAEL. I just want to talk. Can I come in?

LYNN. C’mon.

(*They enter.*)

LYNN. You want something to drink or—

MICHAEL. (*Shakes his head ‘no.’*) But if you—

LYNN. No.

(*A beat.*)

MICHAEL. You look good.

LYNN. Not really. But thanks.

MICHAEL. How’s your mom’s house going?

(LYNN indicates so/so.)

MICHAEL. Right.

LYNN. Right.

MICHAEL. Sorry.

(LYNN *nods.*)

MICHAEL. You ever think about forgiveness?

LYNN. (*Laughs slightly.*) What kind question is that?

MICHAEL. I don't know. (*Sits.*) I just been thinking—

LYNN. You mean someone specific?

(*Sits.*)

MICHAEL. Just like, in general. You know.

LYNN. What do I know from forgiveness. You remember my two aunts? (*He nods.*)

When they were teenagers, Aunt Anna was saving up for a new dresser and Aunt Harriet stole 25 cents from her drawer. 70 years they didn't talk and over a quarter.

MICHAEL. What if it's something bigger? Not money, but deeper than that.

LYNN. How deep?

MICHAEL. Like basic. As deep as it gets.

LYNN. I don't know. Maybe you have to get really mad. As mad as you really are at the other person. Then maybe you have to get mad at yourself.

MICHAEL. For what?

LYNN. Whatever you did to make it happen.

MICHAEL. What if you didn't do anything?

LYNN. Then maybe you have to forgive yourself for that. I tried.

(*He looks at her.*)

LYNN. To forgive myself. For losing our babies.

MICHAEL. Lynn timer, there was nothing you did. That you could've done different.

LYNN. I know.

MICHAEL. It wasn't like you did anything.

(LYNN *nods. Shakes her head, laughs slightly.*)

MICHAEL. What?

LYNN. You come to me for advice and I'm the one who winds up crying.

MICHAEL. Lynn—

LYNN. I'm o.k.

MICHAEL. You sure?

(LYNN nods.)

MICHAEL. I miss you.

LYNN. Don't.

MICHAEL. I really miss you.

(He gently touches her finger. Strokes her hair.)

MICHAEL. I should go.

LYNN. Right.

(She kisses him. As the two of them kiss...)

Bolivar #4

(LYNN exits, followed by MICHAEL.)

(The Statue of Bolivar. Morning.)

(NOAH, a teenager around 15, enters and sits on the arm of a park bench, with his feet up on the seat.)

(JEMMA enters. She looks for ELIZABETH, who is late. She wears a T-shirt that reads, "Kidneys for Kids.")

NOAH. You know what time it is?

(JEMMA shows him her watch.)

Thanks.

You like Bolivar?

(JEMMA just looks at him.)

What, Jemma?

JEMMA. Like am I supposed to know you or something?

NOAH. I thought you'd look more like Anne Hathaway.

JEMMA. What?

NOAH. My aunt said she'd meet us at the boathouse after the tour of the park.

JEMMA. Your aunt?

(He nods. As she realizes, she laughs to herself slightly—a mix of amused and annoyed.)

JEMMA. Oh... Well, thanks for the message.

NOAH. She said you'd be hot.

JEMMA. I met your aunt. I don't think so.

NOAH. Whatever. *(Re: her shirt:)* Kidneys for kids. What is that, like a band?

JEMMA. Uh huh.

NOAH. Their t-shirt sucks.

JEMMA. I didn't wear it for you. Besides, it's supposed to be like ironic.

NOAH. It still sucks.

JEMMA. Thanks.

(He looks at her shirt.)

JEMMA. Ew!

(Folds her arms over her chest.)

NOAH. I was just reading it.

JEMMA. Yeah, right.

NOAH. I'm Noah.

JEMMA. Like the ark.

NOAH. Like I haven't heard that before. I hate that. My whole life. Like I didn't even pick that name. Next thing you'll be buying me some wall hanging with like pockets and these matching animal finger puppets. And I'll be all like, thanks—like I don't already have one.

JEMMA. I'm not buying you any finger puppets.

NOAH. It's like you tell me your name and I'm like, "Jemma. Like the diamond."

JEMMA. That doesn't even make any sense.

NOAH. Like you haven't heard that before.

JEMMA. Not once.

NOAH. Lie.

JEMMA. No.

NOAH. Big lie.

JEMMA. It's like a diamond isn't a "Jemma." It's like not even a gem.

NOAH. What is it then?

JEMMA. It's a diamond, duh.

NOAH. O.k., so like I bring this big bag to this Hasidic guy on 47th Street and he looks inside and there are emeralds and rubies and what? like topaz and shit, and he looks through and says, "Here's your diamond back. Sorry, I only deal in gems."

JEMMA. That is so Anti-Semitic.

NOAH. I'm just making a point.

JEMMA. A stupid one.

NOAH. Like you'd know.

JEMMA. Trust me.

NOAH. Whatever.

(They do not speak. After a beat, he notices:)

NOAH. The tour's starting.

(JEMMA doesn't move.)

JEMMA. So where we headed?

Before Dreams #3

(JEMMA exits, followed by NOAH. HARRY enters.)

(A park bench. Approaching night. HARRY sits, places a napkin on his lap. Peels and eats an orange. HARRY seems a bit older and more tired.)

(MICHAEL [MIKEY] enters. He sees HARRY, stops a second. Then crosses and joins him.)

(Sits.)

MIKEY. I've been looking for my father. Do you know where he is?

HARRY. I don't know. What does he look like?

MIKEY. You.

(As kid:) Hi Dad.

HARRY. Hi, Mikey.

MIKEY. *(As kid:)* What's up?

(HARRY says nothing.)

(As kid:) What's up?

(HARRY says nothing.)

(As adult:) Now you say—

HARRY. Nothing much.

MIKEY. And...

(No response.)

And...

(No response. A moment. Simply:)

I love you, too.

And now you leave.

HARRY. Michael—

MICHAEL. *(Simply:)* It's time for you to leave.

(HARRY takes the remainder of the orange in his napkin. He starts off. MICHAEL watches him go. He is gone.)

The Chair #3

(MICHAEL exits.)

(Late afternoon. BOBBY enters the hi-tech store. He looks around, then heads over the massage chair. Sits. He takes off his shoes.)

(From his bag, BOBBY takes out his headphones. Checks them for 'left' and 'right,' then puts them on for music. With his bag and picture I.D. on his lap, he sinks down into the chair.)

(HEATHER enters. She sees BOBBY and goes to him. She lifts up one ear of his headphones:)

HEATHER. Where have you been?

BOBBY. *(Sits up, removes headphones.)* What?

HEATHER. Been? We've been wondering, Bobby.

BOBBY. Oh. Right.

HEATHER. *(Sits.)* We've seen you pass by the store but—

BOBBY. I've been kinda busy lately. Should I go? Is your manager...?

HEATHER. Oh, they caught her stealing a talking espresso machine. Guess who's manager now.

BOBBY. Congratulations.

HEATHER. Jiggle away.

BOBBY. That's great.

I want to show you something.

(He starts to open his bag. As she tries to peek in, he pulls his bag away slightly. He takes out a small package wrapped in brown craft paper.)

HEATHER. What's this?

BOBBY. *(Hands it to her.)* Open it.

(She removes a small painting on canvas. Looks.)

HEATHER. Is this me?

BOBBY. By a brook. Light streaming in. I figured—

HEATHER. I look fat.

BOBBY. No.

HEATHER. Really fat.

BOBBY. No. It's just the perspective.

HEATHER. Is my bum really that pudgy?

BOBBY. No, you have a very nice bum.

HEATHER. You think?

BOBBY. I didn't mean...

(An admission:)

BOBBY. Yeah. You do.

HEATHER. Thank you.

(She holds the painting as though going to keep it.)

BOBBY. I just wanted to show you.

HEATHER. It's lovely.

BOBBY. It wasn't a gift or anything.

HEATHER. *(Meaning 'of course:')* No.

BOBBY. I mean if you want to look at it for a while or borrow it. I can make you a color Xerox or—

HEATHER. No, I—

(Hands it back.)

Aside from my pudgy bum, it's really quite good. Thanks.

BOBBY. *(Takes painting:)* Sure.

HEATHER. You're painting again.

BOBBY. Yeah, I guess it's kinda like this dream I had and...

HEATHER. A sleeping dream or a "Dream."

(She indicates 'big.')

BOBBY. No, nothing, so... *(He waves it away. Changes the subject:)* So today's my last day at the job. I'm taking a leave of absence.

HEATHER. How long?

BOBBY. Like six months. To paint. At least that's the idea.

HEATHER. That's fantastic.

BOBBY. I had saved up some money. I inherited a little too, so—

HEATHER. Your mum...? I remember she was ill so—

(BOBBY nods.)

HEATHER. I'm sorry.

BOBBY. That's o.k. Yeah, well...

HEATHER. Really sorry.

(BOBBY nods. A beat.)

BOBBY. So, anyway, I won't be around, so I figured I'd stop by.

HEATHER. That's good you did.

BOBBY. Before I left.

HEATHER. Right.

BOBBY. Right. Anyway...

(A moment.)

BOBBY. I should go.

(She nods. He starts to put on his shoes.)

HEATHER. Your dream.

(He stops.)

HEATHER. What was it? Earlier you started to say—

BOBBY. It's stupid.

HEATHER. Even so.

BOBBY. Right. Um, it's like there were all these paintings hanging over the city. Over the skyline. In this dream. They were just hanging there, and they were mine. I know it's kinda stupid, but it's like they were what? Just waiting for me.

HEATHER. Um hm.

BOBBY. All these people who I never even met somehow in them. The paintings. You don't know my mom. I mean how could you, but it's like she always saw me as this famous artist, and now that she's gone...

HEATHER. Maybe you can be.

BOBBY. I don't know about the famous part...

(They both laugh slightly. He just looks at her. An awkward moment. He wants to ask her something, but doesn't know how. He extends the painting, offering it to her. Simply.)

BOBBY. It's for you.

HEATHER. Bobby, I can't.

BOBBY. No, it's yours.

HEATHER. You sure?

(He nods.)

HEATHER. It's lovely. Thank you.

BOBBY. Sure.

(She nods.)

BOBBY. Sure. *(A beat.)* You mind if I ask you something?

HEATHER. Of course.

BOBBY. Um, you mind if I just sit here for a minute?

HEATHER. Take your time. *(She gently touches his arm.)* As long as you need. I'm here.

BOBBY. O.k. Thanks.

(HEATHER nods. She heads off to another part of the store, exits. BOBBY puts on the headphones. He unclips his picture I.D. from work and places it in his bag. He puts his bag down on the other massage chair. Exhales. Sinks into the chair.)

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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