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Playscripts, Inc.  
P.O. Box 237060  
New York, NY 10023

Phone/fax: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)  
Email: [questions@playscripts.com](mailto:questions@playscripts.com)  
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# Foreword

Why commission, produce and promote short plays?

- Not every dramatic idea has full-length potential, and so, with the ten-minute play, playwrights are provided a popular outlet for their less-than-full-length content.
- The form allows emerging playwrights the opportunity to succeed because it doesn't demand they sustain their young brilliance for more than ten pages.
- The form also teaches young and emerging playwrights to focus on conflict, theme, and character revelation in simultaneous and interconnected ways from the first page to the last.
- The form encourages established playwrights to experiment in ways that could become cumbersome if the experiments lasted more than ten minutes.
- A bill of ten-minute plays can represent the diversity of the American experience far better than a single play.
- For classroom work, the ten-minute play beats scenes from longer plays because all the information, all the clues, all the questions and choices for student actors are in the text being performed.
- For young directors and designers, the ten-minute play makes all the production demands of a longer play—metaphor, theme, style, tone, rhythm, period, and function—yet does so at a length that's reasonable for students to work with.
- A ten-minute play invites thematic rigor and character specificity, since each action, each line, each idea can be significant.
- The idea of an evening of ten-minute plays offers the opportunity for many writers to work from a common source: Shakespeare's sonnets, Chekhov's short stories, and the Bill of Rights, to name three such successful projects.

- These plays create tremendous energy. As single plays, like the life of a fruit fly, they must quickly come to life and be active before they meet their sudden end. In an evening comprised of several works, each play resembles a song in a musical revue, gaining distinctiveness and power through contrast and variety.
- An evening of these short works also allows multiple opportunities for actors to display their talents in more than one role. It's like a rep company, an eight-play season, but all in one evening. How delicious is that?
- A ten-minute play can contain the seed of a larger play—just ask Paula Vogel how she got started on her Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *How I Learned to Drive*.
- Because the power and poetry of each play exist in its details—ten-minute plays are all about detail—each work stands as a time capsule for our concerns, our methods, our ethics, and our actions. They represent our culture writ small and an evening of these short works creates a mosaic of our lives, a fragmented mirror of this moment in time.

Michael Bigelow Dixon  
Artistic Associate/Literary Director  
Guthrie Theater

*Minneapolis, Minnesota*  
2003

**FAIRY TALE**  
**by Tracey Wilson**

## **Cast of Characters**

MAN

WOMAN

# FAIRY TALE

by Tracey Wilson

*(Lights up on a MAN and WOMAN. They are yelling at passing cars.)*

**MAN.** Love is like a checkout line.

**WOMAN.** If you are patient, you will be next.

**MAN.** Drive your cart down the aisle of peace.

**WOMAN.** And your item will always be in stock.

**MAN.** Friendship can't be found in the bargain bin.

**WOMAN.** You must pay the pre-sale price.

*(MAN and WOMAN face audience.)*

**MAN.** Once upon a time there was a couple with two children.

**WOMAN.** Who shopped at Wal-Mart.

**MAN.** They enjoyed shopping at Wal-Mart.

**WOMAN.** Two miles from home.

**MAN.** Wal-Mart employees always have a smile.

**WOMAN.** And, in Wal-Mart, the temperature is always perfect.

**MAN.** Warm in the winter.

**WOMAN.** Cool in the summer.

**MAN.** In-between in the spring.

**WOMAN.** We shop and shop and shop and shop.

**MAN.** Sometimes for hours. Wal-Mart has everything.

**WOMAN.** Clothing and furniture.

**MAN.** Kitchen appliances and tools.

**WOMAN.** Shoes and jewelry.

**MAN.** Guns and food.

(WOMAN *gestures to children.*)

**WOMAN.** Come on kiddies.

**MAN.** It's Saturday!

**WOMAN.** Time to shop at Wal-Mart.

**MAN.** Let's go!

**WOMAN.** Into the cart. Wee-Wee-Wee.

**MAN / WOMAN.** Up and down the aisles.

**WOMAN.** Wee-Wee-Wee.

**MAN / WOMAN.** Up and down the aisles.

**MAN.** Sometimes though, the woman got tired of shopping at Wal-Mart.

**WOMAN.** (*To MAN:*) I swear these fluorescent lights are making me go blind. Why can't we do something else on Saturday? If I go to another Wal-Mart I'll die.

**MAN.** Promise?

**WOMAN.** Sometimes, the man got tired of shopping at Wal-Mart.

**MAN.** I want to watch the game. I want to relax.

**WOMAN.** Then wipe your ass with your hand because we're out of toilet paper.

**MAN.** So, they wound up going to Wal-Mart anyway.

**WOMAN.** (*In Wal-Mart with child—indifferently:*) OK, honey, let's get some toilet paper so Daddy can wipe his big, fat ass. Yes, honey. Yes. You can pick out the toilet paper. No, over there in the bargain bin. Over there. That's right, sweetheart. What? Just grab the toilet paper. What? It's calling my name? What? Look, just... (*Grabs toilet paper.*) AHHHHHHHHHHH! Talking toilet paper!!!!

**MAN.** (*In Wal-Mart with child:*) Hey, put that down. Put that down. No, I am not buying you a toy. We have to buy some tampons. Tampons. Your mother makes me get it to humiliate me. Humiliate me. She knows I hate it. But if I don't get it, she takes all day to shop

and then I miss my game. Huh? It stops the bad stuff from coming out of them. In their special private place. No, you can't use it. Put it down. Put it...What? It is not. It is not. Gimme that box. AHHHHHHHHH! AHHHHHHHHH! Talking tampons.

**WOMAN.** Everywhere in the store the man and woman went, the products were talking to them.

**MAN.** And every product said the same thing.

**WOMAN.** Stop shopping! Stop shopping! Stop shopping!  
**MAN.** Stop shopping! Stop shopping! Stop shopping!

**MAN.** AHHHHHHHHH! Talking tools!

**WOMAN.** AHHHHHHHHH! Talking spaghetti sauce!

**MAN.** AHHHHHHHHHHH!  
**WOMAN.** AHHHHHHHHHHH!

**MAN.** The man and woman ran amuck.

**WOMAN.** Smashing and knocking down shoppers and displays.

**MAN.** People in the store did not understand them.

**WOMAN.** And the Wal-Mart managers said they could never shop at Wal-Mart again, and if they did, something bad would happen to them.

**MAN.** The man and woman went home sad and confused.

**WOMAN.** What happened to us?

**MAN.** Are we crazy?

**WOMAN.** So, the man and woman began to talk.

**MAN.** And talk...

**WOMAN.** And talk...

**MAN.** And talk....

**WOMAN.** And soon they noticed they didn't fight as much.

**MAN.** Or yell at their children.

**WOMAN.** Or complain.

*(Pause.)*

They knew what they had to do.

**MAN.** Their house was two miles from Wal-Mart.

**WOMAN.** Many, many shoppers passed their house on the way to Wal-Mart.

**MAN.** Every Saturday, the couple would stand in front of their house and speak their message.

**WOMAN.**

ATTENTION WAL-MART  
SHOPPERS! ATTENTION WAL-  
MART SHOPPERS!

**MAN.**

ATTENTION WAL-MART  
SHOPPERS! ATTENTION WAL-  
MART SHOPPERS!

*(They shout to passing motorist.)*

**WOMAN.** You don't need to go shopping. Let love be your check-out line.

**MAN.** Let communication be your red-tag sale.

**WOMAN.** When you shop, you lock your feelings away in the bargain basement.

*(Pause.)*

At first people thought they were crazy.

**MAN.** *(As irate shopper:)* Communist! Go back to...uh...the former Soviet Republic...or one of their territories.

**WOMAN.** But, then, other shoppers told their stories.

**MAN.** *(As shopper—emotional:)* Since giving up Wal-Mart I've learned sewing, skydiving and several foreign languages. *(In French:)* Depuis que j'ai renoncé le Wal-Mart, j'ai appris à coudre, à sauter en chute libre, et à parler plusieurs langues étrangères.

*(Pause.)*

Wal-Mart began to worry.

**WOMAN.** All their customers were going away.

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**IN DARKNESS**  
**By Kevin Kling**

## **Cast of Characters**

MARY MAGDALENE

LAZARUS

GOD

ABRAHAM

NOAH'S WIFE

DAVID

MARY

JESUS

# IN DARKNESS

By Kevin Kling

**MARY MAGDALENE.**

don't be afraid of the dark  
in darkness my soul takes flight  
I am visited upon by dreams and burning epiphanies  
I traffic in the profane  
the love is rough  
the bride's burning bed  
the song of weeping and gnashing of teeth  
the twitching and wailing of infant souls  
the perversity of the sleepless  
in darkness my royalty is known  
I sing, I sing the world into existence

*(Lights up.)*

**LAZARUS.** Hey there are you the Lord my God?

**GOD.** I reckon I am what I appear to be.

**LAZARUS.** What you using.

**GOD.** Started out favorin' prophets and disciples, but lately I been haulin' in little 'uns with this little jolly white bearded fat man in a red suit.

**LAZARUS.** I'll let you get back to it. You seen David.

**GOD.** Thar's him yonder.

**LAZARUS.** Much obleeged, good luck.

**GOD.** Careful, yourn off the jogaffy now.

**LAZARUS.** I always promised myself upon entering the valley of bones, afore the Lord calls my soul, worms carve my thoughts and maggots make off with my good looks, I'd pop in a visit to the house a David. David?

**ABRAHAM.** No. Abraham.

**LAZARUS.** Lord a mercy, Abraham.

**ABRAHAM.** Yessir. I raised my knife and split the world in two.

**LAZARUS.** That's a trick.

**ABRAHAM.** Hark, now. How you answer my question I'll tell you which side you sit.

**LAZARUS.** You're on.

**ABRAHAM.** You know of how I came to be blessed with a son nigh on my ninetieth year.

**LAZARUS.** Common knowledge.

**ABRAHAM.** How the Lord then bade me to build a sacrificial pyre. I obliged, put my frogsticker to the stone and layed out the butcher paper. As per the recipe I placed my youngin upon the block and raised the blade.

**LAZARUS.** Mercy.

**ABRAHAM.** However, at the apex of my murderous act the Lord stayed my hand, the boy lived on and from him a nation was born. Let me ax you who was that boy?

**LAZARUS.** That boy was Isaac.

**ABRAHAM.** Had I not another son, Ismail? Did he not grow to create a nation? The house of Mohammad? Had you answered Ismail I would have seated you in Islam. You said Isaac and sit at the hem of David.

**LAZARUS.** That's good, I'll win some shekels at the inn with that one. But tell me, good Abraham, which child squirmed beneath the blade. Who are the chosen people?

**ABRAHAM.** To answer would be to raise one son in order to condemn the other and this I will not do. I raised my knife and split the world.

**GOD.** Hey, there's David now.

**LAZARUS.** David.

**NOAH'S WIFE.** Most of our young folks have moved away. Looking for a better life up to the cities. Not much good breeding stock

left to choose from, all gone up to Sondheim and Gomorrah. I was down to the A&P for some necessities. Ruth standing behind me at the register, awearing a big ol' coat, that coat had looked to fill out considerably since she'd entered. All of a sudden we all hear a thud and there at the feet of Ruth was a ham. What does Ruth say? She looks up and says, "Who threw that ham at me?" I know she was lying, her face looked liked every picture I ever seen of the President.

**LAZARUS.** King David. The Warrior King.

**DAVID.** You know I started out as a musicianer and a poet?

**LAZARUS.** I do know.

**NOAH'S WIFE.** Go on children, run on home. Them yellar clouds denote rain.

I says, "Noey, you go on and build your boat. Leave choosing of the animals to me." I know good stock, been breeding prize cattle twenty years. Basic rule of thumb: form follows function. You see a trait you like stay in the line, sire a father or a brother and lock it in. It's what God did with the flood. Good breeding plain and simple. Picked our family. But what he was thinking with Ruth I'll never know. She's way outside the line. I mean there's country and then there's rural. Well Ruth is rural. She's a Moabite, from Moab. But I guess God knows what he's doing. You children stop fighting, I don't care who cast the first stone I'm putting a stop to it. I'm serious we can only take two of you 'uns and I'll tell you right now nobody has a sure seat.

**DAVID.** No sooner had our marching band brung down the house at a parade in Jericho when we run up a blood feud with the Philistines' boys and that big simple minded 'un Goliath. The Lord god himself bade me to win the day. And I did. Whupped and gutted that slow footed giant with the Lord nestled right there in my heart.

**LAZARUS.** Glory Halleluyer.

**DAVID.** Yeah well. After Goliath I had the world by the tail and was a pullin' downhill.

**LAZARUS.** Mary.

**MARY.** Hello. Go on, David. Tell us of Bathsheba.

**NOAH'S WIFE.** Ha, there's another piece a work.

**DAVID.** When I first layed eyes on her person I thought she must be a god. But I observed Bathsheba cast a shadow which no god is able to do and then I wanted her. Above right and wrong. Like nothing else I have known.

**NOAH'S WIFE.** A good Name won't save a dog from hanging.

**DAVID.** Now the Lord puts things in our path for one of two reasons: it's either a gift or it's a test.

**MARY.** She was married wasn't she?

**DAVID.** Yes ma'am she was. But I had already reasoned she was a gift. I waved a hand and they took this young man, her husband, into the infantry front lines. I figured if God was on his side he would live and I would lose my love. He was killed. And soon I held Bathsheba in my arms.

**MARY.** Go on.

**DAVID.** Our first child was the purtiest child I ever seed borned. And he died shortly thereafter. I can't help but feel it was because of my actions that we lost the baby. We inherit the world from our children. The more we destroy the more is taken from them. Our next son Solomon seems sharp and attentive but this cost of wisdom. It is not cheap.

**MARY.** As often happens in the hollers and back country, I was a half-growed mountain girl, devoid of the ways of the world, and Joe was getting on in years when we was hitched. I liked him enough but we had not as yet 'ate of the fruit' when the Lord sent unto me an angel. I thought he was a revenuer, with Joe away to the capital. Me all alone, I leveled both barrels at the poor herald. 'Hold on,' he says, 'I'm not a revenuer. I'm a cherebum...' 'A what?' 'It's like a holy census taker. I'm trying to find out how many virgins are in these parts.' 'Mister, you come to the wrong place I got no idea.'

**LAZARUS.** I have this visage of a memory. It haunts me. Perhaps by giving it voice it will fly from me.

**MARY.** When Joe got home I told him, 'Honey a angel was here in the guise of a census taker and planted in me a holy seed.' And Joe brushed aside the tears streaming down my cheeks and he said, 'Then we will raise this holy child.' If any woman has a better man I don't believe it.

**LAZARUS.** There was this itty bitty bite-size boy. His personage was well attired and the boys I run with we took him in feeling his wealth and breeding may do us some service. Well after an evening of mischief, things a boy will do, we found ourselves in the hands of the law. The bite-sized boy fell fetal to the ground and hiccup cried the entire undertakings of the evening. The following evening we led that boy to the forest. He begged to be untied. 'At least leave my eyes unveiled for I greatly fear the dark.' A blindfold was furnished and placed about his head. We arrived in this secluded spot. 'If you do me one favor,' stammered the boy. 'This shirt was a gift from my mother, please leave it intact.' The shirt was ripped from his back. 'Not the boots,' then the boots. 'Not the trousers,' and then the trousers. Then the boy explained what not to do next. In a no time he led us down a path of pain and torture so magnificent it makes me shudder to this day. Finally we agreed. 'Alright we're through.' He shot back, 'No, no more.' We told him, 'We're not feeling very good about what we've already done' and we left him there pleading screaming for us not to continue.

Now it came to pass that Satan boasted through his wiles and tactics that he could bring any man to condemn the Lord. God took that bet and unveiled his champion, Job, the man above corruption, and lo and behold there stood that itty bitty bite-sized boy all grown up powdered pampered and rouged; a plump target for Satan. I quietly walked up and put all I owned on that boy. I became a wealthy man. I'm not saying it wasn't ugly but God doesn't lose a bet. I feel a bit better.

**GOD.** Howdy Jesus.

**JESUS.** Howdy Pa.

**MARY MAGDALENE.** Jesus.

**JESUS.** Miz Magdalene. Lazarus, we got be getting you back from beyond now.

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**THE JOY OF HAVING A BODY**  
by Julie Marie Myatt

## **Cast of Characters**

ANNA

STEVE

JIM

TED

MANNY

# THE JOY OF HAVING A BODY

by Julie Marie Myatt

*(TED and JIM lie on the floor, on top of each other. Then ANNA, then STEVE and MANNY lie on top of her. ANNA is in between them like a sandwich. She wears a bra and panties.)*

**ANNA.** OK. That's good. Very good. Nice. Good going boys.

*(The MEN begin to stand up, to free her.)*

Wow. Great stuff. I like that. Very nice. We should do that more often.

**STEVE.** Why?

**ANNA.** Why not?

**JIM.** Well, what's it for?

**ANNA.** I want you to all line up in row.

**TED.** Why?

**ANNA.** Jiminy Christmas. 'Why' this. 'Why' that. Line up.

*(The MEN line up. Facing her. ANNA walks around them.)*

Uh huh...uh huh... Good. Now. Let me see your stomachs.

**MEN.** Again?

**ANNA.** Lift up your shirts.

**STEVE.** Why—

**ANNA.** Lift!

*(The MEN reluctantly lift their shirts.)*

Hmm...well...yes...there you are. I suppose that will have to do, won't it. Ted, suck it in.

**TED.** I am.

*(ANNA touches his stomach. Kisses his lips.)*

**ANNA.** Hmm...well then...perhaps...just, just keep the lights out.

*(She proceeds to touch each one of the MEN's stomachs.)*

Oh yes. Nice, Steve...very nice...firm...I see some men actually take my advice.

**STEVE.** Like you say, it's wild, it's tough out there—

**ANNA.** Those sit-ups are indeed paying off. Bring on the wash!

*(She scrubs his belly. STEVE blushes. She moves on to MANNY.)*

Oh my. Manny, my my my...your skin is certainly Very soft.

**MANNY.** That oil you gave me really works—

*(She places her own stomach against his.)*

**ANNA.** Yes. Oh yes. Indeed. She'll like this.

**MANNY.** I think so—I really hope so—

**ANNA.** Very much.

*(ANNA reluctantly pulls away.)*

**TED.** Anna, I'm sorry, but...but, uh...how much longer do we have to go through this?

**ANNA.** Until you get it right.

**TED.** Get what right? We've done Everything Known to Man—

**STEVE.** Enthusiastically tackling menial domestic chores.

**TED.** Marriage counseling. When to buy diamonds—

**MANNY.** Chakra release, Cross-country skiing, Tantric sex practices—

**JIM.** And it's getting boring.

*(The other men look at JIM. Nervous.)*

**ANNA.** What? I'm sorry, but I thought you said—what did you say?

**JIM.** I said, it's get—getting—

**ANNA.** "BORING." ...I have every right mind to keep you here.

*(The other men jump to attention.)*

So...You want to stay? Is that what you want? Huh?

**JIM.** No—

**ANNA.** I can arrange that. I can get you back that leash to eternity in two seconds flat—

**JIM.** No, no. I swear. I, I didn't mean to say—I just—

**ANNA.** There is Never a moment when this “is getting boring.” Never. You hear me?

**MEN.** Yes.

**ANNA.** JIM?

**JIM.** Loud, loud and clear. Anna.

**ANNA.** Anna who—

**JIM.** Anna my love—

**ANNA.** THIS is what you're going down there for. Am I correct?

**MEN.** Yes.

**ANNA.** THIS is what you're being sent to do. Correct?

**TED.** What, what about talking?

**ANNA.** Talking?

**TED.** Aren't we going to talk?

**ANNA.** Of course you are.

**TED.** I'd kind of like to have a nice conversation with her.

**ANNA.** Well, yes, Ted. Where have you been? That's expected—

**TED.** Then, then why have we spent all this time rubbing up against you, and flexing our muscles, and kissing your back?

**ANNA.** Oh...well...that was nice, wasn't it? Maybe we should do that again, just for—

**STEVE.** We were supposed to leave four days ago.

**MANNY.** Five. Actually.

**JIM.** More like twelve—

**ANNA.** Since when do we work in, in DAYS?

**STEVE.** Well—

**ANNA.** Time means nothing to us—

**STEVE.** But you said we were being rushed—

**ANNA.** Listen, this, this mission—this opportunity is not to be taken lightly. We have a serious problem down there.

**JIM.** We have all the moves, all the data now, Lamaze and—

**ANNA.** We've got ourselves a situation.

**TED.** Let us go take care of—

**STEVE / JIM / MANNY.** Yeah—

**ANNA.** It's of a magnitude that only We—well I—could intercept. Sure, they could've called the archs, the principalities, the dominions, the thrones—pffsh—though everyone knows they wouldn't really give a rat's ass, sitting up there on their high horse—

**JIM.** I'm a throne—

**ANNA.** They could've called the cherubs. Why not. They get all the good press. All those bare-assed paintings and rosey-cheeked smiles. Harps galore. Those jokers can't even hold a note, you know—

**TED.** I'm a cherub—

**ANNA.** They went straight to the top—who, who did they call? Hmm?

*(The MEN are silent.)*

**ANNA.** *(Whispers:)* Seraphim.

*(All the MEN roll their eyes, behind her back.)*

---

We put the high in celestial hierarchy. I'm cream of the crop, boys. God's girl. Top of the heap. I've reached the spiritual cathedral ceiling. I'm infinite. And they called me. Why?

**STEVE.** You were available?

*(The MEN laugh.)*

**ANNA.** That's beside the point—

**JIM.** And you do have some terrific legs—

**MANNY.** Really. Everybody says so—

**ANNA.** Because there is a serious situation at hand down there and they called in the TOP GUNS to handle it.

*(The MEN are still giggling—)*

Take off your pants.

*(The MEN stop laughing.)*

**TED.** Again?

**JIM.** Why?

**ANNA.** Hey! We've got a situation! Don't argue with me!

*(The MEN take off their pants.)*

When you have got women turned inside out down there...when they're dying their hair and crying on each other's shoulders...when every conversation turns to yet another male disappointment and lackluster event under the sheets...when they would rather get drunk alone on an expensive bottle of wine than go get smashed at a bar and go home with a 'decent enough' looking stranger...when they begin freezing their eggs because they can't meet one man who will commit to sit on the damn nest with them...you've not just got yourself a situation, you've got yourself a crisis.

**MANNY.** But—

**ANNA.** A CRISIS!

**STEVE.** We know what we're up against—

**ANNA.** You have been chosen, boys.

**MANNY.** I replaced someone, actually—

**ANNA.** CHOSEN! Among millions! Light years of men. For a most courageous job. America's future depends on you. A battle—

**JIM.** Let me go win it—

**STEVE / TED / MANNY.** Yeah, let us go—

**ANNA.** Against lost hope. You have got to go down there and be TRIUMPHANT. You have got to RESTORE FAITH! Yes. Faith! You have got to go down there and go where no man has gone... "in a very long time." You have to be limitless, boys; emotionally available and sexually ambitious, all wrapped in one warm delicious commitment... You have to be Home Sweet Home— Take off your shirts.

**MANNY.** But—

**ANNA.** You, you think the Devil's our Nemesis? Our red-headed stranger, perched on the other side of every shoulder? Be ready to meet FEAR! I'm telling you, you have got to go down there and outweigh FEAR. FEAR?! You know how hard that is?

*(The MEN begin to answer—)*

It's like trying to spin that earth in the opposite direction. Like stopping a train with your tooth. Like refolding a map in one go. Are you ready for that, boys? Really ready?...Steve?

**STEVE.** You can trust me... Please trust me?

*(ANNA walks closer to him, nodding. She gently touches his neck, his shoulders.)*

**ANNA.** You have got to be all that they have lost faith in.

**STEVE.** I'm not going to leave you for someone younger.

*(She moves over to MANNY. Touches his stomach.)*

**ANNA.** All that they are afraid doesn't exist anymore.

**MANNY.** I am listening to you. I'm listening to what you don't say.

ANNA. All that their bodies crave.

MANNY. Where shall I touch you first?

*(She moves on to JIM.)*

ANNA. All that they've missed so very much.

JIM. You're the one I want to marry. How many kids shall we have? Oh, let's have a big family.

*(She looks the MEN over as she moves to TED.)*

ANNA. Great men.

TED. Hand me your heart.

MEN. I'm here. Bold. I won't desert you.

ANNA. You must be...Earth's most glorious gift...solace...

MEN. I'm not afraid of you.

*(She lays her head on TED's chest. TED touches her hair. Lovingly.)*

ANNA. Heaven's pleasures on human flesh. Oh dear sweet skin. (I miss you.) The happy calm. The body's song. Lullabies they don't want to forget...

MEN. Come closer. Come closer. Open up...Lean into me.

ANNA. The swaying backs...limbs together...breath held...chorus.

MEN. Don't be afraid. I love you. You're not alone.

*(The MEN all reach for her.)*

You're not alone.

*(ANNA slowly lifts her head off TED's chest. Then quickly. Gathers herself.)*

ANNA. Oh. Yes. Well. Yes. I think you're ready for the job. Yes. Geez. Of course you're ready. Yes. Sure. Time is wasting.

*(The MEN begin to gather their clothes.)*

JIM. It's a crisis, right? We really better get out there.

MANNY. They're waiting, right?

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**THE NEW NEW**  
**by Kelly Stuart**

## **Cast of Characters**

JENNY

MARCY

BRADLEY

CRAIG

NAOMI, African-American

# THE NEW NEW

by Kelly Stuart

*(JENNY and MARCY in one “office” area—they are stapling brochures. BRADLEY and CRAIG in another office—they are actually separated by a long corridor, but should be represented as being in isolated areas of the stage.)*

**JENNY.** I’m going to have an affair with him.

**MARCY.** But Jenny, you’re failing his class.

**JENNY.** He says I can take an incomplete if I want, and he’ll help me make it up over the summer.

**BRADLEY.** I need a new word for new.

**CRAIG.** Fresh.

**BRADLEY.** Too hip hop. This is more white.

**CRAIG.** *(Opening a thesaurus:)* Thesaurus check.

*(NAOMI, a nervous, down at the heel woman appears and stands, hoping to engage MARCY and JENNY’s attention.)*

**MARCY.** Isn’t he what, like, uh, married?

**JENNY.** Yeah, but we have this INTENSE CONNECTION. It’s like, ECONOMICS is not my forte. I find the whole subject abysmal. But he’s got this *precision of mind* and I want that. I think that’s what’s *missing* in me, and I’m *so*, like, *attracted* to that.

**NAOMI.** I’m here to see, Bradley Zuckerman?

*(JENNY and MARCY look at her, deciding she’s a nonentity.)*

**CRAIG.** *(Reading:)* Fresh, modern. Modernistic. Neoteric.

**BRADLEY.** Neoteric?

*(They shrug in unison. CRAIG continues.)*

**CRAIG.** Novel. Newfangled. Newsprung. Revived. Reinvigorating.

**BRADLEY.** “...Reinvigorated the genre of prison memoir.”

**CRAIG.** That's stale.

**BRADLEY.** It's become stale to say something is NEW. What's the new *new*? We need the new NEW.

**MARCY.** Did you ask me a question?

**NAOMI.** Bradley Zuckerman?

**MARCY.** Do you have an appointment?

**NAOMI.** When is he back?

**MARCY.** Do you have an appointment?

**NAOMI.** When is he back.

**JENNY.** Do you have an appointment?

**NAOMI.** I'll wait.

**MARCY.** We discourage that.

**JENNY.** He's not coming in. He's with marketing. So you would simply be wasting your time.

**NAOMI.** Where's marketing?

*(MARCY turns back to JENNY, leaving NAOMI standing awkwardly. They whisper to each other, occasionally looking NAOMI's way. NAOMI watches. They giggle.)*

**BRADLEY.** A laser-sharp vision. The voice. The, something, vision and voice. His. New. The...What. There's no more words.

**CRAIG.** I liked Neoteric.

**BRADLEY.** Nobody will know what that means.

**CRAIG.** A powerful neoteric account of the agony behind prison walls.

**BRADLEY.** I'm sorry, that sounds like gobbledygook. Um...deadpan, self-deprecating and, witty. But it's also new and it's important we say that.

**CRAIG.** It's a first novel.

**BRADLEY.** It's a memoir.

**CRAIG.** Actually, we can't call it a memoir. It's a kind of memoiristic novel.

**BRADLEY.** Why can't we call it a memoir.

**CRAIG.** Legal affairs said—

**BRADLEY.** Okay it's a novel in the form of a memoir, based on real life authentic experience.

*(NAOMI continues to stand looking at the women. They ignore her. Their conversation has become audible again.)*

**JENNY.** There is like, so much electricity there. When he's looking at me, it's like I get zapped.

**MARCY.** Well I really want you to meet this guy.

**JENNY.** The writer?

**MARCY.** Yeah. Jimmy.

**BRADLEY.** The absurdity and the agony of life as a convict.

**CRAIG.** Agony isn't a word that sells.

**BRADLEY.** Agonizing, and yet entertaining.

**CRAIG.** That sounds so "People Magazine."

*(They scan a thesaurus.)*

**JENNY.** What does he write about?

**MARCY.** Um, prison. Jail. The penal system.

**JENNY.** Oh.

**MARCY.** He had like, an MBA from Yale but I think he was like, convicted of manslaughter.

**JENNY.** Oh. A murderer.

**MARCY.** Manslaughter. I think. It was accidental. Self defense. Some kind of fight, with this guy named Monster. This six foot two three hundred pound monster. An accidental death that he was convicted of—I guess, I guess, he pled guilty.

**JENNY.** Oh.

**MARCY.** To spare something, more like, the death penalty. I mean, I guess he cut a deal.

*(JENNY notices NAOMI staring at her.)*

**JENNY.** Can we help you with something else?

**NAOMI.** Who are you talking about?

**MARCY.** I'm going to have to ask you to leave, okay?

**NAOMI.** I need to see Bradley Zuckerman.

**MARCY.** Leave a number and go or I'll have to call security.

**NAOMI.** I'd like to know who you're talking about.

**JENNY.** Did you not hear us? Do we HAVE to call security?

*(NAOMI abruptly leaves. The two women shake their heads in disgust.)*

**MARCY.** These people will do anything to make you take a manuscript. Anyway he's—he's just really charismatic and charming and smart. I mean, it is so odd, when you meet him, you'll see, what an odd juxtaposition to think of this guy in prison. I mean, I'm really FOND of him. And his writing is really super evocative of the, you know of the Kafkaesque nature of life in prison. He's sexy too.

**JENNY.** So why don't you sleep with him?

**MARCY.** I'm trying to be monogamous now. And Bradley is like, editing his book. I can't do that. Sleep with the guy Bradley edits.

*(NAOMI makes a cross past the stage. Disappears.)*

**BRADLEY.** I used to get these calls from prison, collect calls every Tuesday. I thought of these calls as my "Tuesdays with Jimmy," he was just this witty, sardonic ethnographer of prison life...of the ingenuity. And the angle, the *engagement* I found with the theme of this—*civilized business executive* locked up with all these *illiterate thugs*, and how he survived.

**CRAIG.** I love that he used like, sales techniques.

**BRADLEY.** Yes.

**CRAIG.** Stuff he learned from corporate sales seminars: Body language mirroring.

**BRADLEY.** I guess it all works.

*(For a beat, they mirror each other's body language. NAOMI enters and stares at them. They ignore her.)*

**CRAIG.** In a way it doesn't matter how we market this thing because film rights have already gone to Ben Stiller.

**BRADLEY.** Really?

**CRAIG.** Mike Medavoy loved it. The release will coincide with the movie.

**BRADLEY.** But that's...I mean, there's a literary value.

**CRAIG.** It's great. Ben Stiller.

**BRADLEY.** Ben Stiller. That's great.

**NAOMI.** Excuse me—

**CRAIG.** It's a comedy. That's how they see it. It's going to sell like a motherfucker.

**NAOMI.** Is this marketing?

**CRAIG.** Yes.

**NAOMI.** I'm looking for Bradley Zuckerman.

**CRAIG.** Bradley—

**BRADLEY.** He doesn't work here. You have the wrong department.

**NAOMI.** I was told he's in marketing.

**MARCY.** I just think you'd have more in common with him than with your economics professor.

**JENNY.** Why? Because he's a criminal?

**MARCY.** But he's not really.

**BRADLEY.** No, uh, he works in creative development.

**NAOMI.** But they said in his office that he was in here.

**BRADLEY.** No. He's not here. Have you seen him Craig?

**CRAIG.** Haven't seen him.

**BRADLEY.** Would you like to leave a message for him?

**CRAIG.** I'm sorry. You really can't wait here. Would you like to leave him a message?

*(He hands her a note pad. She stands looking at it. She begins to write, furiously.)*

**MARCY.** Being convicted of manslaughter had nothing to do with the arc of his life. It was just, this aberration.

**JENNY.** Who did he kill again?

**MARCY.** This drug dealer guy. The stuff he's seen. You're going to like him. I told him about you, he's interested in meeting you.

**JENNY.** So he's like,—out?

**MARCY.** On parole.

*(NAOMI has finished writing.)*

**NAOMI.** Will you make sure Bradley Zuckerman gets this?

**BRADLEY.** Certainly.

*(NAOMI gives them the pad of paper and exits. The men giggle.)*

**BRADLEY.** Oh my god that was close.

**CRAIG.** “No I'm not Bradley.”

**BRADLEY.** “BRADLEY? NO. I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM.” Anyway, Jesus. What does she want?

*(CRAIG is reading the pad of paper. He hands it to BRADLEY.)*

**BRADLEY.** My brother's name was Jeremy. Not Monster. He was five foot three one hundred thirty pounds. Not six foot two, three hundred fifty. My brother was tortured and strangled over the course of a two hour period. The shape of a turtle and a steer were imprinted on my brother's neck, from the cowboy belt your so-called “author” used. My brother's face was badly beaten, bones protruded from his bloody face. My brother was a medical assis-

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**PLEASURE CRUISE**  
by Kira Obolensky

## **Cast of Characters**

MAN

WOMAN

Various roles, including:

WAITER,  
PERSON,  
RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN,  
JACK, and

VOICE,

which can be played by a variety of actors, but the VOICE should be its own separate role.

## **Place**

A pleasure craft, of a sort

## **Time**

The present

## **Production Notes**

When the word “Pleasure” is mentioned, it becomes a kind of re-enactment, however subtle, of the sensory experience of pleasure. I intend for the “pleasure parts” to be verbal—to have the pleasure, as it were, occur in the saying of the word. Each “pleasure part” should be orchestrated to be different from the last.

The VOICE comes from above, and the WOMAN when she talks to the VOICE talks to the sky. The RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN is different than the VOICE—and the sound comes from the “boat.”

# PLEASURE CRUISE

by Kira Obolensky

**WOMAN.** This is nice. What a comfortable boat.

**MAN.** Like a floating living room. Or a big car. Really nice.

**WOMAN.** I could float like this forever. The sun framed in the sky. The land over there, a safe distance away. Trees bending to the banks of the river. An occasional fisherman. I could float like this forever.

**MAN.** Me too.

**WOMAN.** The river is gentle.

**MAN.** Gentle?

**WOMAN.** Not rough.

**MAN.** Smooth ride. I'm going to have a really good time. That is my only hope. Good time.

**WOMAN.** Comfortable. And the scenery is really...nice.

**MAN.** Couldn't be nicer.

**WOMAN.** Have you noticed?

**MAN.** What?

**WOMAN.** Every question answered.

*(She calls out to illustrate, in a sing-song voice:)*

"I like coffee  
I like tea?"

How does the rest of it go?

**MAN.** How about doing me?

**WOMAN.** Shhh...

**VOICE.**  
*I like radio  
and TV.*

*It's an old skipping rhyme. From the 1950s.*

**MAN.** Wow.

**WOMAN.** I know. Anything we want—

**MAN.** Does it work for beer?

**WOMAN.** I don't know.

**MAN.** *(Calls out:)* Can I get a beer? Please?

**VOICE.** *What kind of beer?*

**MAN.** A cold beer.

*(And a WAITER appears, smiling, with a beer.)*

**WOMAN.** I'd like a beer too.

**WAITER.** *(Nods.)* Wouldn't you rather have a cold mint julep?

**WOMAN.** Why yes, I would. Thank you for suggesting a mint julep.

*(WAITER nods and exits.)*

**MAN.** What a fantastic ride.

**WOMAN.** I'm going to have fun, too. And maybe get some questions answered. But fun. Fun first. After all, this is a pleasure cruise.

**MAN.** Did you say "pleasure"?

**WOMAN.** Pleasure? Yes.

**MAN.** That word...affects me...in a...mysterious way.

**WOMAN.** Pleasure...yes, I see what you mean. Pleasure.

**MAN.** Pleasure.

**WOMAN.** Pleasure.

**MAN and WOMAN.** PLEASURE!

*(A beat.)*

**MAN.** I wonder if I could get some new shoes.

**WOMAN.** Try it.

**MAN.** *(Calls out:)* A pair of Nike swervetoppers with aircushion lights. Size 11 and a half.

*(A PERSON approaches and puts on new shoes.)*

**WOMAN.** Hi.

*(PERSON doesn't say anything.)*

**WOMAN.** Not everyone is friendly. That's for sure. Well...the river is still gentle. The ride is...still nice. I am going to have some...fun!

*(The WAITER appears with her mint julep and a pair of binoculars. Gives both to the WOMAN.)*

**WOMAN.** Thank you. Thank you so much. Binoculars. How thoughtful.

*(WAITER exits.)*

**WOMAN.** Perhaps there are birds. I wonder why else the waiter would give me a pair of binoculars. Perhaps there are...birds.

*(She puts binoculars up and looks in the sky.)*

**MAN.** *(Calls out:)* Another beer! Please?

**WOMAN.** *(Still looking:)* No...no birds. Huh. Not a bird. I'll keep checking. I've always been interested in birds. What kind of birds populate this part of the world?

**MAN.** Do you think they heard that I wanted another beer?

**VOICE.** *There are three kinds of birds. Birds of prey, those birds that actually hunt and devour; scavenger birds, the birds that clean up the mess we make; and birds that exist to delight the senses—song birds, birds of beauty.*

**MAN.** Beer?!

**WOMAN.** *(Calls out:)* Thank you! That was very interesting about the birds.

**MAN.** I thought you said you were going to have fun.

**WOMAN.** I am.

**MAN.** Birds? Not fun.

**WOMAN.** (*Thinks about it, agrees, decides upon—*) Music!

*(Music comes on, and she dances by herself, while the MAN admires his shoes.)*

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.** THE MUSIC IS TOO LOUD.

**WOMAN.** WHAT?

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.** TURN DOWN THE MUSIC. THE MUSIC IS TOO LOUD.

**MAN.** No! Louder!

*(WOMAN is dancing.)*

*(A RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN enters and hands the MAN and the WOMAN a laminated menu. The music cuts off.)*

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.**

I'm sorry to inform you.

No loud music.

**MAN.** Why the hell not!

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.** It's a rule.

**WOMAN.** Oh. Sorry.

**MAN.** A rule?

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.** There are certain rules, yes. As outlined in the literature.

**WOMAN.** (*Reads:*)

Rule #1. No loud music.

That's what it says.

Sorry.

**MAN.** What kind of pleasure cruise is this?

**WOMAN.** Pleasure...cruise.

**MAN.** Pleasure, that word again.

Ooh. *Pleasure.*

**WOMAN.** *Pleasure.*

**MAN.** Pleasure?

**WOMAN.** Pleasure!

**MAN.** (*Yawning:*) Pleasure.

(*MAN is asleep.*)

**WOMAN.** (*Alone:*) I feel...lonely.

(*She lifts up her binoculars and looks at the banks.*)

Oh, I think I see—is that a bird? Is that a...? Goodness. Are those...wolves? Or packs of wild dogs? And I see... (*She looks again.*) children...hands out...are the children hungry? Are the wolves hungry?

(*A distant cry from off.*)

**WOMAN.** Why are you crying, children?

(*There is a distant clamor.*)

**WOMAN.** (*To the VOICE:*) Excuse me. EXCUSE ME. We need to do something about this...there seems to be a problem—

**VOICE.** *Yes?*

**WOMAN.** Packs of wild dogs, hungry children—there seems to be a problem on the banks of the river.

**VOICE.** *There is a good safe distance between the boat and the banks. We are surrounded by deep water, with a swift current and there is absolutely no danger here on board—*

**WOMAN.** I don't care about us, I'm worried about them. Bob?

(*MAN is asleep, he wakes up.*)

**WOMAN.** The children are hungry.

**MAN.** The CHILDREN!?

**WOMAN.** Apparently.

**MAN.** Well, for God's sake, let's feed them.

**WOMAN.** (*Announces:*) We would like for the children to be fed. Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

**RIVERBOAT CAPTAIN.** If I could have your attention, this is your riverboat captain speaking. I'd like to point out that the river is bending. We are now traveling through a BEND in the river. The current here, you will notice, is significantly stronger. We are entering new territory. Please be patient as we navigate through rough water.

**MAN.** New territory?

**WOMAN.** I heard, "Rough Water." I don't want to drown.

**MAN.** He didn't say Rough Water, he said New Territory.

**WOMAN.** I heard "Rough Water."

**MAN.** Ask.

**WOMAN.** Excuse me, could you explain what you meant by "Rough Waters"?

Hello?

Sir?

(*Louder:*) Bend in the River? I'd like an explanation, please.

(*To the VOICE:*) Should we put on our life jackets?

(*Silence.*)

Before—all our questions—answered.

**MAN.** I don't know, maybe they were easy questions. I mean, *I* knew the answers.

**WOMAN.** And so now, when we really need to know the answers, they won't give them to us?

**MAN.** We could...you know...

**WOMAN.** What?

**MAN.** Take our minds off this part of the ride.

**WOMAN.** You want to?

**MAN.** Pleasure.

**WOMAN.** Pleasure.

**MAN.** Pleasure.

**WOMAN.** It's not working.

*(JACK enters, bearing a bottle of gin. He's an elegant man.)*

**WOMAN.** Oh good. Hello, kind sir. Perhaps you can help us?

**JACK.** I can do my best.

**WOMAN.** We have a few questions and I wonder if you might oblige. We are wondering what the results of the Rough Water will be—seasickness? Will we be sprayed? Should we put our lifejackets on?

**JACK.** Drink?

**MAN.** Absolutely.

**WOMAN.** We were already having fun. I think we were. We were definitely having fun, but then we entered “new territory” and the water became ROUGH.

**JACK.** Here—

*(He offers the bottle.)*

**WOMAN.** Just a little.

**MAN.** Fill her up!

*(The MAN drinks down a tumbler of gin.)*

**JACK.** Fantastic.

**MAN.** Hi. I'm Greg. At least I want to be Greg, a guy who is younger and thinner and has a whole lot more going on than Bob. I mean, Bob—what a loser.

**JACK.** I'm Jack.

**WOMAN.** His name *is* Bob. It's not GREG—

**MAN.** Greg for now.

**WOMAN.** Well if you're Greg, I'm Evelyn...a woman of mystery who travels the world and knows the names of all the birds. Evelyn, that's my name.

**MAN.** Her name is Janet. Give me a break.

**WOMAN.** You're right. Janet. Never mind. I'd like to be Evelyn, but I'm not sure how—

**JACK.** I couldn't help but notice how concerned you both are and how oppressive everything has become, so I decided I'd join the party.

**WOMAN.** Oppressive?

**JACK.** The scenery, for one.

**WOMAN.** *(Looks:)* Oh no, not oppressive, it's been surprisingly nice.

Goodness. Look at that.

**JACK.** Industrial wasteland.

**MAN.** Pour me another!

*(JACK does.)*

**WOMAN.** I don't understand. Rolling hills, trees bending down to the water. I remember...

Now, rubble, piles of rubble and smoke. Strange. I wasn't paying attention. We need to do something.

Bob, look beyond—

**JACK.** Chocolate?

**WOMAN.** No. Thank you.

**JACK.** I insist. Chocolate.

*(She eats it absentmindedly.)*

**JACK.** *(Looks at WOMAN:)* Pleasure?

**WOMAN.** *(Wary:)* Pleasure?...

**JACK.** *(More confident:)* Pleasure.

**WOMAN.** *(Resigned:)* Pleasure.

**JACK.** *(Jubilant:)* PLEASURE!

**MAN.** *(To his drink again, softly:)* Pleasure.

*(WOMAN yawns.)*

*(JACK exits.)*

**WOMAN.** *(To herself:)* I haven't been paying attention.

**VOICE.** *This is a friendly reminder that you are mortal and that you will die, your bones will fall to dust and so will we all. For we are mortal. This is a friendly reminder.*

**WOMAN.** Bob! Bob! BOB!

**MAN.** What.

**WOMAN.** Did you hear that?

The Voice says we are going to die.

**MAN.** Holy! You're kidding! Die? We've just started to enjoy ourselves!

**VOICE.** *You are going to die for you are mortal. A Friendly Reminder.*

*(WOMAN puts a hat on.)*

**MAN.** What are you doing?

**WOMAN.** The UV rays are damaging to the skin. We've been out here for a long time.

Wrinkles!

*(The call of a bird, maybe a cardinal.)*

**WOMAN.** Did you hear a laugh...the smallest little chuckle. Someone is laughing at us!

**MAN.** Relax. No one is laughing at us.

**WOMAN.** Someone far away thinks we are ridiculous.

**MAN.** Speak for yourself.

**WOMAN.** *(Quiet:)* Are we ridiculous?

**MAN.** I've been sitting here on my tookas. Drinking beer. I disgust myself.

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**THE ROADS THAT LEAD HERE**  
**by Lee Blessing**

**Cast of Characters**

JASON: 29, oldest

MARCUS: 23, middle

XANDER: 20, youngest

**Time**

Here and Now

**Place**

Their Father's House

# THE ROADS THAT LEAD HERE

by Lee Blessing

*(It's bright and warm, the middle of the day. MARCUS and XANDER sit on a terrace, in white iron lawn chairs. They're huddled over a matching round table which is covered with folders, photos, notepads and various loose scraps of paper. Their speech is rapid, excited, a hint conspiratorial. They are both listening and not listening to each other as they rush excitedly on in their eagerness to share.)*

**MARCUS.** *(Thrusting a photo at XANDER:)* Look at this—

**XANDER.** *(Looking at it:)* Oh, *fantastic!* What is it?

**MARCUS.** Wolf Point, Montana.

**XANDER.** I *loved* Wolf Point! I was there last August—no, June. So cold; it actually snowed! *(Of the photo again:)* What is this?

**MARCUS.** Grass.

**XANDER.** *Grass!* It's so yellow.

**MARCUS.** *Dried* grass.

**XANDER.** Absolutely. *Dried.* That is so, it's just so...it's—

**MARCUS.** Wolf Point.

**XANDER.** Exactly! *(Thrusting a photo at MARCUS:)* Look at *this.*

**MARCUS.** Great! What is that? Ice?

**XANDER.** Looks like ice, but it's water. Wave, close up. Pensacola. The sun was glinting—

**MARCUS.** I see! Spectacular! Jason'll love this. Where is Jason? Why isn't he out here?

**XANDER.** He's talking to the Eminent.

**MARCUS.** Still? He's *missing* all this!

**XANDER.** He'll catch up. We've got all night.

**MARCUS.** But there's so much. We haven't even seen his yet.

**XANDER.** Listen to this: (*Picking up a notebook and reading:*) “The dawn sky dipped down in red and white streaks over the endlessly repeating, cream-colored mounds of the empty badlands of west Texas—”

**MARCUS.** I know! I know!

**XANDER.** “Interstate 10 pulled me along, a parent tugging a child toward the bright front door of life, no promises, only an endless possibility.”

**MARCUS.** (*Grabbing for a notebook of his own and reading:*) “The earth sinks, as if it were an enormous dish, as I approach Jamestown. Rolling over the far edge, I’m back on the endless table that is the rest of North Dakota—”

*(XANDER turns to another section of his notebook and starts reading again. MARCUS does the same. Both men read simultaneously with furious enthusiasm, almost as though they are “jamming.”)*

**XANDER.** The Columbia River gorge is the one cathedral not built by man. Its very existence is an act of praise. The Oregon side is pure emotion, green and steaming with life. The Washington side is hot, dry, blank—a desert staring at a jungle. Rivers and streams flow down from Mt. Hood like open hands—

**MARCUS.** You could see the whole battlefield from Lookout Mountain. Along the ridge line to the south the monuments stood peeping out silently from under heavy summer trees. They whisper of long-dead regiments from Virginia, Ohio, Minnesota, Tennessee—men who lie here now part of the ridge itself, part of the mountain—

**MARCUS.** God, these are so *good!*

**XANDER.** I’ve got tons more!

**MARCUS.** Me, too!

**XANDER.** Where’s Jason!/? (*Starting to call out:*) Hey, Jace—!

**MARCUS.** (*Quickly shushing him:*) Don’t! You know how the Eminent gets.

**XANDER.** But there's so much to go over. He's gotta see this. We should meet more than once a year.

**MARCUS.** No, once is best. We're more independent.

**XANDER.** Yeah, but if he misses stuff—

**MARCUS.** Calm down. It'll be fine. We all have to talk with the Eminent.

**XANDER.** Hey, listen!

*(XANDER produces a small cassette tape player and plays it: Urban noises—traffic, horns honking, skateboarders, a bus going by, dog barks, etc. MARCUS listens intently under XANDER's stare.)*

**MARCUS.** Denver?

**XANDER.** Nope.

**MARCUS.** Denver suburb—Aurora?

**XANDER.** I wasn't even in Denver this year.

**MARCUS.** Oh—*Phoenix!*

**XANDER.** You *bastard!*

**MARCUS.** *(Laughing at this small victory:)* Try this.

*(MARCUS produces his own cassette tape player and plays it: ocean surf, gulls screaming, wind, etc.)*

Well?

**XANDER.** Shit. Shit. Lemme listen, lemme...um...

**MARCUS.** You have no hope.

**XANDER.** No, I'm close. It's...it's, um...

**MARCUS.** Time!

**XANDER.** Bethany Beach! Delaware coast!

**MARCUS.** *Bastard!!*

**XANDER.** Jace!

*(JASON has appeared. Unlike his brothers, he seems subdued.)*

**MARCUS.** How'd it go?

**XANDER.** Yeah, how's the Eminent?

**JASON.** He had a present for me.

**MARCUS.** *(Surprised:)* A present?

**JASON.** He said since I'm turning thirty this year—

**XANDER.** Not for two more months—

**JASON.** And I won't be home for it—

**MARCUS.** Home? He knows we have to drive.

**JASON.** That he's going to give it to me now.

**XANDER.** What is it?

**JASON.** He wouldn't say. He had a look in his eye, though. I didn't like the look in his eye. *(To MARCUS:)* He wants to see you next.

**MARCUS.** *(Starting to rise:)* Right now?

**JASON.** *(Shaking his head:)* He'll send word.

*(A silence hangs over them as JASON sits down with them at the table.)*

**XANDER.** *(With renewed enthusiasm, trying to banish the uneasiness in the air:)* What'd you bring us, Jace? What've you got?

*(Distracted, JASON pulls a small piece of darkish fur from his coat pocket. The others stare at it. XANDER feels it.)*

**XANDER.** Wow! Feel this!

**MARCUS.** What is that? No, wait—make us guess!

*(They ponder it carefully while JASON stares off in the direction from which he entered.)*

**MARCUS.** *(Stroking the mystery fur:)* It's not bear; it's too fine.

**JASON.** There was something different about him this year.

**XANDER.** Who?

**JASON.** The Eminent. Something's changed.

**MARCUS.** Of course things have changed. It's been a year. Things change every time. Wolf?

**JASON.** No. This was different. There's a look in his eye.

**XANDER.** Wolverine?

**JASON.** No.

**MARCUS.** Otter?

**JASON.** *(Absently:)* What kind?

**MARCUS.** Fresh water?

**JASON.** No.

**XANDER.** Salt water?

**JASON.** No.

**MARCUS.** Bastard! Beaver?

**JASON.** Getting colder. He said "thirty" in the strangest way. "You're going to be thirty, Jace. You deserve something very special this year." I said my life was already special—that all our lives were special. I mean, what other father would help make a project like ours possible?

**MARCUS.** Nobody.

**XANDER.** Dad is very special. Melanistic mountain lion?

**JASON.** *(At the absurd guess:)* Please. *(Returning to his subject:)* I said Mom would have been proud of him. So few fathers really listen to their sons. So few brothers stay intimately involved in each other's life through adulthood.

**MARCUS.** It's not raccoon...martin?

**JASON.** No.

**MARCUS.** Coatimundi? Were you in the Southwest?

**JASON.** I was all over, like always. No, not coatimundi. *(With a sigh:)* He didn't want to look at my pictures this year.

*(The other two look up, shocked.)*

**XANDER.** He *what?*

**JASON.** Said he expected they looked a lot like last year's.

**MARCUS.** They're different! There's always something different!

**XANDER.** This is a compendium! Encyclopedic!

**JASON.** I know. The whole point is accumulation—

**MARCUS.** From three different points of view. The gathering of experience.

**XANDER.** America as we see it.

**MARCUS.** With fresh eyes. Unjudged. The natural state.

**XANDER.** Images, writings, smells, tastes— (*Brandishing the fur:*)  
Feels!

**JASON.** The Eminent says we're not growing up.

*(The others are dumbfounded.)*

**MARCUS.** *We're* not growing up—?! *We're* not!!?

**XANDER.** How's he spend his day? How's he spend his...his...majorly grown-up day?! Screwing the public?!

**MARCUS.** Quiet! He'll hear you!

**XANDER.** I don't care! How can he say we're not grown up, just 'cause we don't want to go into the business?

**JASON.** Xander—

**XANDER.** He spends every waking minute advising mega-corporations how to get around federal law—

**JASON.** He helps business flow. He's like...like a plumber of money.

**XANDER.** (*Loudly:*) *Up to his elbows in shit!*

*(They all look towards where JASON entered. An anxious moment, but no sound is heard.)*

**JASON.** He was better when Mom was alive.

**MARCUS.** She always calmed him down.

**XANDER.** She never even blinked at our gasoline bills.

*(They fall into a reverie.)*

**JASON.** You think he got mad that we left again right after the funeral?

**MARCUS.** That was two years ago!

**XANDER.** We had to get back on the road.

**JASON.** I know, I know. Still... *(After another silence, as MARCUS strokes the fur:)* Fisher.

**MARCUS.** What?

**JASON.** The fur. It's fisher.

**MARCUS / XANDER.** *(With delight:)* Fisher! You *bastard!!*

**XANDER.** Great going.

**MARCUS.** Wonderful animal.

**XANDER.** Underrated.

*(They all ponder the fur.)*

**JASON.** Do you ever wonder if we shouldn't be doing more with our lives?

**MARCUS.** *More?*

**XANDER.** How could we be doing more? I drive 200,000 miles a year.

**MARCUS.** We all do. We have a project. We have a vision.

**XANDER.** America without the people.

**MARCUS.** How it survives, despite everything.

**JASON.** It's just that the Eminent said—

**XANDER.** Screw the Eminent. Hey, look! I've got some birds' eggs. *(Quickly producing them:)* Quick—Maine or California?

**JASON.** Xand—

**XANDER.** Maine or California?

**MARCUS.** Maine.

**XANDER.** Nope.

**JASON.** Guys—

**MARCUS.** California?

**XANDER.** Nope! I lied!

**MARCUS.** No fair!

**JASON.** *Quiet!! Both of you!!*

*(As they look up, startled at his vehemence:)*

The Eminent—*Dad*—said that he doesn't think our project is...helping us grow.

*(Over their audible reactions:)*

He thinks we should get married, for one thing—

**MARCUS.** Married? There's plenty of time for that!

**XANDER.** This is a calling!

**MARCUS.** These are our years before the mast!

**XANDER.** Our walkabout!

**JASON.** We're virgins.

**MARCUS.** And proud of it!

**XANDER.** Yeah!

**MARCUS.** How else are we going to have enough love for this country? It's immense!

**XANDER.** There's so *much* of it.

**JASON.** He wants grandkids.

**MARCUS.** I don't care! Women weaken resolve. When I wake up each morning, I give myself to that first look of the highway—the shadows of the trees crossing the asphalt like ties on a railroad—

**XANDER.** Or the sun holding the plains in his arms like a sleepy lover—

**JASON.** You've never *had* a lover! How would you know?!

**MARCUS.** You talk like you think he's right.

**JASON.** I'm not saying that, it's just...

**MARCUS.** Just what?

**JASON.** I miss him sometimes, when I'm on the road.

**XANDER.** You miss *him*?

**JASON.** I miss all of you. Don't you?

(MARCUS and XANDER look at each other.)

**MARCUS.** Sure, but...you know.

**JASON.** What?

**MARCUS.** America is a jealous mistress, Jace.

**XANDER.** Jealous.

**MARCUS.** We get lonely—lonely as hell. But when this project is finished, we'll have it all. You know? The whole country. A little touch of everything: pictures, words, plants, animals, objects, textures, soils, water from rivers, oceans, stones, feathers, fur, teeth, claws, thorns, seeds...

**XANDER.** Everything but the people. Everything they don't see, or feel or hear or smell or taste. Everything they forget about, every day—when they're only thinking about themselves or other people. We'll have something for every sense.

**MARCUS.** Something that *makes* sense.

**XANDER.** A record of love. A careful record of how much we love America.

**MARCUS.** Proof that it's still worthy of love. That no matter how many of us there are, no matter how badly we may behave, it's still here.

**XANDER.** Beautiful. Worthy. Waiting.

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

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## Author Biographies

**Lee Blessing.** *On Broadway and London's West End: A Walk in the Woods.* Off-Broadway: *Eleemosynary, Cobb, Thief River, Chesapeake* and *Down the Road*—plus *Fortinbras, Lake Street Extension, Two Rooms*, and the world premiere of *Patient A*, all in the 1992-93 Signature Theatre Season. Recent regional productions include *Whores* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival and *Black Sheep* at Florida Stage and Barrington Stage. Other plays include *Going to St. Ives, Independence, Riches, Oldtimers Game*, and *Nice People Dancing to Country Music*. Awards: The American Theatre Critics Association Award, the L.A. Drama Critics Award, the Great American Play Award, the Humanitas Award, and the George and Elisabeth Mar-ton Award, among others. His plays have been nominated for Tony and Olivier Awards, as well as for the Pulitzer Prize. Mr. Blessing is the author of over twenty plays and screenplays. He currently resides in New York City.

**Kevin Kling's** one-person plays include *21A, Home and Away*, and *The Education of Walter Kauffmann*. He is the author of *Lloyd's Prayer, 7 Dwarfs, The Ice Fishing Play, Mississippi Panorama*, and *Gulliver, A Swift Journey*. His commentaries can be heard on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*. Mr. Kling graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota in 1979. He is a proud member of the trio Bad Jazz.

**Julie Marie Myatt** has had plays produced in New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Louisville. *Zealot* and *The Joy of Having a Body* were commissioned by the Guthrie Theater, premiered at Guthrie Lab, and are published by Playscripts, Inc. The Magic Theatre in San Francisco will premiere her new play, *The Sex Habits of American Women*, in October 2003. Her other published plays include *Lift and Bang* in *30 Ten-Minute Plays by 2 Actors from Actors Theatre of Louisville* (Smith & Kraus), *What he sent* in *The Best American Short Plays 2000-2001* (Applause Books), and *Cowbird* in the new anthology *Breaking Ground* (Stage and Screen Books). Ms. Myatt received a Walt Disney Studios Screenwriting Fellowship in 1992-1993, a Jerome Fellowship at the Playwrights' Center in 1999-2000, a McKnight Advancement Grant for 2001-2002, and is a participant in

the Guthrie Theater New Play Project, funded by the Bush Foundation. Her other plays include *August is a thin girl*, *The Pink Factor*, *Alice in the Badlands*, and *49 Days to the Sun*.

**Kira Obolensky's** plays include *Hate Mail*, written with Bill Corbett; *Lobster Alice* (Jungle Theater, Playwrights Horizons, Stages Theater); and *The Adventures of Herculina* (Next Theater, Frank Theater). She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship as well as the Kesselring Prize (for *Lobster Alice*). New work in progress includes *Quicksilver* (produced in 2003) and *A Modern Home*. A graduate of Williams College, Ms. Obolensky also attended Juilliard's Playwriting Program.

**Kelly Stuart** is the author of *Mayhem*, produced at The Evidence Room in Los Angeles; *Demonology*, produced at the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival and at Playwrights Horizons; and *The Life of Spiders*, which earned her a Whiting Fellowship in 2000, and will be produced by Holderness Theatre Company in New York City in the spring of 2004. Her other plays include *Furious Blood*, produced at Sledgehammer, and *The Square Root of Terrible*, produced at The Mark Taper Forum. Ms. Stuart currently lives in New York, and teaches Playwriting at Columbia University.

**Tracey Wilson** was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey. She received a B.A. from Rutgers University and an M.A. from Temple University. While at Temple she wrote a satiric novel entitled *I Don't Know Why That Caged Bird Won't Shut-Up*. After receiving 28 rejections for that novel in one day, she developed writer's block for one year. To combat this block, Ms. Wilson took a playwriting class at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Street YMWCA in New York City. The following year she won a Van Lier Playwriting Fellowship from the New York Theatre Workshop. In September 2000, Theatre Outrageous produced her first play, *Exhibit #9*, an outrageous satire greatly influenced by George C. Wolfe's *Colored Museum*. In April of that same year, New Georges Theatre produced her second full-length play, *Leader of the People*. She received the Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award for her latest play, *The Story*. The Joseph Papp Public Theatre is producing *The Story* in December 2003.