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Authors' Note: Theaters are free to choose their own running order for these plays in production.

## Foreword

As I sit and write this foreword I still cannot believe the journey I have been on.

Three years ago I was riding the W train from Brooklyn to Queens at 5:00 a.m. I had no newspaper, crossword puzzle or book to occupy my time. All I had was the subway and the people around me. At one point a homeless man entered the train, carrying a very large, overstuffed blue bag of recyclables. He looked tired and as if he had not bathed in a week. He sat down and proceeded to take off his white(ish) tennis shoes. What caught my attention was that when he was removing his sneakers he would not let his feet touch the dirty subway floor. At that moment I wished I had a pen so I could write that personality trait down so I would not forget it. Ironically, I can't get it out of my head. Then the thought morphed from wishing I had a pen to wishing that I had my friends David Riedy and Craig Pospisil, two very gifted playwrights, with me to capture the scene.

A couple of days later over a game of pool at the Amsterdam Billiard Club I told them of the idea. "What do you think if we put writers on the train and in the time it takes to ride from one end to the other they had to come up with a script?" At first they laughed, then saw I was serious and replied, "Well, if you put restrictions on the writers you have to do it to everyone else." I then talked to another friend Michael Pemberton, a noted performer and musician, about using a song titled "On the A Train" as our theme. And finally I turned to Andrew Donovan, the production manager at the Neighborhood Playhouse, a fine actor and another friend, about designing a set, which he did to higher expectations than I imagined...and we were off and running.

So with the help of many other friends that were writers, directors and actors, we staged the first of the A Train plays on May 17, 2002 and we haven't looked back. The energy, creativity and talent of the company that has formed (and continues to grow) is humbling. To be around and create with my partners, playwrights Craig Pospisil and David Riedy, and performers Andrew Donovan and Michael Pemberton, is truly a blessing.

When you read these six plays, think about this: these writers not only faced putting their words onto a blank page. They wrote a one-act play in the maddening, loud and sometimes crazy environment of the NYC subway system and they did it in less than two hours. Pretty fearless. Pretty courageous. Pretty amazing!

Lawrence Feeney  
*theAtrainplays*

**TOURIST ATTRACTION**  
**by Craig Pospisil**

## Cast of Characters

NANCY

JASON

## Author's Note

*Tourist Attraction* refers to and quotes a brief section of the “February” scene from my play *Months on End*, which premiered at the Purple Rose Theatre Company (Jeff Daniels, Executive Director; Guy Sanville, Artistic Director) in Chelsea, Michigan on January 25, 2002. *Months on End* is published and licensed by Dramatists Play Service.

## Acknowledgments

*Tourist Attraction* was originally produced as part of Volume I of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on May 17, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Daniel Ruth and the cast was as follows:

NANCY ..... Nancy Wu  
JASON..... Jason Quinn

# TOURIST ATTRACTION

by Craig Pospisil

*(A subway car. JASON, an actor, sits and reads a play script. The train pulls into the station and the doors open. NANCY, a giddy tourist, gets on. She smiles broadly and gleefully as she takes in the car. She sees JASON.)*

**NANCY.** Oh, this is so exciting!

**JASON.** *(Looking around the car:)* Uh,...what?

**NANCY.** A real New York City subway!

**JASON.** Oh. Yeah.

**NANCY.** Do you ride the train everyday?

**JASON.** Yeah, sure.

**NANCY.** Wow! Wow. How do you stand it?

**JASON.** What?

**NANCY.** The excitement, the exhilaration of it all.

**JASON.** *(Slight pause.)* It's just the subway.

**NANCY.** Just the—!?! Oh!

**JASON.** What?

**NANCY.** You're one of them!

**JASON.** One of who?

**NANCY.** A real New Yorker. A jaded New Yorker. Wow!

**JASON.** If you say so.

**NANCY.** Oh, that's perfect. Perfect. That New York wit. *(Slight pause.)* Can I have your autograph?

**JASON.** Huh? I'm just a guy on the train. Why would you want my autograph?

**NANCY.** To show my friends when I get home to Boca Raton. That means “Mouth of the Rat.”

**JASON.** Oh. Great.

**NANCY.** So, what do you do?

**JASON.** I’m an actor.

**NANCY.** There! See! I thought you looked familiar. Oh, please give me your autograph.

**JASON.** No.

**NANCY.** Why not?

**JASON.** Because I’m no one, okay? You don’t want my fucking autograph!

*(Silence.)*

**NANCY.** I’m sorry.

**JASON.** *(Pause.)* No, look, I...I’m sorry I shouted.

**NANCY.** It’s okay.

**JASON.** No, it’s not. I’m sorry. Okay?

**NANCY.** Sure.

**JASON.** Great.

**NANCY.** *(Pause.)* Excuse me?

**JASON.** Yeah?

**NANCY.** Would you take my picture? A picture of me here on the A train?

**JASON.** Sure.

*(NANCY pulls out a camera. JASON takes it and points it at her.)*

**NANCY.** Oh, wait, wait. *(She quickly fixes her hair or makes herself up, etc.)* Where should I stand?

**JASON.** Uh,...how ’bout in front of the map.

**NANCY.** Oh, yeah. Great.

*(NANCY goes to the map and poses. JASON raises the camera.)*

**NANCY.** Wait.

**JASON.** What?

**NANCY.** Where are we? On the map.

**JASON.** We're, uh, right about here.

**NANCY.** All right. I'm gonna point there!

**JASON.** Sure. Good idea. You ready?

**NANCY.** Yeah!

*(She poses again, playfully pointing at where they are on the map. JASON takes the picture, and then starts to hand it back to her.)*

**NANCY.** Oh, one more. One more please.

**JASON.** *(Sighs.)* All right. One more.

**NANCY.** Where should I stand?

**JASON.** I don't know.

**NANCY.** What's really New York-y?

**JASON.** The map.

**NANCY.** But other than that.

**JASON.** Ah, I...okay, I know. Lie down on the seats and pretend you're asleep.

**NANCY.** Pretend I'm sleeping?

**JASON.** Nothing says New York like someone sleeping on the subway.

**NANCY.** Okay, yeah.

*(NANCY lies down on the seats. JASON moves about looking for the best place to take the picture from.)*

**JASON.** Hey, open your mouth a little.

**NANCY.** What?

**JASON.** Like you've passed out from drinking too much Thunderbird.

**NANCY.** Oh! Got it.

*(NANCY gets into the part, sprawling more, mouth open. JASON snaps a picture.)*

**JASON.** Okay, here you go.

**NANCY.** Thank you so much!

**JASON.** Sure.

*(JASON goes back to his script. NANCY snaps some pictures of the car. Then she takes JASON's picture.)*

**JASON.** Did you just take my picture?

**NANCY.** No.

**JASON.** Yes, you did.

**NANCY.** No, no. I was taking a picture of that sign.

**JASON.** The one behind my head?

**NANCY.** *(Slight pause.)* Maybe.

**JASON.** Why'd you take my picture?

**NANCY.** I just want to be able to show my friends the famous New York actor I met on the subway.

**JASON.** I'm not famous. Nothing like it.

**NANCY.** I know I've seen you.

**JASON.** No, you haven't.

**NANCY.** I'm sure I have.

**JASON.** No, you haven't. Now do you mind? I'm trying to read!

**NANCY.** *(Pause.)* Weren't you on "Law and Order"?

**JASON.** No.

**NANCY.** Then it was that Burger King commercial.

**JASON.** No, no, no. You haven't seen me. I haven't been on any of those.

**NANCY.** Then where—

**JASON.** Nowhere, okay?! You haven't seen me anywhere. I've been pounding the pavement ever since I got to this town, but I haven't been cast in anything on TV, or in the movies, or on Broadway, or Off-Broadway! The last thing I did was a ten-minute play in a grungy thirty-five seat theater in a basement off Avenue A. And that's nowhere you'll ever see. So leave me alone!!

*(Silence. Then JASON and NANCY shift as the train comes to a stop in the tunnel.)*

**JASON.** Aw, damn it! Not now.

**NANCY.** Is it supposed to stop in the middle of the tunnel?

**JASON.** No, it just knows I'm trying to get to an audition.

**NANCY.** You're going to an audition? Right now? What's it for?

**JASON.** A play.

**NANCY.** What's it called?

**JASON.** "Months on End."

**NANCY.** Is it good?

**JASON.** Who knows.

**NANCY.** Haven't you read it?

**JASON.** *(Holding up the script he's been trying to read:)* How can I?

**NANCY.** Oh. Sorry. *(Pause.)* Well, hey, maybe I could help you.

**JASON.** How?

**NANCY.** I could help you memorize your lines.

**JASON.** I'm just reading from the script. I don't have to memorize it.

**NANCY.** Then I could read it with you.

**JASON.** On the train?

NANCY. Sure.

JASON. No, thanks.

NANCY. I used to act in high school.

JASON. Really.

NANCY. Yeah. People said I was really good. I was in “Fiddler on the Roof.”

JASON. That’s terrific. But I need to go over this scene, okay?

NANCY. All right, look, I’m sorry, okay? But,...but I get a little claustrophobic sometimes and...and this is making me nervous. I mean, I know nothing’s really wrong, right? But, I mean,...how long’s the train gonna be stopped?

JASON. No one ever knows. *(Slight pause.)* Don’t worry. It’ll start again.

NANCY. Uh-huh, okay, yeah. I’m sure it’s fine. Probably. I mean—

JASON. Hey, look, you wanna read with me?

NANCY. Really?

JASON. Yeah.

NANCY. That’d be great!

JASON. *(Showing her the script:)* Okay, here, you read—

NANCY. *(Reading:)* “Jenna, hi! I’m Tony. Sorry I’m—”

JASON. No. “Tony” is my part. You read Phoebe.

NANCY. Oh.

*(They read from the script and begin to connect and flirt a bit just as the characters in the scene do.)*

**JASON as TONY.** Jenna, hi! I’m Tony. Sorry I’m late. All the snow slowed me down. Listen, I hope you don’t have plans tonight, ’cause I had this wild impulse on the way over here and I stopped at Lincoln Center and got two tickets to the ballet. I thought we could go for a drink first, then to the ballet, and then I made reservations for a late dinner at the Supper Club. They’re gonna have a

swing band, and I thought we could have some great food and take a few passes on the dance floor. *(Slight pause.)* Whadya say?

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** Well,...ah, that sounds great,...but...

**JASON as TONY.** What?

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** I'm not Jenna.

**JASON as TONY.** *(Slight pause.)* But you're wearing a red scarf.

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** Well, it's cold out. And I'm still not Jenna.

**JASON as TONY.** *(Slight pause.)* Right, okay, well, thanks. Sorry I bothered you. God, what an idiot.

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** Oh, no. I thought it was lovely.

**JASON as TONY.** Really?

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** Yeah.

**JASON as TONY.** Oh, you don't know how long I spent trying to think of something that would really grab you. I mean, her. *(Slight pause.)* You think it'll work?

**NANCY as PHOEBE.** Yeah, sure. I'd go out with you.

*(They break out of the scene slowly.)*

**JASON.** Okay. Okay, well, that's all I have to read for the audition so... That was good. Thanks.

**NANCY.** Wow, that was so much fun! Hey, what do you think,... should I move here and become an actress?

**JASON.** Ah,...I don't know.

**NANCY.** *(Smiles)* No. Yeah, I was kidding. *(Slight pause.)* I really liked your reading.

**JASON.** Thanks. I think I'd be good in the part. But you never know what people are looking for.

*(JASON stands close to NANCY, staring deeply into her eyes.)*

Of course, we might be stuck here for a while.

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**EVERYTHING YOU WANT**  
**by David Riedy**

## Cast of Characters

JONATHAN

HARRY

## Acknowledgments

*Everything You Want* was originally produced as part of Volume III of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on September 14, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Tom Dybeck and the cast was as follows:

JONATHAN .....Jonathan Tipton Meyers  
HARRY ..... Harry Kakatsakis

# EVERYTHING YOU WANT

by David Riedy

*(HARRY sits on the subway, looking forlorn and agitated. He is 30-ish years old and dressed in clean blue jeans, leather tennis shoes, and a simple short-sleeved collared shirt, in the breast pocket of which is a pen. He is reading a well-worn copy of How To Win Friends and Influence People from which bright Post-Its stick out, marking favorite passages.*

*He is consulting his book, trying to memorize a specific passage when JONATHAN enters through the doorway, as if he'd just made an escape.*

*JONATHAN puts away his MetroCard and collapses on the nearest seat.*

*HARRY watches JONATHAN. They make eye contact. JONATHAN leans back and closes his eyes. HARRY gets up and walks to one end of the car, studying JONATHAN.*

*He walks back to the middle of the car, still staring at JONATHAN, and stands by a pole.*

*After a moment, HARRY sits down on the same bench as JONATHAN.*

*After another moment, HARRY leans over to slide closer to JONATHAN:)*

**JONATHAN.** Don't do it.

*(HARRY is frozen in mid-slide.)*

**HARRY.** What?

**JONATHAN.** Go on and sit back over there.

*(HARRY doesn't move.)*

Go on.

*(HARRY moves back to where he was sitting.*

*Beat.)*

**HARRY.** I wasn't going to rob you.

*(No response.)*

I'm sorry if you thought I was. I wouldn't want you to think—

**JONATHAN.** Don't worry about it.

*(Beat. They sit.)*

**HARRY.** Hello. My name is Harry.

**JONATHAN.** Hi Harry.

**HARRY.** Who are you?

**JONATHAN.** I'm the guy who just wants to sleep on the train.

**HARRY.** I'm sorry—

**JONATHAN.** Forget it.

**HARRY.** —I meant “What's your name?”

*(No response.)*

My name is Harry. And yours is—?

**JONATHAN.** Do you have a problem?

**HARRY.** No.

**JONATHAN.** Because I'm just trying to sleep.

**HARRY.** Sure.

**JONATHAN.** I don't want to be rude or anything—alright? I just want to...

*(JONATHAN leans back again, eyes closed. HARRY watches him. Maybe looks at his book. Beat.)*

**HARRY.** I'm not very good at meeting people. So—I've decided that I need to try a little harder and talk to strangers. Usually you start with exchanging names, you know, so that's why I was asking your name but we can move on to something else, if you'd rather.

*(No response.)*

What do you like to do for fun?

(No response.)

I like your shoes. Where did you get them?

(No response.)

Did you just come from a party? Was it fun?

(No response.)

I noticed that you're black. Do you enjoy being—

**JONATHAN.** LOOK! Knock it off, or—just knock it off. Alright?

**HARRY.** I was just asking questions. That's a good way to start a conversation.

**JONATHAN.** I don't want to have a conversation right now.

**HARRY.** Why not?

**JONATHAN.** Because I—no—I'm not answering any questions. I'm going home and going to sleep and forgetting today ever happened.

**HARRY.** Where do you live? What's your stop? Is it far?

**JONATHAN.** I'm not answering questions, alright?!

**HARRY.** Why don't you want to answer—

**JONATHAN.** *Because, alright? Because! Now for God's sake, shut up!*

**HARRY.** Okay.

(Silence. Beat. HARRY, hurt, gets up and goes to a nearby pole. Beat.)

**JONATHAN.** I don't want to have a conversation because I did just come from a party—a party with People—you know, important People with a capital “P” who could help a young editor such as myself, and I *failed*. I couldn't do the whole *schmooze thing*. The small talk, the laughing at their jokes and acknowledging their superiority; the begging for a crumb of attention. And I disappointed a lot of People. I failed those People who thought I had Potential with a capital “P” and who, now, *don't*. So, I don't have any words right now that you'd want to hear. And this is my stop.

(JONATHAN *gets up.*)

But good luck with the whole meeting people thing. One word of advice? Two A.M. on the A-Train isn't the best time to make new friends.

(JONATHAN *begins to exit.*)

**HARRY.** Wait!

**JONATHAN.** Good night.

(JONATHAN *heads for the exit. HARRY tackles his feet. JONATHAN tries to get away.*)

What the—? Get off of me! Get off of me! GET OFF OF ME!

(HARRY *lets go. JONATHAN realizes that the door has closed.*)

This is an *express*, you moron! The next stop is 125th Street!

**HARRY.** I'm sorry. I want to talk to you more.

**JONATHAN.** No.

**HARRY.** Please. We were *communicating*.

(JONATHAN *walks to the end of the car to try the door.*)

They lock them now.

(JONATHAN, *trapped, stands far away from HARRY.*)

I used to have friends, when I was a kid. Lots of them. Grade school. High school. Even in college. We used to go to the movies. Bowling. A lot of fun activities. But then, something happened. I don't know what. But I stopped being able to talk to people.

**JONATHAN.** No. No more talking. I am going to sit here. And you are going to sit there. And no more talking.

(JONATHAN *sits on the bench. HARRY gets off the floor and sits.*)

Stop right there.

(*Beat. They sit.*)

**HARRY.** I play a lot of video games. They say that's a sign of being anti-social.

**JONATHAN.** What did I just say?

**HARRY.** No talking.

**JONATHAN.** That's right.

*(Long pause. Finally:)*

**HARRY.** You need other people. Not just—you know—a woman to marry and to have babies with. Without other people you're just floating. Like in outer space. Spinning around the planets in a vacuum. Alone. Until you eventually run out of oxygen and die.

**JONATHAN.** And nobody will ever know.

**HARRY.** Yeah.

*(Beat. A different kind of silence between them.)*

**JONATHAN.** I lived with this girl for a while. And she used to leave her underwear and sports bras hanging in the shower or on doorknobs. She moved out—a lot of reasons, doesn't matter—and suddenly the apartment felt completely empty because the doorknobs had no underwear on them.

**HARRY.** Did you put your underwear on the doorknobs?

**JONATHAN.** What? You mean after she left?

**HARRY.** Yeah.

**JONATHAN.** ...Yeah. Didn't help. It just looked dirty.

*(Beat.)*

**HARRY.** The only woman I've ever lived with was my mother. She probably would have killed me if I hung my underwear on the doorknobs.

*(JONATHAN laughs.)*

So...you want to catch a movie?

**JONATHAN.** It's 2:30 in the morning.

**HARRY.** Some other time?

**JONATHAN.** No, I don't.

**HARRY.** Because we were kind of opening up there and sharing a moment, which is a good sign.

**JONATHAN.** Harry. Please.

**HARRY.** You're the closest thing I've had to a friend in five years.

**JONATHAN.** I am not going to the movies with you.

*(Beat.)*

**HARRY.** I don't know what happened. One day I'm shooting the shit with all the other IT guys at the water cooler and the next day—I couldn't. Well, they laid everyone else off, but still I can't talk to anyone. Except about their computers. What kind of computer do you have?

**JONATHAN.** I have an iMac.

**HARRY.** You're a *Mac user*?

**JONATHAN.** Harry, look, this isn't going to work out. We're not going to be friends.

**HARRY.** Why not?

**JONATHAN.** Because you scare me. Because you seem like a perfectly nice, normal person who needs maybe a little—more—therapy and I'm just not a patient enough person. Besides, you're talking to the wrong guy. I can't talk to people either. I get up face-to-face with someone and I don't know what to say. I know what they *want* me to say, but I can't do that. I can't lie to people to make them feel better.

**HARRY.** I think that's a good thing.

**JONATHAN.** No. No, it's a very bad thing. See, the world is run by People who want to be told that they are smart, and beautiful, and *right*. And most of the time they're not. But if you want these People to help you, to let you in to their inner circle, you need to be someone else. You need to *lie*. I can't do that. And until I can—I'm going nowhere.

*(Beat.)*

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**BOUNCE AND ROLL**  
**by René Flemings**

## Cast of Characters

CHUCK: White, forties, conventional blue-collar male.

BRIANNA: White female, mid-twenties. Very sexy and confident.

## Author's Note

One of the interesting things about the subways of New York is the sense that there are millions of people who are all moving in the same direction literally, however, each one exists in their own world. That is what is unique about New Yorkers, we can be in a room with millions, and easily choose to exist only in our own worlds. My involvement with *theAtrainplays* has allowed me the opportunity to explore that sense of loneliness and that is the fulcrum of Chuck and Brianna's brief relationship, the shattering of each of their little individual worlds.

It is better if the CD player is a CD player as opposed to an iPod or other modern technology, way too expensive for either of them to own or for Chuck to compensate her for in the play.

## Acknowledgments

*Bounce and Roll* was originally produced as part of Volume I of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on May 17, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Leslie (Hoban) Blake and the cast was as follows:

BRIANNA ..... Veronica Bero  
CHUCK..... Ron Stetson

# BOUNCE AND ROLL

by Reneé Flemings

*(On the A train, late, late night as it travels to Far Rockaway.)*

**BRIANNA:** *20ish, beautiful woman, dressed in hip, sexy clothes. She listens to a discman. Occasionally she moves her foot or hips to the music. The train stops. CHUCK, mid-40s, wears a rumpled business suit; he carries a fake pleather type briefcase. He rushes through the doors, trips and crashes into BRIANNA. He manages to get himself tangled up in the wire of her discman.)*

**CHUCK.** Shit— oh shit— I'm sorry.

**BRIANNA.** Ow! Would you— Christ.

**CHUCK.** Sorry. Really...sorry.

*(They untangle, she moves to the end of the bench.)*

Really, I'm sorry.

*(She ignores him for a moment, then jiggles the discman.)*

I hope I didn't you know...didn't ruin it. *(Pause.)* I mean I would really feel bad, really bad you know, 'cause it was an accident. But if it is broke, I can buy you— get— no, give you money for another one. *(Pause.)* If it's broke you know, if it's— you know— Christ.

**BRIANNA.** It does sound funny now.

**CHUCK.** It does?

**BRIANNA.** Yeah. Cost me a hundred bucks easy.

**CHUCK.** I don't have...wait a minute I sawr one like dat at the Wiz last week for like forty-nine bucks. How come dat one's a hundred?

**BRIANNA.** 'Cause I say so, that's why. Look buddy, you offered, I'm takin'.

**CHUCK.** Here, fifty bucks. I got fifty dat's all you know. I'll give it ya' okay?

**BRIANNA.** Sure.

**CHUCK.** Wait— hey, I know you.

**BRIANNA.** No you don't.

**CHUCK.** Yeah. Yeah I do, over to...over to— yeah, the Diamond Stud Mud Club. I seen you there.

**BRIANNA.** I have no idea what you are talkin' about.

**CHUCK.** Yeah, ya do. You took more'n fifty bucks off me then.

**BRIANNA.** Look, mistah, you got me confused—

**CHUCK.** No, no I don't. I went there for my friend's bachelor party y'know. And I remember you 'cause I thought...I thought you was beautiful. The most beautiful woman I ever seen. Even more beautiful—

**BRIANNA.** Than your wife?

**CHUCK.** I kept callin' ya over to give ya money and you came over but you never saw me. I was lookin' at you and you never saw me. My hand was out like dat...and you'd take the money but...

**BRIANNA.** I can't date the customers mistah.

**CHUCK.** Chuck. And I didn't want no date. I— I just wanted you to see me.

**BRIANNA.** What are you talkin'? I look at everybody that gives me money, that's how I make money mistah—

**CHUCK.** Chuck. What's yours?

**BRIANNA.** We don't need to be on a first name basis.

*(Pause.)*

**CHUCK.** Through 'em.

**BRIANNA.** What?

**CHUCK.** You look through 'em, not at them. The men.

**BRIANNA.** Look forget it, you can keep your fifty bucks.

**CHUCK.** I just wanted—

**BRIANNA.** What? A quickie?

**CHUCK.** No! It wasn't like dat at all—

**BRIANNA.** You guys kill me. There's always a bachelor party. There's always a ten, a twenty or a fifty Chuck.

*(She crosses to and tries the door between cars.)*

Shit it's locked.

**CHUCK.** I didn't want no quickie.

**BRIANNA.** I don't look 'cause I don't wanna see, okay?

**CHUCK.** See what?

**BRIANNA.** Never mind. This' my stop.

**CHUCK.** I bet it ain't. C'mon don't go. Here take the money. If it's broke take the money. It don't make no difference no how. I don't have much in the first place, might as well be broke.

**BRIANNA.** If you're so broke, why you trying to give it to me?

**CHUCK.** 'Cause sometimes it don't make no difference. Fuck it.

*(She crosses to take the money; before she gets it:)*

I lost my job today.

**BRIANNA.** See, that's not fair. You don't offer someone some money and then tell 'em you lost your job. That's fucked up, Chuck.  
*(Pause.)* What kinda job you have?

**CHUCK.** Mailroom, at F.E.T. Corporation. Just had dat job for six months. They laid me off— lousy.

**BRIANNA.** You'll get another one.

**CHUCK.** Took almost a year to get that one. I ain't no office type. No way. I like workin' with my hands. I was a drill press guy out in Queens before I got this one.

**BRIANNA.** You'll get somethin' else.

**CHUCK.** Yeah, well I better and soon. My wife's pregnant again! Third time.

**BRIANNA.** Did it by herself did she?

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**FOREIGN EXCHANGE**  
by **Stephen O'Rourke**

## **Cast of Characters**

SUSAN

REIKO

## **Setting**

The A train, bound for Far Rockaway.

## **Acknowledgments**

*Foreign Exchange* was originally produced as part of Volume I of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on May 17, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Darcie Siciliano and the cast was as follows:

REIKO ..... Yumi

SUSAN..... Tamara Flanagan

# FOREIGN EXCHANGE

by Stephen O'Rourke

*(The train doors open and SUSAN, dressed in jeans and a T-shirt, enters with REIKO, fashionably dressed. REIKO carries a lot of small shopping bags.)*

**SUSAN.** Are you sure you're going to get all this into the overhead?

**REIKO.** I'm going to put these bags into this bag.

*(REIKO starts to organize her shopping bags into one larger shopping bag.)*

**SUSAN.** Still—

**REIKO.** If it doesn't fit I will pay the extra charge and submit it with the luggage.

**SUSAN.** Yeah, I suppose you could.

**REIKO.** It is very nice of you to come with me.

**SUSAN.** No, I want to.

**REIKO.** But you already took so many off days—

**SUSAN.** Days off.

**REIKO.** Yes, days off during my stay.

**SUSAN.** I just want to make sure you get off OK.

**REIKO.** Yes. Are you sure there will be enough time. It looks like a long trip on the train.

**SUSAN.** You'll get there with time to kill.

**REIKO.** Yes, but a taxi would be so convenient.

**SUSAN.** I like the train. I ride it all the time.

**REIKO.** I would pay for the taxi.

**SUSAN.** No! It's not about the money!

**REIKO.** No, I did not mean—

**SUSAN.** It's a very nice ride. It comes above ground. You'll get to see another part of New York.

**REIKO.** Yes. The trains are so different in Japan. They are always crowded. No one ever sits. Next time you come to visit me!

**SUSAN.** Oh, yeah, I would love to.

**REIKO.** I've come to see you twice. You've never come to visit me!

**SUSAN.** Well, I don't have a job that takes me around the world, so—

**REIKO.** I'll take you shopping!

*(REIKO realizes that one pair of shoes isn't going to fit in the duffel.)*

**REIKO.** I don't think these shoes are going to fit. Do you want them?

**SUSAN.** Those?! Aren't those the ones you bought at Barneys?

**REIKO.** Yes. I think I bought too many shoes. Last time I was here I bought 16 pairs. I think I have a problem.

**SUSAN.** But—

**REIKO.** I saw you try them on. I know they fit you... Go ahead.

**SUSAN.** But I—

*(SUSAN takes the shoes and checks out the price tag on the box.)*

**REIKO.** *(Checking her watch:)* Are you sure we have enough time? I understand it take so long to check your bags; and we have to transfer to a bus?

**SUSAN.** Don't worry. Wow, that's a nice watch. Did you get that here?

**REIKO.** Did I? No. This was Paris.

**SUSAN.** Paris!

**REIKO.** I always do a lot of damage in Paris. Ugh! It's the bags. They have the cutest bags in Paris.

**SUSAN.** Mn!

**REIKO.** You know that area by the Rue St. Germaine with all the bags?

**SUSAN.** Mn.

**REIKO.** I try to avoid it, but I must go every time. So cute!

**SUSAN.** I know.

**REIKO.** Where do you stay in Paris?

**SUSAN.** Uh, actually, I've never been. But I'm like that with frap-puccinos. I always tell myself I shouldn't spend the money and then when I'm walking by a Starbucks I just go in. I mean, they're like four bucks.

**REIKO.** Yes. Frappuccinos are good.

*(Silence.)*

**REIKO.** I had a nice visit. It's too bad I didn't get to see your mother.

**SUSAN.** I know. She still calls you Little Reiko. She still thinks of you as that timid foreign exchange student who barely said a word and covered her mouth when she laughed.

**REIKO.** I was so shy!

**SUSAN.** Little Reiko. And now you're a vice president of market-ing.

**REIKO.** Yes, and you work for internet company

**SUSAN.** Well, I did...

**REIKO.** Did?

**SUSAN.** Well, see, that's why I've been able to take so much time off. I was laid off.

**REIKO.** Oh.

**SUSAN.** I didn't want to tell you because...

**REIKO.** Well it was nice. We had more time together.

**SUSAN.** Look, I really can't take these shoes.

**REIKO.** No, please.

**SUSAN.** Really, I can't... But if you could give me a little money before you go...

*(Silence.)*

**SUSAN.** See, my unemployment ran out two months ago. I haven't worked since last year.

**REIKO.** You'll find a job, Susan.

**SUSAN.** I've been trying. Believe me.

**REIKO.** You were very smart in high school.

**SUSAN.** Right now it's really hard for me. I mean some days I just ride the train all day. All the way to Far Rockaway and back. It's like going to the end of the world. And that's on a good day. Sometimes I don't even leave the apartment.

**REIKO.** But you live in New York! There is so much to do.

**SUSAN.** Not without money. Please, Reiko, I just need like, two thousand dollars. It would really help me out.

**REIKO.** You are very smart, you will find a job.

**SUSAN.** I will, yes. But I just need enough to see me through right now.

**REIKO.** Your apartment must be very cheap, I mean, inexpensive, now that you live in Brooklyn.

**SUSAN.** Please, I know this is very awkward. I've been trying to figure out how to ask you this whole week, and now you're about to leave, so it's now or...

**REIKO.** You know the economy in Japan is very bad right now. We are still in recession.

**SUSAN.** But you're not. You've driven up our Gross National Product by three percent in this one week.

**REIKO.** I'm not making the amount of money that I was, Susan.

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**IT'S NOT YOU**  
**by Craig Pospisil**

## Cast of Characters

NATALIE

TERRY

AMBER

JOHN

## Author's Note

The characters of “Natalie” and “Terry” are Asian and black respectively because the parts were written specifically for the actors who first played them. The parts could, however, be played by white actors, just as the parts of “Amber” and “John” could be played by Asian, black or Hispanic actors. I feel the characters could be from any racial background, and I encourage race-blind casting wherever appropriate in my work.

## Acknowledgments

*It's Not You* was originally produced as part of Volume II of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on September 13, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Marie-Louise Miller and the cast was as follows:

NATALIE ..... Nancy Wu  
TERRY ..... Tracie Thoms  
AMBER ..... Alexandra Wijkman  
JOHN ..... Jamie Bennett

# IT'S NOT YOU

## by Craig Pospisil

*(A New York City subway car. A young Asian woman, NATALIE, stares open-mouthed at her three friends, AMBER and JOHN, a married couple, and TERRY, a young black woman. AMBER is six or seven months pregnant.*

*AMBER, JOHN and TERRY regard NATALIE with a mixture of sympathy and sadness.)*

**NATALIE.** What?!

**TERRY.** We're really sorry.

**AMBER.** Yes, really.

**NATALIE.** *(A pause. She looks at them.)* What the hell are you talking about?

**JOHN.** It's just...it's over.

**NATALIE.** The three of you are... "breaking up" with me? And on the subway?

**TERRY.** We're going different directions.

**NATALIE.** We're all going downtown.

**AMBER.** You know what we mean.

**NATALIE.** No. No, I don't. I mean, first of all, we're friends. It's not like I'm dating any of you. So, how can you break up with me?

**JOHN.** Friends drift apart.

**TERRY.** It happens all the time.

**NATALIE.** Yeah, friends drift apart, but they generally don't announce they never want to see you again.

**AMBER.** Sometimes they do. Like if they have a big fight.

**NATALIE.** But we haven't had any fights. This is crazy.

**JOHN.** Look, we know this is hard for you, Natalie. It's hard on us too. None of us wanted this to happen.

**NATALIE.** So, why *is* it happening? And why are you telling me on the train?

**TERRY.** Because we didn't want this to be some long drawn out thing.

**AMBER.** Yeah, you know. Dragging out over weeks and weeks.

**JOHN.** This way it's over quickly. By the time we get to West 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

**NATALIE.** What? Why West 4<sup>th</sup>?

**TERRY.** We're having dinner in the Village.

**NATALIE.** And I'm not invited?!

**AMBER.** Haven't you been listening?

**JOHN.** Hey, now, honey, take it easy on her. We knew this would be hard, but we agreed not to let ourselves get angry.

**AMBER.** Oh, shut up!

**JOHN.** Amber!

**AMBER.** Well, I'd like to see you stay calm when you're pregnant and you've got sixty gallons of hormones running through your body.

**TERRY.** Guys, we're getting a little side-tracked here. And Amber, shouldn't you be sitting down?

**AMBER.** Oh, Terry, you're right. Thank you. You're such a good friend. I just know John and I made the right choice.

**NATALIE.** Hey! I'm a good friend! Amber, when you lost your job last year, who was on the phone with you for, like, hours every day?

**JOHN.** Natalie, it's not a question of you being a good friend or not. This was a hard decision, and we went back and forth. Agonized over it. Look, it's not you. It's us.

**NATALIE.** I don't understand. Amber, we've been friends forever. I was your maid of honor.

**AMBER.** I know, I know. It's heartbreaking.

*(Slight pause.)*

**AMBER.** What was that last stop?

**JOHN.** 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

**TERRY.** Oh, good. Then it's just a few more stops.

**NATALIE.** No! Tell me why you're doing this!

**TERRY.** Natalie, you're an amazingly wonderful person. Really. But...we want different things.

**NATALIE.** The three of you?

**JOHN.** We just feel like you're out there pursuing your options, focused on your career,...and we're in a different phase of our lives.

**NATALIE.** Well, you and Amber obviously are, but where does she fit in?

**AMBER.** Don't make this about Terry. It's about all of us.

**JOHN.** Yeah, and it's not your fault. You didn't do anything.

**NATALIE.** I must've done something if you don't want to see me anymore.

**TERRY.** No, no. Look, things change. Maybe some people are just meant to spend a certain amount of time in each others lives and then move on. That's just natural.

**NATALIE.** *(Slight pause.)* That's such bullshit.

**AMBER.** No, she's right. People come in and out of each others' lives all the time. *(Slight pause.)* Are we only at 34<sup>th</sup>?

**NATALIE.** Stop counting the stops!

**TERRY.** Don't fight it. It'll all be over soon.

**NATALIE.** Oh, yeah? Well, you can't dump me at West 4<sup>th</sup> if I pull the emergency brake and we never get there!

*(NATALIE marches toward where the emergency brake cord dangles at one end of the subway car. She reaches for it, but JOHN grabs her and wrestles her away, sitting her on the bench.)*

**JOHN.** Don't take this so hard. You'll find other friends.

**TERRY.** Yeah, you'll have lots of friends. You're young.

**NATALIE.** *(Bursting into tears:)* But why? What did I do? I don't understand! Why?

**AMBER.** Because you're boring!!

*(Silence.)*

**NATALIE.** What?

**AMBER.** You're boring. All you ever want to do is go to the same restaurants and the same cafés. We've eaten at the same six places on the Upper West Side at least fifty times. And when we go to the movies all you want to see are those stupid romantic comedies. Never a thriller. "Too scary." No action films. "Too violent." No foreign movies. "I don't like reading subtitles." There's no variety. You never want to get away for a ski weekend or some time at the beach. You're stuck in your routine. You need to break out, take more chances. You're a wonderful person, intelligent and funny, patient and loving. Anyone would be lucky to have you for a friend,...but my God, you're boring!!

*(Silence.)*

**NATALIE.** What happened to "It's not you. It's us"?

**AMBER.** We lied.

**JOHN.** Oh, no, now come on, Amber. We said we weren't going to do it this way.

**AMBER.** Well, it has to get done, and we're almost at 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

**NATALIE.** You're really planning to just get off the train and leave me?

**TERRY.** We have dinner reservations at eight.

**NATALIE.** You're dumping me and then going to dinner. Where?

**TERRY.** Does that really matter?

**NATALIE.** It matters to me.

**JOHN.** Don't make this any harder.

**NATALIE.** *(Slight pause.)* Are you going to that Moroccan restaurant you always wanted to try?

**JOHN.** It's not about where we eat.

**NATALIE.** Then where are you going?

**TERRY.** Don't.

**NATALIE.** Where?!

**AMBER.** We're going to the Moroccan place, okay? Are you happy now?

**NATALIE.** *(Pause.)* Have...have you gone there before?

**JOHN.** *(Pause.)* Yeah. A couple of times.

**NATALIE.** Oh my God! Why? Why?! I would've tried Moroccan food!

**TERRY.** It's spicy. You know you can't take spicy food.

**NATALIE.** Yeah, well, you have lousy table manners.

**TERRY.** What? Hey, now, listen—!

**NATALIE.** *(Interrupting:)* You talk with your mouth full. You slouch and put your elbows on the table. *(To JOHN and AMBER:)* Keep me. I'm better than her.

**JOHN.** Natalie, please don't make this harder than it is. Don't cry. We just need to make a change. With the baby on the way we only have room in our lives for one close friend.

**NATALIE.** But why her?

**AMBER.** Do I have to repeat my whole "you're boring" speech?

**NATALIE.** But I'm *not* boring

**TERRY.** *(Slight pause.)* Natalie, what did you do last Saturday night?

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**HOWARD HOPPED  
THE A-TRAIN**  
by Anthony P. Pennino

## **Cast of Characters**

HOWARD

JESUS CHRIST

## **Setting**

The A Train, New York City, present day.

## **Acknowledgments**

*Howard Hopped the A-Train* was originally produced as part of Volume II of *theAtrainplays* by Atrainproductions (Lawrence Feeney, Executive Producer) on September 13, 2002 at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. It was directed by Daniel Ruth and the cast was as follows:

HOWARD ..... Ron Stetson  
JESUS ..... Drew Donovan

# HOWARD HOPPED THE A-TRAIN

by Anthony P. Pennino

*(The A Train. HOWARD enters. He is a middle-aged blue-collar man. He reads off a slip of paper.)*

**HOWARD.** “Dear sir, Your services are no longer required...”

*(He crumples up the paper.)*

Jesus Christ.

*(He sits reading a newspaper. Beat. JESUS enters. This is the Jesus, at least in appearance, of the crucifixion. He has stigmata on his hands and feet and a gash in his side. He stands holding a pole. HOWARD stops, looks at JESUS, goes back to reading his paper, stops, and looks at Him again.)*

**JESUS.** Hey.

**HOWARD.** Hey.

*(Beat.)*

**JESUS.** We’re lucky.

**HOWARD.** Hmm?

**JESUS.** I said, “We’re lucky.”

**HOWARD.** How so?

**JESUS.** Empty car.

**HOWARD.** Yeah.

**JESUS.** Not often you get an empty car these days.

**HOWARD.** Nope. You sure don’t.

*(Beat.)*

**JESUS.** Is something the matter?

**HOWARD.** I was just going to ask you the same thing.

**JESUS.** Ah...Why?

**HOWARD.** Well, you seem to be bleeding, you know, a lot.

**JESUS.** Oh, that.

**HOWARD.** Yeah that.

**JESUS.** Think nothing of it, Howard.

**HOWARD.** Are you sure?

**JESUS.** I'm used to it by now. I think I do it mostly for show. Some might say I'm too melodramatic but, I say, if you have something to say, you should say it.

**HOWARD.** Is that so? Hey!

**JESUS.** What?

**HOWARD.** You knew my name. How did you know my name?

**JESUS.** It's on the address label on your paper. See? Howard O'Neill.

**HOWARD.** Oh...Look, are you sure you're okay? Maybe there's a doctor on the train or something. Or the conductor can call for a paramedic.

**JESUS.** No, no, no, it's all good. Thank you for asking. That's very kind.

**HOWARD.** Is it really? Thanks...Did you see this news story here? Some inmates broke out of Bellevue.

**JESUS.** Yes, I did. Terrible. I understand them wanting their freedom. But they will find it difficult to cope against the vague cruelties of the wider world.

**HOWARD.** Look, I don't mean to bother you or nothing, but...

**JESUS.** Yes?

**HOWARD.** But um...but um...but um...Do you take the A often?

**JESUS.** No, I'm more of an N/R man myself. But I keep hearing all the time about how I'm supposed to hop the A Train, when I haven't really. To be honest, I don't see the attraction.

**HOWARD.** Huh?

**JESUS.** There was this play. It had a great deal of what they call “buzz.” Anyway, this play said I got on the A Train. Now my name has been used and misused for many for many things. Most wars over the past 1,000 years have been waged for me, they say. But I think this is the first time I’ve ever been incorrectly associated with the public transportation system.

**HOWARD.** A play, huh?

**JESUS.** Yeah.

**HOWARD.** Never heard of it.

**JESUS.** It was off-Broadway.

**HOWARD.** Oh...OH!...I don’t go to off-Broadway.

**JESUS.** I know what you mean. Performance art. East German interpretations of Shakespeare. Robert Wilson. Who can understand it all?

**HOWARD.** The wife and I used to go to Broadway. You know, for special occasions.

**JESUS.** Musicals. Now that’s the shit.

**HOWARD.** For our tenth anniversary, we went to see *Guys and Dolls*.

**JESUS and HOWARD.** (*Singing:*)

“Luck be a lady tonight,  
Luck be a lady tonight,  
Luck if you’ve ever been a lady to begin with,  
Luck be a lady tonight!”

**JESUS.** Ah, the classics.

**HOWARD.** So, tell me, you’re not really...Him, are you?

**JESUS.** What do you think?

**HOWARD.** Nah, it couldn’t be...I mean, no...I mean, I’m just, you know, this guy who works construction sites...worked construction sites. I’m not worthy of...I haven’t been to confession for years.

**JESUS.** So, you rather not believe because you don't think you're worthy?

**HOWARD.** Well, it's just that...This is the A Train for Christ's sakes. Sorry, no offense.

**JESUS.** None taken.

**HOWARD.** It's going to Far Rockaway. If you are...Him...what would you be doing going there?

**JESUS.** You're going there.

**HOWARD.** Yeah, but I'm me. You know, I grew up out there. I thought I'd go back, walk on the beach awhile, think, and figure out...I just got laid off today. I don't know what I'm going to say to my wife. We just got a new house with a mortgage...Anyway, I'm just an ex-foreman. You're You.

**JESUS.** I spent 18 years in the desert. Nothing to eat but bugs.

**HOWARD.** Eww.

**JESUS.** You can put salt and pepper and hot sauce on them all you want, but they still taste like bugs. Far Rockaway is the City on the Hill next to that. And how bad can a place be if you can order in pizza?

**HOWARD.** You like pizza?

**JESUS.** Sure. What? Do you think I eat unleavened bread all the time? Nah. Sit back, eat a few slices, and wash 'em down with some Bud.

**HOWARD.** Me. I like it with pepperoni and anchovies.

**JESUS.** That's my favorite too.

**HOWARD.** Especially the anchovies, when they...

**JESUS and HOWARD.** ...slide right down your throat.

**HOWARD.** Imagine that. I like the exact same kind of pizza as the Sav...

*(He stops.)*

Never mind.

**JESUS.** C'mon, Howard. You want to believe. You are so close to believing.

**HOWARD.** But if I believe and you're not...

**JESUS.** Look, if I am who I say I am, or if you just think that I am, as long as you believe, what difference does it make?

**HOWARD.** Because I've been on this roller coaster too many times. I mean, you—whoever you really are—are a nice guy. But everything. Catechism, confession, confirmation, vespers, water into wine...

**JESUS and HOWARD.** ...so many prayers. None of them answered. I couldn't stand to have another one go unanswered.

**JESUS.** All prayers are answered. Most of the time the answer is "no."

**HOWARD.** Well that's a pretty fucking awful system you have there.

**JESUS.** And what of your free will, Howard? What of your ability to grow, change, adapt? If every answer was "yes," you and everybody else would still be in diapers.

**HOWARD.** I'm sorry.

**JESUS.** For what, Howard? For being honest. Adversity can sometimes be a good thing. One door closes, another door opens. Why are you going all the way out to the ocean? Are you like Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*? Are you seeing Heaven and asking, "Do you exist? If so, I respectfully return my ticket."

**HOWARD.** I don't understand.

**JESUS.** Don't throw it all away, Howard?

**HOWARD.** I told you, I'm just going to think.

**JESUS.** I know how most of you see me. I'm an underachiever. And, yeah, you're kind of right. I try to make amends in little ways where I can.

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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