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The plays in this anthology were commissioned by The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science & Technology Project and the Guthrie Theater, Joe Dowling, Artistic Director.

## Foreword

For the third year in a row, the Guthrie Theater under Artistic Director Joe Dowling's leadership has commissioned and premiered a powerful group of ten-minute plays in this theater's unique summer conservatory: A Guthrie Experience for Actors in Training. This year the project was also supported in part by the Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Science and Technology Project, which challenges playwrights to tackle the scientific mindset.

And the playwrights' responses to that challenge are wonderfully inventive. In *Hurry!*, for example, Bridget Carpenter puts a stopwatch on dating to study how relationships are affected by limited time. In *A Little Lunch*, Kristina Halvorson employs the prospects of nanotechnology to reveal her characters' hopes and fears of the future. And in *The Second Beam*, Joan Ackermann illuminates ambition and self-esteem in Hollywood casting circles by freezing light and then letting it go.

Some of the playwrights take an even more unusual angle on the assignment. Kevin Kell O'Donnell, for instance, demonstrates the complicating influence of communications equipment on modern relationships in *No More Static*. In *The Glory of God*, Carson Kreitzer tackles the technology of writing itself in the time-bending mystery of ancient texts and modern critics. Laurie Carlos gives science a child's-eye whirl through the wild imagination Zion, a young boy and the title character. And Jerome Hairston applies Euclidian geometry to human psychology as he peers into a triangle of thought that links the characters in *Three Dimensions*.

The exception to the science/technology rule is *Wanting North*, a play so compelling in subject matter and style that Guthrie Theater Company Development Director Ken Washington added it at the last minute to the otherwise thematically inspired group of short works. In Tanya Barfield's moving encounter between a young house slave and field slave, we sense the pride and courage of two young female slaves searching for their futures on a southern plantation. In a few minutes, this wonderful drama conjures both the cultural distance and the common humanity between these 19<sup>th</sup> century characters and our 21<sup>st</sup>-century selves.

As did the first two collections of *Ten-Minute Plays from the Guthrie Theater* published by Playscripts, Inc., this third volume demonstrates again the incredible range and surprising depth of the ten-minute play. Here's comedy and drama, realism and surrealism, history and subject matter ripped right from the headlines. And since these plays were written specifically to provide actors with juicy roles, they all offer the classic dramatic opportunities and events: confessions and accusations, revelations and mysteries, moments of insight, inspiration and more. While containing so much in a ten-minute frame is a complex dramaturgical task, once accomplished by the playwrights, it sure doesn't take a rocket scientist to appreciate these plays!

Michael Bigelow Dixon  
Associate Artist/Literary Director  
Guthrie Theater

**THE GLORY OF GOD**  
by Carson Kreitzer

## **Cast of Characters**

D.: Ovid's Daphne: a nymph turning into a tree

MONK: earnest but with a strong sense of self

GOATHERD GIRL: fearless, you'd think

SCHOLAR: intellectual girl, harried. She's lost her data.

TECHIE: kinda cute, very techie

GIRLFRIEND (DAPHNE): fun and funky, lipstick lesbian.  
Doubles as the waitress and D.

## **Acknowledgements**

*The Glory of God* owes a debt of inspiration to Thomas Cahill's *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe*.

# THE GLORY OF GOD

by Carson Kreitzer

*(Lights bang up: we start in a panic. The SCHOLAR and the TECHIE.)*

**SCHOLAR.** It's gone. Everything's gone. All my—

**TECHIE.** What am I looking for?

**SCHOLAR.** *(Slightly crazed:)* The Glory of God. The icon says The Glory of God.

*(Light on D., a nymph. Turning into a tree.)*

**D.** He is coming. Breath at my back. Catching at my hair. No matter how fast I run, not fast enough. Moments till I am crushed in his large hands.

Anything is better than this.

To feel damp mud between my toes and gentle breezes that smell sweet. My hair is leaves my skin is bark I am safe

in here

I am safe

*(Light shift: A MONK standing at a rudimentary desk, copying from a small book into a large one. Elsewhere, the SCHOLAR and the TECHIE, over her laptop.)*

**SCHOLAR.** If not for these wild, barely civilized mountain-dwelling people, all these great texts would have been lost—Plato, Sophocles, everything we know of the ancient world. Copied painstakingly by hand. My monk is a bit of a scamp, actually, adding his own commentary to the margins about various things—the improbability of certain passages in Ovid, sometimes just that he's cold and his hand cramps. He misses the hills above his village. Ireland is still so green and lush, I can't imagine it then. My god, it must have been beautiful. A lifetime spent copying out texts. Crouched over animal-skin pages, quill and ink—

**TECHIE.** *(Breaking into her reverie:)* And you didn't back up your hard drive?

**SCHOLAR.** That's not helpful.

**TECHIE.** You know what you need?  
Lunch.

*(She looks at him.)*

Your computer crashes. Your adrenal glands have been working overtime for a good—six hours?

**SCHOLAR.** Nine.

**TECHIE.** Nine hours. Your stomach lining is digesting itself at this point.  
Let me buy you lunch.

**SCHOLAR.** And then you'll retrieve my data?

**TECHIE.** To the best of my abilities.

*(She begins to hyperventilate.)*

See, that doesn't help.

**SCHOLAR.** Neither does your ATTITUDE.

**TECHIE.** And that *really* doesn't help

**SCHOLAR.** *(Chastened:)* Maybe...a little something to eat...wouldn't be a bad idea.

*(Lights shift: the MONK. A GIRL is just sneaking into the room, through a window. Both have thick, strange but distinctly Irish accents.)*

**MONK.** How can a girl turn into a tree. This makes no sense whatever.

**GIRL.** *(Landing with a thump:)* I've seen stranger things.

**MONK.** You're not t'be here.

**GIRL.** You gonna throw me out?

*(He considers for a moment.)*

**MONK.** I will continue with my work and ignore you.

*(He does. she is annoyed, then amused.)*

**GIRL.** What're you doing?

**MONK.** I am looking for the Glory of God.

**GIRL.** Copying out of a book.

**MONK.** Yes.

**GIRL.** You think you'll find the Glory of God in there?

**MONK.** Well that's where I'm looking, or are you deaf as well as rude?

**GIRL.** Is it a Bible, then, that you're copying?

**MONK.** It's the tale of a girl who turns into a tree.

**GIRL.** God turns her into a tree? What's she done, then?

**MONK.** No, she turns herself into a tree. I think.  
To get away from Apollo.  
He's Greek.

**GIRL.** You sure it doesn't say behind a tree?

**MONK.** No. Turns into a tree. Bark grows over her and everything.

**GIRL.** Aye, that's what it feels like.

*(MONK looks at her.)*

I've made myself invisible. To get away from men.

**MONK.** Does it work?

**GIRL.** Sometimes. Sometimes they see you anyway.

*(Light shift: the SCHOLAR and the TECHIE at a table.)*

**SCHOLAR.** The handwriting changes at a certain point. Another monk takes over. A more...disciplined copyist. Just the texts, nothing in the margins. These monasteries were subject to periodic attacks. I'm afraid... It matches up with the burning of an Abbey at Lindisfarne. And I'm afraid this funny, irreverent young man that I have...come to love. I'm afraid he's been killed.

**TECHIE.** Centuries ago.

**SCHOLAR.** Yes.

**TECHIE.** And this—

**SCHOLAR.** Never mind.

**TECHIE.** bothers you?

**SCHOLAR.** Skip it.

*(Beat.)*

**TECHIE.** That's cool.

**SCHOLAR.** I don't need you to patronize me.

**TECHIE.** No, it's...it's your passion. It's interesting.

It's the same with me. People think it's boring, for most people it *is* boring. But for me, it's like... It's like I'm Quincy or something, you know?

**SCHOLAR.** Yeah!

**TECHIE.** Like I can find out what happened, I can fix it, I can find it.

**SCHOLAR.** God, I hope so.

**TECHIE.** You gotta worry less. This is our relax-you lunch. Worry less—

**SCHOLAR.** And back up my hard drive, I know.

*(The waitress arrives with lunch. She has an artsy arrangement of twigs in her hair.)*

**TECHIE.** So how come you think he died this horrible way? The book didn't burn, right?

**SCHOLAR.** It's unmistakable, his writing ends with his last little doggerel poem in the margin. I imagine he scrawled it down before running out to join the fighting. The last lines in his handwriting are:

For I have found the Glory of God and so must write no more.  
The Glory of God is in at the window and I am out the door.

**TECHIE.** The Glory of God is invading Huns?

---

**SCHOLAR.** Vikings. And no, it's, you know. Battle. The sanctity of holy battle.

**TECHIE.** No way he'd be sitting there writing if they're swarming in the window.

**SCHOLAR.** (*Smiles:*) It's the, uh, noise of the battle. That would be in at the window.

**TECHIE.** "so must write no more" ...that's not. No, if he's going to battle he wouldn't know he won't write anymore. He could survive, come back fine, sit back down at that desk like nothing happened. No, your little Monk is a runaway.

**SCHOLAR.** Death in battle is certainly a logical assumption—

**TECHIE.** No, you know what it is?  
I've got your Glory of God.  
The Glory of God is sunlight.

**SCHOLAR.** What are you—

**TECHIE.** In at the window! He sits there at that desk, day in day out. Surrounded by Monks, eating gruel, trapped inside hunched over his work. Hour upon hour. Day upon day. Searching for the Glory of God. And then one day, it hits him. A shaft of light. It's warm on his back, it makes the dust motes shine and dance before his eyes, and suddenly he realizes he doesn't want to be in this subterranean hovel anymore. He doesn't want to be trapped at a desk, nailed down, unable to move, slaving away for this mythical Glory of God when really, it's right outside these walls, grass and clean air and the sun on his face. And he says FUCK IT. I'M OUTTA HERE.

*(Beat.)*

**SCHOLAR.** The monastery wouldn't have been subterranean.

**TECHIE.** A manner of speaking...

**SCHOLAR.** Handy Computer Rescue is subterranean.

*(Beat.)*

**TECHIE.** Yeah. I did say subterranean, didn't I.

*(Light shift: the MONK and the GIRL.)*

**MONK.** I've seen you before.

**GIRL.** Mmm. I bring the goatsmilk to the Abbey. An' once I gave it to you. Thought you noticed me then.

*(The MONK blushes.)*

No need to be turnin' red. Y' caught me eye as well. N' I been peekin' in windows ever since, tryin' to find where they'd got you hid.

**MONK.** What's your name?

**GIRL.** Used to be Derdriu. Now it's just Girl! See to them goats.

**MONK.** Derdriu.

**GIRL.** I like it when you say it.

*(Light shift: lunch.)*

**TECHIE.** So, would you wanna do something this weekend? Provided I retrieve your data and you're still speaking to me?

**SCHOLAR.** I'm a lesbian.

**TECHIE.** Whoa! That's not what I was asking.

**SCHOLAR.** Yes it is.

**TECHIE.** *(Smiles. Nods:)* Ok. It is.

*(Light shift: the MONK and the GIRL. Time has passed. He looks around nervously to make sure they won't be spotted. She walks around his desk with confidence, uncaring.)*

**MONK.** You don't understand. Nothing made sense till I came here. This is important. What we're doing.

**GIRL.** Then stay.

**MONK.** *(Pleading:)* You.

**GIRL.** I'm going where I never see another goat. We can fish! Live off the bounty of the sea. All God's green land will be ours.

**MONK.** I can't.

**GIRL.** And if I'd let a silly thing like that stop me, I'd never a shimmied in that window now, would I?

**MONK.** It's different for you. You're fearless.

**GIRL.** *(Soft:)* No. I'm not. *(Strong:)* But nobody's keeping me here another day.

I want you to come with me. But I'll go my way without just the same.

*(Light shift: the SCHOLAR at home with her girlfriend, DAPHNE.)*

**DAPHNE.** You let him take you to lunch?  
Did you tell him you've got a girlfriend?

**SCHOLAR.** Yes, actually, I did.

**DAPHNE.** 'Cos you figured *that* was more likely to intrigue him, and he'd work harder to get your data back.

**SCHOLAR.** Daphne!

**DAPHNE.** You know, for a lesbian feminist, you do make use of those feminine wiles.

**SCHOLAR.** I don't know what you're talking about.

**DAPHNE.** How come you don't use 'em on me?

**SCHOLAR.** *(Relenting:)* You invented 'em. You'd see it coming a mile away.

**DAPHNE.** AhHa!  
An admission of guilt!

**SCHOLAR.** It's just so hard to negotiate the world. A man would never have to smile, or laugh at anybody's joke, or put in contact lenses

**DAPHNE.** You wore your contact lenses?

**SCHOLAR.** No, I barely slept. I was in no condition to think that far ahead.

**DAPHNE.** But when you got to that counter, the instincts kicked in.

**SCHOLAR.** Guilty as charged.

**DAPHNE.** You look cute in your glasses

**SCHOLAR.** Thanks

**DAPHNE.** Sexy librarian.

**SCHOLAR.** Can we have a rational conversation about this?

**DAPHNE.** Probably not.

**SCHOLAR.** Actually, I didn't tell him about you.

**DAPHNE.** You wench!

**SCHOLAR.** I told him I was a lesbian, but I wanted to leave you out of it, for some reason.

**DAPHNE.** It's much less fun if you leave me out of it.

**SCHOLAR.** I didn't want to sully you with his lust.

**DAPHNE.** Why not?

**SCHOLAR.** *(Looks up smiling:)* I'd rather sully you with mine.

**DAPHNE.** That's more like it. You've been mooning over that goddamn Monk for months. I thought I was gonna have to shave the middle of my head to get your attention.

*(Light shift: the MONK and the GIRL.)*

**MONK.** Stay here. It's safe.

**GIRL.** Lindisfarne Abbey was burnt to cinders not a fortnight ago. How's that for God watching over you. I suppose he watches, but doesn't do anything. Has him a little chuckle, you think?

**MONK.** I must find the Glory of God. My whole life has been—

**GIRL.** You want the Glory of God?  
Come here and I'll show you.

*(Places his hand on her breast. He stares at it for a moment, amazed. She pulls his face down to hers. They kiss.)*

I'm not leavin' you here.

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**HURRY!**  
by **Bridget Carpenter**

## **Cast of Characters**

WOMAN

SPEED DATE LEADER

GUY

DUDE

# HURRY!

by Bridget Carpenter

*(A young WOMAN sits at a table. The tabletop has a folded card with the letter G on it. She's in the middle of a cell phone call.)*

**WOMAN.** Yes I'm here. I *said* I would do it and I'm doing it. Yeah. Right. I'll let you know.

*(WOMAN hangs up. We hear: DING!)*

*(The SPEED DATE LEADER has rung her bell—the kind on motel desks—and is now waiting expectantly for attention from the group. She speaks into a microphone.)*

**SPEED DATE LEADER.** *(On the mic:)* People, let's focus, we've got a lot of dating to do in the next hour. Welcome to "Make Your Move," Speed Dating for Finicky Urban Professionals. Okay. Focus! Here's how it works. Each lady has her own table and a list of her dates. The men *move*; the ladies *stay put*. Ladies, *let the men come to you*. You have *two minutes* per date. Pay attention to the bell. Hurry up and *Make Your Move!*

*(DING!)*

*(A GUY sits down with the WOMAN.)*

**WOMAN.** Hi.

**GUY.** Hi.

**WOMAN.** Have you...done this before?

**GUY.** Oh yeah. This is my eleventh time.

**WOMAN.** Eleventh?

**GUY.** Yeah.

**WOMAN.** Wow. So—I guess. Wow. Speed dating. It's fun, right?

**GUY.** *(Pointedly:)* It is when you *play by the rules*.

**WOMAN.** What, what do you mean.

**GUY.** That paper they gave you, it has topics for *conversation, questions*.

**WOMAN.** Oh. *(She glances at the paper.)* You don't want to just talk?

**GUY.** We *can*.

*(Pause.)*

**GUY.** The questions are interesting though.

**WOMAN.** I'll ask a question. How about that. *(She consults the paper. Reads:)* "Have you ever seen a ghost?"

**GUY.** No.

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** "Do you believe in ghosts?"

**GUY.** No.

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** These are kind of stupid questions.

**GUY.** They're *ice breakers*. They're not designed to be about *intelligence*. Why are you doodling. Are you bored?

**WOMAN.** No no, um doodling just makes me feel more relaxed, I guess. More comfortable.

**GUY.** Because I'm making you uncomfortable.

**WOMAN.** No no not at all. I just doodle. You are making me a little uncomfortable.

**GUY.** It's because I'm a mathematician. Numbers make people uncomfortable.

**WOMAN.** I don't think so, I didn't have any idea that you were a—

**GUY.** *(Interrupting on "idea":)* Let's start over.

**WOMAN.** Um.

**GUY.** Let's start over.

**WOMAN.** Okay...

**GUY.** What are your hobbies? Do you have any brothers or sisters? What's your favorite color? Where were you born? What kind of music do you like? If you could be any animal, what would you be? What's your favorite way to spend a Sunday afternoon? When do you get up in the morning? What do you like best, Mexican, Italian, or Chinese? What's in your refrigerator? If you could be anywhere on earth right now, where would you be?

*(DING!)*

**SPEED DATE LEADER.** *(On the mic:)* Make Your Move! Next! Let's go! Hurry hurry hurry!

**GUY.** Okay, nice to meet you.

*(He exits. DUDE enters, sits down with WOMAN.)*

**DUDE.** Hey.

**WOMAN.** Hi.

**DUDE.** I get to sit at the G-Spot! *(Laughs heartily.)* I FOUND THE G-SPOT! Get it?

**WOMAN.** Got it.

**DUDE.** I'm number two hope that doesn't mean I'm through! *(Laughs heartily.)*

**WOMAN.** Uh, no.

**DUDE.** You seem a little shell-shocked, sweetheart.

**WOMAN.** I guess I haven't gotten the hang of this yet.

**DUDE.** The speed?

**WOMAN.** Right, the speed.

**DUDE.** I love it, man. Speed dating. I love the efficiency, I love the adrenaline rush, I love that it's *survival* of the *speediest*—I think it's awesome. Thirty dates in an hour—POW. BOOM.

**WOMAN.** That's a positive attitude.

**SPEED DATE LEADER.** *(Coming over to them; off the mic:)* I'm interrupting for *(Checks watch)* ten seconds. I always like to give a few

couples a racy little topic to respond to—just to throw something *wild* into the conversational mix! For instance: “waxing”—discuss!

*(She laughs merrily and leaves them.)*

(WOMAN *laughs halfheartedly.*)

**DUDE.** Waxing? Like, the hair on my ass? Only if I was *Greek!*  
*(Laughs heartily.)*

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** I’m Greek.

*(Pause.)*

**DUDE.** I’ve been to Greece.

**WOMAN.** Uh huh.

**DUDE.** So wow, you don’t have a huge hooked *nose*...

**WOMAN.** What?!

**DUDE.** Yeah I was in Greece. Anyway. You look way, way familiar.

**WOMAN.** I’m not.

**DUDE.** I feel like I’ve seen you before.

**WOMAN.** You haven’t.

**DUDE.** I feel like I know you.

**WOMAN.** You don’t.

**DUDE.** You’re not my *dental hygienist* are you?? *(Laughs heartily.)*

**WOMAN.** No.

**DUDE.** Ha, ha. My Big Fat Greek Dental Hygienist. SEQUEL! Ha.  
So what do you do?

**WOMAN.** What do *you* do?

**DUDE.** I’m an engineer.

**WOMAN.** Really.

**DUDE.** I design shit that they use in the space program.

**WOMAN.** Wow.

**DUDE.** So I'm one of the few people actually *qualified* to say, "Hey, that isn't rocket science!" (*Laughs heartily.*) Because you know rocket science is *what I do!* So I'd *know* if something wasn't it! Come on tell me what do you do.

**WOMAN.** (*Reluctant.*) I'm an actress.

**DUDE.** No shit! I knew it! I knew it! I've seen you in something.

**WOMAN.** No you haven't.

**DUDE.** I HAVE. I HAVE. A movie. What movie? What the shit was it? It's on the tip of my tongue! Or, or some TV show...

**WOMAN.** No. Neither. I just do theatre.

*(Pause.)*

**DUDE.** Really?

**WOMAN.** Yes.

**DUDE.** Theatre? Like, plays?

**WOMAN.** Right.

**DUDE.** Are you in a play here in town?

**WOMAN.** Yes.

**DUDE.** Right now? You're in a play right now.

**WOMAN.** Yes.

**DUDE.** That is so fucking cool. What's the play? Do you like it?

**WOMAN.** It's a trifle.

**DUDE.** What's that mean?

**WOMAN.** It doesn't mean anything. I mean the play doesn't mean anything.

**DUDE.** Oh come on. Everything means something.

**WOMAN.** This doesn't.

*(DING!)*

**SPEED DATE LEADER.** *(In the mic:)* Make Your Move! Next! Hurry hurry hurry! HURRY!

*(DUDE exits. No one comes to sit down. The WOMAN makes a cell phone call.)*

**WOMAN.** Are you there? Pick up if you're there. *(Pause.)* Okay I just wanted to call and tell you that I hate you. Thanks for recommending this.

*(She hangs up. The GUY from before sits down at the table.)*

**GUY.** Were you bored talking to that guy?

**WOMAN.** Um...didn't we already have a, a date?

**GUY.** Tonight there are quite a few more women here than men. I didn't want you to be sitting alone. So I came back.

**WOMAN.** Won't that, um, mess up things for the other women at other tables?

**GUY.** I've been here eleven times. I know how to work the system.

**WOMAN.** Oh.

*(Pause.)*

**GUY.** So were you bored with the second guy? Or uncomfortable? I didn't see you doodling, that's why I ask.

**WOMAN.** I uh, I don't really want to answer that, I don't think.

**GUY.** Because you're uncomfortable.

**WOMAN.** Yeah.

**GUY.** *Damn!* Dammit, dammit, I always *do* this!

**WOMAN.** It's not you, it's me.

**GUY.** Really?

**WOMAN.** Sure.

**GUY.** Whew. Great. So what were you guys just talking about?

**WOMAN.** You know, I'm sorry. I made a mistake. I shouldn't have come here.

**GUY.** Why?

**WOMAN.** I don't know. I'm just, very, very uncomfortable.

**GUY.** But you said that was you.

**WOMAN.** I'm going to leave.

**GUY.** Wait for the bell. Please. If you leave right now they'll know I didn't move in the right order.

**WOMAN.** Okay. Fine.

*(Pause. They sit. She almost doodles, then stops herself.)*

**WOMAN.** Why have you come here eleven times?

**GUY.** I work with numbers. I don't have many opportunities to meet people. As a mathematician, I appreciate the odds. Why are you here?

**WOMAN.** I promised my friend Dina that I'd go.

**GUY.** Why does she care?

**WOMAN.** My fiancé died two years ago and I haven't been on a date since then. That's why.

*(Little pause.)*

I was with someone, and we were in love, and then he died, and boom I was alone. It happened that fast.

*(DUDE comes over.)*

**DUDE.** Hey guy, you're screwing up the order. Is he bothering you? You're not supposed to be here.

**GUY.** Why don't you just focus on your own Speed Schedule.

**DUDE.** Why don't you take your pocket protector and shove it up your—

*(DING!)*

**SPEED DATE LEADER.** *(On the mic:)* Is there a problem over at Table G.

*(SPEED DATE LEADER comes over.)*

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**A LITTLE LUNCH**  
**by Kristina Halvorson**

## **Cast of Characters**

DEB

KATIE: Pregnant.

THERESA

WAITER

*All characters are in their 20s.*

## **Time**

Lunch.

## **Place**

A restaurant.

# A LITTLE LUNCH

by Kristina Halvorson

*(Lights up on a restaurant table for four. THERESA is sitting alone. She's on her cell phone.)*

**THERESA.** Yes. I know. Oh Mother, you can't possibly ... she's being totally unreasonable. She's seen a dermatologist and she's booked an appointment with a ... well, have you seen her, have you seen what she's talking about? It's infinitesimal. Microscopic. I can't see a thing. It's invisible to the eye.

*(KATIE enters. She's also on her cell phone. She sets a stack of folders and brochures on the table.)*

**KATIE.** No no, the tiny little ones. The little red, the itsy bitsy teeny ones. *(Whispers:)* Get off the phone.

**THERESA.** A wrinkle at 22? I hardly think so.

**KATIE.** They're everywhere, they're crawling right up the wall, they crawl all over each other. It's disgusting. There must be hundreds, thousands.

**THERESA.** I know, I know. Regardless, weekly tanning isn't helping the situation.

**KATIE.** I'm sure they're inside the walls. Well, they may be small but they can do a lot of damage.

**THERESA.** She's talking Botox.

**KATIE.** No no, no chemicals.

*(DEB enters.)*

**DEB.** Hey. Oh, sorry.

**KATIE.** I have to go.

**THERESA.** I'll call you back.

**DEB.** Hi you guys.

**THERESA.** Hi.

**KATIE.** We need to get started. I have an ultrasound at 2:15.

**THERESA.** Oh sure, double-book us for the kid.

**DEB.** But Katie! We only see each other once every few months.

**KATIE.** Oh, I know. Isn't it great we still have a reason to get together?

**DEB.** Did we need a reason?

**THERESA.** I just need a martini.

**KATIE.** So let's call to order.

**DEB.** But really, we don't need to jump right in.

*(The WAITER appears. He stands behind THERESA, speaking over her shoulder.)*

**WAITER.** Hello, ladies. Care for anything to drink to start off?

**DEB.** Nothing for me.

**KATIE.** I need purified water, no ice. And organic lemon if you have it.

**THERESA.** *(Staring at the menu:)* I'll have a dirty martini, stirred not shaken with three olives. And no pimentos.

**WAITER.** Theresa?

**THERESA.** What? *(She turns around.)* Oh. Oh, my, don't these salads look lovely? I simply can't decide between the field greens or the spinach...maybe the caesar...

**WAITER.** What are you doing here?

**THERESA.** What am I doing, I'm waiting for a martini.

**WAITER.** Know what I'm waiting for? I'm waiting for you to call me back.

**THERESA.** Right, well, you know, we're on a tight schedule here, this woman is having a baby.

**WAITER.** She is? Oh. Right. You are so funny. Okay. Well. Don't go anywhere, I'll be right back. We'll catch up.

*(Exits.)*

**DEB.** So, who is he?

**KATIE.** All right, let's move along.

**THERESA.** Maybe just the soup, or a sandwich. Is it a sandwich day?

**DEB.** Theresa.

**THERESA.** One date. One painfully long date.

**DEB.** He's kind of cute.

**THERESA.** He's kind of excruciatingly boring. I'd suggest we make a run for it, except now he's bringing me a martini.

**KATIE.** Oh, my goodness, look at the time. *(Clinks her glass.)* All right, ladies, I hereby call to order the fourth meeting of the Wise Women's Financial Management Club.

**DEB.** No no, wait.

**KATIE.** Our agreed-upon topic this month is pre-tax retirement savings.

**DEB.** Do we have to jump right in?

**KATIE.** Is there something else you want to talk about?

**DEB.** Well sure.

**KATIE.** What is it?

**DEB.** I don't know. Our lives. Important stuff. Big things.

**KATIE.** Saving for retirement is important.

**DEB.** Well, sure, but I just think...

**KATIE.** We all agreed that this was worthwhile.

**THERESA.** I only agreed that money was worthwhile. You were the one with the agenda.

**KATIE.** Look how much we've already learned.

**DEB.** Remember when we'd sit up all night in Theresa's room drinking gin and tonics and talking about...

**KATIE.** Emergency savings funds, IRAs...

**DEB.** Medieval literature, Nietzsche...

**KATIE.** Savings bonds, consolidating credit-card debt...

**DEB.** Feminism, mitochondria, world hunger...

**THERESA.** Good times, good times.

**KATIE.** Excuse me. We are not living in dorm rooms with our hot pots anymore. With our financial management club, we have a set date every two months, and we can make the most of our time together by learning something new.

**DEB.** Exactly, but why don't we talk about something...

**KATIE.** Something that applies to real life. Like pre-tax retirement savings! So, if you'll both turn with me to the first page my little presentation...

*(WAITER enters with drinks.)*

**WAITER.** Here we are, ladies.

**THERESA.** He's back. Is he back?

**WAITER.** Of course I'm back, I'm your waiter.

**KATIE.** Is this lemon organic?

**WAITER.** I'm waiting on you.

**THERESA.** Don't start with that.

**DEB.** I think we should skip ahead to stocks.

**KATIE.** No no, we won't get to stocks until after the holidays.

**WAITER.** Our soup today is cream of potato with watercress.

**THERESA.** Stocks are much more exciting, I think. Inherently dramatic. Stop looking at me.

**DEB.** That's what I mean. Drama. Excitement. Something big!

**WAITER.** Our fish today is the salmon.

**KATIE.** You can't just change the topic.

**WAITER.** Lightly broiled, with a bit of white wine and vine-ripened tomatoes...

**KATIE.** I have an agenda. I have handouts.

**DEB.** Let's invest in something exciting.

**WAITER.** Served with a side of asparagus risotto, which is really quite lovely.

**THERESA.** Something important, something risky...

**DEB.** Something that's going to change the whole world...

**WAITER.** Ramone does this special something with the spices, I don't quite know how to describe it.

**KATIE.** You want us to throw our money away?

**THERESA.** A new discovery.

**DEB.** Biomedicals, natural energy sources, space exploration...

**WAITER.** How about nanotechnology?

**DEB.** Nanotechnology? What's that?

**THERESA.** Oh no, no no no no.

**WAITER.** It's only the defining technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**DEB.** Really?

**WAITER.** Companies are already investing billions in research. It's going to radically alter the very fabric of our society.

**DEB.** See, that's exactly what I'm talking about. Big things.

**KATIE.** I definitely don't have time for this.

**THERESA.** Don't look him in the eye. This is how he hypnotizes his prey.

**WAITER.** We're talking about a technology that basically offers control over the building blocks of nature. Let me explain.

*(He leans over the table, opens a packet of sugar and dumps it out.)*

Pretend that these are atoms. Did you know that ten million atoms can fit on the dot of an “i”?

**KATIE.** Excuse me, but I’m ready to order.

**DEB.** *(Taking notes:)* Keep going, this is great.

**WAITER.** Scientists have figured out how to move atoms around and manipulate them into patterns of our own design. Basically, the goal of nanotechnology is to engineer materials and devices at the atomic scale.

**DEB.** That’s amazing.

**THERESA.** Is this a reality TV show? Am I losing?

**WAITER.** So the theory is that if we can build new materials from the molecule on up, we can create materials that behave however we want them to. Steel that’s ten times lighter and a hundred times stronger. Rubber that never wears out. Glass that never breaks. They already have self-cleaning glass.

**DEB.** Oh my God, I’ve seen commercials for that.

**WAITER.** Isn’t it great?

**DEB.** Do you know the names of any companies that are doing this?

**KATIE.** No no, Deb, I can’t just sit here and let you take investment advice from a waiter.

**WAITER.** Oh, I’m a very well-informed waiter. Nanotechnology is a subject very close to my heart.

**THERESA.** Never mind that it’s absolutely irrelevant to the rest of the human population.

**WAITER.** No no, it’s everywhere. Digital cameras, computers, MP3 players, everything’s getting smaller and more powerful.

**DEB.** See? See?

**KATIE.** We are really running behind schedule.

**WAITER.** I even have nanomaterials in my pants.

**THERESA.** You sure do.

**WAITER.** Oh yeah. It's these little nanofibers that stand up from the material and actively repel liquids. Totally invisible. They make my pants stain-resistant.

**DEB.** Seriously? Can I feel them?

**WAITER.** Sure.

**THERESA.** Stop that. Stop it.

**KATIE.** Well. Not that anyone cares what I think, but I find it highly irresponsible to invest in something so new and so unpredictable.

**DEB.** Katie, they're pants.

**KATIE.** What are the ethics behind this technology?

**WAITER.** The ethics?

**THERESA.** Oh, nobody cares about that.

**KATIE.** What will these kinds of advances mean for our economy, our societies, the global community?

**WAITER.** Oh, it'll change everything. More than the internet. More than electricity! We'll be able to program molecules to self-replicate and self-assemble. We'll be able to create something from nothing. Building materials. New forests. Human organs, a heart, a liver, a pancreas...

**KATIE.** But what are the risks? What are the consequences?

**WAITER.** Well, you can't have progress without some consequences.

**KATIE.** You know, it's attitudes like yours that make this world a dangerous place to live.

**DEB.** Katie, come on...

**KATIE.** Just jumping right into things, no regard for anyone else, for the dangers, for future generations.

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

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**NO MORE STATIC**  
**by Kevin Kell O'Donnell**

## **Cast of Characters**

LIAM: 26, first generation Irish-American. Speaks with a thick Boston accent

SCOTT: 27, African-American

LEX: 26, American

NORA: 20, Liam's sister

## **Time**

Late Spring, 2003

## **Setting**

Riverside Park, New York City, under the George Washington Bridge, next to the Little Red Lighthouse. There's a concrete path, a bench next to the Lighthouse, green grass, and not a cloud in the sky.

## **Production Notes**

The Little Red Lighthouse can be represented with lighting. It isn't necessary to have an actual lighthouse.

# NO MORE STATIC

by Kevin Kell O'Donnell

*(LIAM, SCOTT and LEX look out over a rail at the Hudson River. LEX is dressed in a disheveled polyester spring suit. SCOTT is dressed in sweat pants, sandals, and a T-shirt. He plays with a yo-yo. LIAM wears jeans, a spring jacket, and a Boston Red Sox baseball cap. He has a cut under his left eye.)*

**LIAM.** How do you guys do it?

**LEX.** What?

**LIAM.** Live here with all the shit going on?

**SCOTT.** With lots of money.

**LEX.** Maybe for you, rock star.

**SCOTT.** No, seriously, it does get crazy here. Sometimes you forget about the insanity, sometimes you embrace it.

**LIAM.** You take vacations? Get away?

**LEX.** Who the fuck can afford vacations? I went home for Christmas. Depressed the shit out of me.

**LIAM.** What are you talkin' about, you weren't depressed when I came and saw you—you were happy—

**LEX.** I was drunk.

**LIAM.** Well, it was Christmas, 'course you were.

*(Pause.)*

I'm glad we came here. It's not part of the rest of this place. Jesus, look at that house. You see that over there? It's like a little cabin—little beach. Might be a boat.

**LEX.** Oh, yeah.

**LIAM.** It's just out of place, you know? Like this fuckin' lighthouse. That's New Jersey, right?

*(LEX and SCOTT laugh.)*

**LEX.** It's kind of cool to be with you down here. If you moved down, Jesus, that'd be great. The three of us reunited in the big city.

**SCOTT.** I feel like I'm taking my kid to school for the first time. I can't help thinking, *he'll never be this innocent again.*

**LIAM.** Stop busting my balls.

**SCOTT.** Sorry, dude, but it's true.

**LEX.** Seriously, maybe you should think about moving down here, Lee.

**LIAM.** Nah. There's lots of stuff going on back home right now.

**LEX.** Like what?

**LIAM.** I got work, you know.

**SCOTT.** You could find something down here.

**LEX.** Maybe flipping burgers somewhere. It's just this economy...

**SCOTT.** Hence, your endless job search.

**LIAM.** I'm trying to pay off the house. It's where I'm supposed to be right now.

**LEX.** How's that going, by the way?

**LIAM.** It's fine. I'm really close. I got a few projects—finishing a walkway down on Jerusalem Road, and another spring clean-up scheduled. I should be all right.

**LEX.** That's great, man. After you pay off the joint, then you can move down here, huh?

*(LIAM shrugs.)*

It's just a thought. But you know, it's nice to think you're still back there, keeping it safe. This city, it's not good enough for you anyway, brotha.

**LIAM.** Thanks, dude. Hey, Scott? So, this show tomorrow, are we gonna have to dress up, 'cause I didn't bring anything fancy, you know? I'm not like Dapper Dan over here.

**SCOTT.** No, don't worry about it. It's an opening, you only dress up if you don't know the artist.

**LIAM.** Good to know. Hey, I'll be right back.

**LEX.** Where are you going?

**LIAM.** I want to touch the water.

**SCOTT.** It's not really clean, you know?

**LIAM.** I'll be right back.

*(He leaves.)*

**SCOTT.** Lee, seriously, it's like, dangerous.

**LEX.** Do you think this is a good idea?

**SCOTT.** I know this is what she wants.

**LEX.** I just hope he doesn't freak out when she shows up.

**SCOTT.** Why would he?

**LEX.** Cause of the thing.

**SCOTT.** What thing?

**LEX.** The money.

**SCOTT.** What?

**LEX.** I thought you—she stole about three grand from the kid before she took off. Drew it right out of the account, a week after their mother died. I thought you knew about that.

**SCOTT.** I didn't know about her stealing money. What did he do?

**LEX.** It's his sister. I mean, what's he going to do? Besides, she hasn't told him where she is. He told me he gets letters from her, but she doesn't say where she is. Postmarked all over the place.

**SCOTT.** She told me she's been living here for a few months. Bartending.

**LEX.** The kid's had enough tragedy in his life this year. I just don't want him to get hurt. I'm only here to protect him. I'm not concerned about her. You know he's still not over his mom.

**SCOTT.** Of course he isn't.

**LEX.** And do you remember Jenny?

**SCOTT.** I met her at the funeral. That was the only time. She was nice.

**LEX.** Dude, she was perfect. Great girl. And she loved the kid. But, she only knew him sober. When Nora left him and took all that money, the kid started playing pharmacist with himself. Must have scared the shit out of his girl. He called me one night, back in November, crying. She left a note for him. Liam told me he would never forgive Nora. He blamed her. If she hadn't left, he wouldn't have started drinking again.

**SCOTT.** He blamed Nora for that?

**LEX.** Why do you have to be so—YES he blamed her. What? You can't understand that?

**SCOTT.** Look, do you think he's still mad at her?

**LEX.** I don't know. Pretty damn good chance.

**SCOTT.** Do you know he hit her?

**LEX.** What?

**SCOTT.** She came home late, he was drunk—waiting up for her. Something about her boyfriend. He didn't like the guy. That's why Nora took off, Lex. He cut her cheek open.

**LEX.** Goddammit, Liam.

**SCOTT.** And do you know he spent some time in jail?

**LEX.** Jail?

**SCOTT.** For a week in January. He was at Mo Jo's. Jenny walked in with some guy. Liam ended up cracking the guy's head open on a radiator. Nora said they held him for a week, but the guy ended up not pressing charges. The kid's in trouble. Look at his face—you really believe that's a carpentry accident?

**LEX.** Damn, I hope we're doing the right thing.

*(Pause.)*

We really haven't thought this through, man— I mean, if he hit her then—

**SCOTT.** I think she wants to make peace with him about it.

**LEX.** She say that?

**SCOTT.** No, but—

**LEX.** See, he should just move down here with us. We'll take care of him.

**SCOTT.** I know. I want that too. But it's his call.

**LEX.** I just miss him, you know. You find out real quick who you want to be around when you lose your...way. When I got laid off, and then when Sarah left, I thought about him a lot: up there in Boston, working, writing when he could. But I had a feeling something was wrong. Couldn't call him—his phone was turned off.

**SCOTT.** Yeah, I know.

**LEX.** No computer. Nothing. I wrote him a letter, but I felt stupid about it. I just kept going on and on about the old days, and—well, you know me. I kept it though.

**SCOTT.** You should give it to him.

**LEX.** We'll see. I need a drink.

*(Pulls out a flask from his jacket and takes a swig.)*

*(Scott's cell phone rings.)*

**SCOTT.** Hello? Yeah. Hi. Yeah, we're here. Yup, he's... *(Looks around, can't see LIAM)* around. I mean, he's here. All right. All right. Well, the park is going to close at six. Sundown. Yeah. So if you want—shit.

**LEX.** What?

**SCOTT.** The fuckin' phone went out.

**LEX.** It's because you're under the bridge. Move over here.

*(SCOTT moves and re-dials the phone.)*

**SCOTT.** Wouldn't the bridge help the signal?

**LEX.** Help the signal?

**SCOTT.** Yeah, since it's so high— Hello? Nora? It's Scott. Sorry about that. I said I'm sorry about that. I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT. Oh, sorry. So anyway, we're here, by the lighthouse and we'll stay here until you come, or somebody kicks us out. Where are you right now? Really. Damn. Well, just hang in there— Ahh! JESUS CHRIST!!! My fuckin' ear!

**LEX.** What the hell's wrong?

*(SCOTT is holding his hand up to his ear. He's doubled over in pain.)*

**SCOTT.** This static just went through the phone. It was like a lighting bolt. Jesus.

**LEX.** So where is she?

**SCOTT.** She's at one-twenty-five. Trains stopped.

**LEX.** She's not going to make it. Just as well.

**SCOTT.** She will.

**LEX.** Why does she want to meet him here anyway?

**SCOTT.** I don't know. When she told me, I didn't know where she meant, *(LEX begins reading the plaque on the ground next to the lighthouse.)* and she was like, "you know the Little Red Lighthouse from the book," I was like, "No, sorry I don't know."

**LEX.** Yeah, they made it into a book. Look: "Immortalized in the children's book 'The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge' *(LEX looks up at the George Washington Bridge.)* by Hildergarde H. Swift published in 1942. In the book, the lighthouse learns that it still has an important job to do, and that there is still a place in the world for an old lighthouse."

**SCOTT.** Signed Rudolph Giuliani. Do you think he really wrote that?

**LEX.** How the hell should I know?

**SCOTT.** What's the matter with you?

**LEX.** Nothing. I'm just curious why she wants to meet him here, and you're cracking jokes.

**SCOTT.** Jokes?

**LEX.** Yeah, everything's always so cool with you isn't it?

**SCOTT.** What the hell are you talking about?

**LEX.** Nothing.

**SCOTT.** Nothing? Fine.

**LEX.** Yeah, fine.

**SCOTT.** Lex, what's going on?

**LEX.** I said: nothing.

**SCOTT.** You got something to say to me why don't you say it and stop acting like a bitch.

**LEX.** You're so...

**SCOTT.** What?

**LEX.** That piece you're working on right now... It's really great, dude. I can't tell you why. But, I just know it's really...different from your other stuff...and your other stuff is incredible... But, even with all this, the stuff that's been happening to you—your success—you're still going. You're still improving.

**SCOTT.** It's what I do.

**LEX.** I know.

**SCOTT.** You're good at what you do.

**LEX.** Don't fuck with me.

**SCOTT.** I'm serious. I couldn't do that type of work. Numbers, money. I'd be lost.

**LEX.** Do you remember in college, when I was thinking of asking Sarah to marry me? Do you remember what you said to me?

**SCOTT.** No.

**LEX.** You asked me what my dreams were. What I wanted to do before I died. We sat down and made a list of things we wanted to do before we died. Like jump out of an airplane.

**SCOTT.** Visit the pyramids.

**LEX.** Have sex with two women.

**SCOTT.** Check.

**LEX.** Shut the fuck up.

**SCOTT.** Seriously.

**LEX.** When?

**SCOTT.** First year I came down.

**LEX.** You lucky son of a bitch.

**SCOTT.** What else?

**LEX.** Direct a movie.

**SCOTT.** Who said that?

**LEX.** I did. I said that.

*(LIAM comes back over to them. He sees LEX with the flask.)*

**LIAM.** Gimme some of that.

**LEX.** Ah, sure.

*(He reluctantly gives him the flask.)*

**LIAM.** *(Takes a swig.)* You were right, the water was fuckin' disgusting. You guys ready to take off?

**SCOTT.** Let's hang out for a little longer, all right?

**LIAM.** Sure. It's the nicest place we've been so far.

**SCOTT.** You really couldn't see yourself down here?

**LIAM.** If I did move down here, it'd be for you guys. I love you guys, but I just— I have to finish things.

**SCOTT.** What do you mean?

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**THE SECOND BEAM**  
by Joan Ackermann

## **Cast of Characters**

GEORGIA

JENNIFER

MEG

CASTING AGENT

PATTI SCHARER

## **Place**

An audition waiting room

# THE SECOND BEAM

by Joan Ackermann

*(In an audition waiting room, three women—GEORGIA, JENNIFER and MEG—sit on folded chairs and study pages from a script. They are all dressed in lab coats as scientists. After a moment, a CASTING AGENT opens a door and sticks her head in.)*

**CASTING AGENT.** Georgia?

*(GEORGIA smiles up at her, grabs her stuff and exits. The other two smile at her as she exits into the audition room, closing the door behind her. MEG is the older of the two, more mature, grounded. JENNIFER is soft-spoken, sweet.)*

**JENNIFER.** *(Approaching MEG:)* Pardon me... Do you have a tissue?

*(MEG opens her bag and gives her one. Goes back to studying. JENNIFER sits down with the tissue and very discreetly wipes under both her armpits.)*

You were at *The Flannerys*.

*(MEG looks at her blankly.)*

You read for the sister. Of the boxer, with the bad hand. The malpractice suit.

**MEG.** *(Remembering:)* Oh. Right.

**JENNIFER.** I heard that show didn't get picked up. You were at *Mind of a Married Man*, too. The jockey's wife. *(Concerned:)* Are you memorizing that?

**MEG.** *(Friendly:)* No. No, just studying.

*(Pause.)*

**JENNIFER.** Do you happen to know who got the part?

**MEG.** Which part. The sister, of the boxer?

**JENNIFER.** No. Yes.

**MEG.** Or the jockey's wife.

**JENNIFER.** Either. Both.

**MEG.** Well, the same actress got them both.

**JENNIFER.** Patti Scharer?

**MEG.** Patti Scharer.

**JENNIFER.** I knew it. Patti Scharer. Patti Scharer. Every part my agent sends me out on, every single part it seems, Patti Scharer gets. Care for a mint?

*(MEG shakes her head no, takes out a lipstick and puts some on, looking at herself in a small compact mirror.)*

Are you doing an accent?

**MEG.** Accent?

**JENNIFER.** For the scientist.

**MEG.** What kind of accent?

**JENNIFER.** Foreign.

**MEG.** I think she's American.

*(Pause.)*

**JENNIFER.** *(Concerned:)* So you're not doing an accent?

*(MEG shakes her head, goes back to studying the pages.)*

I was going to do a French accent. Madame Curie. The scientist. You don't think I should?

**MEG.** If you've worked on it that way. It's a choice.

**JENNIFER.** Yes, it is. It's a choice. *(Pause.)* I never know about choices. My agent always says they like it when you make a choice, but I'm not so sure. I've been making choices, strong choices, but...they haven't really been panning out for me.

*(She discreetly picks something out from between her teeth.)*

I really need the work. I really, really, really need the work. I'm sorry, I'll let you concentrate.

*(Pause.)*

Have you read for him before?

(MEG looks at her.)

Ethan Schroeder. The director. Have you read for him?

(MEG nods. Goes back to her pages, concentrating.)

My friend Annette says he's a monster. She read for him for a movie of the week and he ate his lunch the entire time.

**MEG.** He can be a jerk.

**JENNIFER.** That's all I need. (She sighs, smooths her skirt.) Can I just ask you...is this lipstick, the color of my lipstick, all right? I've never worn this shade before.

**MEG.** It looks good on you. It's a good color for you.

**JENNIFER.** You think so? Really?

**MEG.** I do. (Smiling:) It's a good "choice."

**JENNIFER.** Thanks. I don't know. It felt like a scientist choice, I don't know why. Sometimes you just have to go with your gut.

(MEG nods, goes back to her pages.)

**JENNIFER.** (Worrying:) Patti Scharer. Do you get the light thing? They won't expect us to understand that, do you think? Stopping light? They won't grill us about that.

**MEG.** Probably not.

**JENNIFER.** I don't know. I read for the part of a veterinarian and they acted like they expected me to know everything about a dog's digestive system. I just winged it, talked about heartworm. I've seen them. In a jar. (MEG doesn't respond.) It's not just about the money. Truth be known, I'm feeling kind of stuck. (Pause.) If he's eating in there, stuffing his mouth with California pizza, Koo-koo-charoo chicken...You said you've read for him?

**MEG.** I used to go out with him.

**JENNIFER.** (Stunned:) You went out with him? You went out with Ethan Shroeder?

(MEG *nods.*)

**JENNIFER.** Ohmygod, I'm so sorry. What I said...I didn't mean to call him a monster. Maybe he was just...hungry when my friend read for him. Maybe he's perfectly—

**MEG.** It's okay. A lot of people think he's an asshole.

**JENNIFER.** They do. You're not going out with him any more?

(MEG *shakes her head.*)

You're still friends? I mean, you're okay reading for him?

**MEG.** I really like this part.

**JENNIFER.** (*Not really like it:*) You do?

**MEG.** I do. How often does that happen?

**JENNIFER.** Yeah. Really. You must like this part.

**MEG.** I find the subject fascinating. I've read quite a bit about it.

**JENNIFER.** Oh. So...Light travels a hundred and eighty thousand miles an hour...

**MEG.** A second.

**JENNIFER.** And...

(JENNIFER *waits for MEG to explain it.*)

Then they stop it in a jar. (*Thinking...*) Like heartworm. Preserve it in formaldehyde.

**MEG.** Chilled sodium gas, actually.

**JENNIFER.** It just hangs in there? Frozen?

**MEG.** Well, the light goes out. It gets fainter and fainter as it slows down. The most amazing part to me—it's all amazing—they can revive the light any time by flashing a second beam of light through the gas.

**JENNIFER.** Oh.

**MEG.** They can bring a beam of light to a full stop, hold it, and then send it on its way with a second beam.

*(Pause.)*

**JENNIFER.** I like scenes best...when I can go deep. Cry. I like emotion. My background is theatre.

**MEG.** Not a lot of emotion in these scenes, not ostensibly.

**JENNIFER.** No. That's why I was thinking the French...

**MEG.** Go for the accent.

**JENNIFER.** You think so?

*(Another actress enters. She is very appealing, made-up, a knock-out. She takes a seat. Exudes confidence. Both MEG and JENNIFER look at her, silently, as she takes out many pages and starts going through them.)*

**PATTI.** *(To JENNIFER, all business:)* Excuse me, are your pages with the reporter dated May eleventh or May fifteenth?

*(JENNIFER looks at her pages...)*

**JENNIFER.** The reporter? I don't have...

*(JENNIFER flips through, looking...)*

**PATTI.** Never mind. *(Noticing...)* Meg.

**MEG.** Hi, Patti.

**PATTI.** How *are* you?

*(MEG nods, friendly, a little guarded.)*

**PATTI.** It's so great to see you, are you here now?

**MEG.** I'm here.

**PATTI.** You know I'd heard that. I ran into Carolyn, she was stage managing *Vanya* at the Taper, she told me you'd moved back.

**MEG.** I did.

**PATTI.** That's great. And you're reading for Ethan?

**MEG.** I am.

**PATTI.** Wow. Wow.

*(PATTI studies MEG, waiting for some kind of response, which is not forthcoming.)*

**MEG.** How's Olivia?

**PATTI.** Olivia is three, God help me. Meg, can I borrow your lipstick, I actually forgot mine.

**MEG.** I'm sorry. I actually left all my makeup in the car.

**PATTI.** Really? What were you thinking?

*(PATTI maintains her charming smile, miffed underneath. JENNIFER stares at PATTI in a mixed stupor of defeat and envy.)*

**JENNIFER.** *(Stirring:)* I have some lipstick. You can borrow.

**PATTI.** *(Brightly:)* Great. Thanks.

*(JENNIFER reaches down into her purse and takes out her lipstick, takes off the cap, and offers it to PATTI.)*

**PATTI.** *(Looking at JENNIFER's lips:)* Oh. Is it the color you're wearing?

**JENNIFER.** Uh-huh.

**PATTI.** That's okay. That color...I can't wear that color. But, thanks.

*(Mortified, JENNIFER looks down at the color, gradually retreats her hand, puts the cover back on and sticks the lipstick back in her purse. Pause as all study the script.)*

**PATTI.** *(To MEG:)* I admire you, Meg. I really do. Reading for Ethan. That takes guts.

**MEG.** Not really.

**PATTI.** The way he treated you. You know Carolyn's first A.D. *(MEG nods.)* You know they're an item. Ethan and Carolyn. She's pregnant. That's ironic, huh?

*(MEG did not know this. She flinches slightly. The door opens and GEORGIA enters with the CASTING AGENT behind her. GEORGIA grabs a sweater she left on a chair, waves to the CASTING AGENT, exiting.)*

**CASTING AGENT.** Thanks, Georgia. Patti. You made it.

**PATTI.** I'm so sorry I'm late. The 405 was a nightmare.

**CASTING AGENT.** You want to come in? Or do you want to take a minute. Jennifer...?

*(JENNIFER, discombobulated, jumps up, dropping all her pages as PATTI grabs her purse, coat, stands up.)*

**PATTI.** I'm fine.

*(PATTI heads smoothly into the audition room. The CASTING AGENT smiles at MEG, looks down at the pages JENNIFER has dropped, and exits into the audition room.)*

**JENNIFER.** *(Crying, wiping her nose on her sleeve:)* I'm sorry. Do you have another tissue?

*(MEG hands her another tissue which JENNIFER uses to wipe her nose and wipe away tears. JENNIFER grabs her stuff and hurries out.)*

**JENNIFER.** *(Not looking at MEG:)* It was very nice meeting you.

**MEG.** Where are you going?

**JENNIFER.** *(Crying, halfway out the door:)* I don't know. Bye.

**MEG.** Wait!

*(JENNIFER turns and looks at her.)*

You can get this part.

*(JENNIFER is sobbing.)*

**JENNIFER.** I can't get this part.

**MEG.** You can.

**JENNIFER.** I can't. I can't even audition for this part.

**MEG.** Sit down.

**JENNIFER.** What?

**MEG.** Pull yourself together. Sit down.

**JENNIFER.** *(Weepy, discombobulated:)* Where?

**MEG.** On that chair. Go ahead. Sit!

*(JENNIFER sits back down on her chair, sniffing.)*

Here. Put these on.

*(MEG takes the pair of tortoise-shell glasses she is wearing and gives them to JENNIFER.)*

Put them on.

*(JENNIFER does.)*

**JENNIFER.** Why does she want this part? It's not even very big.

**MEG.** Patti Scharer is not going to get this part.

**JENNIFER.** Yes, she is.

**MEG.** No she's not.

**JENNIFER.** *(Crying:)* She's already got it. She's already in there. With the part.

**MEG.** Ethan can't stand Patti Scharer. He's not going to give her this part. He's going to give you this part, because it's your part.

*(JENNIFER pauses crying to look at her.)*

**JENNIFER.** He can't stand her?

**MEG.** Jennifer, listen to me. Light...is emotion.

*(JENNIFER, somewhat calmer but still a mess, responds to the intensity of MEG's voice. Listens...)*

Think of light, a beam of light...as a story, a story with its own past, its own history. The light has been who knows where, has illuminated who knows what. Maybe it's been traveling for a long, long time—decades, centuries. And somewhere along its journey, it starts to slow down...Take a pause, fold into itself...

*(The lights on them start to dim...)*

Okay, so...Now, I want you to imagine you're at the theatre. You're sitting in the audience, and you're watching a play. You say you love theatre?

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**THREE DIMENSIONS**  
by Jerome Hairston

## **Cast of Characters**

ART

DALE

SHEILA

# THREE DIMENSIONS

by Jerome Hairston

*(Two men stand before a sofa. The sofa faces away from the audience.)*

*(A woman sits in a chair away from the men. She occupies a distinctively separate space. She faces towards the audience.)*

*(One man studies the face of a digital watch. He pinches it in his hand, fiddling with the buttons.)*

*(The other man studies a small stack of photographs, systematically flipping through.)*

*(The woman sits silently in her chair, unaffected by the men's exchange...)*

*(The digital watch beeps. It beeps again.)*

*(ART, the one with the watch, flicks the digitized face in frustration.)*

**ART.** Dammit.

*(ART returns to punching buttons. The watch beeps again. Then again. A long sustained beep. Then again.)*

*(Under his breath:)* Son of a bitch. *(Squints.)* Fucking small ass buttons.

*(Again, a sporadic barrage of beeps.)*

*(DALE, the one with the photos, looks up.)*

**DALE.** Jesus.

**ART.** What?

**DALE.** Enough. I mean, c'mon. Jesus.

**ART.** Jesus what? What's your—

**DALE.** *(Re: the couch:)* You'll wake her.

**ART.** Wake her?

*(ART remains focused on the watch, which keeps beeping.)*

**DALE.** With that. Yes. With that incessant barrage of...you're bound to—

**ART.** She asked, Dale. You were there.

**DALE.** We really should just let her—

**ART.** She was specific. Very specific. No more than an hour. You heard her. You were there.

**DALE.** It's been days, Art. Days. Not a wink and here she finally...

**ART.** I assured her.

**DALE.** ...finally gives in. Finally concedes defeat and you...

**ART.** I assured her. One hour and no later. I set this alarm not only so she can rest. But rest assured. And I keep my word, Dale. I do. She knows this. Her whole life she's known this.

**DALE.** If you say so.

**ART.** Well, I do. I do. And she does. She knows. So you can kindly—

**DALE.** Kindly what?

*(SHEILA, the one who sits alone, adjusts herself in her chair, perhaps re-crosses her legs.)*

*(The motion prompts ART and DALE to look tentatively to the couch.)*

**DALE.** *(To the sofa, soft:)* Sweety?

**ART.** Shit, did we...

**DALE.** Sweety? Sweety, are you...

**ART.** Is she?

*(DALE studies the couch closer, shakes his head.)*

**DALE.** No. Still gone.

**ART.** You sure?

**DALE.** Yeah.

**ART.** Good. That's good.

*(Pause. ART faithfully returns to the watch. Another beep.)*

**DALE.** Christ on a crutch.

**ART.** That's it. It's done. Alarm's set. All done.

**DALE.** Unbelievable.

**ART.** She's now officially...

*(He holds down a button. One last beep.)*

Set.

*(ART loops the watch back onto his wrist. DALE returns to the photos. He begins to choose select snapshots, separating them from the stack. ART notices.)*

What's that?

**DALE.** What?

**ART.** That. What's...

**DALE.** Memorial Day weekend. Blue Ridge.

**ART.** No, what's that you're doing?

**DALE.** I don't know. Taking precautions, I guess.

**ART.** Against?

**DALE.** Might be a bit much for her, that's all.

**ART.** Much?

**DALE.** These were just taken.

**ART.** Yeah?

**DALE.** It's barely been a week.

**ART.** And?

**DALE.** I just don't think it's something to be reminded of. To see herself. Her face. How she used to... I don't know.

**ART.** She's not dead, Dale. There's no "used to." She's still—

**DALE.** Guess I'd rather save her...

**ART.** She—

**DALE.** ...save her the, well, the heart-break.

**ART.** She survived.

**DALE.** *(Pause.)* Yes. Yes she did.

*(Pause. DALE returns to sifting photos.)*

**ART.** Give them here.

**DALE.** I'm not finished.

**ART.** You're not doing this.

*(DALE remains focused on the photos.)*

**DALE.** Correction. Not Blue Ridge. Not all the way Blue Ridge, at least.

**ART.** I'm serious, Dale. You're not.

**DALE.** Seems there's a St. John or two mingling in here as well.

**ART.** You're not gonna shame her, okay? Shame her into thinking...

**DALE.** Would you look at her. My God. And that sun.

**ART.** ...thinking she's damaged goods.

**DALE.** The sky down there.

**ART.** Thinking she's weak.

**DALE.** I almost forgot.

**ART.** When the time came. She opened her eyes. She opened them, Dale. Or did you forget that, too.

**DALE.** No. I remember.

**ART.** And I refuse, hear me? I refuse to let you rob her of that. Not after what she's been through. Hell no. She deserves more.

**DALE.** Yes she does.

**ART.** You of all people should know that. What she needs. What she deserves. You of all people.

**DALE.** Me.

**ART.** Yes. You. Who saw. Who was by her side. In that room. When she made the choice.

**DALE.** Choice?

**ART.** To live. To live through this shit. You know, fight. To open her Goddamn eyes and... Like I said, Dale, you should know better. Than to sell her short. You've got no excuse. You were there.

**DALE.** I was. I was there. *(Pause.)* And you weren't.

**ART.** What? What you just say to me?

**DALE.** I'm just agreeing with you, Arthur. Stating it for the record. I was there. And you. You were not. *(Pause.)* You were never there. For her. Ever.

*(ART and DALE look at one another.)*

*(Silence.)*

*(ART's watch suddenly begins to wail, the alarm beeping relentlessly.)*

**ART.** Shit.

*(ART, panicked, fumbles to stop it. Finally he does.)*

*(ART and DALE look to the sofa. After a few moments, their nervous anticipation subsides. They share a silent moment of relief.)*

*(ART takes off his watch. He holds it in his hand, shaking his head.)*

Ridiculous. Fucking ridiculous. I don't know what I'm doing wrong. Here I am. A grown man. And I can't... I can't figure this out.

**DALE.** Art.

**ART.** Fuck you, Dale. I know what you're thinking. *(Re: the watch)* Just because I fucked this up, doesn't mean... I haven't failed her. Hell, like I need anything to remind me. I know what I'm supposed to do.

*(ART moves over to the sofa.)*

I'll just stand here and wait. And when it's time, I'll wake her. Just like she wants. Just like she asked. Just like she trusted me to do. Now you may not have heard that. But I did. Make no mistake. I heard her.

*(ART looks down at the sofa. DALE watches him. Silence. DALE slowly makes his way over to ART. He stands next to him. DALE offers a reconciliatory hand upon ART's shoulder. ART defiantly shrugs it off.)*

*(DALE walks away. He returns focus to the photos. He takes the selected snapshots and rips them in two. He then walks to the opposite side of the sofa. And looks down upon it.)*

*(The two men flank the sofa and watch the woman in question "sleep.")*

*(Stillness.)*

*(SHEILA straightens herself in her seat, bracing herself to speak...)*

**SHEILA.** *(To the audience:)* I don't know what I expected, exactly. It's been such a long time since I've done this. I mean, I've closed my eyes. Closed my eyes so many times in hopes this would happen. And when it did, I figured one of two things would happen. Either one: I'd relive it. You know, each horrific detail. Or two: The opposite would happen. I'd dream of a time, a place where no such thing ever took place. Either way. I didn't expect this.

Apparently there's no scientific reason. I've seen the evidence, passed all the tests. And believe me, there were many. But there was one in particular. I don't know, maybe it's the name. "CAT" scan. Sounds so much more sanguine than X-ray or MRI. And when I saw it. My mind in three dimensions. Sectioned off layer by layer, trained experts guaranteeing me the integrity of the landscape. Made me feel perhaps that at least here, within quiet confines of my cranium, things would make sense. But to arrive and find, of all things, all of you. Makes me wonder.

For example, right now, I sleep in the presence of two men. Two men who love me. In very different ways, but equally as deep. And I know this in my bones, my marrow, my heart, to be true. And

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**WANTING NORTH**  
by Tanya Barfield

## **Cast of Characters**

FIELD GIRL, dark skinned, younger  
HOUSE GIRL, light skinned, older

Two slaves. Two sisters. Adolescent.

## **Setting**

A plantation in the American South, 1840.

## **A Note About Dialect**

Certain words have not been written phonetically for the sake of readability. The actors should fill in these areas. (For example, “never” may be closer in pronunciation to “nebber.”)

If a character omits a pronoun and it would otherwise be unclear whom or what they are referring to, it is included in brackets [ ] for the sake of clarity, but it is not spoken.

# WANTING NORTH

by Tanya Barfield

*(Outside, near the big house. A HOUSE GIRL wears a white hand-me-down dress. She has a large basin, half full of water, and a pile of clothes that she is diligently washing. Her left hand is wrapped in a bandage. The FIELD GIRL enters, carrying two large buckets of water. She wears rags.)*

**FIELD GIRL.** *(Exuberant:)* Ov'r yon cotton field, dey's got a book—

**HOUSE GIRL.** Only half full? Need two full buckets.

**FIELD GIRL.** Dey spoke 'a us—

**HOUSE GIRL.** You fulla chatter.

**FIELD GIRL.** D'story-books wrote us—

**HOUSE GIRL.** Ain't gon be nuf water.

**FIELD GIRL.** Got no memory 'a who w'was—

**HOUSE GIRL.** *(Referring to the bucket:)* Sit it dere.

**FIELD GIRL.** —cuz dis is how w'came outta d'mouth 'a men.

**HOUSE GIRL.** *(Half listening:)* Didn't come outta no mouth.

**FIELD GIRL.** Writ us down that way.

**HOUSE GIRL.** All you talk is stories. Crazy talk.

**FIELD GIRL.** You ever lived in d'mouth ov'a man?

**HOUSE GIRL.** That called rumor.

**FIELD GIRL.** Rumor?

**HOUSE GIRL.** That when everything said can be heard whisp'ring through de trees. When d'leaves are tellin stories 'bout ya.

**FIELD GIRL.** True stories or prattling?

*(The HOUSE GIRL shrugs.)*

Maybe they slumbering stories.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Best git workin.

**FIELD GIRL.** (*Re: listen to this:*) Looky here. Jimbo seen a book fulla colored folks!

**HOUSE GIRL.** (*Curious:*) He did?

**FIELD GIRL.** Book called a pamp'let, made by up-north white—

**HOUSE GIRL.** (*Worried:*) Ain't spose t'be readin.

**FIELD GIRL.** Seent a book!

*(The HOUSE GIRL pours out the water and refills the basin.)*

**HOUSE GIRL.** Gon need nother bucket.

**FIELD GIRL.** Got one right there.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Ain't gon be enough.

**FIELD GIRL.** Sure is so.

**HOUSE GIRL.** I told you. Gonna need more water.

**FIELD GIRL.** You ain't Missus.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Missus ax me do this washin, n it yur job t'do how I say.

**FIELD GIRL.** Humph. M'wanting north.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Best bring me nother one, 'fore you go off.

**FIELD GIRL.** [I'm] gonna be a nanny.

**HOUSE GIRL.** What.

**FIELD GIRL.** When I gets bigger. Gonna be one.

**HOUSE GIRL.** (*Finding the idea silly:*) No yous ain't.

**FIELD GIRL.** Is so.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Can't be nothin.

**FIELD GIRL.** In m'head, I can.

**HOUSE GIRL.** What you ever knows 'bout tending afta younger?

**FIELD GIRL.** Ain't hard. [I] tend afta you.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Me? I's older.

**FIELD GIRL.** Still, I knows 'bout it.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Tend afta me?

**FIELD GIRL.** Bring ya wash water.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Don't got no choice in dat. No one's gonna let you tend after no chilluns.

**FIELD GIRL.** North. People up norths want a cheap thing.

**HOUSE GIRL.** You don't got no titties.

**FIELD GIRL.** Can grow em.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Too young to be a nanny.

**FIELD GIRL.** Can grow up t'be one.

**HOUSE GIRL.** You a stick figure. No one's believin' you a nanny 'cuz you too stringy. *(Makes a crowing sound:)* Ca Ca.

**FIELD GIRL.** What.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Ca ca.

**FIELD GIRL.** Wha's that?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Crow. All anyone thinks when d'see you. "She dirty like a black crow. Don't want her spikey lil beak, dirty fingers, takin 'part my chil'ren."

**FIELD GIRL.** Who say dat?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Parents gonna say.

**FIELD GIRL.** That a vulture.

**HOUSE GIRL.** A wha'?

**FIELD GIRL.** From d'bible.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Vulture ain't black like you is.

**FIELD GIRL.** [You] callin me scavenger? Not me, I'ms a bird.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Bird?

**FIELD GIRL.** Am so.

**HOUSE GIRL.** You there bird better fly off down to d'water well. Look't all dis washin.

**FIELD GIRL.** All day doin only that?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Make sure pinks come outta d'whites. Blood come outta d'sleeves. Keep everythin white n fresh as water.

**FIELD GIRL.** Water ain't white. Water ain't got nothin in it.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Sometimes it's white. When it's fast.

**FIELD GIRL.** Not even runaway water [is] white.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Runaway? Water don't got no legs. Jes smooth along.

**FIELD GIRL.** Smooth along?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Slither.

**FIELD GIRL.** That ain't water. That snakes.

**HOUSE GIRL.** What you know 'bout runnin water?

**FIELD GIRL.** Nuttin.

**HOUSE GIRL.** You ain't runnin.

**FIELD GIRL.** Didn't say.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Cuffee boy ran n d'dogs stole his feet. Can't walk no more.

**FIELD GIRL.** (*Re: I know:*) I seen him.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Got t'be clever t'run. Got to know thangs about land-escapin n how night fall down from upstairs n also gotta know where d'wind blow from n where it go.

**FIELD GIRL.** Didn't say I'd be runnin. Didn't say.

**HOUSE GIRL.** [You] never say. Never tell me nothin. When everyone hid out n disappeared from d'field—went cakewalkin—you didn't say.

**FIELD GIRL.** Couldn't say.

**HOUSE GIRL.** I heard you. Whisp'ring, like dem trees.

**FIELD GIRL.** Trees?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Tree leafs talkin t'each other. Y'all like dat.

**FIELD GIRL.** Trees ain't talkin t'ya.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Leafs, bark, branches all talkin.

**FIELD GIRL.** Trees can't talk.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Maybe can so. Talk like rumor.

**FIELD GIRL.** Ain't talkin 'bout no dancin, no cakewalkin.

**HOUSE GIRL.** I heard ya. Voices in d'trees. Couldn't hear yur words but heard yur voices. Why you didn't tell me?

**FIELD GIRL.** You was in d'house.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Wish you'd said.

**FIELD GIRL.** *(Without judgment:)* [You] couldn't come out in d'nighttime cuz you had t'do all your yes-mamming.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Then I heard ya when I was dreamin. Heard y'all laughin like wolfs. Howlin, clappin. [I] jes lyin there in d'bed twix dem quiet sheets n I knew you was cakewalkin n no one say no words t'me.

**FIELD GIRL.** House got rules that keep you wearin dem dresses n makin tea time.

**HOUSE GIRL.** I tore m'white dresses. Had a fever-dream picturin ya.

**FIELD GIRL.** Ya did?

**HOUSE GIRL.** *(Curious:)* How was it?

**FIELD GIRL.** Cakewalk? You shoul da seen Granny A prancin round wearin dem big hats n feathers.

*(The FIELD GIRL imitates Grandma A's cakewalk: the dance of an old slave woman dressing up as a young white mistress.)*

*(They both laugh.)*

Jimbo took 'em outta Miss Tilly's—put 'em back dis mornin, no one knowed the difference.

**HOUSE GIRL.** He did?

**FIELD GIRL.** Mm-hmm!

**HOUSE GIRL.** *(Still laughing at the idea:)* Granny A, feathers?

**FIELD GIRL.** Looked like a real Missus.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Granny A, dancin'?

**FIELD GIRL.** Got her bones woken up fur dat.

**HOUSE GIRL.** *(Considering:)* Granny A's been the longest one ever here.

**FIELD GIRL.** Massuh never send her out. Why he never send her?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Dunno.

**FIELD GIRL.** Bet Massuh never send you neither.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Maybe Massuh keep botha you and mes. Keep us bot' together. Maybe?

**FIELD GIRL.** Maybe.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Missus Mabeline don't want me in d'house.

**FIELD GIRL.** *(Re: regardless of that:)* Sleepin in d'house better than sleepin in d'b.

**HOUSE GIRL.** That so.

**FIELD GIRL.** *(Savoring the thought:)* You ate them leftover ham-hocks?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Ate em all.

**FIELD GIRL.** Wit d'gravy?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Whole plate.

**FIELD GIRL.** She gave ya all?

**HOUSE GIRL.** She likes t'give me. [She] say she got compassion.

**FIELD GIRL.** Wasn't angry 'bout the ironin'?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Mighty angry.

**FIELD GIRL.** What she say?

**HOUSE GIRL.** (*Dramatically:*) Creases.

**FIELD GIRL.** Creases?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Creases.

**FIELD GIRL.** Wha's that?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Ironin.

**FIELD GIRL.** How's it "creases"?

**HOUSE GIRL.** That when I leave sharp lines like knives in her skirt.

**FIELD GIRL.** That's creases?

**HOUSE GIRL.** (*With absolute seriousness:*) Worse then wrinkles.

**FIELD GIRL.** What she say den?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Burnt m'hand.

*(FIELD GIRL looks at the bandage. A beat.)*

**FIELD GIRL.** Anythin else wit dem hamhocks?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Custard after.

**FIELD GIRL.** Custard too?

**HOUSE GIRL.** Sho' was good.

**FIELD GIRL.** Someday I be eatin custard.

*(A beat.)*

**HOUSE GIRL.** Missus Mabeline say I not t'put no more buddermilk in d'trough.

**FIELD GIRL.** No milk fur us?

**HOUSE GIRL.** She say d'niggers actin haughty. And "yous not t'give no field niggers buddermilk in d'horse trough tonigh."

**FIELD GIRL.** Missus said? How could sh—us need d'milk—

**HOUSE GIRL.** Missus a mighty kind white lady. She got compassion. All d'slaves here lead a good life sure nuf. Not like ov'r yonder where d'slaves eat hardly never. Yon Massuh Earl slaves eatin off d'ground, eatin wit d'dogs n gettin a lickin jes fur lookin cross-wise.

*(The FIELD GIRL looks away, considering.)*

**FIELD GIRL.** [I] better git workin now.

*(She turns to go.)*

**HOUSE GIRL.** You say you wantin north.

**FIELD GIRL.** Never said.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Then why you say—why you talk 'bout mammy-ing?

**FIELD GIRL.** [I] say stories.

**HOUSE GIRL.** This jes one 'a yur stories? Takin care 'a chilluns.

**FIELD GIRL.** Bible got so many stories, Jimbo learn me. I likes makin em too. Maybe we be 'membered in a story.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Who's tellin.

**FIELD GIRL.** Our story— *(Decisive:)* I'm gonna tell our story.

*(A beat.)*

Better git now.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Why ya don't let me know thangs—

**FIELD GIRL.** Try t—

**HOUSE GIRL.** 'bout cakewalk— Grandma A— [I] gotta hear rumor only from tree whispers.

**FIELD GIRL.** Trees don't got much t'say.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Leafs and bark and branches sayin 'lot!

**FIELD GIRL.** Trees standin still.

**HOUSE GIRL.** Sho' do some talkin when it winds.

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**ZION SCIENCE**  
by Laurie Carlos

## **Cast of Characters**

ZION IS THE BOY

LALA FALLS THRU TIME

SHANITA LEAVES HER MEMORY

ALL FOUR MOVE IN CONCERT (the group in two voices)

The voices can be played by many or just a few/Shanita is a single tone /She is the depression / Everyone else works through her episodes /please remember the jazz/All is in the child's voice/

## **Setting**

The yard in a world of the city at the back of a Brooklyn house/Where the vines cover all the ground and fences and shed/Two chairs clean and stylishly simple/Buildings grow on all sides with shades and lights and curtains and heads and Cinnamon sauces/Constant smells/Voices fill without notice in peals of language/Shouts/The boy leans on the fence /Eyes open as he formulates with the moon/His mother sleeps/ All the voices are his / The shapes of his friends grow along the fence /They speak to witness the time and theory of Zion the boy at six/

# ZION SCIENCE

by Laurie Carlos

## ALL FOUR.

When we move into morning we grow just full out /

Move rocks /

Keep our face clever against the dawn/

Showing what we are is to open out to sky/

Open lines away in blips searching up for answers/

What a question?/

What is a question to do?/

What?/

These even cuts?/

waste little in this yard at the fence /

A note at a time with these long avenues at his fingers/

With all the delays in the value of desire/

In the last desire he is moving thru this regularity/

His hat matches socks and gloves /

New shoes the color of his coat and boots/

Wake for the language and for a tiny dance of peace/

Not the torn spaces in the large holes /

Is this everything we got to do here?/

What a question?/

What question is this?/

What??

**LALA.** The boy stands near the center/Please tell him to cup his hands to hear deep together with in /We need not leave till there is a wake in her /Wanting? What was the answer to the question?/

**ALL FOUR.**

Lay your hands open across the left hole on this side of your head and dream this /

Short tune please /

No dances?/

No high volume /

**LALA.** He does not sing as well as her? Her voice made him?

**ALL FOUR.**

He drums /

A bang /

Tough heart /

Bang a bang tough/

Sure sweet in the lonely sleep/

**LALA.** His sleep is his own /Deep apart from her /Rich in dreams of his own/Every turn he masters /Youth like this is ash / Moles and dead skin mark all the world/He cannot come here every night and talk in the silence/In her dream that spits away the days/

**ALL FOUR.**

Look as he eats his fingers /

We told him to cup his ear/

Hold your ear /

Cover it /

Dream/

**LALA.** Zion marks the ground with the bang and his sticks with his hard hand/Why wont he cover his ear? Cover your awful ear!/

**ZION.** My ears are so deep inside they wont cover anymore/My beats are the best part of the night/Into the night /My hands know

drums too well to ever end the beats/ Beats are my best part /Beats  
in the days of dream/

**ALL FOUR.**

He does not know?/

**LALA.** What is this question?/What?

**ALL FOUR.**

She is singing herself/

Is this true?/

She sings this way?/

**LALA.** She has made this song with her mother too/ The days  
dancing backward?/Wild beats/dreaming and taking all the night  
into her /Did he eat today?/

**ALL FOUR.**

He ate last week oats and rice /

He had a sandwich at the school /

He picked some bread from tables/

He dreamed of corn and biscuits/

He has new sheets /

**ZION.** I am made of this / *(he plays some beats)* My head comes full  
to the throat/ This is the throat/My swell up throat /Hand and feet  
in the yard she tell me/Again she tell me hands/ *(He beats the  
ground)*

**LALA.** Has the question come out well?/ /If not why? /What?/

**ZION.** I crown my day I crown it /I crown my jumps with  
vines/All the windows watch my hand beat the beats/This is  
night?/

**LALA.** If you cover that ear on the left/You could sleep all night  
long/You could sleep and go to school on time/

**ALL FOUR.**

He has not been to that brick yard since she went on in dream/

He is a drummer/

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

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