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**ODDS&ENDS**  
**PLAYS FROM THE ODD FELLOWS HALL**  
**by Nicole Quinn**

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# **THE SPIRIT IS WILLING**

**Cast of Characters**

BARBARA

JOHANNA

CONSUMERS

**Place**

A New Age Expo.

**Time**

The present.

**Acknowledgments**

*The Spirit is Willing* was first produced as a staged reading by Actors&Writers, Olivebridge, NY, on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1994. It was directed by Carol Morley, with the following cast:

BARBARA..... Elizabeth Benedict  
JOHANNA..... Mary Louise Wilson

# THE SPIRIT IS WILLING

*(Lights up on three booths bearing signs: "SPEEDY DEMON REMOVAL: Visa and MasterCard accepted," "CLASSICAL PALMISTRY," "COSMIC SINGLES CONNECTION.")*

*(CONSUMERS, carrying pentagram inscribed helium balloons, pennants, and sundry freebies, straggle across the stage, singly and in small groups, stopping at one or more of the booths, throughout the play.)*

*(BARBARA MANNING, a comely, upscale, reporter in her middle years, talks into a mini tape recorder.)*

**BARBARA.** ...Everything from EST to witchcraft. There's even an expert on "UFO abduction phenomenon." One holdover from the 60s, a local Swami, who once made his living writing for Hustler, now offers workshops in "Sex as a Doorway to Divinity" ...

*(JOHANNA, a handsome woman of about Barbara's age, moves out of the center booth.)*

**JOHANNA.** Barbara?

**BARBARA.** *(Turns in confusion:)* Yes?

**JOHANNA.** *(Menacing:)* I know your past.

**BARBARA.** *(Startled:)* Excuse me?

*(JOHANNA crosses to her.)*

**JOHANNA.** It's John Biddle...Johanna now, Muncie Indiana? You look fabulous. Just eyes or whole face? How's your mother?

**BARBARA.** *(Confused:)* Johanna Biddle? It sounds familiar.

**JOHANNA.** John. We went out twice, senior year. Once for fun and once so you could mock me in front of the entire class. Remember?

**BARBARA.** *(Recognition dawns.)* Not "little Biddle"?

**JOHANNA.** Not anymore. I had it snipped.

**BARBARA.** My God!

**JOHANNA.** I thought I was, until you dashed my dreams. Just as well, really. The experience prepared me for the rest of the size queens who tip the scales at meat over motion. (*She indicates the recorder.*) Could you turn that off? I'm not anxious to become one of the curios you collect on this hunting expedition.

(*BARBARA clicks off the recorder.*)

**JOHANNA.** So, tell me, Barbara, are you still a self-centered bitch?

**BARBARA.** Do I detect a note of bitterness?

**JOHANNA.** Take it as a compliment, sweetie. Some of us actually admired you for it. Even in grammar school, you were the only one who got to see foreskins without having to bare any skin yourself.

**BARBARA.** You remember more about me than I do.

**JOHANNA.** Because I studied you. It must have been very lonely being Barbara.

**BARBARA.** I see you've taken a degree in amateur psychology.

**JOHANNA.** Paranormal psychology actually.

**BARBARA.** You're joking.

**JOHANNA.** No, I'm not.

**BARBARA.** But I heard that you became a lawyer.

**JOHANNA.** So I did.

**BARBARA.** Do you practice?

**JOHANNA.** Only numerology and tarot.

**BARBARA.** Male lawyer turned female gypsy. What a story.

**JOHANNA.** A little too "true confessions" even for you, dear.

**BARBARA.** Did you have any children?

**JOHANNA.** Three. Two girls and a boy.

**BARBARA.** And are you their father or mother?

**JOHANNA.** Father. Surgical technology hasn't come that far yet.

**BARBARA.** So, you were gay.

**JOHANNA.** No, I was a woman trapped in a man's body. Now I'm gay.

**BARBARA.** (*Shocked:*) You changed your sex to become a lesbian?

**JOHANNA.** I changed my sex to become a woman. Consequently, men have never turned me on.

**BARBARA.** Oh...

(*BARBARA backs away involuntarily.*)

**JOHANNA.** Don't worry, dear, you're no longer my type. Too socially correct, too waspy, too mean. Tell me, is your husband still fucking the starlet?

**BARBARA.** (*Direct hit.*) I see I should have attended some of those high school reunions. Muncie's not as dull as it used to be. What else do you divine in my aura?

**JOHANNA.** I needn't divine anything about you. I follow your by-line, dear. And since that charming bit of exhibitionism on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," your daily existence has become an open tabloid. Why are you here, Barbara? To ridicule and humiliate?

**BARBARA.** To inform.

**JOHANNA.** Meditation and past life regression don't seem quite your beat.

**BARBARA.** I'm curious.

**JOHANNA.** Anxious to find out how many peons you had be-headed, or the acreage of your plantation?

**BARBARA.** (*Hostile:*) Something like that.

**JOHANNA.** That was judgmental of me, wasn't it? I do apologize. I'm operating on out of date information. For all I know you might be very enlightened.

(*JOHANNA bursts out laughing.*)

**BARBARA.** Now what?

**JOHANNA.** I was trying to imagine you with a titanium pyramid on your head.

**BARBARA.** Do you honestly believe in any of this New Age hype?

**JOHANNA.** If you sift through enough crap, you might find a few genuine spiritualists here.

**BARBARA.** And how does one tell the real from the fake?

**JOHANNA.** Basic instinct. And I don't mean dykes with ice picks. But then I don't suppose your expose has room to embrace simple truths.

**BARBARA.** Such as?

**JOHANNA.** Ordinary people living plain and exemplary lives amidst chaos and confusion. Using their gifts, with little fanfare, for the well being of others.

**BARBARA.** So this iconographic display is not a parody of itself, and these gurus are not gold digging merchants masquerading as Messiahs?

**JOHANNA.** That's not what I mean at all. There are definitely those here who enlighten their pockets as they hawk the new age version of the dashboard Jesus. But behind all the acting and the artifice, the seeming charade of it all, there are also those who see things, terrifying things unappeased and dangerous, lurking in the dark. And if you seek with unveiled eyes, Barbara, you just might see those angels.

**BARBARA.** Tell me, John, do you see them?

**JOHANNA.** Everyday. Just as one sees God. With the mind and the heart.

*(JOHANNA moves upstage. Barbara watches her in confusion before talking into her recorder.)*

**BARBARA.** Academics, who now study the new age, consider it a kind of fundamentalism for liberals, "wherein consciousness is numbed, not raised." This trade show, marketing products targeted for human potential, has attracted some twenty-one thousand shoppers to the Hilton Convention Center over a three day period.

---

From tribal drums to crystals, this buffet of spiritual consumerism...

**WOMAN'S VOICE.** *(Voice of an old German woman:)* Bebe?

*(BARBARA stops in her tracks.)*

Bebe?

**BARBARA.** Who said that?

*(Lights up on the center booth. JOHANNA, head thrown back, speaking in the thin German voice.)*

**JOHANNA.** Your mother saying you not wanting to be Jewish.

**BARBARA.** This isn't funny.

**JOHANNA.** In the war I pretend I'm not, you know?

**BARBARA.** Stop it.

**JOHANNA.** I joined the German Army. It was the only way I know how to stay alive, Bebe. One day you go to work and at night you return to find a rubble heap with only lifeless limbs the remnants of humanity. Every night, in the barracks, I was afraid I might talk if I slept. Some word in Yiddish, a Kaddish for so many dead. I didn't dream for three years. This is why I always am telling you what a luxury sleep is.

**BARBARA.** *(Shock:)* Nana?

**JOHANNA.** It is so hard to decide what is right, Bebe. Do we choose to protect the one, or rise together and fight for the many? These questions plaque me, like waking nightmares, even now.

*(JOHANNA's head drops to her chest.)*

**BARBARA.** Nana?

*(JOHANNA raises her head, looking around in curious bewilderment.)*

**JOHANNA.** Was I doing that lampshade on head thing, or just having wild sex with strangers?

**BARBARA.** Why are you doing this?!

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# **SIDEOUT**

## **Cast of Characters**

*In order of appearance:*

LARK

DOVE

HAWK

WOMAN

## **Time**

Winter night.

## **Place**

Ledge

## **Acknowledgments**

*Sideout* was first produced by Actors&Writers, Olivebridge, NY, on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995. It was directed by Shelley Wyant, with the following cast:

LARK .....Sarah Chodoff  
DOVE..... Nicole Quinn  
HAWK.....Adam Lefevre

It was subsequently produced as a staged reading by Makor-Steinhardt/92nd St. Y in New York City in August of 2003. It was directed by Nicole Quinn with the following cast:

LARK ..... Melissa Leo  
DOVE..... Nicole Quinn  
HAWK.....John Seidman

# SIDEOUT

*(Lights up on a gigantic louvered window.)*

*(Three pigeon plumed figures, LARK, DOVE, [both female] and HAWK, [male] huddle on the ledge, dwarfed by the aperture's scale. They coo.)*

*(The silhouette of a WOMAN passes, now and again, behind it.)*

**LARK.** Night.

**DOVE.** Somewhere between sleep and REM.

**HAWK.** She thinks of him.

**LARK.** Recent memories indelibly etched on the landscape of her life.

**DOVE.** Just two holiday shoppers

**LARK.** Sandwiched between salsa rhythms and sheet music.

**DOVE.** She spots him in the crowd.

**LARK.** Nudged by the ebb and flow of supply side economics.

**HAWK.** Continually shifting her vantage point to value him anew.

**DOVE.** Content to watch him play Santa Claus.

**HAWK.** Little gifties for the wife and kids.

**DOVE.** Content to watch him think.

**HAWK.** Not of her.

**DOVE.** Content to obsess.

**HAWK.** As she's done since the first time he happened.

**LARK.** The pulse of the city churns.

**HAWK.** Their eyes meet.

**DOVE.** So many people.

**HAWK.** Recognition.

**LARK.** So much unsaid.

**DOVE.** Fractured seconds.

**HAWK.** A smile plays at the corners of his eyes.

**LARK.** His mouth.

**DOVE.** Making more memory to haunt the recesses of her psyche.

**LARK.** “What are you doing here?”

**DOVE.** As if she didn’t know.

**HAWK.** “I’m meeting someone.”

**DOVE.** The slight wink. His eyes sweep her body wondering how much has changed since the last time. He falters. (*Grunting coo.*)

**HAWK.** “Ugh.”

**LARK.** “What is it?”

**HAWK.** “Damned pigeons!”

**DOVE.** Oops. Did I do that?

**HAWK.** He dabs at his coat.

**LARK.** “They say it’s good luck.”

**HAWK.** “You’re all the luck I need.”

**DOVE.** Yeah, right. (*Coo.*)

**LARK.** A frosty wind cools cheeks flushed by proximity’s chemical reaction.

**DOVE.** Hurling garbage bins punctuate the meter of hurried conversation.

**HAWK.** “You look great.”

**LARK.** “You too.”

**DOVE.** A race to intimacy.

**HAWK.** “Qui tacit consentiri.”

**DOVE.** Two steps forward.

LARK. “Why not dance on our heads?”

DOVE. One step back.

HAWK. “You look great.”

LARK. “You too”.

DOVE. Keep it simple. Physical.

*(All coo.)*

That is all it is. Isn't it?

HAWK. Their hands touch in patterned awkward salutation.

LARK. Perhaps and someday flood her thoughts.

DOVE. Heat and moisture mingle.

HAWK. Silent moans, unuttered sighs.

LARK. She feeds on this conduit of words and tangibilities

HAWK. “I meant to write...call.”

DOVE. Oblique and random.

LARK. “Did you?”

DOVE. Does she buy the dime-store charm?

HAWK. “Only a catatonic hand, not an unresponsive heart...mind.”

DOVE. Months spent reviewing the OED.

LARK. “Oh, I understand.”

DOVE. Sideout.

*(LARK and HAWK trade places. All coo.)*

HAWK. “I've missed you.”

DOVE. I think it's true. Don't you?

LARK. He suggests the assignation.

DOVE. Where do they go? Both bound by the gold band that armours only that small area above the knuckle.

**HAWK.** “Let me fly you to the moon.”

**DOVE.** A cheap hotel.

**LARK.** Musty sheets.

**HAWK.** Paradise.

**DOVE.** He unwraps her like a new toy.

**LARK.** Eager to relearn how she works.

**HAWK.** What buttons to push.

**DOVE.** How to keep her wired for radio remote.

**LARK.** Not too close.

**HAWK.** But available upon command.

**DOVE.** She’s been stolen for parts.

**LARK.** A rubric uttered aloud unleashes floods of emotion.

**HAWK.** “Oh ... !”

**DOVE.** Insert name.

**HAWK.** “ ...you’re fantastic.”

**DOVE.** Passion unprepared.

**LARK.** Easier to remember than to forget.

**DOVE.** Silent thoughts roar like thunder.

**LARK.** Maybe this time.

**DOVE.** Momentary truths.

**HAWK.** “I want you.”

**DOVE.** She basks in the rosy glow of limited, but for the moment, absolute power.

**LARK.** “I know.”

**DOVE.** He jolts, his club-chair charm shaken. She smiles, enjoying his unease.

*(All coo.)*

**HAWK.** “What’s that?!”

**LARK.** “Just pigeons. Out on the ledge.”

**DOVE.** Her thoughts return fleetingly to the real world. Love and responsibility. Family.

**HAWK.** “No. They’re lovebirds.”

**DOVE.** *(Coo.)* Yuck.

**LARK.** “You’re sweet.”

**DOVE.** Sideout.

*(LARK and HAWK and DOVE trade places. WOMAN opens the window, tosses out a handful of rice, then closes the blinds.)*

**LARK.** They stroll

**DOVE.** As they did the last time

**HAWK.** And the time before that

**LARK.** She tucks her arm in his

**DOVE.** Fleeting images of what things might have meant.

**LARK.** The Park.

**HAWK.** Holiday lights.

**LARK.** Monoliths tower over the wall of trees.

**HAWK.** Remembrances held like trophies, against yielding perception

**LARK.** She hangs on each missive.

**DOVE.** Each endearment seeming grander

**LARK.** More secure than what reality portends.

**HAWK.** “So what’s the answer?”

**LARK.** “I don’t know. I only have questions.”

**DOVE.** Huh?

**HAWK.** He chuckles. She amuses him.

**DOVE.** She lifts her eyes to his, her mouth open, eager to be reassured.

**HAWK.** *(Cold:)* “Now what?”

**DOVE.** He’s feeling too much. Must...make...it...stop.

**LARK.** “Nothing.”

**DOVE.** All her confidence slops on the sidewalk. Incoming!

*(The figures huddle close, scanning the horizon from right to left, then dropping the gaze to a fixed point below the perch. They jolt.)*

**ALL THREE.** Ugh.

**DOVE.** He gasps.

**HAWK.** *(Gasps.)*

**DOVE.** *(Coo.)* Heh, heh, heh.

**LARK.** “What is it?”

**HAWK.** “It’s dead.”

**LARK.** “What?”

**HAWK.** “The pigeon.”

**DOVE.** You wish.

**LARK.** “Maybe it’s a sign.”

**DOVE.** Take it to heart, sweetie.

**HAWK.** “Of what?”

**DOVE.** She wills her legs to flight. Seeing only her passion mirrored in his eyes.

**LARK.** “I have to go now.”

**DOVE.** Come here, go away. He’s master of the game.

**HAWK.** “When will I see you again?”

**DOVE.** See isn’t the correct verb. Now is it?

**LARK.** “Maybe next Christmas.”

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# **MARCHEN TWO BY TWO**

## **Cast of Characters**

MAN

WOMAN

ELDER MAN

ELDER WOMAN

WOMAN TOO

MAN TOO

## **Acknowledgments**

*Marchen Two by Two* was first produced as a staged reading by Actors&Writers, Olivebridge, N Y, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003. It was directed by Nicole Quinn with the following cast:

ELDER MAN .....John Seidman  
ELDER WOMAN .....Sigrid Heath  
WOMAN .....Sarah Chodoff  
MAN .....David Smilow  
WOMAN TOO..... Sophia Raab  
MAN TOO..... Jason Downs

# MARCHEN TWO BY TWO

*(A MAN in a suit and a WOMAN in white downstage left. An ELDER MAN and an ELDER WOMAN, similarly appareled, downstage right.)*

**WOMAN.** *(To the MAN:)* What shower?

**ELDER MAN.** *(To audience:)* He wasn't someone she knew.

**ELDER WOMAN.** *(To audience:)* He was the man who had watched her throughout the afternoon.

**ELDER MAN.** The one who'd seen the way she arched her neck, a swan...

**ELDER WOMAN.** ...When she'd blushed at some dirty joke made by that old man.

**ELDER MAN.** An old man who liked to poke young girls with words now that his other tool had dried up. *(A dirty old man laugh.)*

**MAN.** *(To WOMAN:)* The shower we shared in Santo. Or was it Villa Preciosa?

**ELDER WOMAN.** His eyes flicked across her face...

**ELDER MAN.** ...As if painting her in watercolor.

**MAN.** *(Disappointed:)* Ah...I see you don't remember.

**ELDER WOMAN.** She's uncertain of this conversation fraught with meaning, and still meaning nothing more than benign pleasantries on a Sunday afternoon.

**ELDER MAN.** He'd stopped her when she rose to leave that restaurant.

**ELDER WOMAN.** That luncheon of obligation. The one she'd promised to attend before she discovered she was on the menu.

**MAN.** *(To WOMAN:)* I had stopped into a doorway. It was raining. A summer shower near the Villa Preciosa, I'm certain.

**ELDER WOMAN.** She stared at him without affect, the way her mother had instructed when dealing with men.

*(The WOMAN stares at the MAN without affect.)*

**MAN.** *(To WOMAN:)* Perhaps it was not you.

**ELDER WOMAN.** He bowed, taking her hand in the way of another time.

*(The MAN bows slightly, taking the WOMAN's hand.)*

**ELDER MAN.** He touched his lips to that hand.

*(The MAN touches his lips to the WOMAN's hand.)*

**ELDER MAN.** He had a boner.

**WOMAN.** *(To MAN:)* I do remember.

**ELDER WOMAN.** She can see it, that doorway. Scrolled wood surrounded by stone.

*(Lights up on that doorway upstage center. Scrolled wood surrounded by limestone. Narrow but deep, double doors. WOMAN TOO, younger, also in white, huddles in it.)*

**ELDER WOMAN.** It was the day of her mother's funeral.

**WOMAN.** *(To audience:)* The day she'd been set free.

**ELDER MAN.** She'd worn white.

**ELDER WOMAN.** It was what her mother had wanted.

*(Rain pours down in front of that doorway.)*

**MAN.** *(To audience:)* It was raining.

**WOMAN.** She'd ducked into that doorway to escape a summer shower...

*(MAN TOO, carrying an umbrella blown backward, rushes to the doorway. WOMAN TOO blocks his entry. HE sidesteps. SHE counters.)*

**MAN.** *(Gently pleading:)* Please.

**ELDER WOMAN.** Her mother would not have approved.

**WOMAN.** But she let him in.

*(WOMAN TOO steps aside to grant him entry. MAN TOO huddles into the doorway next to her.)*

**MAN.** His broken umbrella still held.

**WOMAN.** A warrior.

**MAN TOO.** Thanks.

**ELDER WOMAN.** The silence was awkward.

**ELDER MAN.** Punctuated by coughs.

*(WOMAN TOO coughs.)*

**WOMAN.** Throat clearings.

*(MAN TOO clears his throat.)*

**MAN TOO.** Rain.

*(WOMAN TOO looks at him, and then away. Inscrutable.)*

**MAN TOO.** I mean it's unexpected. I bought an umbrella on the street. It was too small to begin with, and then the wind ...

*(She flits her eyes at him once again. A moment of silence passes.)*

I have guests coming. Five of them. We were supposed to be four but Angela's cousin's wife wants to bring her mother. I hate her mother. Talk, talk, talk...And now we need more wine, more cheese, more patience.

*(The MAN, MAN TOO, and ELDER MAN exhale audibly. They ALL stare straight ahead.)*

*(A police siren blares, moving from stage left to stage right growing louder, they all lean back in unison.)*

*(A spray of water gushes up from the base of the doorway onto MAN TOO and WOMAN TOO.)*

**MAN TOO.** What the...?! Fuck you!!!

*(MAN TOO, MAN, and ELDER MAN pump their fists toward the retreating siren off stage right. The WOMEN are looking that way too.)*

**MAN.** Stupid idiot...

**ELDER MAN.** Police, puh...!!!

*(MAN TOO looks down at himself.)*

**MAN TOO.** This is just not my fuckin' day. Excuse my language.

**WOMAN TOO.** I speak French.

**WOMAN.** I speak French.

**ELDER WOMAN.** I speak French.

*(MAN TOO looks at WOMAN TOO, they smile.)*

**MAN TOO.** This suit's new.

**MAN.** ...Got it off my cousin Louie's step-daughter's father...

**ELDER MAN.** ...Knock-off, but very well made.

**WOMAN TOO/WOMAN/ELDER WOMAN.** Oh...

*(WOMAN TOO looks away. MAN TOO does too.)*

**ELDER MAN.** He checked her out from the side.

**MAN.** Running his eyes from her hair to her...

**WOMAN.** He thought he was so slick.

**ELDER WOMAN.** Thought I didn't notice.

*(The MAN checks her out, sidelong, running his eyes from head to her...)*

**MAN TOO.** Omigod!

*(He turns his eyes front.)*

**ELDER MAN.** He took off his coat and draped it over her shoulders.

*(MAN TOO does.)*

**WOMAN TOO.** *(Startled at his touch:)* What?!

**MAN.** You're...wet.

**WOMAN TOO.** Yes...

**MAN TOO.** And...it's white.

**WOMAN TOO.** Yes, and...?

*(She looks down at herself.)*

**WOMAN.** He could see my tits through the wet cloth.

*(Realization dawns. WOMAN TOO hugs the suit coat tight.)*

**WOMAN TOO.** Oh ...

*(She stares out. A moment.)*

**WOMAN TOO .** Thank you.

**MAN.** My pleasure.

**ELDER MAN.** And it was. *(That laugh.)*

**WOMAN.** She slid her arms into his sleeves.

**ELDER WOMAN.** The scent of cigars and a trace of something... *(She inhales.)*

**WOMAN.** ... soap.

**ELDER WOMAN.** The smell of a man.

**WOMAN.** The smell of a mystery.

*(WOMAN TOO inhales his scent.)*

**WOMAN TOO.** May I?

*(She holds her hands up, next to the side pockets.)*

**MAN TOO.** What?

**WOMAN TOO.** Warm my hands in your pockets.

**MAN TOO.** Of course.

*(WOMAN TOO does.)*

**MAN TOO/WOMAN TOO.** *(Together:)* Wait!!! Oh?!

*(SHE lifts a GUN from the pocket.)*

*(They all freeze, a beat.)*

**ELDER WOMAN.** It was sleek, silver, scary.

**WOMAN.** It was sexy.

**MAN TOO.** (*Matter-of-fact:*) I'll have that.

(*MAN TOO gently takes it from her, sliding it into his pants pocket.*)

**MAN.** It's heavy.

**ELDER WOMAN.** She nodded.

(*WOMAN TOO nods.*)

**WOMAN.** Afraid, but so excited. Never before in her life...

**ELDER MAN.** He turned to her...

**MAN.** She was so lovely...

**ELDER MAN.** He kissed her cheek.

(*MAN TOO turns and kisses WOMAN TOO's cheek.*)

**MAN TOO.** You didn't see me. If anyone asks.

**ELDER WOMAN.** He walked out into the rain.

(*MAN TOO walks out of the doorway.*)

**WOMAN.** He waved from the end of the block.

(*MAN TOO waves.*)

**ELDER MAN.** She waved back.

(*WOMAN TOO waves. She holds in the doorway.*)

**ELDER WOMAN.** And now there he was, that man with the gun, just when she was running away from that old Lech and his friends.

**WOMAN.** (*To MAN:*) I still have your coat.

**MAN.** Do you?

**ELDER WOMAN.** A knock-off, but very well made.

(*They smile.*)

**MAN.** I'm only here for the night.

**ELDER MAN.** That's what I told her. Didn't want to risk her putting me off.

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# FUGUE

## Cast of Characters

JOHNSON MCNAMARA, “All American,” a northerner.

GEORGIA BRYANT, his southern lady friend.

SAVANNAH REYNOLDS BRYANT, her very southern mother.

MALCOLM BRYANT III, her very southern father.

SAFRONIA, a middle aged, black, family retainer.

## Time

Sometime in the distant present.

## Place

A Nebula.

## Acknowledgments

*Fugue* was originally produced as a staged reading by The Legacy Project at Primary Stages in New York City on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994 under the title *Best of Intentions*. The cast was as follows:

SAVANNAH .....Sharon Ulrick  
GEORGIA..... Jill Giles  
MALCOLM ..... Chip Brenner  
JOHNSON..... Aaron Harpold  
SAFRONIA..... Delores Mitchell

*Fugue* was subsequently produced by Actors&Writers, Olive-bridge, NY, on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000, with the following cast:

JOHNSON..... Kevin O'Rourke  
GEORGIA..... Melissa Leo  
SAVANNAH .....Sigrid Heath  
MALCOLM ..... Tad Ingram  
SAFRONIA..... Nicole Quinn

# FUGUE

*(Spotlights illuminate five occupied chairs. JOHNSON MCNAMARA, "all American," a northerner. GEORGIA BRYANT, his southern lady friend. SAVANNAH REYNOLDS BRYANT and MALCOLM BRYANT III her very southern parents. SAFRONIA, a middle aged, black, family retainer. The five voices function as a polyphonic composition. Picking up strands of story and interweaving them, like a fugue.)*

**SAVANNAH.** *(Southern and syrupy:)* Equality. That's the trend nowadays, isn't it? Equality. Equality between the sexes. Although we all know that men and women are inherently different. I mean when I can impregnate a man and he carries to term, *and* gives birth, I might reconsider. But my daughter, well, she has always emulated her father. Electra complex, formerly known as Daddy's girl.

**GEORGIA.** *(Hint of south.)* I always wanted to be close to my mother. But Savannah Reynolds Bryant had very little time for a child. She chaired the local Junior League, was on the board of no less than three philanthropic organizations at a time, and could buy, sell, and trade while having her legs waxed. More Nancy Reagan than Barbara Billingsly.

**SAVANNAH.** Malcolm, my husband, handles all of our finances. I just haven't the head for that sort of thing. My daughter actually went to college for a degree, while the women of my generation were nurtured in the arts of gracious living. We majored and mastered in how best to lavish our families with creature comforts.

**MALCOLM.** *(Deep South.)* Whilst we men were reared with the fear of God and debtor's prison if we couldn't finance the lifestyle to which our women aspired.

**SAVANNAH.** Malcolm was cursed with money. All he had to do was pay the inheritance tax. I say cursed because it doused his ambition. I think he could have been truly great. If he'd had to be to survive.

**MALCOLM.** My family was comfortable. In the early years of this country we Bryants settled this land below the Mason-Dixon,

investing heavily in cotton and the sweat of others. Devoting our minds to loftier ideals and the pursuit of philosophic supremacy. But the war between the states forced us to view several hundred acres as an estate and a few family retainers as an adequate staff. We loved our homeland. Even named our daughter after it. Georgia.

**SAVANNAH.** Georgia was everything anyone could ask for in a daughter. After her debut, she was courted vigorously by several eligible bachelors. And I'm proud to say that even though she most assuredly lost her virtue in the back seat of somebody's Cadillac, she had the good sense not to bring home any surprises. Until much later.

**GEORGIA.** I had two abortions before grade eleven. My mother's younger sister, Aunt Mamie, finally took me to a doctor out of town for the pill. And once I got to college, well, it was the seventies. And frat boys like a girl who does. Do you know what the mating call of a sorority girl is? "Oh, I am so drunk." Only way to absolve yourself of the stigma of actually liking sex. That was considered common. A girl could get herself a reputation, and the wrong kind of attention. So I walked the tightrope of trampy intellectual. Until I met Johnson.

**SAVANNAH.** Johnson MacNamara, that's such a southern name.

**JOHNSON.** Johnson is my mother's maiden name. Joelle Johnson MacNamara. She and my father met at Berkeley. In the sixties. She's a painter. Quite good actually. She added the MacNamara after years of mistaken identity at school functions, boy scouts, even at the hospital the day I was born. My sister looks a lot like her. I look more like my dad.

**GEORGIA.** I met Johnson at a beach party in Amagansett, New York. I'd moved north to try the career thing. And in a sea of brokers, traders, and pompous assholes, he was a Greek God. His hair kissed golden by the sun. Tanned and lean and the most adorable smattering of freckles across the bridge of his nose. He looks very much like his father. He was sarcastic, and funny, and definitely not under my spell. I had to make him mine.

**JOHNSON.** I'd never met anyone quite like Georgia. So sure of getting what she wanted from a man without ever asking for it. Raised in a devoutly feminist household as I was, I must admit to rebellious titillation. At first I was amused. But as weeks turned into months, I knew that her hook had been baited with something gluten-like, and there was no way I could ever leave her. My father says the same thing about my mother.

**MALCOLM.** A father wants his little girl to find a man like himself. Someone who will cherish her, provide well. Someone who will not make it too obvious that he's fucking your baby. Johnson MacNamara seemed to be all of these. A man's man, who had a way with women. The fact that he wasn't southern wasn't even a factor once he had won over Savannah.

**SAVANNAH.** He was smooth. Not even Safronia guessed.

**SAFRONIA.** I raised Miss Georgia like she was my own. Laughed with her at the clowns on her fifth birthday. Patched up a whole lot of scraped-up knees. Hugged away the panic at the first blood between her legs when she was twelve. Even hated her when she turned into just another southern belle, batting her eyes and spreading her thighs for rednecks disguised in Saville Row suits named Bubba and Jim Bob.

**GEORGIA.** I knew I was in love with Johnson, when I started to think more about what he wanted. That's just not my normal style. And, luckily, what he wanted, was me.

**MALCOLM.** She brought Johnson MacNamara home for our annual summer barbecue. He fit right in. Could even discourse intelligently on the subtle innuendoes of Faulkner. Quite a feat for a northerner.

**SAVANNAH.** Not even Safronia guessed.

**JOHNSON.** The house was old and baronial and everyone knew their place. Everyone, except me.

**MALCOLM.** Not even Safronia guessed.

**JOHNSON.** I had never been further south than Maryland. And there I was in the land of Dixie. And old times there are not forgotten. I couldn't look away.

**GEORGIA.** Not even Safronia guessed.

**SAFRONIA.** Such a nice boy. Polite, full of northern liberal guilt. Went out of his way to talk to me. Asked questions about my family. Expressed real concern at the notion that my sons and daughters had had to raise themselves while I looked after Miss Georgia. So curious about who I was in relation to the woman he loved.

**JOHNSON.** Not even Safronia guessed.

**SAFRONIA.** I never would have guessed.

**GEORGIA.** He was so distant after that trip home. I thought maybe mother had caught him with one of her barbed remarks.

**SAVANNAH.** I wanted him to marry my baby. The way he looked at her. The barely perceptible tremor that shook her frame when he touched her. I cannot recall whether I ever felt that way about Malcolm.

**GEORGIA.** He didn't return my call for days. I was so desperately angry. What had I done? Was there someone else? I humbled myself, crying in a cab through midtown on my way to his apartment. Whizzing past late-night revelers basking in the glow of streetlamps in the city that never sleeps. All their joy magnifying my pain.

**MALCOLM.** I was certain we would be planning a wedding soon. That whirr of feminine excitement in a silk and crinoline haze. I was delighted at the thought of parading my baby down the aisle before several hundred of our closest friends, and turning her over to a man whom I already admired.

**JOHNSON.** I had never thought of it as a liability. Didn't even know how to broach the subject. Everyone had always known, somehow. There were no family pictures in my apartment, that's true, and my parents were now living abroad, and Kate, my sister, well, she's exotic. But I knew I had to tell Georgia. Knew it would change everything. How could I not have known it would matter?

**GEORGIA.** I searched his face for some sign of my crime, some clue that would help me crack his icy facade.

**JOHNSON.** I decided to take her to meet my parents. I know it was not the most direct way. But I had hoped that when she got to know them, saw them together, she would understand.

**SAVANNAH.** Europe! He was taking my baby to meet his parents. How cosmopolitan. How chic.

**SAFRONIA.** I was disturbed by this trip. Perhaps it was my own personal dislike of anything foreign. Or the fear that his folks would act unkindly toward her. But I think I knew Miss Georgia's life was going to be changed somehow. All the folks around here always called me a witch. I didn't want him to hurt her.

**GEORGIA.** I was thrilled! Shopped for a whole new wardrobe to impress these people I knew would be my in-laws.

**SAVANNAH.** She hadn't a clue.

**GEORGIA.** The plane touched down. The drive along the Spanish coast was delicious. Miles of bleached sand eternally caressed by an undulating sea. I noticed the clench of his jaw, the furrow of his brow, and attributed both to normal pre-parental anxiety.

**MALCOLM.** She hadn't a clue.

**JOHNSON.** She sat beside me, this woman I loved. Feet perched on the dash, hair fondled by a salty breeze. Loving me so completely. I wanted to make those moments last forever.

**SAFRONIA.** She hadn't a clue.

**GEORGIA.** We turned away from the sea, climbing a steep craggy precipice where the house was perched. I could see it, white stucco framing walls of glass. I knew it would look like that.

**JOHNSON.** She hadn't a clue.

**GEORGIA.** I didn't have a clue.

**JOHNSON.** The door was opened by Pilar, "Sus parentes son en el patio."

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# **SCIENCE PROJECT**

## **Cast of Characters**

*In order of appearance*

SIRI

MALACHY

TATE

LILY

CAITLIN

ISAAC

## **Time**

Sometime in the distant present.

## **Place**

A Nebula.

## **Acknowledgments**

Science Project was first produced by Actors&Writers, Olive-bridge, NY, on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1996 as a staged reading. It was directed by Sigrid Heath, with the following cast:

SIRI .....Siri Crane  
LILY .....Lily Harden  
TATE ..... Tate Lefevre  
ISAAC ..... Isaac Lefevre  
CAITLIN ..... Caitlin Quinn  
MALACHY ..... Malachy Silva

# SCIENCE PROJECT

*(A bright white light upstage center CHILDREN hover, staring out at the audience.)*

**SIRI.** They seem to be surviving pretty well on their own.

**MALACHY.** But they're destroying the habitat.

**TATE.** I beg to differ. They've modified it to suit their needs.

**LILY.** I would have to agree. Though it really isn't as pretty as when we kept those big beasts there.

**SIRI.** *(Accusing:)* We still need to do a post-mortem on the failure of that experiment.

**CAITLIN.** It wasn't my fault. You introduced the concept of airborne bacterias.

*(She points to ISAAC.)*

**ISAAC.** And I still stand by the data. I think it only enhances the thoroughness of our project. How many other groups will have cycled two major life forms on a free-floating territory?

**MALACHY.** Though the second species are systematically sabotaging all that was good and healthy. All that we gave them.

**CAITLIN.** What conclusions can we draw from that?

**SIRI.** It was a perfectly good macrocosm when we created it.

**MALACHY.** Yes, but we didn't know they would become the dominant life form.

**ISAAC.** That's true.

**LILY.** Or that'd they'd be so adaptable.

**CAITLIN.** Or inventive.

**TATE.** Didn't we give them free will?

**ISAAC.** Did we? I can't remember. It was so long ago.

**CAITLIN.** What was his name again?

ISAAC. Who?

CAITLIN. The first one we made.

TATE. You remember, cute face, kind of a pug nose, great butt.

CAITLIN. Adam.

ISAAC. Adam...

TATE. And Eve.

CAITLIN. You always did like her best.

TATE. Yes, well she had those...things.

LILY. Breasts.

TATE. That's it. I liked those.

SIRI. They seem so ungrateful. Especially that one.

*(She points to a woman in the audience.)*

SIRI. Complete disregard for all that we've given them. We'll be marked down on that.

MALACHY. Isn't that why we gave them God?

LILY. And the Goddess.

SIRI. And man was created in God's own image.

CAITLIN. That's man.

TATE. Not woman.

ISAAC. There's a difference?

TATE. Yes. This is the one we gave the power to bear fruit.

MALACHY. I thought that was a tree.

LILY. That too. But this is the one with a brain and opposing digit.

CAITLIN. Power of reason. Able to determine right from wrong. Good from evil, that sort of thing.

LILY. Wait a minute. What happened to destiny?

**SIRI.** Recalled in the middle ages. Don't you remember? They seemed to prefer this "one forgiving God" idea best. Less responsibility.

**ISAAC.** Not all of them.

**TATE.** Sort of the same old thing though, isn't it?

**ISAAC.** What is?

**TATE.** One God, many Gods, still have to look for the right answers. Read between the lines.

**CAITLIN.** But then they mucked that up with the Priest thing.

**LILY.** Monks, Rabbis,...

**SIRI.** The annoying need for a middle man. Someone to distort the truth. Misrepresent the facts.

**ISAAC.** Was that a flaw in the original material?

**TATE.** There was nothing wrong with the design. I inspected it myself.

**SIRI.** Not the design, the stuff. The "essence." We haven't had nearly as many problems in any other experiment.

**CAITLIN.** I rather like their spirit.

**MALACHY.** Me too. All our other experiments have so many pre-determinations built in. This free flowing ecosystem idea is much more exciting, don't you think?

**LILY.** No other group will be exhibiting anything half as daring.

**ISAAC.** Where did you get it?

**TATE.** Get what?

**ISAAC.** The stuff! Where did you get the primary stuff for this experiment? It's not logged in with the original data.

**MALACHY.** They will ask about that.

**TATE.** (*confession:*) I found it.

**ALL.** What?!

**TATE.** I found it.

**LILY.** Where?

**TATE.** On the bottom of my shoe.

**CAITLIN.** You're kidding?

**TATE.** No. We were getting nowhere, remember?

**ISAAC.** Right after the first wave of dinosaurs died.

**LILY.** That's right it was all very frustrating. We didn't want to repeat any of the experiments we saw at the last hundred thousand millennium fair.

**MALACHY.** So where did you find it?

**TATE.** I went walking, over near the Pleiades, I think. And when I got home, I found this rather extraordinary looking matter clinging to the bottom of my shoe. Seemed as good as any of the other stuff we'd used before. What are you doing?

**MALACHY.** Checking my shoe.

*(They all check their shoes.)*

**SIRI.** Isn't it against the rules? I thought we were only to use approved matter.

**CAITLIN.** Approved matter yields predictable results.

**ISAAC.** I don't like this. We'll be disqualified.

**TATE.** Oh, you're such a worry wart.

**SIRI.** Origin unknown. No wonder we have no controls. Like deciding when to procreate. I thought we'd approved and implemented mating seasons for all earth species. But they've tinkered with it.

**CAITLIN.** So?

**SIRI.** Well what if Eve had decided not to? Then where would we be?

**MALACHY.** Not to what??

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# **RELATIVE TIME**

## **Cast of Characters**

MOTHER

DAUGHTER

SISTER

## **Time**

Now.

## **Place**

Here.

## **Actors' note**

“” (quotes) indicate where the actors are speaking to each other, otherwise the dialogue is delivered out, either as reverie or to the audience.

## **Acknowledgments**

*Relative Time* was first produced by Actors&Writers, Olivebridge, NY, as a staged reading on November 3, 2001. It was directed by Nicole Quinn, with the following cast:

MOTHER.....Carol Morley  
DAUGHTER ..... Melissa Leo  
SISTER .....Sigrid Heath

*Relative Time* was subsequently produced by Makor-Steinhardt/92nd St. Y in New York City in August of 2003. It was directed by Nicole Quinn, with the following cast:

MOTHER.....Carol Morley  
DAUGHTER ..... Melissa Leo  
SISTER ..... Sophia Raab

# RELATIVE TIME

*(Three WOMEN seated, side by side, on a bare stage.)*

**MOTHER.** My daughter's coming to visit. I've won the Publishers' Clearing House Sweepstakes you see. It's going to be announced on the television. Super Bowl Sunday.

**DAUGHTER.** Big white farm bed. Wallpaper, cabbage roses. Mock tin border.

**MOTHER.** I'm going to pay off her mortgage with my winnings. She's coming to be with me. My daughter. Do my make-up for the camera.

**SISTER.** An enclosed courtyard. No sight of the street. Or of telephone wires, pole to pole, interrupted now and then by connector boxes. Traffic lights.

**MOTHER.** My husband steals from me.

**DAUGHTER.** The lawn out back stretches to the view. Golf course, houses, sky.

**MOTHER.** He thinks I don't know.

**SISTER.** Citrus trees in terracotta pots. Iron crosses on a garden wall.

**MOTHER.** Little things. Lipsticks. Reading glasses. Costume jewelry.

**DAUGHTER.** Rattan outdoor furniture she's purchased from a catalogue, but has never seen in place.

**MOTHER.** Maybe he's a cross dresser. I wouldn't know. I never leave this bed. *(Conspirator:)* But I have a lot of hiding places.

**SISTER.** Clothes hang in the closet. New. Tags still on. Waiting to be worn. Shoes. Boxes piled high, ready-to-wear, in case she ever walks again.

**MOTHER.** He doesn't believe I've won. The sweepstakes. Jealous. But my daughter's coming. She'll do my make-up for the camera.

**DAUGHTER.** It's the house in which they retired. Meant for two. Maybe a dog.

**MOTHER.** My son dies shortly after I do.

**SISTER.** CD player on a timer. Gregorian chants at five. With a smile. In a glass. Happy euphemism for cocktails. Not the first of the day.

**MOTHER.** My daughters don't get along. It might be my fault. It might not. The results are the same.

**DAUGHTER.** The gardener comes once a week. Japanese. He likes the old woman. He's sad when she dies.

**MOTHER.** I lost my virginity to a not yet famous photographer. I was sixteen. He said he loved me.

**SISTER.** Hospice nurses come to look her over. Fill out charts. Give sad smiles.

**MOTHER.** He broke my heart.

**DAUGHTER.** Her husband prepares the food they will eat together in her room. From recipes she still supervises. She can tell if he ad libs.

**MOTHER.** The women in my family were all teachers or prostitutes. I'm neither one. That's a lie. I'm both.

**SISTER.** She dreams of her house in Spain. Straddling the cliff. White caps. Cloud mottled sky.

**MOTHER.** My mother was strict. I was not to move from those stairs until she got home from her extra money job. Not even to the outhouse. It had to have been the year 19 and 19. I was three or four. The pee just gushed down those stairs toward the second floor. *(A girlish giggle.)*

**DAUGHTER.** She's incontinent. But won't admit it.

**MOTHER.** I've won the Publishers' Clearing House Sweepstakes. My husband doesn't believe me. My daughter's doing my make-up for the camera.

**SISTER.** Mama asked us both, her daughters, to come for a visit. To talk about dying.

*(The DAUGHTER turns to her SISTER.)*

**DAUGHTER.** “We’re going to fight over Mama’s stuff, aren’t we?”

**SISTER.** “Not necessarily.”

**DAUGHTER.** “We’re going to want the same things. The grape dinnerware. Silver. The good jewelry.”

**SISTER.** “If we do we’ll compromise.”

*(They stare at one another.)*

**DAUGHTER.** “Yeah, right, little miss executor.”

**SISTER.** “It wasn’t my choice.”

**DAUGHTER.** “Never is. And yet you always win.”

**SISTER.** “It’s not a competition.”

**DAUGHTER.** “Pull your head out of the sand. I’m loud for a reason. I’m angry, for a reason. It’s the only way I get noticed. But you just have to show up.”

**SISTER.** “It’s not my fault.”

**DAUGHTER.** “The results are the same. In this family, I’m always smelling your ass.”

**SISTER.** “That’s why I parked it on the other side of the country. You think I liked getting beat up so I could ask for things you wanted?”

**DAUGHTER.** “Let you in on a little secret, most of the time, all I really wanted was proof.”

**SISTER.** “Proof... ”

**DAUGHTER.** “That they love you more.”

**SISTER.** “They like me more. I’m easier. You’re a pain in the ass. They love us the same.”

**DAUGHTER.** “Fuck you. How dare you talk to me like that. My mother’s dying!”

**SISTER.** “And mine isn’t?”

**DAUGHTER.** “Where were you when she needed her ass wiped?”

**SISTER.** “With my kids.”

**DAUGHTER.** “What’s that supposed to mean?”

**SISTER.** “Where were your kids while you were wiping her ass?”

**DAUGHTER.** “Fuck you.”

**SISTER.** “Fuck you back.”

**DAUGHTER.** *(As if speaking in sentences.)* “Blah blah blah blah blah!” (You are so selfish.)

**SISTER.** “Blah, blah blah? Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah, blah blah blah.” (Me, selfish? This from little miss “look at me, look at me!”)

**DAUGHTER.** “Blah blah!” (Fuck you.)

**SISTER.** “Blah blah blah!!!!” (Fuck you back!!!!)

*(A moment.)*

**MOTHER.** My mother died young, when my children were still small. Alzheimer’s. Although they didn’t call it that then. I wasn’t there. I was in Paris, stuck in an elevator during a power outage. My brother never forgave me.

**DAUGHTER.** My uncle died without ever speaking to my mother. His wife called to let her know. Just another dark corner she never visits.

**MOTHER.** I’m afraid to die. I saw a man die when I was a young nurse. He saw demons. He was terrified. Thrashing. Screaming. Begging for forgiveness.

**SISTER.** She’s afraid to die. She wants to talk about it...

**MOTHER.** “I’m afraid...”

**DAUGHTER.** “...Eat and you’ll get better.”

**MOTHER.** I know I'm going to go that way. Like that man. With all the bad things I've ever done come to haunt me. I don't sleep well.

**DAUGHTER.** That damned bell rings in the middle of the fucking night. I go in so my father can sleep. He's old too. I know she's going to criticize.

**MOTHER.** "Why do you always look so slovenly? You need to watch your weight. You've gotten fat."

**DAUGHTER.** And the inevitable...

**MOTHER.** "Your sister dresses so nicely."

**DAUGHTER.** (*Screams:*) Intellectually I know it's not her fault. My sister. But all the same I want to rip her fucking heart out and heave it into that old woman's face.

**MOTHER.** "You should ask her what she's using on her face. She looks so young."

**SISTER.** (*To DAUGHTER:*) "Cetaphil. It'll keep mama's skin from being so dry."

**DAUGHTER.** We're the same age. At my mother's funeral someone jibed me about my husband.

**SISTER.** (*As funeral guest:*) "Congratulations, you cradle robber. Your husband is so yummy, and young."

*(The DAUGHTER smiles perfunctorily.)*

**DAUGHTER.** I smiled. Later I cried. He's ten years older than me. I use to be the trophy wife.

**MOTHER.** No one told me my son was dying. Cancer. Liver. Too much drinking. Forty-seven. I never thought he'd live past twenty. But I thought he'd go some other way. Something more violent.

**DAUGHTER.** My brother told my sister he was dying the day before Mama's funeral. I'd known for a while. She got all upset.

**SISTER.** "Can't you for one minute forget yourself and try to understand how he feels?!"

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# **SANDCHAIR CANTATA**

## **Cast of Characters**

WORRIER

PRAGMATIST

## **Acknowledgments**

*Sandchair Cantata* was originally produced as a staged reading by Actors&Writers, Olivebridge, NY, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2002. It was directed by Nicole Quinn with the following cast:

WORRIER.....Sarah Chodoff  
PREGMATIST.....Sigrid Heath

# SANDCHAIR CANTATA

*(Lights up on: A beach.)*

*(Two forty-something WOMEN in sand chairs at surf's edge. They wear bathing suits and baseball caps, each with a book in her lap, watching their respective kids in the water. The conversation ebbs and flows, the rhythm of waves.)*

**WORRIER.** *(A lament:)* I'm old.

**PRAGMATIST.** We're well preserved.

**WORRIER.** Pickled.

**PRAGMATIST.** Pears.

**WORRIER.** Pairs?

**PRAGMATIST.** Luscious fruit.

**WORRIER.** *(Indicates the ocean:)* You think they're okay?

**PRAGMATIST.** Yep.

**WORRIER.** Really?

**PRAGMATIST.** Yep.

**WORRIER.** Smells like summer.

**PRAGMATIST.** Seaweed.

**WORRIER.** Sunscreen, s.p.f. 30.

**PRAGMATIST.** *(Thrilled:)* Vacation.

**WORRIER.** *(Thrill shared:)* Vacation.

*(They take it in, the beach.)*

**PRAGMATIST.** Good book?

**WORRIER.** It's okay. Yours?

**PRAGMATIST.** Better in bed.

**WORRIER.** Who?

**PRAGMATIST.** The book.

**WORRIER.** Oh.

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Nods her head toward the water:*) Or him.

**WORRIER.** (*Wrinkling her nose:*) No.

**PRAGMATIST.** (*A minor wound:*) Why not?

**WORRIER.** Boring.

**PRAGMATIST.** Looks or personality?

**WORRIER.** Both.

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Reassessing:*) Grumpy maybe.

**WORRIER.** Or mean.

**PRAGMATIST.** Nice smile

**WORRIER.** (*Revelation:*) Oh, yeah. Laughing eyes.

**PRAGMATIST.** Great butt!

**WORRIER.** (*Doubtful:*) Really?

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Indicating someone else.*) No, hers.

**WORRIER.** Buns of steel.

**PRAGMATIST.** Youth.

**WORRIER.** (*Devastated:*) I'm middle aged.

**PRAGMATIST.** Yes we are.

**WORRIER.** When did it happen?

**PRAGMATIST.** Everyday.

**WORRIER.** Everyday.

*(Each retreats, reverie, water as lodestone.)*

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Confession:*) I hate my book group.

**WORRIER.** (*Surprised relief:*) I hate mine too!

**PRAGMATIST.** The dynamic's ...

**WORRIER.** ...All wrong.

**PRAGMATIST.** Too social.

**WORRIER.** Mine too. (*A beat.*) Do the waves seem rough?

**PRAGMATIST.** No.

**WORRIER.** You're sure?

**PRAGMATIST.** Yep.

**WORRIER.** (*Whimsical:*) Your kids are *so* happy.

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Pleased:*) Yeah.

**WORRIER.** (*Poor me:*) Mine are so whiny.

**PRAGMATIST.** Don't say yes so much.

**WORRIER.** (*Startled, miracle cure:*) Really?

**PRAGMATIST.** You're a paper tiger.

**WORRIER.** (*Defensive:*) Am not.

**PRAGMATIST.** Are too.

**WORRIER.** (*Anger rising:*) Am no...

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Loud, in her face:*) Are too, are too, are too!

(*WORRIER backs down, fairly cringing.*)

(*A breath.*)

See?

(*They sit in silence, watching the waves of children.*)

**WORRIER.** (*Licking her wounds:*) Want a frozen lemonade?

**PRAGMATIST.** And french fries. (*She indicates the kids:*) They'll fly if we buy.

**WORRIER.** Alone?

**PRAGMATIST.** It's not far. We can watch them from here.

**WORRIER.** I don't know.

**PRAGMATIST.** Don't know what?

**WORRIER.** If it's a good idea.

**PRAGMATIST.** Give them a budget and let them work it out. We get chair service.

**WORRIER.** But ...

**PRAGMATIST.** Or *you* could go.

**WORRIER.** (*A large life question:*) What am I doing!?

**PRAGMATIST.** Getting Lemonade? French fries?

**WORRIER.** Children. Raising children, that's what I'm doing.

**PRAGMATIST.** My treat.

**WORRIER.** I'm always the bad guy. "You can't do this," "don't do that." I make them go to bed. I take them for shots.

**PRAGMATIST.** You take them for ice cream.

**WORRIER.** (*Hopeful:*) Ice cream.

**PRAGMATIST.** The great equalizer.

**WORRIER.** (*Squinting out front:*) What's that boy doing?

**PRAGMATIST.** (*Yelled out front:*) Hey, you! Orange trunks! Blue Warhead mouth, get off my kid!

**WORRIER.** Jerk!

**PRAGMATIST.** He's a kid.

**WORRIER.** But he ...

**PRAGMATIST.** He wanted someone to tell him to get off. I did. He did.

**WORRIER.** (*Okay, smarty pants:*) Like the one you threatened to bite?

**PRAGMATIST.** Like that.

**WORRIER.** Did you ever bite her?

**PRAGMATIST.** Nope.

**WORRIER.** (*Smug:*) Who's the paper tiger?

**PRAGMATIST.** I didn't have to. But I would have.

**WORRIER.** Sure.

**PRAGMATIST.** *She* believed me.

**WORRIER.** She was three.

**PRAGMATIST.** They can be very cunning at three.

*(The WORRIER glances around, then panics, dancing in all directions from her chair.)*

**WORRIER.** Where are they!!!

**PRAGMATIST.** *(Calm:)* Down there. The tide carried them.

**WORRIER.** *(Screeching, hand gestures, basic mania:)* Olivia! Over here! Move, back, back! Get your brother! Now!

**PRAGMATIST.** *(Sure she's come unhinged:)* You okay?

**WORRIER.** *(A breath, a confession:)* Every day in the papers, there's another kid taken. And teenagers.

**PRAGMATIST.** *(Sympathetic:)* It's too much.

**WORRIER.** Is everybody a pervert or a victim?

**PRAGMATIST.** We just hear about it more. The media.

**WORRIER.** It's not right. Not fair. Priests. Teachers. Relatives. Strangers.

**PRAGMATIST.** We do the best we can.

**WORRIER.** Living in fear is the best we can do?

**PRAGMATIST.** This isn't the projects, or Auschwitz, we're at the beach. Lighten up.

**WORRIER.** It could happen here.

**PRAGMATIST.** Sure it could.

**WORRIER.** *(Self righteous:)* Kids are snatched from their homes.

**PRAGMATIST.** *(Proverbial:)* Lives lived in fear ...

**WORRIER.** Oh, please.

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

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