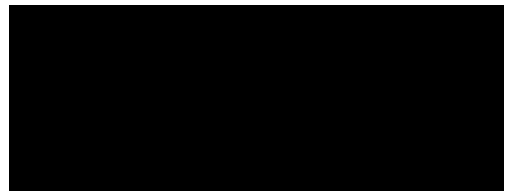


A BLUE HYDRANGEA

A 10-Minute Play

By Eric Braman



Cast of Characters

BLUE A Blue Hydrangea
PINK A Pink Hydrangea
CAROLE The Great Gardener (optional voiceover)
GEORGE The Great Gardener's Husband (optional voiceover)

Scene

A backyard garden.

Time

Late spring/early summer.

Lights up on a garden. A hydrangea bush with multiple heads of blossoms is seen center stage, all of them pink except one, which is blue. The blossoms are asleep. The sun rises at start of play waking the blossoms from their slumber.

PINK

Good morning world.

BLUE

Good morning sun.

PINK

Good morning dirt.

BLUE

Good morning butterfly.

PINK

Good morning little ants.

BLUE

Good morning Lilies and Roses and Jasmine.

PINK

Good morning Cherry Tree, good morning Kale!

BLUE

Good morning family.

PINK

(turning toward BLUE) Good morning – OH MY GROVE!

BLUE

What is it?

PINK

What happened to you?!

BLUE

What? Is my stamen showing?

PINK

No, it's – I can't believe it.

BLUE

What is it?! Am I infected? Is it aphids?! Oh god, get them off!
Get them off!

PINK

Stop fussing. Stop flinching.

BLUE

Out with it! You look like you've seen a slug!

PINK

No, it's not a pest. It's a... Well, you're... Blue.

BLUE

What?!

PINK

As blue as that morning sky, dear. You're blue through and
through. Every petal. I've never seen anything like it. I can
hardly believe it's you. Look there, in the bird bath.

(BLUE leans over and looks at
reflection in water surface.)

BLUE

Wow. I'm...

PINK

Did you eat something?

BLUE

Nothing out of the ordinary. Just water from the ground and you
know... carbon from the air. Same water and air as you, I think.

PINK

Well you must have had paint from the house dripped on you.

BLUE

No. Not that I recall.

PINK

Good Gardener in Heaven! You must have done something. I've
never heard of a Hydrangea just turning blue out of the blue.

BLUE

I mean, there *are* blue Hydrangeas, right?

PINK

Sure, I've *heard* of blue Hydrangeas. But we are pink Hydrangeas. The Good Carole planted us as such, and no Hydrangea I've ever seen in this back yard has ever been blue.

BLUE

Are you sure I wasn't always blue and we just never looked close enough?

PINK

You're being absurd.

BLUE

Well, I don't know.

PINK

You look ridiculous.

BLUE

I think I look... nice.

PINK

Nice?!

BLUE

Handsome, even.

PINK

Handsome?! A Hydrangea?! Handsome?!

BLUE

Yeah?

PINK

(laughing) I've never in all my days heard of a Hydrangea being... handsome! Beautiful? Of course. Pretty? Always. Stunning? I mean, I've heard it said once or twice. But handsome! Hah! I've never.

BLUE

You don't have to be so cruel.

PINK

I'm sorry, dear. It's just so unnatural.

(An uncomfortable silence.)

BLUE

I think I wished for this.

PINK

WISHED FOR THIS?! To be blue?! What on earth would make you wish to be blue?

BLUE

I don't know. I guess I've always wanted to be blue. Like, since I was a tiny bud. There was something in me that never felt pink, you know?

PINK

That's against the laws of nature. Carole planted us to match the yellow Irises and red Poppies. We are the splash of pink in this garden. You know how she likes warm colors.

BLUE

I know. I don't wish to upset Carole, bless Her Greatness, but I can't help but feel this is meant to be. I mean, I've had dreams – so many dreams – for years about looking up into the sky and seeing my reflection in its beautiful hue. I've had visions while we slumber in the cold of winter. Visions of waking up absolutely turquoise and looking down at the Thyme creeping below us to hear songs of "oohs" and "aahs" as each little white bud tells me how much they love the new view.

...

Maybe I manifested this!

PINK

Flowers don't manifest. We blossom, wilt, hibernate, repeat. We follow nature's cycle. We only live because Her Greatness, Carole, planted us here. To manifest would be a malicious betrayal of Her great design!

BLUE

Perhaps Her Greatness will love this. Perhaps Her Greatness always wished for me to be blue!

PINK

Flowers are not meant to change colors. Flowers are meant to stay the hue the Good Gardener planted at time of purchase. You are breaking the laws of lawn care.

BLUE

I can't help it if I'm blue!

PINK

But you wished for this. You *wished* to break Carole's heart. How dare you.

BLUE

You think this will break Carole's heart?

PINK

Oh absolutely. There's not a single blue flower in this garden. You'll stick out like a sore thumb. Oh, I can hear those terrible Chrysanthemums now. "A blue flowah, why I nevah." Oooooh... We'll be the laughing stock of the yard. Thank compost we're in the back.

...

Oh. This is why. This is why Carole put us back here. She knew we couldn't handle the curbside!

BLUE

You can't mean that. Carole put us back here because She spends more time here. She put us back here because we're Her favorite.

PINK

We were Her favorite. Imagine when She comes to water us...

BLUE

She really might like it!

PINK

Or maybe She'll chop your head right off. Into the incinerator with you. Or all of us. What if She takes all of us? One rotten head in the bunch... soon the whole bush will turn.

BLUE

Just because I turned blue doesn't mean every pink Hydrangea will turn blue. You clearly don't want to be blue and you're pink as pink can be.

PINK

Because I have my wits about me! Because I'm strong. But what about those new buds on the edge. Oh, they're so young and impressionable. They will surely turn blue.

BLUE

It took me 6 years to turn blue. And, I never wanted to be pink! Everyone around me was pink so I just followed suit. I didn't know I had a choice. I think I've been pretending to be pink this whole time!

PINK

You take that back.

BLUE

No, I really think that I was pretending, this whole time, to be something I'm not! I'm blue! I am a blue blossom! I'm a handsome blue blossom!

PINK

(clutching chest) Oh my sepal!

BLUE

Hey backyard! LOOK OVER HERE! Check out the newest addition—

PINK

You shut your mouth right this instant.

BLUE

They're going to see eventually, might as well get it out of the way. HEY RHODODENDRONS!

PINK

You stop it. Stop it. If I hear one more word out of you I'll break your stem myself.

BLUE

You wouldn't.

PINK

I'll kick you right out of this bush, you hear me?

BLUE

Who put you in charge?

PINK

I am the oldest bud on this hedge, I was blossoming long before you were even a thought in Carole's heart.

BLUE

You said we all lived in Carole's great vision before we bloomed?

PINK

Of course, you did. WE ALL DID! That doesn't give you seniority. This is my bush and so long as I'm in blossom you'll follow my rules. Now, you unruffle your leaves or so help me...

BLUE

Or what? You'll chop me out of the family? Leave a gaping hole in this bush? You think Carole will be happy when she comes out to see we're asymmetrical?!

PINK

Carole, grant me patience...

BLUE

Oh, sibling, just look at me. Please. Look me in the eyes.

(PINK struggles, finally looks up.)

BLUE

Don't you see it?

PINK

See what?

BLUE

Look deeper, you must see it. It's me. This has always been me.

PINK

Oh! Love, I'M SO CONFLICTED!!!!

BLUE

I know it's hard. I know this is different. It's scary for me too.

PINK

(crying) STOP DOING MY EMOTIONAL LABOR FOR ME!

BLUE

I just want you to see me and accept me for the blueness that I am. This is me.

PINK

I know. I know it's you. It's just... it's going to take some time for me to... adjust.

(A moment of silence as BLUE and PINK embrace. The sound of a door being opened is heard and the faint sound of CAROLE's humming arises in the distance.)

CAROLE

Good morning, flowers!

PINK

Holy peat moss! It's Her Greatness. It's Carole. Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no!

BLUE

(suddenly in shock) It's Carole.

PINK

She's going to freak out. She's going to lose her mind. She's going to rip us right out of the ground. She's going to KILL US ALL!!!

BLUE

It's going to be fine. Everything will be fine.

PINK

This is the end. It was great knowing you, world. I wish I had more time. I wish I could watch the butterflies burst from their cocoons even just once more!

BLUE

We're not going to die. I don't think.

PINK

She'll stop watering us. She'll make us suffer for betraying her.

BLUE

Shoosh shoosh shoosh! Here she comes.

PINK

Uuuuuggggghhhhhhh...

(BLUE and PINK slowly look up to see CAROLE standing above them.)

CAROLE

Oh my word! What do we have here?!

PINK

We're dead.

CAROLE

Why, you've turned blue, little one! I can't believe it! George! George, get out here!

(BLUE and PINK watch as CAROLE runs back into the house.)

PINK

Oh god. It's happening. She's getting George so he can dig us up. I knew it!

BLUE

She wouldn't.

PINK

I knew it. I knew it was unnatural. I knew she would hate it.

BLUE

They're coming back. Calm down. You'll be fine.

PINK

May Carole have mercy on our souls.

(BLUE and PINK's attention follows GEORGE and CAROLE as they come to stand above them.)

CAROLE

It's turned blue! Look at it!

GEORGE

My word. It has.

CAROLE

It's... so...

GEORGE

Handsome.

CAROLE

Like it was always meant to be blue... I love it!

(BLUE looks over at PINK, smiles.)

BLUE

Like I was always meant to be.

(The lights fade as BLUE basks in their newfound pride.)

The End.

A DENSITY OF THOUGHT
by Timothy Krause



Cast of Characters

QUANG: a middle-aged man; a shy, quirky, but earnest artist.

Place

A TED Talk event in Portland, Oregon.

Time

The present.

[As lights come up, TED Talk intro music plays. QUANG enters to recorded applause. The stage is bare except for a projection screen with the TED logo; a red, circular carpet at center stage; and a wooden stool with a bottle of water on it. QUANG wears a high-tech headset microphone and carries a wireless remote control.]

QUANG

(pausing briefly as the applause dies out, making eye contact with the audience before beginning)

You may think that great art lies in the imagination of the artist. But I am here today to tell you that's not true. No, great art lies in the imagination of you, the viewer.

My name is Quang. I'm an artist. And I make invisible paintings.

But before I show you what you cannot see, let's first look together at what we can see. This, for example.

(QUANG clicks the remote control and an image of da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" appears on the screen.)

No one denies the masterpiece of da Vinci. We can all appreciate the technique, the composition, the atmosphere. But have you ever noticed the title?

The portrait's Italian name is *La Gioconda*. In France, where the painting now lives at the Louvre, this work is known as *La Joconde*. And while those titles come from this woman's married name, there is this added significance that the name comes from a word for "happy" -- in English, "jocund" -- "the happy one".

So we see the title--

(QUANG clicks the remote control and the title appears below the image of the painting.)

--and we see that famous smile, and we nod our heads, knowingly: "the happy one."

But was she? Was she really? She lived in Florence under the rule of the Medici. She had a much older husband, once thrown in prison. Five children, one which died as a baby. Was she happy?

Look at the painting.

Here, da Vinci made the choice for us -- not only about Lisa's emotional state, but also about what we expect to see if we bothered to read the title: "the happy one."

More importantly, though ... Do you know when this painting really became famous?

(QUANG clicks his remote control to advance to an image of the painting's empty space in the Louvre in 1911.)

When it wasn't there. When we couldn't see it. When we had to imagine what it was.

You see, before the *Mona Lisa* -- or, rather, "the happy one" -- was stolen in 1911, it wasn't even the most famous painting in its gallery, let alone in the Louvre. It was its absence that fueled our speculation, our imagination. And since it was returned, we have come to know more about this painting than we care to: In fact, this middle-class housewife from the sixteenth century has a longer Wikipedia page than any of the "Real Housewives" -- Beverly Hills or otherwise.

And now, despite -- or perhaps thanks to -- the occasional pedantic debate between smug smile and stiff upper lip, nothing is left to the imagination. The artist says "look at this" and we take them at their word. Da Vinci said "La Gioconda" -- "La Joconde" -- "the happy one."

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but I say that words have the power to create a thousand pictures.

And that's why I choose to make invisible paintings ... like this.

(QUANG clicks the remote control to reveal an empty frame. He waits a beat for a reaction.)

Oh, wait, I forgot the title.

(QUANG clicks the remote control again and a title appears: "What if a boy in a coat with a goat has a row in the bow of a robot rowboat?")

Actually, there's also a subtitle.

(QUANG smiles and clicks the remote control again and a subtitle appears: "It's amazing to note how they stay afloat in the moat.")

Now ... What do you see?

Let's try another.

(QUANG clicks the remote control again and a title appears: "What if the lobster was a little closer?")

What do you see in this one?

One more.

(QUANG clicks the remote control again and a title appears: "What if a wonderful weirdo wields a box of weird wonder?")

Again, forgive me, the subtitle.

(QUANG clicks the remote control again and a subtitle appears: ""I do," says he. But will she?"")

What do you think? Is this all weird.... or wonderful?

Let's try an experiment. I will show you titles for real works of art -- which is not to say that my art is not real. Rather, these are titles of the establishment's notion of art that is worthy of a museum installation, let's say. Tell me what might make these paintings so noteworthy.

(QUANG clicks the remote control to show a new title. Then he clicks the remote control again to reveal an actual painting of this title. The first is "Unlucky 13: The Odd Man Out Says Grace." ["The Last Supper"]. The second is "Starlight, Starbright, The Morning Star from an Asylum Night." ["Starry Night"]. "Anxiety at Sunset: The Deafening Despair of Nature." ["The Scream"].)

... Yes, da Vinci again. We get it -- a master. But with a title as simple as "The Last Supper" -- could it ever have looked any different than this? No surprises here. Next.

... "Starry Night" was a vision for Van Gogh, a recurring vision that he finally painted while staying at an asylum seeking reprieve from mental illness. But why so much paint, Vincent? Maybe he's afraid of what he can't see?

... "The Scream", by the way, is so familiar that it now has its own emoji, and yet we still get it wrong. The figure isn't screaming. The figure is Munch's attempt to block out the piercing emotions brought upon by the reaction of his senses to this brilliantly-red sunset.

So I put the question to you now: What is more important? What you see with your eyes? Or what you see with your mind?

You may recall the quote from *The Little Prince* that says: "What is essential is invisible to the eye." I suggest to you today that the same is true in art. After all, what do you remember now about *La Gioconda* -- "the happy one"?

... a middle-class woman named Lisa; a much-older husband who had been in prison; five kids, one who died as a baby; an otherwise ordinary middle-class life, a theft and return; fame; the Louvre; on and on ...

And yet -- look at it again.

(QUANG clicks the remote control again, and an image of the *Mona Lisa* returns.)

We don't see that. None of that is here.

But what if the estimable Leonardo -- had chosen to portray dear Lisa in an invisible painting?

(QUANG clicks the remote control again to show an empty frame with the title: "A husband's bail, a baby's grave, and four kids: Lisa makes the best of it". QUANG looks at the audience, but says nothing. QUANG clicks the remote control once more to see the screen go blank. He turns abruptly to the audience, all business.)

As for me, my own beginnings with invisible paintings seemed to have more to do with representation than interpretation.

(QUANG quickly clicks the remote control and a new image appears on the screen of a banana.)

"That banana is too phallic."

(QUANG quickly clicks the remote control and a new image appears on the screen of a pair of cherries.)

"Those cherries hang like your father's testes."

(QUANG quickly clicks the remote control and a new image appears on the screen of a pear.)

"The curves of that pear remind me of my ex-wife."

(QUANG quickly clicks the remote control and the screen goes dark.)

Just to be clear, those paintings were not mine. You probably guessed that since they were, in a word, visible.

No, those paintings were part of a museum exhibit a few years ago. And those comments were from you, the public.

That's what I heard, or, rather, overheard, day after day at the museum: people complaining about the strangest things.

"My dear, that painting is just too red."

Of course, if you've been to the museum, you probably know that this person was standing in front of this painting.

(QUANG clicks the remote control to show an image of one of Mark Rothko's red paintings.)

Truth be told, unlike a good bowl of fruit, a Rothko can be a bit, dare I say, reductive.

But even so, this attitude toward art -- this entitlement toward art -- this -- it was driving me insane.

But it also led me on a new adventure, of sorts. I began a new series of work, a new collection. I went to the museum every day, and I listened more carefully to what people said. Specifically, I listened to what they complained about. And every day I went back to my studio, and I began to paint what people said they hated about art.

(QUANG smiles with an air of mischief.)

Did you see them hanging in the lobby? Do you recall which was your favorite?

This isn't a trick. This isn't the emperor's new clothes. I'm not trying to fool you.

I never said I was a painter, at least not in the traditional sense. I only said I was an artist.

I make invisible paintings. I don't use oil or pigment or canvas. Instead, I use my words, your imagination, and sometimes a frame -- because I know how much we like to put things in neat little boxes and ... of course ... how much we like to label things.

So I'm giving you the framework -- pun intended -- to think outside the box.

In fact, I'm working on a new piece right now, and I would love to share it with you.

(QUANG clicks the remote control to display a new empty frame with the title: "What's good for you is sometimes bad for me." He quickly continues, all business.)

What's clear is this: There must be trust between artist and audience if there is to be truth.

Now because we are in a theater tonight, you may think this is only make-believe -- ...

And by the way, let's just stop and think about that term for a moment: "make-believe". Isn't it delicious? Religion is ... make-believe. Education is ... make-believe. Art ... is make-believe. That's what we're doing here tonight, aren't we? I'm here ... to make you believe.

So in case you are quick to dismiss this talk as only make-believe -- because, of course, let's admit it -- some of this is and some of it isn't -- let me share with you one more truth.

(QUANG clicks the remote control to display a news story.)

Let me introduce you to an Italian artist named Salvatore Garau. In 2021, Signor Garau sold an invisible -- or, as he calls it, an immaterial -- sculpture titled *Io Sono -- I Am* -- for 15,000 euros. That's about \$18,000, give or take.

And this wasn't even his first.

Now, as I said at the beginning, you may think that the necessary elements of great painting are oil, pigment, and canvas. Or perhaps watercolors on paper. But I am here today to tell you that great art is about seeing what others do not see, and then helping others to see what is not there. Great art lies in the imagination of you, the viewer.

Artists must learn to trust you, even as you, friend, always trust that the artist will tell you the truth.

Listen to this:

"When I decide to 'exhibit' an immaterial sculpture in a given space" -- this is Signor Garau speaking -- that space will concentrate a certain amount and density of thoughts at a precise point, creating a sculpture that, from my title, will only take the most varied forms."

Because -- and these are now my words -- invisible does not mean non-existent.

Garau goes on to say -- and I quote:

"You don't see it, but it exists; it is made of air and spirit. It is a work that asks you to activate the power of

the imagination, a power that anyone has, even those who don't believe they have it.

"After all, don't we shape a God we've never seen?"

[A recording of erupting applause. The TED music plays. QUANG clicks his remote control and the lights go out.]

END OF PLAY

DOMINANT SPECIES

By Cameron Jackson



Cast of Characters

XEN

An alien

SOUP

An alien

Place

The bridge of an observation deck on a spaceship. Research vibes.

Time

Unspecific.

Director's Note

The setting can be as adaptable to the stage as necessary—providing more “business” in the form of interactable controls for their work should add to the action onstage. The only essential scenic elements are two vehicle-like chairs with seat belts/straps (possibly with more than the normal amount) and some form of monitor/screen for the characters to react to information.

Setting: The futuristic layout of an observation bridge in space. The two main vehicle chairs sit center stage, in close proximity to controls.

(The whirring and clunking of a spaceship coming close to its destination. Lights blink on, showing XEN working controls, and SOUP dozing in their chair.)

XEN

All right, coming into orbit now, look alive Soup.

SOUP

Yeah, yeah, okay...It's just been a long one. *(Unbuckles, looking out the "window")* Huh. What's the job?

XEN

First contact, if you can believe it.

SOUP

All the way out here? Really?

XEN

Yup.

SOUP

Tiniest system to make contact I've ever seen, but sure.

XEN

Not system. Planet.

SOUP

Ho-ly shit, really? Just the one?

XEN

I know, right? Crazy! Saved it for last because it was so weird. Just that little one. Only one moon, too.

SOUP

One planet making contact... *(shakes it off)* Well, at least it should be fairly organized then, not too many disparate factions. Looks to be, what, three-fourths water? I'll switch on the Aquifiers to take the ship in and say hello-

XEN

Nope! No need. Get this—the contacting species is land-based.

SOUP

WHAT? Almost their entire planet underwater, and a surface species is the winner?

XEN

Insane, and it gets wilder. The initial report scan shows that they evolved from an aquatic species. They *adapted* to that.

SOUP

Hold up—evolved? So they're-

XEN

-carbon-based, yeah.

SOUP

(exploding to their feet, disgusted) God DAMNIT, Xen! I *just* had this uniform cleaned!

XEN

(chuckling) Hey, it's not their fault that they're made of biomass.

SOUP

It most certainly *is* their fault! You knew! You just wanted to see me make contact with- *(dry heaves)* -with- *(dry heaves)* ... with damn meat-creatures!

XEN

(laughing more) Yeah, a little.

SOUP

It's not natural! *(pacing, fighting for composure. To self)* I'm a professional. I can do this. *(in motion)* Alright, let's run a detailed recon scan and get this over with.

XEN

Okay, let's see here... Running comm disambiguation, it's having a hard time for some reason. It looks like they use a basic auditory transference of data-

SOUP

-gross-

XEN

-though there's a visual component too. But it doesn't match with- Oh NO WAY!

SOUP

What?

XEN

They have multiple, disparate communication modalities! WEIRD.

SOUP

They don't have a unified language yet? The meat-creatures are still, what, trying to decide between the last couple favorites? A little antiquated for my taste in a first contact, but-

XEN

Uh, try seven.

SOUP

They have SEVEN languages?

XEN

...thousand. Seven thousand languages. Currently..

SOUP

Seriously?! How have they survived? (*checking other data*) whoawhoawhoa, hold up. Are you seeing the biodiversity here? There's hundreds-*thousands* of fauna! Just- just all on the same planet? How is that even possible?

XEN

Diversification over time, I guess- but look at that strata. Getting some imagery in now of species sampling.

SOUP

Oh weird! Is this one the contacting species?

XEN

Nope, that's something called a "moose." It's kinda cute for a bioform, all things considered.

SOUP

Who knew you had a hair kink, Xen?

XEN

Stop! Although this would be the planet for it... look how many actually have hair! Even the main species, though they have... less? For some reason?

SOUP

Whoa, look at the numbers on this species! I thought you just said they had hair?

XEN

Still not the main species.

SOUP

Oh, dang. Mos-qui-to? Is that right? They seem rather dominant.

XEN

(pulls up data)...Here's the target for contact.

SOUP

(big exhale) That's... certainly something. Yikes.

XEN

Keep an open mind, Soup.

SOUP

Yeah, I know, we've seen weird. But that's one for the books.

XEN

(covers screen) Okay Soup, guess how long the average lifespan of this main species is? No peeking!

SOUP

Uhh, hm. So they've reached out, and the technology to do that usually takes a while. Assuming they follow the typical pattern of generational leap from fire to fusion in three cycles, and converting for their solar rotation... Like—three thousand of their years? Maybe a bit more?

XEN

Not. Even. Close.

SOUP

If they're carbon-based, I can't imagine them going longer than five thousand?

XEN

Getting colder...

SOUP

Yeah, very funny, I- *(moves XEN aside to look. Beat.)* ...You ran diagnostics on the scanner, right?

XEN

Yup. Just before we entered the parsec.

SOUP

THEY MAX OUT AT AROUND ONE HUNDRED YEARS?!?

XEN

Yeah. Wow.

SOUP

How in the hell do they get anything done? Like, seriously!

XEN

Looks like they tell ...“stories?”

SOUP

What even is that?

XEN

I- ...I don't really know. It's like- they capture data in representative characters, a lot of which aren't even real, and through the repetition of parable experience somehow retain knowledge through generations?

SOUP

Wild. But- auditory, right? So they can perceive sound. But how in the hell are meat-creatures making sound?

XEN

Huh, good question. (*XEN researches, then pushes away from the monitor quickly*) NOPE. Don't look.

SOUP

Oh, tell me.

XEN

They- (*dry heaves*) -NOPE. Can't do it.

(SOUP moves in to look)

SOUP

OOOH! The vibrate wet air with their bodies?!? Internally?!? WHAT?!?

XEN

That's not right. That is NOT right.

SOUP

So they come on land, squish out air, and now they've gotten to the stage of extrasolar contact? That is... weirdly impressive? The sheer ridiculousness of it!

XEN

If you think that's something, wait until you see how they reproduce.

SOUP

Yeah, osmosis is pretty gnarly, but- (*sees screen*) ... We're leaving. (*Immediately begins to resecure to their seat*)

XEN

Wh-

SOUP

HELL no. We are leaving NOW.

XEN

We're supposed to make first contact though.

SOUP

FLUIDS, Xen! There is an EXCHANGE of FLUIDS! Nuh-uh.

XEN

Okay, fine, fine. But let's at least complete some data collection before we go. They'll want to know why we left.

SOUP

They're gonna understand.

XEN

I know, but still. Professionals, right?

SOUP

There's a limit! ... but, fine. Sure.

XEN

Just- scan for other media transfer. They use some pretty archaic tech, so see what they might be reaching out on.

SOUP

Boring. But, sure. You?

XEN

I'll... do a threat scan, I guess. Make sure we can just leave them alone.

SOUP

Smart.

(They work in silence for a few beats)

XEN

Well, no immediate threat, at least. They barely have a grasp of nuclear fission. Tons of low-grade explosives, and moving all over the place, too. *(beat)* Now, that's interesting.

SOUP

Ugh, what now?

XEN

No, not like- The explosives. It looks like they get inside the explosives, and modulate the combustion as a means of transport?

SOUP

Now that's actually kind of impressive. Also nuclear?

XEN

That's just it—they're using combustible biowaste. I mean, they're moving away from it, it's chaos for their ozone layer, but they made bombs to help them move.

SOUP

That's... well, I'm a little less repulsed. Good for the meat.

XEN

That's not all, either. Look at this thing.

SOUP

Yeah, a moving bomb- on a rail? With hills? It just goes in a circle. What's the point?

XEN

The species have these "coasters" because of their biological response to danger. Chemical alterations to help them in life-threatening situations, and to reward them for surviving.

SOUP

So they're, what? Microdosing their mortality to... get high?

XEN

I guess so!

SOUP

Also kind of impressive. Another point for meat! (*back to work, then*) Huh. A lot of activity on low-band radio frequencies. They might be using that for communication.

XEN

Actually, their initial output included a bit of that, I think... That's pretty novel for communication, though.

SOUP

Yeah, but they also traverse via bombs, so...

XEN

Good point.

SOUP

Amplifying the signal now. (*sounds of radio static*) Eh, maybe not, ... hold on, adjusting...

(*Through the static, a song becomes clearer. It is from Lakme' - Duo des Fleurs (Flower Duet)*)

XEN

(*after moments of listening*) That's... um. That's beautiful. ...what is that? Is that what the meat sounds like?!

SOUP

Sometimes? That's a combination of meat sounds and pushing air through tools to vibrate it differently. Something called "Music".

XEN

The meat-creatures made that? Intentionally?

SOUP

Yeah, according to this, they make a lot of it. All different kinds.

XEN

...why?

SOUP

Their databases are a little mixed on that. Some are those story things... But it looks like it's a bit closer to the coaster thing, weirdly? Like, survival-adjacent.

XEN

You said there's more?

SOUP

It's a bit overwhelming, actually. Okay, here's some used in deity worship, I think. Praising the goddess... Beyonce?

(The music switches to "Single Ladies" by Beyonce. XEN and SOUP begin to move in rhythm, growing from small gestures to more expressive)

XEN

Soup?

SOUP

Yeah Xen?

XEN

Why am I gesticulating?

SOUP

I am as well. Restraints?

XEN

Probably wise.

(Both fully strap into their seats. They both remain motionless while the music continues.)

SOUP

...Listen, I know I said-

XEN

Right there with ya, Soup.

SOUP

First contact?

XEN

Yup.

SOUP

Let's just hope procreation isn't part of their greeting ritual.

(Lights fade, as they begin their descent)

HEIRLOOM
A Ten-Minute Play

By:

Sara Freedman

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the author's name and any contact information that might have been present.

HEIRLOOM

CHARACTERS

LAURA Female, 40s, wearing a black sweater and jeans

TIM Male, 40s, wearing a dress shirt and slacks. Older brother of Laura.

SETTING

In the kitchen of the family home.

TIME

Afternoon

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Setting: The kitchen of the family home. In the center of the kitchen table are medicine bottles, oral syringes, cotton swabs, hospice pamphlet, and a box of tissue along with a vase of flowers and a few little trinket boxes.

At Rise: Laura is drinking coffee at the kitchen table. Tim enters the kitchen.

TIM

So really? This is it? I didn't think she would go out so quickly. I thought we had more time.

LAURA

You should have known better. Typical Mom. When she knew she couldn't beat it, that was it. The cancer was too painful. Her impending death too much to bear. "Knock me out fast," she said.

TIM

I didn't get a last goodbye in when she was awake.

LAURA

The last goodbye was not pleasant. She's been so terrified. (Beat.) I tried to get her to tell me that I've been a good daughter, and she looked at me like I was crazy.

TIM

Everyone knows you're a good daughter, Laura. Why do you need to be told?

LAURA

The same reason you want to wake her up. And I don't think we can do that now. I think she's between this world and the next.

TIM

So, we wait. (Beat.) 78 is not young. But her people live to be 95.

LAURA

We've been robbed of ten years. It's such bullshit. We had so much planned.

TIM

Do you think she can hear us when we're talking in the bedroom?

LAURA

Hospice says they can still hear you, but Mom was deaf – so who knows. I guess we should watch what we say.

TIM

This isn't what I pictured.

LAURA

I know what you mean. In the movies it seems so sweet. Today was a firestorm, Tim.

TIM

She looks pretty sweet now. (Motions in the direction of the bedroom)

LAURA

She's finally sleeping peacefully. Here's the handbook from hospice. It runs you through the stages of dying. Mom's following it right along.

TIM

(Takes the book from LAURA and thumbs through it.)

Some light reading.

LAURA

It's there for you if you need it. I thought hospice did everything, but they're only here once a day. *We* do it all. The morphine, the moving her on her side, the changing of her clothes.

TIM

I'll help you. We can do it together.

LAURA

I don't think she has long. She's so weak now. The breathing is getting shallow. It's in the book.

(LAURA starts crying.)

TIM

It's okay, Laura. It's okay.

LAURA

Her big, amazing life ends like this? Fading away in a bed. What's the point of the whole damn thing, anyway.

TIM

You got me. There isn't one? Enjoy it while you can?

LAURA

No daughter should have to do this. Seeing Mom so sick, so scared, and then having to put her down like this.

TIM

Every daughter should get to do this? I mean if you weren't here – you'd be even more traumatized. Telling everyone for years that you should have been here.

LAURA

That's true. There's no winning on this one.

TIM

She'll go easy now. Into the sunset.

LAURA

Mom! Oh Mom!

(LAURA is crying again, and puts her head down on the table.)

TIM

(Beat.) We better pick a day for the memorial.

LAURA

What? No, I can't do that. Can you plan it?

TIM

I will. But don't complain later.

(He picks up his phone and starts scrolling.)

LAURA

(Thinking.) I'll give the eulogy. No music. She hated music at events because it was loud in her hearing aids.

TIM

We can have some music with the slideshow.

LAURA

Fine. But only that bluegrass band she likes.

TIM

I thought I was planning this?

LAURA

And it needs to be outside. The woman spent her life in nature.

TIM

Obviously.

LAURA

(Thinking.) The bar right there when you walk in. So you can get a drink before the ceremony starts. And limited flowers. People keep sending flowers here, and I take them from the door to the garbage can. Every bouquet makes me cry harder.

TIM

I'll make some calls. (Beat.) There's just one thing I want.

LAURA

Okay...

TIM

I want her wedding ring.

LAURA

What? A little early.

TIM

Oh please. You know you already took it.

LAURA

(Beat.) Just for safekeeping. But I want it, too. I thought the daughter inherited it?

TIM

Why would you inherit it? You have your own wedding ring from Miles.

LAURA

But this is her one family heirloom if you think about it. I mean she doesn't have a lot to pass down.

TIM

Exactly. So why should you get it?

LAURA

Well for one thing – you're almost 50 years old. You really think your next girlfriend is going to want a 1960s ring? She's going to want to pick out a big old diamond.

TIM

It's hard to say.

LAURA

And the idea of this ring – that my beloved Mom – my best friend if we're honest – wore for 50 years – on some stranger's hand—

TIM

There it is. Your hatred for every woman I date. This time preemptively.

LAURA

A little dramatic, Tim. But anyway, the ring would mean nothing to them.

TIM

But it would mean everything to me. In fact...

LAURA

What?

TIM

I think if I had Mom's ring...

LAURA

What.

TIM

I mean I think if I would have had it in the past...I may have proposed to someone by now.

LAURA

What the hell are you talking about?

TIM

Honestly I don't know. It's just a feeling I have about it. When you called and said to get down here – I thought about the ring. About how I need that ring.

LAURA

That's just crazy talk, Frodo. And not how it works. You propose to someone because they're your person. (Beat.) And your past girlfriends would've hated that ring. Melted it right down...

TIM

See! You never liked any of them.

LAURA

The ring won't make a difference on whether you propose to someone or not.

TIM

And I'm saying it might. Anyway, I want to have Mom's ring with me now. To help me manifest my future. In my pocket for the next time the opportunity presents itself.

LAURA

Manifest your future? You're a lawyer, not a yoga teacher. (Beat.) It's inappropriate to be talking about this now.

TIM

It's the perfect time to talk about it.

LAURA
(Quietly.)

And anyway, I think I've earned it.

TIM

What?

LAURA

I said I think I've earned it. The ring. I've earned it.

TIM

Here we go. Martyr time. You've done everything. I've done nothing.

LAURA

It's not about being a martyr. Someone had to be the caretaker. You don't live here. Do the math.

TIM

That doesn't entitle you to the ring.

LAURA

It kinda does? I mean, I should get first pick of the heirlooms.

TIM

You can have everything else. The paintings. The china. The old clock.

LAURA

That stuff isn't personal. This was on her hand. Every day for 50 years. Dad saved three months of salary to buy it. No. I don't think I can give it to you. What if you give it to someone, and then get a divorce?

TIM

Well, I can't ask for it back.

LAURA

Exactly. And there goes the heirloom. Down the road with Mrs. Right...

TIM

I think whoever I give the ring to will be my forever person. I think they will wear it As Is, and be so happy to have it.

LAURA

(Beat.) Nothing. In your past. Would suggest this to be true.

TIM

What does that mean?

LAURA

Ellen would have wanted an emerald or something weird like that. Heather, a ring from Tiffany's. And Meredith – her ring would have to be custom-made – nothing like it in the world

– with a diamond twice the size of Mom’s.

TIM

It’s weird how you know my girlfriends so well. Kind of creepy even.

LAURA

You know I’m right. Anyway. I just assumed I would inherit it.

TIM

Why?

LAURA

You know why. Mom and I are the closest.

TIM

That’s your perception, La. I always thought Mom and I were the closest. Her first-born son and all that.

LAURA

You can have Dad’s ring. It’s right there in the box next to you. She’s kept it there since Dad died.

(TIM picks up one of the trinket boxes from the table and finds his dad’s ring in it. He puts it on and holds up his hand to look at it.)

TIM

Yeah, no, I don’t want this ring.

(TIM returns his dad’s ring to the box.)

LAURA

That was quick.

TIM

Dad’s ring freaks me out. When I look at it, I can see him judging me.

LAURA

You’re a successful lawyer like he was. What’s there to judge.

TIM

Successful – but not ruthless. My ambition never as great as his. My heart a little too soft. Did you ever watch Dad in court? Scared the shit out of me.

LAURA

Yes, I did. You sound exactly like him.

TIM

That's enlightening. Anyway. I don't want the old man's ring. So, there you go! Perfect.

LAURA

What is?

TIM

You take Dad's ring – and I'll take Mom's!

LAURA

(Picks up the hospice book and starts reading it.)

I'll take them both if I want to.

TIM

(Beat.) What was the last thing Mom said to you?

LAURA

That if she wasn't dead or unconscious soon that I better get her some suicide pills.

TIM

Lovely. (Beat.) I'll give you \$10,000 for the ring.

LAURA

You have \$10,000? Miles and I used most of our savings when the hot water heater broke. The lives of public school teachers.

TIM

Just think. You could take a nice trip to Hawaii when this is over.

LAURA

Gross.

TIM

You can have her car? You love that old wagon.

LAURA

She already gave it to me.

TIM

Of course she did.

LAURA

Why do you want to get married now, anyway? You've avoided it for forty-seven years – why not just ride it out?

TIM

I was thinking about that on the drive here. With Mom leaving us, and Dad gone, and you with Miles – boy, that’s it. I’m alone. Alone Alone. Very alone.

LAURA

I thought you liked that. You’re married to the law. No time for family life. All the things you’ve said.

TIM

I may have been wrong.

LAURA

Hold on, let me record that (grabs her phone) – say it again...

TIM

I’m just saying – you think Mom was your best friend. She was my best friend too. She loved hearing about my cases. Discussing strategy. So supportive of my every move.

LAURA

She loved it. Your weekly phone dates. Martinis in hand. And that was Mom. The best kind of friend.

TIM

And now I won’t have that anymore. I honestly thought she’d outlive me.

LAURA

We all did.

TIM

And now I’m looking at what – 30 years without her? That’s insane. When she leaves, we will never see her again. The person we’re both closest to.

LAURA

Yeah. It’s super fucked up. But we do have each other.

TIM

It’s different. You have Miles. You two are a team.

LAURA

I get it. I do. Find your teammate. It’s the best. It’s still out there for you.

TIM

And I think Mom’s ring will bring me the magic I need. To find my person. And then take the plunge.

LAURA

(Beat.) Maybe you're right. At this point, anything's possible.

TIM

Where is it, by the way?

LAURA

What?

TIM

The ring. Don't play stupid. It doesn't work on me. You've always been smarter than me and we both know it.

LAURA

It's in a very safe place.

TIM

Well go get it. I just want to see it.

LAURA

It's not here. And I'm not leaving this house until she takes her last breath.

TIM

Convenient. Hide the ring and hope I forget about it. I won't. But you're safe for now.

LAURA

For now.

TIM

I need to get some coffee, call work. When's the next morphine dose?

LAURA

Pretty soon. (Looks at her watch.) Another hour I think.

TIM

Be right back.

(TIM exits. LAURA waits a beat, then she reaches into her pocket and pulls out her mom's wedding ring. She puts it on her ring finger and admires it. She opens the box on the table and takes out her dad's ring and puts it on the same finger. She admires both rings, kisses them and then takes them off and puts them in the trinket box, together. She exits.)

THE END

MOURNING HENRY IV

a play in one act

By: Hannah Teryn



Cast of Characters

Brooklyn:

Nick's sister, twenties

Nick:

Brooklyn's brother, twenties

Setting

Nick's apartment.

Time

The present.

Scene 1

SETTING: We are in Nick's apartment.

AT RISE: There is knocking. NICK enters looking like he just woke up.

NICK

I hear you! I'm coming!
(opens door)

BROOKLYN

(enters through door nicely dressed
in all black, carrying a purse and
a tinfoil covered dish)

That is not what you're wearing.

NICK

Good morning to you too, sister.

BROOKLYN

It's almost one, Nick. I just ate lunch.

NICK

Fine. Good afternoon then. Is that my lunch?

BROOKLYN

If you want it to be. It's lasagna.

NICK

A whole lasagna?

BROOKLYN

You love lasagna.

NICK

I know I do, but like...why did you bring me a whole lasagna?

BROOKLYN

It's what you do when someone dies. You bring their family
a lasagna or some other gluten-filled pasta dish.

NICK

Thanks...I guess...

BROOKLYN

I can put it away while you change.

NICK

I don't think I need to change.

BROOKLYN

It's Henry's funeral. You can't wear *that*.

NICK

Henry's dead, he won't mind.

BROOKLYN

I'd mind if I was the one who died.

NICK

Then I'll wear black to your funeral.

BROOKLYN

Nick.

NICK

Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

Please.

NICK

Fine.

(grabs a discarded jacket off
the couch and puts it on)

Happy?

BROOKLYN

Not really.

NICK

So, how are you? How's Sam?

BROOKLYN

Sam's happy—

NICK

That's good.

BROOKLYN

—happy with Mina, that is.

NICK

Oh. So you broke up?

BROOKLYN

I'm still a monogamist if that's what you're asking.

NICK

When did this happen?

BROOKLYN

Two months ago.

NICK

So right after...?

BROOKLYN

Sam said it was all a bit too much.

NICK

I never liked Sam.

BROOKLYN

You did so like Sam.

NICK

Sam cut sandwiches diagonally.

BROOKLYN

And...?

NICK

It felt really pretentious.

BROOKLYN

It was kind of pretentious.

NICK

I really am sorry about Sam.

BROOKLYN

It's okay. I'll get over it.

(collects herself)

But today isn't about me. Today's about you and honoring Henry's memory. How're you holding up?

NICK

I'm fine.

BROOKLYN

You lived with him for two years.

NICK

Eh, more like a year and half.

BROOKLYN

He was the last one you saw before you went to bed and the first one you saw when you woke up in the morning.

NICK

I looked at other things before I fell asleep.

BROOKLYN

Be serious, Nicky.

NICK

I am being serious, Brooky. I'm fine. It's not like he passed unexpectedly.

BROOKLYN

You woke up yesterday and he was dead. That's what you told me over the phone. That seems pretty unexpected.

NICK

I guess. But Henry IV died in a very similar way as Henry I and Henry II and Henry III. I'm starting to think I shouldn't own goldfish.

BROOKLYN

Have you even cried?

NICK

Am I required to?

BROOKLYN

It seems like you should.

NICK

I can't cry on cue, sis.

BROOKLYN

Ugh. You're impossible. Let's just start the funeral. Maybe you'll cry during your eulogy.

NICK

Um, okay. We are gathered here today—

BROOKLYN

The body, Nick. We need the body!

NICK

The body's gone.

BROOKLYN

Someone stole it?

NICK

Jeez, no, of course not, Brooklyn. Who steals the corpse of a goldfish?

BROOKLYN

Then where's Henry?

NICK

I flushed him.

BROOKLYN

Without me?

NICK

I'd already flushed him when I called you yesterday. I didn't know you wanted to throw a big memorial service.

BROOKLYN

Why didn't you tell me? I thought we were going to bury him together.

NICK

I just...I didn't really think it was about Henry, I thought you wanted to come over and talk. And then you showed up with a lasagna and dressed like that...

BROOKLYN

It's what you do when a loved one dies!

NICK

He is a goldfish!

BROOKLYN

He was a goldfish! See, you can't even admit he's dead. That's why you flushed him, so you didn't have to look at him!

NICK

Well of course I didn't want to look at him! Who wants to stare at a dead fish?

BROOKLYN

I bet you already bought a new goldfish. Where's Henry V? Come on, I want to meet this fish who replaced your best friend.

NICK

Brooklyn, I didn't get another goldfish, I'm never going to get another goldfish.

BROOKLYN

I don't see why you wouldn't. It's not like you're broken up about Henry IV.

NICK

I shouldn't have gotten him in the first place. I don't keep goldfish alive very well. Seriously, I'm not a competent fish owner.

BROOKLYN

You killed him?

NICK

No. Well. Not intentionally. It's like how some people can't keep houseplants alive. I can't keep goldfish alive.

BROOKLYN

So, you're just going to live here alone?

NICK

I might get a ferret...you know, after a suitable mourning period.

BROOKLYN

What makes you think you can keep a ferret alive if you can't keep a goldfish alive?

NICK

I don't know. People who kill houseplants have kids all the time and keep them alive just fine. And kids are way harder to keep alive than ferrets.

BROOKLYN

So that's it, then? You flushed him. You're thinking about getting a ferret and you just...move on?

NICK

What else am I supposed to do?

BROOKLYN

I don't know. Be sad! Show a real human emotion. Act like maybe you care about something for once!

NICK

I do care. But I'm not going to sit around and unravel.

BROOKLYN

Of course not. You're just going to get a ferret. Something different, but just as good. Maybe you should start calling Debra "Mom."

NICK

Whoa. Where did that come from?

BROOKLYN

I mean, she's been our stepmother for seven years. And now that Mom's been gone for a whole two months, you can just start calling her "Mom" and it'll be like Mom never died!

NICK

Brooklyn, just because I'm not a wreck over Henry IV, doesn't mean I don't miss Mom...and it definitely doesn't mean I'm going to start calling Debra, "Mom."

BROOKLYN

You don't act like you care.

NICK

I don't act like you want me to act.

BROOKLYN

I was crying so hard, I couldn't even make it through my eulogy, while you read yours like a scientific report.

NICK

I was trying to hold it together.

BROOKLYN

Your voice didn't even crack!

NICK

I'm sorry my voice didn't crack. If I'd known that was all you wanted, I would have made my voice crack.

BROOKLYN

I wanted your voice to crack because you were sad, not because you forced it to crack.

NICK

I really don't know what to say here, Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

I don't know what I want you to say either...

NICK

Do you want to talk about it?

BROOKLYN

No. I don't. I've talked about it. And I've cried and I've screamed and I've eaten tubs of ice cream and I still don't feel any better. Why am I the only one falling apart?

NICK

You're not.

BROOKLYN

Yes, I am. Dad was like a little sad, but mostly fine because he had Debra. Aunt Eloise cared more about the cake we served at the reception than she did that Mom died, and Uncle Ian didn't even bother to show up.

NICK

He lives in Germany.

BROOKLYN

That's not the point.

NICK

I know.

BROOKLYN

And you. You didn't cry. Not when she got admitted to the hospital. Not when we took her off life support. Not at the funeral. Not when we buried her. Not on her birthday three weeks later. I know you loved her...but you're not acting like it.

NICK

I didn't sleep for three days after we pulled her off life support. I just stared at Henry and the wall. I tried to ignore the beeping in my ears. But it was like I could hear her heart stop. I kept hearing her heart stop.

BROOKLYN

You never told me.

NICK

You were grieving. I knew you and Mom were closer. I knew you'd take it harder. So when we started planning the funeral I threw myself into that. I focused on being productive, on making sure the slideshow was perfect, on finding the right people to speak, on booking the right place to host the funeral and, yes, on buying the right cake. I guess Aunt Eloise didn't approve.

BROOKLYN

Aunt Eloise always finds something to complain about.

NICK

I heard her say your eulogy was too sad and mine wasn't sad enough.

BROOKLYN

We'll have to ask her what the appropriate amount of sad is for a eulogy, so we get hers right. *(beat)* Nick...I am so sorry. I didn't understand. I thought you took over planning the funeral because Mom's death didn't affect you.

NICK

It did. I've wondered a lot if we should have left her on life support for another day. I've wondered if maybe she would have come back to us.

BROOKLYN

She had a stroke. She was brain dead. Machines were keeping her alive. She wasn't coming back.

NICK

I know that. Logically, I know that.

BROOKLYN

We did the right thing. And I know I wasn't in the room. I was scared to be in there. But I'm glad you were with her. If it had just been me at the hospital, she would have died alone.

NICK

Maybe.

BROOKLYN

You were there for her. And you were there for me. And I'm sorry I didn't see that before. Thank you.

NICK

Yeah. Well. You're welcome.

BROOKLYN

So. A goldfish funeral. It sounds sort of silly now.

NICK

Eh, people have funerals for their pets all the time.

BROOKLYN

For their dogs and cats. Not their fish.

NICK

He was a good fish. Definitely my favorite Henry.

BROOKLYN

(reaches into purse)

I brought these to eat afterwards.

NICK

You brought Goldfish? That's in poor taste.

BROOKLYN

Yeah, well, since you already flushed him, maybe we can eat them in memory of him.

NICK

I have his bowl. Why don't we say a few words over that?

BROOKLYN

Alright. I never liked an open casket funeral anyway.

NICK

Here lies Henry IV, a good fish and even better friend.
Thank you for keeping me company when Mom died.

BROOKLYN

Rest in peace, Henry.

NICK

You too, Mom.

(NICK and BROOKLYN eat goldfish as
lights go down)

(BLACK OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

SHE WHO WATCHES

By Nancy West

CHARACTERS

Angie	Woman in cancer treatment, quiet, determined, afraid. (pronoun: she)
Tsagaglal	She Who Watches, a Native American woman, observant, witty, a powerful leader. English pronunciation shá-ga-gláal , from the Ichishkiin language. (pronoun: she)
Jordan	Nurse, any gender identity, compassionate, preoccupied (pronoun: they)

SETTING

The infusion room of a cancer treatment center

TIME

The time is now



Developed in collaboration with Marta Lu Clifford, Tribal Elder, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde

More about Lillian Pitt, her art, the story of Tsagaglal, and the culture and history of the River People of the Columbia River Basin, can be found at: www.lillianpitt.com.

More about the four tribes of the Columbia Plateau (Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce), their fishing rights in the Columbia River Basin, and projects to protect and restore Salmon, at the Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, www.critfc.org

Nancy West



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NOTES

PRONOUNCIATION

TED Talk > Oral traditions > Voices of our Ancestors: Lillian Pitt and Toma Villa

<https://youtu.be/XU5InZW8Vlc>

Wak'amu 0:13

Tsagaglal 4:12

Confluence Project > Interview with Lillian Pitt

<https://www.confluenceproject.org/library-post/lillian-pitt/>

Tsagaglal 0:24

Ichishkiin Sinwit Yakama / Yakima Sahaptin Dictionary – University of Washington

<http://depts.washington.edu/sahaptin/Sahdic.htm>

Ichishkiin <http://depts.washington.edu/sahaptin/i/ichishkiin.mp3>

Wak'amu http://depts.washington.edu/sahaptin/w/wak'_amu.mp3

MEDICAL PROP – IV CATHETER IN ARM

Just prior to the start of the play, the nurse Jordan has disconnected the IV catheter in Angie's arm from the IV bags containing the chemotherapy infusion medications and secured the IV with a clamp so Angie can move around freely. One method for creating a realistic IV onstage is demonstrated by a cancer center nurse below:

- **IV kit.** Displayed below is the Braun Smallbore Extension Set with Female and Male Luer Lock Connectors, 6-inch.
 - The IV catheter that would usually go into the vein is very flexible. It can either be twisted backward against the skin or cut off.
 - Then the Tegaderm Film Dressing placed above.
 - The “loose” end that was connected to the IV bag can be looped backward and taped to the arm in place.
- **3M Tegaderm Transparent Film Dressing** is placed over the simulated spot where the IV enters the vein in the arm.
- **Medical Adhesive Tape** is used to securely tape the “loose” end that would connect to the IV bag or both ends of the IV loop to the arm to keep it in place



SOUND: loud alarm of an emergency call button. SOUND ENDS as LIGHTS UP on a cancer treatment infusion room. JORDAN, a nurse, is helping ANGIE get seated in a comfortable chair. ANGIE is agitated, with an IV taped in her arm. There's a refreshment station, and ANGIE'S large bag with personal items for comfort and a blanket.

JORDAN

I disconnected you from the infusion pump, just like you asked. So, what's going on?

ANGIE

Done. I'm done with chemo. Take this IV out.

JORDAN

It's your choice, hon. How about you take a break? We can keep the IV in case you decide to continue. Either way, your oncologist will want a chat.

ANGIE

(Beat) Okay.

During following, JORDAN takes ANGIE's pulse and checks her temperature.

JORDAN

Any side effects you didn't mention before?

ANGIE

Some diarrhea. A little tired and nauseous, but that's nothing new. I'm just feeling...done. With all of this.

JORDAN

Umm hmm. What about the mouth sores?

ANGIE

Oh, I've still got them. Along with a rash, reflux, aching bones, muscle spasms. *(Gestures to her body)* It's a party all the time. My white cell blood count is so low, I have to stay away from, well, pretty much everyone but my cat.

JORDAN

This is tough chemo. Remember to pace yourself. Are you still working?

ANGIE

I've *got* to keep my job. Insurance.

JORDAN

Maybe find a way to rest a bit more?

ANGIE

Sure, that's nice in theory.

JORDAN

Hey, you're wearing that same necklace again. Good luck charm?

ANGIE

Maybe. If it is, I'm not sure how well it's working.

JORDAN

What is it?

ANGIE

Tsagaglal, She Who Watches. (*JORDAN doesn't recognize the name*). The petroglyph, um, the rock carving above the Columbia River?

JORDAN

I *think* I've heard of it.

ANGIE

She's a Native American chief from a long time ago.

JORDAN

I'll make you that tea. Peppermint, right? (*ANGIE nods. During following, JORDAN prepares tea, hands it to ANGIE*) So, what's She Who whatever's story?

ANGIE

I only heard it once. Let's see. During Coyote's travels, he met She Who Watches. She lived high in the cliffs above her village. He asked her if she was a good chief, and when she said yes, he put her in the rock.

JORDAN

A coyote asked?

ANGIE

Coyote is a mythical character. He's a trickster, stirring things up. Him and Raven.

JORDAN

I didn't know you were Native American.

ANGIE

Oh, I'm not. The story resonated with me. But I don't think I remember it right. Damn chemo brain.

JORDAN

I want you to drink that tea. Stay hydrated. I'll call your doc, then I'll be back.

JORDAN EXITS.

ANGIE

(Dreamily) Tsagaglal sees all things, for whenever they are looking at her, those large eyes are watching them.

TSAGAGLAL, a Native American woman, ENTERS.

TSAGAGLAL

Nice story.

ANGIE

Oh! Hey. Um, sorry about the alarm, I was just—

TSAGAGLAL

I heard the commotion. Figured I should come check it out.

ANGIE

It's off now. It's over.

TSAGAGLAL

Is it, really?

ANGIE

Yes. Thanks for checking. *(TSAGAGLAL doesn't move)* I'm fine. Just sipping my tea.

TSAGAGLAL

I'm here to visit you.

ANGIE

Have we met?

TSAGAGLAL

Not in person. But you're wearing me against your skin. *(looking out window, toward audience)* Hey, you have a view of the river!

ANGIE

Wait...

TSAGAGLAL

I am The Rock Woman. The Bear Woman Chief. Tsagaglal. She Who Watches. *(ANGIE, stunned, doesn't answer)* The namesake of your pendant?

ANGIE

Huh. Okay. Hi? I'm not sure what's going on here. Do you ... come with the necklace?

TSAGAGLAL

I don't always. She Who Watches is not my full name, you know. I'm She Who Watches All Who Are Coming And Going. So ... that's a pretty wide mandate.

ANGIE

And that includes me?

TSAGAGLAL

I go where I'm needed. I don't know where I'll show up, or when. The Creator decides. (*Confiding*) It's actually kind of fun.

ANGIE

Am I coming or am I going?

TSAGAGLAL

I don't know. Maybe both. I'm not your magic Native, here with "ancient wisdom." I just thought we could talk for a while.

ANGIE

Okay, this is wild. I don't want to take you away from a Native person who needs you more.

TSAGAGLAL

Don't worry, I can be many places at once. I have these big ass eyes, watching over everyone. BIG. Remember the rock carving? I watch all.

ANGIE

Are you a sign of ... something?

TSAGAGLAL

Like what?

ANGIE

What's to come?

TSAGAGLAL

I'm not the Grim Reaper. You got some of it right, but there are many ways of telling my story. Now *I'll* tell my story to you. Although the parts that are sacred must remain unspoken between us.

Long before people became real people, I was chief of a village on the banks of what's now called the Columbia River, next to Celilo Falls. We were an economic power, trading with Indigenous Peoples from the Great Plains to the Pacific Coast, from what became Alaska to California. I made my home high in the cliffs above, so I could watch for trouble and make sure everyone was well-fed and protected.

Coyote's travels up and down The Big River brought him to our village. He asked my people if they lived well or ill, and they said, "We live well, we have lots of Salmon, roots and berries. Our chief taught us how to build strong houses. But you should go talk to her." So he climbed up the cliff. *(Pause)* Maybe I should have kicked him out as soon as I saw him.

ANGIE

It's not that easy to kick out the charming ones.

TSAGAGLAL

Don't I know it. Story of my life. Literally. You were wrong about Coyote, you know. He's not a "character" in a "myth." Give me a break.

ANGIE

Sorry, I don't —

TSAGAGLAL

And Trickster doesn't mean what you think. He enjoys making mischief, but he has a purpose. He's a teacher, a hero, a jerk, or a clown. He helped the Creator make the world, and he teaches us how to be a good human.

ANGIE

What exactly did he say to you?

TSAGAGLAL

He asked if it was true that I was a good chief, and I told him yes, he could look and see how my people lived for himself. I thought he might have been hitting on me a little. He's a pretty earthy guy, if you know what I mean.

He told me that in the future, foreigners would come to our lands, and women would be forbidden from being chiefs. Kinda pissed me off. He asked what I wanted. I thought about it, then asked if I could watch over and protect my people forever.

ANGIE

Wow. That's a powerful choice. Do you ever regret it?

TSAGAGLAL

I don't know. He put me in the rock, and it's not always been easy. But I'm okay with it. *(Gestures to ANGIE's necklace)* I'm wondering why you have the pendant of me?

ANGIE

I saw it in an art gallery. Your legend was displayed, along with a biography of the artist, Lillian Pitt. Both of you are so strong. Lillian was a hairstylist but had to give it up. Then she learned to make amazing ceramic masks inspired by the petroglyphs. Every time she meets an obstacle, she overcomes it. That's what I want to do. That's why I wear it.

TSAGAGLAL

Her mother named her Wak'amu, which means camas root in the Ichishkiin language. Because just like the camas, she's stubborn. She digs in deeply. She persists. *(Pause)* You ever seen me in person?

ANGIE

In the rock? No, I tried to drop in once when I was passing by, but it's restricted now. You need to call ahead.

TSAGAGLAL

Yeah, you can't just waltz up and stare at me. I'm a celebrity!

ANGIE

You had too much graffiti on you, that's what I heard. Vandals.

TSAGAGLAL

There's no such thing as bad publicity. When they write about protecting the carvings, others might learn of our work to protect the Salmon. When a thing is scarce, it becomes more precious. I guess that includes me.

JORDAN ENTERS but doesn't see TSAGAGLAL.

JORDAN

How's it going?

TSAGAGLAL

Shitty. She has cancer.

ANGIE

Doing fine.

TSAGAGLAL

Liar.

JORDAN

I got in touch with Dr. Walsh, she'll be here in about half an hour. So, any swelling?

ANGIE

No.

JORDAN

You're looking a little flushed.

ANGIE

It happens every time. It'll go away.

JORDAN

No itching anywhere?

TSAGAGLAL

I got an itch. For freedom. For a good time. For a long ride along the rise of the winding ridge above the canyon. I itch to scream into the howling winds that roar from the falls, before the dam silenced them, to race along the roaring river.

ANGIE

No. No itching.

TSAGAGLAL

Liar.

JORDAN

You want a blanket?

ANGIE

No, thanks, I'm fine.

JORDAN

Okay, I'll check on you in a bit. You give me a call if you start to itch, or —

ANGIE

—or get too warm, or flushed, or any symptoms I'm having a reaction.

JORDAN

It could happen the first time or the tenth time. Even after we stopped the infusion.

ANGIE

I know the drill. I'll holler, don't worry.

JORDAN EXITS.

Why do you talk about freedom and racing in the wind when you know I can't go anywhere?

TSAGAGLAL

You can do more than you think. I'm not talking about your physical body.

ANGIE

Well, I'm not going to start howling into the wind.

TSAGAGLAL

Why not?

ANGIE

That's not ... polite.

TSAGAGLAL

You think bearing all this politely guarantees you won't die?

ANGIE

Maybe. It's worked so far. Why don't you go find someone who needs your advice more than I do?

TSAGAGLAL

I am. Right now.

ANGIE

Oh, that's right. ALL who are coming and going.

TSAGAGLAL

You give *me* attitude, but you won't use that mouth to give anyone else attitude?

ANGIE

I'm tired of people telling me what I need to do.

TSAGAGLAL

What you *need* to do is tell yourself a new story. Seek out joy.

ANGIE

Oh, like how? Eat something spicy without throwing up? Now, THAT would be a joy.

TSAGAGLAL

Do not mock me!

ANGIE

Is that your stern chief voice? Look, I just want to be left alone!

TSAGAGLAL

Careful. Wishes have power. Take it from me. I wished to stay where I could protect my people forever. When the dams were built, I listened as explosions rocked the canyons. I watched as the waters slowly rose to flood our homes, where we've lived since time before time. The spirits of thousands of rock carvings and paintings were silenced. A handful were salvaged and stored below the dam, next to a parking lot, covered in bird shit. I could feel their pain, their strength, their longing.

ANGIE

I think...I understand a little.

TSAGAGLAL

For more than 40 years they were in storage. I stood without them, above our flooded lands, disconnected.

ANGIE

Okay, I don't understand at all.

TSAGAGLAL

Our people struggled, blocked from fishing freely on lands provided to us by the Creator. The Salmon faded. Who was I if I couldn't be a good chief, protecting, teaching my people how to live well?

ANGIE

I can't bake my daughter a birthday cake. I can't go weed the garden. I can't even go out to a movie when all I have to do is sit there. I get tired, I ache, I can't focus.

TSAGAGLAL

But our people persevere. They help bring down dams to restore the Salmon. The few surviving sacred rock carvings were moved below me, to a place of honor near the beauty of the river. Our people could visit us again, and we rejoiced.

ANGIE

Well, you're kick-ass powerful. I'm just... not. I am so tired, all the time. It's deep in my bones. I tell everyone I'm fine, but I can't imagine feeling well again.

TSAGAGLAL

Celilo Falls still exists below the surface. Silent and unseen, but strong. I hear the voices of the ones lost in the waters. I shout and sing along with them, dance on the earth, fly up and down the river in my dreams. You can seize what brings you joy, what causes your heart to sing. *(Pause)* Just take a nap afterwards.

ANGIE

I'm already such a bother. People cook me meals, drive me around, do my laundry.

TSAGAGLAL

That's why we're all here. You howl, and your people will howl with you.

ANGIE

Coming or going. You're watching all who are coming and going.

TSAGAGLAL

That's right.

ANGIE

I'm both coming and going.

TSAGAGLAL

Yes.

ANGIE

Jordan!

JORDAN ENTERS.

When she gets here, tell Dr. Walsh I'm going to finish chemo today. Oh, and I *do* want a blanket! Can you get mine out of the bag for me?

JORDAN

Of course! And I'll let the doctor know. Need a warmup on that tea?

ANGIE

ANGIE shakes her head "No". JORDAN gets the blanket out and puts it on her.
Thank you so much.

JORDAN

You are more than welcome.

JORDAN EXITS.

TSAGAGLAL

It's a start.

ANGIE

The howling comes next. After my nap. One hour and forty minutes of chemo left. Will you stay a while?

TSAGAGLAL

Yes.

ANGIE begins to doze. TSAGAGLAL adjusts ANGIE's blanket.

LIGHT CHANGE to focus on TSAGAGLAL, who looks out at the entire audience, moving her face slowly, acknowledging them, watching them.

TSAGAGLAL watches us all coming and going with her large eyes.

BLACKOUT

Silence S'il Vous Plait!
(*trans.* "Silence, Please!")

A Play in One Act

By Ken Henry
French by Stephania Verhagen



Characters

CLINT-male, 60-70, American tourist. Name tag around neck, face mask dangling off one ear, wearing a straw fedora. He has a *Rick Steves Paris Guide* in one hand and a small daypack over one shoulder.

JOSEPHINE-female, 20-30, French; speaks broken English with a French accent. NIKE shirt, skirt, and running shoes.

VOICE – Voice emanates from a loudspeaker or megaphone. Monotone and impersonal.

Synopsis

An American tourist and a young woman meet one another in a gothic cathedral in Paris, France. The discussion quickly turns to their contrasting views of God, the church, and meaning of silence.

Scene

A towering and ancient cathedral in Paris, France. The cathedral could be Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, Saint-Chapelle or Notre Dame, but the point is, every cathedral inspires reverence, reflection, and awe. There are a line of 5-6 wooden chairs on stage.

CLINT

(Enters scene gazing upward and talking to self)

Jesus, that's high. God, the people who built these things must have been acrobats. (Cupping his hands and shouting) Hellooooooo –

VOICE

Silence, S'il vous plait.

CLINT

(Sits down on one of the chairs at the end of the row.)

Loving Paris, but all this walking around is for the birds. But then, the nicest thing about Europe is you can always find some dark cool cathedral to step inside and escape the heat of the day.

(Looking through guidebook.)

Not sure which one this is, but frankly, they're all beginning to look alike.

(After a moment of silence, JOSEPHINE enters and sits down on a chair. Obviously, she is in distress.)

Maybe she knows where I am. Ahh, Miss?

JOSEPHINE
(moaning)

Mon Dieu! (two beats) MON DIEU!

VOICE
Silence, S'il vous plait.

JOSEPHINE
(Wiping tears and becoming quieter, but then continuing her moaning cries.)

Dieu aide moi. POURQUOI M'AS-TU! ABANDONNEE?

VOICE
Silence, S'il vous plait. Silence.

CLINT
(Broken French) Pardonnez-moi. Il y a un problem?

JOSEPHINE
(Pointing at self)

CLINT
Oui. I'm talking to you. Do you need help?

JOSEPHINE
You don't want to know. You're on vacation. Don't worry about me.

CLINT
Your English is good.

JOSEPHINE
Your French is not good. Leave me alone.

CLINT

(to self) Right. So much for trying to be neighborly. (Next comment directed toward JOSEPHINE) I don't mean to intrude. I see someone cryin' and I figure they want to talk. My feet are killing me.

JOSEPHINE

The Eifel Tower. The Louve. Notre Dame. Champs-Elysees.

CLINT

(Holding up his name tag)

Paris in Three Days. That's the tour. (*one beat*) Why were you moaning?

JOSEPHINE

Moaning?

CLINT

Moaning, crying, sobbing; um, you know.

JOSEPHINE

Oh. It's a silly problem. Nothing for a tourist to solve. Have you gone to the Orsay? Or perhaps, later you'll catch the Batobus at Pont Neuf.

CLINT

After this? (indicating cathedral surroundings) I'm done. My feet are walking me back to the hotel. (kicks off a shoe) My dogs are barking.

JOSEPHINE

Dogs? Barking?

CLINT

Feet. Tired. (smiling and rubbing foot) Bark! Woof! (howls like a wolf) Owooooo!

(Hangs tongue out like a panting dog.)

VOICE

Silence, S'il vous plait.

JOSEPHINE

(three beats) My husband is leaving me or so he says.

CLINT

Ouch.

JOSEPHINE

He's decided to become a priest.

CLINT

Double ouch. I'm sor —

JOSEPHINE

No one goes to church anymore. No one reads the Bible anymore, but my husband decides God wants him to save sinners.

CLINT

(Looking in guidebook.)

Jay- soos-deso —

JOSEPHINE

(interrupting and speaking rapidly)

Qui croit en Dieu? Je déteste Dieu. Je ne suis pas d'accord. Il a brisé mon cœur.

CLINT

English.

JOSEPHINE

I said, who believes in God anymore? I hate God. I don't agree. He broke my heart. Do you go to church?

CLINT

Not anymore. Christmas and Easter. That's about it.

JOSEPHINE

Then you agree. Am I right?

CLINT

We *are* the only ones in here. Of course, this isn't Sunday morning. I would guess someone still comes to church here. Someone keeps sweeping the floor and polishing all these statues. Empty, yes, but look at that stained-glass win-der. Who's the guy with the head?

JOSHEPHINE

That's Saint Denis. The first bishop of Paris. He was beheaded in 250 and carried his head with him to the graveyard because he didn't want to be buried without it.

CLINT

I guess in a crisis, nobody wants to lose their head.

JOSEPHINE

Are you making a joke?

CLINT

I'm trying to make sense of all this.

JOSEPHINE

See my point? While the cafes in Paris are full, the churches are becoming empty barns. A young couple might get married in a church on Saturday, but they won't come back to church on Sunday. It's all window dressing and background music. Religion is dying off, and God is not changing anyone's mind. That's why I'm moaning. I'm moaning because my husband is about to throw away his marriage on all this.

CLINT

I believe in God.

JOSEPHINE

You do? (pointing at everything around her)

CLINT

Not everything, but some of it. I like the silence. What's your name?

JOSEPHINE

Josephine.

CLINT

Clint. Clint Haverstock. Midwest. Northern Minnesota. Nice to meet you, Josephine. Here's the thing. I figure God is the shortest distance between two points –

JOSEPHINE

Clint Haverstock. A nice name. A strong name.

CLINT

It's geometry, really. God is one point, over here somewhere, way out in space and you and I are over here – in Paris, sitting in these wooden chairs; we are at another point in time and space. . . . and the line – everything from here to there, the space between God you and I – that's silence.

JOSEPHINE

I never liked math.

CLINT

Math is not the point. The point is silence is God and God is silence. That's it. Geometry.

JOSEPHINE

No saints! No Saint Martin? No Sainte Vierge Maire? No priest hearing your confession? No lighting candles for dead parents?

CLINT

None of that matters without silence. Keep it simple. (*Drawing two points and the line connecting them in the air*) Me. God. Silence. Voila.

JOSEPHINE

Voila. What do you do for a living, Clint Haverstock?

CLINT

I sell sausage casings for dried meats like salami and pepperoni.

JOSEPHINE

And you get all that from selling pepperoni.

CLINT

No, I got all that because I came in here and let the noise of the world fade into the background. The language of God is silence.

JOSEPHINE

Maybe instead of wearing a clerical collar, my husband should sell sausage casings. What about my marriage?

CLINT

Look, Josephine, I don't know you, but you seem like a good person, a spiritual person.

JOSEPHINE

I do?

CLINT

Well, you came in here and I think you probably came in for the same reason I did.

JOSEPHINE

I did? Clint Haverstock, I think you really don't know me.

CLINT

I'm starting to know you. You're like every other person out there who has a million questions but can't sit still long enough to hear any answers.

JOSEPHINE

You sound like a priest.

CLINT

My mother wanted me to be a priest, but I wanted to make money. Those two ideas don't always go together. All I'm saying is come in here with your husband and sit together in silence. Maybe something will change.

JOSEPHINE

I don't know.

CLINT

Look, there's a phrase in America. Silence makes the heart grow fonder.

JOSEPHINE

Does that mean I grow fonder for God? Or God grows fonder of me?

CLINT

Guess you'll find out.

JOSEPHINE

(two beats) I thought absence makes the heart –

CLINT

It's something like that.

JOSEPHINE

Let's do it. Together.

CLINT

You mean, the silence. What about your husband?

JOSEPHINE

Practice. A warm-up for the big event. What do I do?

CLINT

Start with a big breath. (JOSEPHINE follows his instructions) Hands on lap. Eyes closed. Breathe in. Breathe out. Now, think of a deer.

JOSEPHINE

A deer? The animal. Bambi.

CLINT

Trust me, a deer. The deer looks peaceful doesn't it? It stands in the shade of the pine trees.

(With her eyes closed, JOSEPHINE begins acting like the deer.)

It chews on the grass and nibbles ripe huckleberries.

JOSEPHINE

This is very strange.

CLINT

Ah, ah. Keep going. The deer can walk through the forest and not make a sound. Why is the deer so peaceful? (JOSEPHINE shrugs her shoulders.) Because the deer knows something we don't. It knows how to live in silence.

JOSEPHINE

(three beats, eyes still closed, chewing, and then smiling) Okay, Clint Haverstock, seller of sausage casings, you might be onto something. (opening her eyes slowly)

CLINT

Two points. Me. God. And the space in-between? That's it.

VOICE

Silence, S'il vous plait.

JOSEPHINE

Maybe that guy goes to church.

CLINT

Maybe that guy runs this place.

JOSEPHINE

You are a good man. You have bizarre theories about God and deer, but you're okay. I feel better.

CLINT

Well, my tour group is probably wondering where I went off to. They were headed toward the Arch Di Triomphe.

JOSEPHINE

Do you need help getting there?

CLINT

No. I'll just wander and wind my way there. They'll find me.

JOSEPHINE

Thank you for. . . for the silence, Clint. Would it be okay –

CLINT

What.

JOSEPHINE

Would it be okay if we hugged? We don't have to, but I think it would be nice.

CLINT

Okay. Are you going to kiss me on both cheeks?

JOSEPHINE

If you're uncomfortable –

CLINT

No. I'm game. I like that about the French.

(CLINT and JOSEPHINE move to embrace. In the midst of the hug, house lights fade and a spot-light zeros in on JOSEPHINE's hand moving toward CLINT'S back pants pocket. Her hand deftly removes his wallet. Spotlight fades. House lights resume. JOSEPHINE kisses CLINT on both cheeks.)

JOSEPHINE

You are a beautiful man, Clint Haverstock. Enjoy Paris.

(Characters move away from each other. JOSEPHINE returns to her chair and CLINT walks toward the exit. He stops and looks up at the cathedral ceiling. He doesn't look back at her.)

CLINT

Au revoir, Josephine.

JOSEPHINE

(Opening wallet, smiling, and looking at cash.)

Au revoir, Clint. Enchantée.

CLINT

I'm glad I met you, too. (exits)

VOICE

Silence! S'il vous plait.

END SCENE

TINDER DATE

by Meg Schenk

CHARACTERS

JACK... mid/late 20s.

JILL... mid/late 20s

VOICE...ageless

SETTING

An unsuspecting coffee shop

NOTES

/ indicates an overlapping of lines

all roles can be played by actors of any gender

there should be a palpable air of awkward first date vibes. you know, the kind where it feels like everyone's watching you and you've done this a million times before and yet you can't for the life of you remember how to act like a normal human person

October 2022 Copy



Scene 1

JACK sits in a coffee shop, a mug, a book, and a tote bag in front of them. They start to take a sip of coffee but quickly and awkwardly splurt it back into their cup when they see JILL enter.

JILL

sorry!! / thank you for waiting

JACK

no, no, not at all

no, don't worry about it

JILL

sorry, again

I know I keep saying that

I have a problem with saying sorry

JACK

yeah, yeah, don't feel sorry, / really

JILL

I just feel bad, I hope you weren't waiting too long

JACK

nahh, you're good, coffee's still warm

I feel bad

I should have waited to order

JILL

not one to pay on the first date, huh?

JACK

... shiit

wow, yeah, I didn't even think of that, / jesus

JILL

(laughing)

no, no, I'm just kidding. you're fine, really

JACK

it's been... a while
since I've done one of these
that's probably not very cool to say, is it?

JILL

probably not
but I haven't in awhile either so

JACK

oh, great!

JILL

yeah!

JACK

we can be uncool...

JILL

uncool together

JACK

exactly

JILL

great

They pause, look at each other, and smile.

JILL

that was a lie actually

JACK

oh?

JILL

yeah, I don't know why I said that
I've been going on a lot of these lately

JACK
ah

JILL
not to say you're like! just one in the lineup

JACK
one in the/...?

JILL
not like a *ton* it's not like I'm a serial dater or something it's just like
I've been single for two years so
you know, a lot of Tinder dates

JACK
I get it

JILL
yeah

Beat.

JACK
so you, uh—

JILL
what did you—

JILL
oh, sorry

JACK
no, please

JILL
go ahead

JACK
no really, you go

JILL
oh I was just going to ask what you ordered

JACK

oh! um

just a black coffee, pretty boring

JILL

ooh very... tough

(JILL cringes. JACK makes a face, amused.)

shut up, I don't know

JACK

you said it *has* been awhile?

JILL

(mock offended)

aaallright

JACK

I kid, I kid

(shift to faux serious)

but yes, I am very tough. very serious. very tough serious mystery guy¹

JILL

I seee

(nodding to the book on the counter, enjoying teasing them)

is that why you carry around a copy of *Pride & Prejudice* everywhere you go?

JACK

ookay, you know what?

JILL

yes?

JACK

I thought

that might have impressed you

JILL

ohh ok, ok, let me get this straight

your plan—

¹ Feel free to change this to what feels comfortable for the actor (girl, person, etc)

JACK

yes

JILL

to win me over I your *first* thought
to make this Tinder date a surefire success

JACK

yep

JILL

was to just
casually leave a Jane Austen novel on the counter
juust hidden enough that it's not too obvious
but once I saw it, it'd be like *blam*

JACK

exactly

JILL

instantly swooned by your Regency-era literacy

JACK

did it work?

JILL

oh, definitely, I mean let's just go fuck now, we can just skip the formalities

JACK

great, perfect, I'll grab my coat now

(JILL laughs. jokingly)

oh— oh, you were kidding?

(putting the book back in bag)

I mean, I guess I can put this back now

JILL

now that it served its purpose?

(They both manage a laugh. A slightly awkward pause.)

I'm gonna grab my drink, I'll be right back

JACK
yep

JILL goes to the counter, then reappears momentarily.

JACK
wow, that was fast

JILL
was it?

JACK
felt like it

JILL
hm

JILL gets settled in her seat.

JILL JACK
so— I gotta ask—

JILL
oh sorry

JACK
no go ahead

JILL
no, you

JACK
I was just gonna ask, how just like totally awful is this outfit

JILL
ehhh

JACK
shit

JILL

no! no. you look great

JACK

The last time I went on a first date, fedoras were in style so

JILL

(skeptical)
were they?

JACK

hey! back in middle school, trust me, I, I pulled them off

JILL

I just
don't believe you

JACK

I was *the* coolest kid in band

JILL

that, at least, I could maybe see

Pause. They both take a sip.

JILL

so middle school, huh?

JACK

what?

JILL

since your first date?

JACK

oh, yeah. my first and only girlfriend.

JILL

wow. childhood sweethearts, huh

JACK
yeeeeeep

JILL
how long have you been single for then?
or is that like ok for me to ask

JACK
yeah yeah sure
like uh
6 months?

JILL
ok ok
so still kinda fresh
for a relationship that long

JACK
yeah I guess

Pause.

JILL
well, I can very succinctly catch you up on the dating world if you'd like

JACK
(mockingly)
you'd do that for me?

JILL
oh yeah
free of charge

JACK
wow thank you

JILL
so most of em don't even make it past the swiping right stage
you *maybe* chat back and forth over the course of like a day or two and then
(makes some sort of gesture to imitate it falling flat.)

JACK

I'm starting to notice that

JILL

so the fact that we are here today is in itself, a true feat

JACK

good to know

JILL

then the date itself usually consists of a pretty standard formula: an awkward exchange of niceties, some getting to know you questions, you know, when was your last relationship? how many siblings do you have?

JACK

how many siblings do you have?

JILL

later

two

that or they dominate the conversation the entire time and never ask a single question about you then it either becomes clear they were only in it for a hookup despite not saying that in the "so what are you looking for" convo, it ends and they ghost you, or, you know, they're a murderer and you're an idiot who went on a date with a complete stranger and you get murdered

JACK

wowwww

has that happened to you before?

JILL

(shrugs)

eh

only once or twice

JACK

so how does this date compare then

JILL

to the ones I got murdered on?

JACK

yes.

JILL

I'd say it's going alright

JACK

I think I'd say it's going alright too

JILL

cool

JACK

cool

Beat. JACK looks out the window, looks slightly confused.

JILL

now sorry, you were gonna say something

JACK

oh, I was just—

sorry I got distracted, I thought I saw—

JACK pauses and JILL joins him in looking out the window as suddenly, there is a shimmer and static from beyond, unseen by the audience. It's like a disturbance in a force field, lasting only long enough to see a glimpse of what lies on the other side. A moment.

JILL

did you— ?

JACK

you saw that, too?

I thought I was having a mini stroke or something

Pause.

JILL

what the fuck was that?

JACK
did you see it, like—

JILL
yeah, it like—

JACK
everything outside just like— glitched...
(It happens again. JACK stands up.)
woah!

JILL
ok this is freaking me out

JACK
did you see the— the person?

JILL
yeah, I saw like a figure or something...

JACK
what the fuck was that?

JILL
did anyone else see that?

They both look around. No one else is in the coffee shop.

JACK
where is everyone? where's the barista?

JILL
I don't—...

JACK
weren't there other people in here? I could have sworn there were other people in here

JILL
I can't remember...

JACK

you ordered from a barista right? where'd they go?

JILL

I—

I think so

Beat.

JACK

everyone's still walking around normally outside

Pause.

JILL

what do you think it was?

JACK

(staring at JILL as if hoping they'll give them the right words.)

maybe it was just like

like

JILL

maybe it was just a weird weather thing

like lightning struck and made everything look weird

JACK

yeah

yeah, maybe

JILL

(peering out the window up at the sky)

it's not raining or anything though...

JACK

did you— did you see how it like— everything broke apart into like... pixels

A pause. They look at each other, lost for words.

JILL
let's try the door

JACK
good idea
(heads for the door and tries to open it unsuccessfully.)
fuck! what the fuck!

JILL
ok um ok

JACK
(starting to have a panic attack)
I don't like this
fuck
I don't like this

JILL
ok, it's ok, it's probably nothing, it's just—

Suddenly the lights shut off. Both scream. It's pitch black, even outside. We hear JACK starting to hyperventilate.

JACK
what is going on
what
is going on

JILL
ok ok it's ok
where are you

JACK
I'm—

JILL
reach out your hand or something

JILL (CONT)

(trips over something.)

shit!

JACK

I'm over here

JILL

ok

ok I've got you

take deep breaths

breathe with me ready

(takes a couple of deep breathes. JACK tries to follow along.)

let's just find a way out of here, ok?

it's gonna be alright

The coffeehouse lights flicker back on. It's still dark outside.

JACK

why—

why is it still dark outside?

I can't see anything

JILL

I don't know, maybe it's like

it's an eclipse or, or

dust in the air or something, maybe there was an attack

JACK

(terrified)

I saw it!! I saw it again!! the figure it was— it's right—

JILL

(trying to get JACK on their feet)

ok, let's just get away from the windows and the door

JACK

it had like a camera or something, it was—

taking a picture of us

JILL

seriously, let's—

Suddenly, a dart from an unseen blowgun strikes JACK, causing them to slump over. JILL drops their hold on JACK and falls back, a second dart narrowly missing them.

JILL

(scrambling to hide behind a pair of chairs)

hooly shit holy shit holy shit, what the fuck

A VOICE blares from unseen speakers. It sounds like something you'd hear in Star Wars— some alien language. A pause.

VOICE

(Hushed and annoyed)

Okay, Steve! I got it, for the love of the Outer Moons... No, it's not still on—I'm— oh fuck okay—

(Another pause. Professional)

My *greatest* apologies. It appears we did not have our autotranslator engaged. We want to apologize for this temporary inconvenience— we are currently experiencing technical difficulties due to the passing of Orglitrion in the Second Ring. These *should* resolve shortly. We thank you for visiting the Earthling Zoo, where we offer the opportunity to enjoy exhibits of life behavior from one of the most troubling and fascinating species in our galaxy's history. We are working to reset our life forms and expect that you will be able to resume witnessing the splendors and horrors of scenes like “Grandma's Death,” “First Bike Ride,” “The Fall of Human Civilization,” and “Awkward Tinder Date,” in just a few minutes.

Thank you, and Blessed Be the Orbit.

(Slightly muffled)

See, Steve, I know what I'm doing—

The speakers cut out with an abrupt crackle. JILL stares around wide-eyed, frozen in shock. Suddenly, JACK sits straight up, causing JILL to scream. JILL scrambles further away from JACK, who looks at them bright-eyed and smiling. JACK picks up a broken mug on the floor.

JACK

hii! I'm so sorry— I actually already ordered?

End of play.