

SCUBA DIVING TO THE MOON

a new play by

Stephen Lloyd Helper

representation:

David Friedlander, Esq.

(914) 241-1277

david@dfriedlander.com

playwright direct:

(929) 450-1344

stephenlloydhelper@gmail.com

CHARACTERS

EARL, partner of Marjoram, 30's - 40's

MARJORAM, partner of Earl, 30's - 40's

NARELLA, a nurse, very experienced

MAINTENANCE MAN and the non-speaking role of the ORDERLY are played by a Stage Manager.

SETTING

Unit set. A hospital room with other locations suggested by props, lighting, sound effects, music, projections.

TIME

The present - or recent past.

MUSIC SEQUENCES

Part of this story is told through four music sequences when the character of Earl is driving. The music could be telling songs on the radio or music written especially for the production.

"If Ye Love Me" by Thomas Tallis is heard in part a few times in the play. Here's a link to a recording: [IF YE LOVE ME](#)

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for Roslyn and Nicola

UP AND DOWN

SCENE 1

A hospital room - a woman lies in a bed, apparently unconscious. SHE holds a small handkerchief in her hand. There are general hospital sounds in the distance. In the room is the soft, slow, steady beep of a heart monitor. The room has an Exit sign above the door. The window blinds are open, showing dull winter afternoon light. EARL bursts into the space, carrying flowers.

EARL

Hello my kumquat!

As HE makes his way to the bedside.

One-two, cha-cha-cha! One-two, cha-cha-cha! Honey! C'mon, let's dance...

HE cha-cha's to the side table, places the flowers down and sits in a chair next to the bed.

Darling, dance class is waiting for us to return. Any day.... any... day.

HE places his hand on hers.

You're warmer today!

He places both hands on hers.

You've been so cold. This is so good.

No response.

Does this mean you are having happy thoughts?

NARELLA enters, reads the monitors and makes notes.

EARL

How are you today, Narella?

NARELLA

Busy but good - how are you?

EARL

OK. Feel her hands! She's warmer!

NARELLA

Yes, a bit.

EARL

Does this mean she can have an operation, now?

NARELLA

A surgeon will decide but - could be a fever.

EARL

OH. An infection would be terrible -

NARELLA

It happens sometimes.

EARL

What, people warm up and cool down?

NARELLA

Sometimes.

EARL

Why?

NARELLA

Not sure. Ask the resident.

EARL

I always seem to miss him - Wonder if he's started to shave?

NARELLA

Ha! You are funny.

*SHE goes. EARL kisses MARJORAM on the forehead.
The room glows slightly.*

EARL

So the big news. Your big boss at your office told me today they want to promote you when you get better! Yes, you are already doing that job but now they want to pay you for it. Woo hoo! My boss put his arm around me and said, "Earl" - I know! He actually used my name! "Earl, take some time off. You place is safe here." Whew.

I took Esmerelda and Jasper early to choir this morning. Gee Mrs. Martinson gets those kids into it. I mean they're

singing "Akuna Matata" AND a beautiful madrigal from Shakespeare's time by Thomas Tallis! It's called, "If You Love Me." ... I know you do.

We hear the distant sounds of a choir singing a Tallis madrigal as the hospital sounds fade away.

He retakes her hand.

Can you hear music? ... Can you hear me? Maybe it's just blank ... Darling, something is going on in there - you're in the sun on the beach. You are somewhere. You are here. Five days in this artificial air, your skin is getting dry.

Making a note on his cell phone.

Get lotion.

I'll bring some lotion next time.

Pause. HE goes to the window. HE can hear the choir which continues.

Esmerelda just missed out on being a co-captain at soccer. Yeah, I know. She remembers you tell her to always do her best. And she figured that's why. She said she was having trouble doing her best. But she's not disappointed. She sees things for what they are. Gets that from you, my darling.

(not wanting to admit)

Uh... I've taken them to stay with Grandma and Grandpa for now.

Hospital sounds return. NARELLA enters, takes notes.

EARL (cont.)

Back so soon?

NARELLA

It's been an hour.

EARL

An hour! Really.

NARELLA

She's still a bit warm. Do you refer to your wife as Marge?

EARL

Only to make her mad. She hates "Marge". It's Marjoram.

NARELLA

Never heard that name before.

EARL

It's in the garden - related to oregano. Marjoram has healing properties.

NARELLA

I'll look it up.

EARL

I'm keeping her up-to-date with stuff. I think she likes it.

NARELLA

It's good you do. She might hear you -

EARL

Really?

NARELLA

The last sense to go is hearing. I think it helps to speak to them. I talk to her.

EARL

Wow. Thank you. I'll keep it up

NARELLA

It's good you're positive.

EARL

I don't want her to know how worried I am. Oo! Do you think she just heard that?

NARELLA

She'd be worried if you weren't worried.

EARL

True! Buess you get these questions all the time. How do you keep it together?

NARELLA

I'm needed. It's my purpose. I help people whether in cure or consolation.

EARL

Grief or consolation. Must be so intense. You have to be strong for everybody.

NARELLA

I let off steam sometimes. I yell at my car.

EARL

No kidding! What kind of car?

NARELLA

A third hand Fiat - so everyone thinks I *am* yelling at my car.

THEY laugh together.

EARL

You nurses are "the rock"

NARELLA

We're the strongest rocks, Mr. Forrest.

EARL

What are those, Narella?

NARELLA

(she smiles)

Diamonds.

On her way out.

It's nice to have the window.

EARL

For my wife?

NARELLA

No, for you.

SHE exits.

EARL

Narella's really good honey. All the staff are great. But you are so demanding! I mean really, lay off the call button, will ya! Ha! Ha! Ha! ... Is there a laugh living in you, my love? ... Still holding that handkerchief...

*HE kisses the hand with the handkerchief.
Time passes. HE looks out the window. Hospital sounds crescendo and fade back to normal.
Now, a dull pink sunset.*

NARELLA enters. Does her observations.

EARL

Don't tell me it's been another hour.

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest you are putting me in a difficult position. It's another hour, yes.

EARL

Times flies when you... dream.

NARELLA

It can feel like a dream here. You've been lucky but a new patient is coming to share the room.

A patient alarm goes off. SHE exits. The light outside dims to darkness. The room is lit primarily by the Exit sign.

EARL

Hey, Kumquat. Have you ever seen anyone change a light bulb in an exit sign? They never go out.

(chuckles)

An eternal light. God must be the one who changes the light bulbs. If we ever see someone doing that, must be God!

(HE laughs)

Aww sweetie. I miss our laughs. I... I don't want to leave. You are being somethingness. I'd better go. See you in the morning. Sleep well. I love you.

HE kisses her forehead. The room glows briefly. HE puts on his coat and heads out. Stops, puts on one set of room lights not to leave her in the dark. HE goes. From the hall outside:

EARL: Good night, Narella. You'll call if any change, right?

NARELLA: As always, Mr. Forrest. What are you cooking tonight?

EARL: Bit of schnitzel - nice and thin, my special breadcrumb mix, lightly fried. I'll bring you some!

NARELLA: Good night, Mr. Forrest.

The lighting becomes peculiar. Music. MARJORAM sits up and looks around. SHE is wonderfully personable.

MARJORAM

(to the audience)

Hi. I in a coma I am. Am I really coma or sedated just? Words backwards outcome!

(concentrating)

C'mon, Marjoram. Well. You can be sedated and in a coma.

(smiles at her success)

That came out right! Ho ho! I in a coma just am!

(realizing that was mixed)

Oh shit.

SHE lies back down. Then NARELLA comes in, turns on lights, does her observations. Another patient alarm goes off.

NARELLA

(to Marjoram)

Looking good, honey. I'll be back.

SHE quickly exits.

MARJORAM sits back up.

MARJORAM

I didn't really lie back down because well, I wasn't sitting up in the first place. I am in a coma. I am in a coma. I am in a coma. Repetitive. In a coma repetitive.

As NARELLA steps into the doorway, MARJORAM lies down. NARELLA changes her mind and goes back out. MARJORAM sits up again.

MARJORAM (cont.)

(word skills warming up)

Surprise! My husband. My pearly Earl I bet doesn't know up from down.

Split stage. MARJORMA in bed, EARL sitting in his car. HE presses a button on his phone. Relaxation music quietly plays. HE tries to relax.

MARJORAM (cont.)

His hand touching my face. Just two seconds... please.

(suddenly)

I've got to MOOOVE! Their world falling apart is and put it I need to back together. Body, GO!

(seeing bright flashes)

Whoa! Flashes! Thinking. Earl - why - Wow! Flashes! Isn't he going to work? It's not going to work. I've GOT to get out of this this. I WILL. Staying with his parents?! What is kids Earl thinking! What is Earl thinking Is Earl thinking? Maybe, what, for the weekend, is Earl, but my thinking god, GRANDMA WILL ONLY GIVE THEM PEANUT BUTTER! Oooo. Snow on an old television set. A blizzard... underwater?

Relaxes.

Earl. My rutabaga. I'll bet he's been knocked out of the park. Down for the count. He's scuba diving to the moon.

SCENE 2

EARL is driving, lights remain on MARJORAM. HE is following what will become a familiar route - streetlamps, road signs, etc. Relaxation music continues with a soothing voice.

V.O. (RECORDING)

You have cleared your mind now feel the flow.

EARL

I'm feelin' it lady.

Hits the car horn.

(shouting at the car ahead)

You coulda made the light if you felt the flow!!

MARJORAM

He's scuba to the mooning.

SHE lies back down.

HE is now in his kitchen, while the relaxation music continues under the following.

HE sets out the ingredients for his schnitzel. He measures, cracks an egg, takes the chicken out of packaging, etc. HE works with flair!

V. O.

Now.... feel the space.

EARL with the V.O.

Allow your psyche to free itself. Ahhhhhh..... Ahhhhh.....
AHHHHHH.

V. O.

There are no boundaries to positivity...

EARL

Not sure about that...

HE pours himself a glass of red wine. HE starts to mix his special breadcrumb mix. HE becomes increasingly intense.

MARJORAM

He is scuba diving to the moon.

SHE lies down.

V. O. (RECORDING)

The boundaries are falling away.

EARL lays out the chicken filets and begins to pound them flat. NARELLA enters, takes MARJORAM's temperature, dabs sweat from her brow.

V. O.

You are floating.

*HE pounds the schnitzel to make it "nice and thin".
HE pounds harder and harder.*

V. O.

Now, the universe embraces you.

NARELLA adjusts the temperature of the room. SHE double checks the monitors and exits. MARJORAM sits up, as if dimly sensing EARL's pain. SHE places her hand on her heart, increasing her concern with every pound.

V. O.

Floating on your own aura of positivity.

Positivity...

Positivity...

*HE pounds the schnitzel to smithereens.
MARJORAM is holding back her own emotional agony.*

V. O.

No boundaries....

With one final pound, HE splits the chopping board in half, it falls to the floor. Spent and distraught, HE turns off the recording.

MARJORAM (V. O.)

Oh my love. Scuba diving to the moon.

EARL buries his head in his hands.

SCENE 3

NARELLA opens the blind, letting in dull sunshine. An ORDERLY helps shift MARJORAM in the bed.

NARELLA

(to the Orderly who is exiting)

Thank you.

(to Marjoram)

So young lady, I hope you enjoyed that - keeping those bedsores away. Now, Marge - OH Marjoram! Sorry, sweetie. We added a little antibiotic last time to bring down that fever. We are doing everything we can to help you. I want you to know that.

SHE senses something about MARJORAM.

You have strength... and a softness...my, my... You are a wonderful person. Your husband loves you so much. You know that. Hang in there. We don't want to lose you.

SHE takes the temperature. She makes a note.

That's better.

The sun bursts out from behind the clouds. SHE adjusts the blinds to diffuse the morning light. EARL enters, doing the tango, unaware of NARELLA. HE carries a fresh bouquet of flowers.

EARL

Brummp! bum, bum, bum - bedya-da-da-da-da --Brummp! bum, bum -- Hi my kumquat!

EARL

Oh, Narella!

NARELLA

Hello...

EARL

Look - in dance class, my wife wants me to work on my leading. If she hears me, maybe she'll know that... I'll be better.

NARELLA

Sure. She's doing better.

EARL

Really? Has something changed? Did she move??

NARELLA

Her temperature's, gone - all normal.

EARL

Normal? I'm sorry, but this* is not normal.

(*being in a hospital bed)

NARELLA

For someone in a coma it is.

SHE exits.

EARL goes to MARJORAM and kisses her gently on the forehead, the room glows briefly. HE lingers his lips there trying to regain her smell, her essence. HE shows her the flowers.

EARL

They just received a new shipment downstairs so these should last. We can take them home with us if they recover before you die -- If YOU recover before THEY die. Oh, man... a bit rattled today, darling.

HE takes out the old flowers and puts the fresh ones in the vase.

Unnoticed by him MARJORAM'S arm, so briefly, seems to reach towards him. HE moves to the window and opens the blinds.

NARELLA (from the hall)

Excuse me but we need to keep the blinds closed.

EARL (calling out)
So much for having a window, then!

NARELLA (at the door)
We must keep the light diffused for comatose patients.

EARL
What? Can she see?

NARELLA
No.

EARL
Maybe somehow sensing the sunlight would be good - you know -
it's daytime? Time to get up?

NARELLA
There have been studies - diffused light.

EARL
Did you look up "marjoram"?

NARELLA
(impatient)
We're understaffed.

EARL
Marjoram flourishes in the sun!

NARELLA
Well, your wife may be in a vegetative state but she is not a
plant!

*SHE goes. EARL considers, then diffuses the
sunlight.*

NARELLA (off)
Right!

EARL
Honey, she's got eyes at the back of her head...

HE takes out a bottle of lotion and begins to moisturize her skin.

Kumquatla, I didn't sleep well. I guess you're getting enough sleep for the two of us. I keep having this intense dream: I am driving down the highway at 80 miles an hour and suddenly, I can't open my eyes! Glued shut! My eyeballs frantic under my eyelids. Where're the fricking lanes!? My body jerks, twisting the steering wheel, hoping I'm dodging cars, pedestrians! I shout out for you! Then, with all my might, I forced my eyes open and - there I am!... On the couch. I couldn't believe it. I still can't believe it... Your poor dry feet!

Do you dream? I'd never wish you a nightmare but if you had one, maybe you'd wake up, too? Oo, what if you are having nightmares but you can't wake up? Oh let's change the subject. I'll moisturize.

HE takes out the lotion rubs it on MARJORAM.

MARJORAM

(holding her head)

What is all this hammering??

EARL

I broke the cutting board. Hammered it. I'm sorry. We bought it at that craft market in the mountains, remember? - I want to keep things just like you remember them... to bring all the good memories back when you get home.

Honey, there's a moment, like it's on a loop. I am talking or driving or... making dinner, and there it is...

We hear the loud squeak of a loose metal step, a woman's falling cry. MARJORAM sits up but does not look at EARL and EARL does not notice or hear her.

EARL

The moment you fell... Then, back to the moment I realized the top stepladder step was "rickety -

MARJORAM and EARL

- but ok for now".

EARL

"This step ladder is proudly made in America!" Back to the moment you asked me -

MARJORAM

(angry)

"Why did you buy such a cheap step ladder!?"

EARL

"Ahhh, we won't use it that often". Back to when you said, "Honey, it would be so -

MARJORAM and EARL

Nice -

EARL

if we had a step ladder -

MARJORAM

To reach -

EARL

The top shelf of the -

MARJORAM and EARL

Kitchen cupboards."

MARJORAM

Back to redoing the kitchen, wondering if the top shelves were going to be too high.

EARL

Back to when I said the high shelves would be okay. And the loop starts over, I see you fall. I... I can't catch you.

Unseen by EARL, NARELLA peeks in to see that everything is okay. Satisfied, SHE disappears.

EARL (cont.)

I threw out the stepladder - I'll buy a new one - a great one. A German one.

MARJORAM lies back down.

EARL (cont.)

Tonight, sweetheart, is the school Christmas concert. Jasper and Esmé want to come and sing for you... I don't know honey. Should they see you like this?

Short pause.

(sings softly to her)

SAID THE LITTLE LAMB TO THE SHEPHERD BOY,

"DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

RINGING THROUGH THE SKY SHEPHERD BOY,

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

A SONG, A SONG, HIGH ABOVE THE TREES..."

(he breaks off)

Darling, please come home for Christmas.

HE moves to the window. And reverberating as if in memory, the verse finishes: "With a voice as big as the sea. With a voice as big as the sea." MARJORAM sits up. Strange clunking music.

MARJORAM

There are workmen in my brain! Yelling! Mending, muddling.

(to those workmen)

OW!! That was a nerve there, sweetheart! Tuning? (*Hums.*)

SHE lies back down.

Time passes.

SCENE 4

NARELLA is there doing her checks. EARL is there.

NARELLA

Good morning, Mr. Forrest. Did you sleep well?

EARL

Thank you for asking. No. What's happening to the roommate my wife keeps expecting?

NARELLA

I'm sorry, they haven't made it.

EARL

Oh. Oh!

NARELLA

Recovery from brain trauma is about the most difficult journey the body can make.

EARL

So what are my wife's chances? The resident only ever says, "we'll see". What are the odds?

NARELLA

Are you a betting man, Mr. Forrest?

EARL

I'll bet my own life to win hers back.

NARELLA

Yes. Yes, you would. There are no odds. Every damage is different. Who makes it, who doesn't, it's a mystery. And Mr. Forrest -

EARL

You can call me Earl -

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest, a gentle warning: websites can give you false hope.

EARL

Are you saying there is no hope!?

NARELLA

From what I've seen, where there is love, there is hope. And here, in you, if I may say, I see so much love.

Short pause.

NARELLA (cont.)

How are your children?

EARL
They're fine...

MARJORAM
CHILDREN.

NARELLA
How are they coping?

EARL
Fine-ish...

MARJORAM
I just thought of them.

NARELLA
Will you bring them?

EARL
To see their mother like this?! I don't think so!

NARELLA
I see.

MARJORAM
I FORGOT MY CHILDREN.

EARL
I mean they ask to come... but my parents are right. It would be too much for little Jasper - he's just 6!

MARJORAM
Their names -

NARELLA
They've asked to come...

EARL
Begged, actually... Uh, my children are my business, I think.

MARJORAM
Brain rain names unscramble bairn!...

NARELLA

Leaving children out -

EARL

I think I know what is best for my kids!

MARJORAM

WE'RE AT THE MALL!

EARL

I've got to protect them, thank you very much!

NARELLA

I *am* talking about protecting them -

MARJORAM

To buy a colander.

EARL

They see her expressionless face, won't they think she's dead?! They won't ever get this picture out of their minds for the rest of their lives!

MARJORAM

My mind has colander holes...

NARELLA

I hear you. There is research you need to know about -

EARL

LIKE WHAT?

NARELLA looks at him steadily.

NARELLA

I recommend you share this booklet with your parents.
Hands him booklet.

MARJORAM

Esmé! Yes! Jasper. Yes!

EARL

What's this about?

MARJORAM

Where are they?! Down hallways, corridors, passages...

NARELLA

Long term consequences. Children over 5 who are shielded from seeing their parent in these situations can suffer deep hurt!

EARL

WORSE THAN SEEING THIS?

MARJORAM

Passages of time...

NARELLA

Over the passages of time, they can believe that if they had held their parent's hand, called their name, their parent would have recovered.

MARJORAM

Esmé, Jasper, slipping through the holes.

NARELLA

(firmly)

Children want to give their love to their parent - no matter what. If they are denied the chance, they can resent it for the rest of their lives. I have seen it.

Pause.

EARL

I don't want that.

NARELLA

Children get forgotten too often.

MARJORAM

I'm their mother.

EARL

Narella. How can I console them when I am inconsolable?!

NARELLA

You will. And they will console you.

MARJORAM

Slipping through the holes...

EARL

Narella. I'm...

MARJORAM

No more fear!

NARELLA

We are here for your fear, your doubt, your hope, for your family.

NARELLA goes out. EARL sits with MARJORAM.

EARL

Darling... I bet you miss the children, hey.

MARJORAM

Gently sift me through home to them to me. Found them. Ah. Fear no more.

(to a "workman")

Hey! if you hit that nerve one more time I gonna bust ya!

SCENE 5

Time passes. NARELLA comes in and out. Lights up on EARL on his phone.

EARL

Mom... But listen. Which is the bigger scar, Momma - seeing her this way or wishing for the rest of their lives that they had? Mom! Mom, put Dad on. Put him on. Dad - can you talk to Mom, she's not listening... You've been married 46 years, she must have listened to you sometime. Dad. I'm glad she didn't hear you say that! The kids want to see her. What do

you think? ... Right. Put Mom back on. Mom, you're outvoted. ... You don't need to come, Dad'll come. Oh, so now you're coming - Love you Mom. Bye, bye.

Hospital sounds fade back in...

SCENE 6

Lights isolate MARJORAM. Music and the sounds of her children saying "I love you, Mom!", "Look what I made!" "Please come home - we cleaned our rooms..." and other endearments and laughter. Perhaps the children sing part of a song.

MARJORAM raises her arms towards them.

MARJORAM

"Ahhh! Ah!... Ahhhhhh.

SHE lowers her arms. SHE sinks back in the bed. We hear the "squeak" of a loose metal step.

Normal light restores.

SCENE 7

On the bedside table are photos of Jasper, Esmerelda and Earl. A couple of child drawings/paintings are nearby, too. The ORDERLY and NARELLA have finished moving MARJORAM to a different position. As the ORDERLY heads out, EARL comes waltzing into the room with fresh sweet pea flowers from the garden. HE dances around the ORDERLY who exits.

EARL

Good morning, Narella! Look, flowers for Marjoram, flowers for you and the nurses' station. From our garden.

NARELLA

Thank you, they smell lovely.

SHE takes her bundle.

You have wonderful children. I love the drawings they did of me!

EARL

Thank you, Narella. You were right. They're coping better than I expected.

NARELLA

I'm so glad.

SHE exits. EARL takes out a tiny speaker which is blue-toothed to his phone. HE puts on a waltz, softly. HE hums along.

EARL

The rain is really coming down. Darling, they say sometimes familiar sounds... how about the waltz from class?

No response. Pause.

HE takes out a deck of cards, shuffles them loudly. Rummy? Game of... hearts? I'll let you take the final trick! ...

HE shuffles the cards again. No response.

HE hums the waltz again. No response.

The kids have got lots of sounds to bring. Jasper bets your electric juicer will do the trick.

HE moisturizes her hands, arms and so gently, her face with lotion.

Wonder when a patient will keep you company? I guess not much company if she's in a coma too... Darling, I'll have to go back to work pretty soon...

HE kisses her forehead. The room glows.

NARELLA enters. Clipboard and careful checks.

EARL

Am I allowed to sleep with my wife?

NARELLA

Uhh, well! I'm sorry, you can visit 24/7 but this isn't a hotel room.

EARL

A hotel room that comes with a comatose person?!

NARELLA

Another funny.

EARL

How about on a chair, just outside, in the hall? Or, if I fell asleep in here during the day?!

MARJORAM sits up.

MARJORAM

Tuck them in! Tuck them I've got to in!

NARELLA

What, in that chair?

EARL

Surely other people have.

MARJORAN

Bedtime.

NARELLA

We keep coming in and oujt.

MARJORAM

Where's Earl?

NARELLA

Your sleep will be disrupted

MARJORAM

Earllllllll!

NARELLA

You need your sleep.

MARJORAM

We haven't fucked in two months!

EARL

What if I took a sleeping pill?

NARELLA

Ha! You are just plain funny.

Tasks done; SHE exits.

EARL

Honey! Honey! I can sleep here during the day and stay awake all night! I'll cash in my leave from the firm. It's perfect...

(holding back emotion)

EARL (cont.)

I'm not going to abandon you.

(singing softly)

AKUNA MATATA... TILL THE END OF OUR DAYS...

EARL

Honey, I will be right back.

MARJORAM (unaware of Earl)

Earl.

EARL

I am going to get sleeping pills.

MARJORAM

This was NOT the plan, Earl.

EARL exits. In the hallway we hear:

NARELLA (off)

Leaving already, Mr. Forrest?

EARL (off)

No, well, yes, but just for a minute.

MARJORAM

Mom, Work, Run the executive circus!! Greece! Italy!
Frickin' Sardinia!! I'm like a Sardinia in a can! Tip me
over and pour me out! Till our old man old woman end. Hands.
Touching faces. Jasper, Esmé you sleep need! Go. To. Bed!
To dream perchance sleep - To dream of a land of... Light!

MARJORAM shifts and knocks a pillow to the floor.

Music.

MARJORAM

(in wonder)

AHHH... the light - the coma light... it isn't a light you know.
It is no colour of light. No, it has... it isn't solid enough
be a colour but... It's feeling like... a feeling! If you

could see a feeling, if you could see a... hum! This light - surrounded in a sea of luminescent atoms...

SHE looks at her hands as if "holding" the light.

NARELLA enters. SHE sees the pillow and picks it up automatically. SHE then looks at MARJORAM as if she is still lying down. SHE consults the monitor. SHE puts the pillow on the chair.

MARJORAM (cont.)

Time! Glowing particles of time! Passing through me! Like I'm part of time.

NARELLA notes the time. SHE checks the monitor and exits. MARJORAM keeps turning her hands, as if light is passing through.

SCENE 8

In a separate space, EARL fumbles with a package of sleeping pills. HE reads the health warning.

EARL

"When used as directed, this product may cause any of the following: poor circulation, arrhythmia, hallucinations, psychotic episodes, bowel pain, joint pain, tachycardia, hair loss, high blood pressure, low blood pressure, double vision, blindness, hearing loss, inability to reason, obesity, diabetes, depression, create a comatose-like state and/or... headache. Do not operate machinery, including motor vehicles when taking this drug. Gambling while taking this drug is not recommended. In a small number of patients, with diagnosed or undiagnosed pre-existing conditions, this drug may contribute to causing or cause death."

Pause.

Does it cause sleep?!

HE turns the paper over and scans it. The lights fade on him and rise on MARJORAM lying down.

SCENE 9

Time passes, sunlight pounds through the windows. NARELLA adjusts the blinds.

NARELLA

There you go, sweetie. You are doing so well.

EARL enters. HE quickly hides his sleeping pills, HE sits, placing the pillow on the floor. NARELLA turns to EARL who smiles trying not to look guilty.

NARELLA

Did you put that pillow on the floor before?

EARL

No.

SHE nods and goes. EARL puts the pillow back on the bed.

EARL (cont.)

Hey babe, got the drugs. Good stuff. Causes psychotic episodes, man. Awesome!

THEIR phrases are spoken in tight alternation. Green indicates spoken in unison.

MAR A coma isn't sleep.

EARL Should I sleep?

MAR A coma's not awake.

EARL I don't want to miss you -

MAR There is no -

BOTH Day or night.

EARL They can't throw me out during the day.

MAR It's as if I am my own universe inside a universe!

EARL Cumquat -

MAR Rutabaga, I feel emotions -

EARL Home is an empty house now.

BOTH But I'm not angry at you.

EARL I think you know that.

MAR Feelings are a substance!

EARL I am so so so sorry.

MAR I bet you're apologising. No need, my darling, darling.

EARL I -

MAR. You -

BOTH Knew the danger of the wobbly step.

EARL I should be where you are.

MAR While you were working late or planting sweet peas -

EARL But no! I wouldn't want you to see me knocked out of the park!

MAR How many times did I almost fall? Wobbling going *UP* almost falling *DOWN*. Then, you were there! You -

EARL - I tried to catch you

MAR Catch me, Earl. I -

EARL I -

BOTH Kept hoping for a stepladder sale at Bed Bath and Beyond.

Short pause.

MARJORAM

(as if seeing it)

Beyond.

SHE seems to knock the pillow onto the floor.

EARL

You would not like this "me".

HE opens the box of sleeping pills, double checks the directions.

"Take one." Let's get this sleep party started. I'll take two.

HE sees the pillow back on the floor.

Damn pillow.

HE gently puts the pillow back on the bed. HE fills a cup with water and takes two tablets. HE begins to relax.

I wonder, will I join you in the same "zone"?

HE goes to the window.

People smoking. God, they are causing their own accident... Well, like I... Why do people do that, Marjoram? Why do we do things that we know are bad? Why don't we do what we know would make things better? Where does this disconnect come from?

His cell goes off with a text.

Sweetie, it's from Esmé: ooh boy, look at all these emojis... "Hi Dad. Want to go "home". Sprained "ankle" "soccer". Jasper said he won't talk until Mom comes home. I said he just talked. He "tear face". Made me "tear face". "Hearts", Esmé."

(softly)

Honey. What do I say? What's the emoji for that?
Marge! Please tell me how much you hate it when I call you
Marge! Marge!

(fading)

Mar... Honey, our sweet peas keep blooming, keep coming...
UP...

We hear the music of Thomas Tallis. HE softly sings along. MARJORAM sings, too - the two of them together for a few seconds. HE falls asleep. The Tallis continues softly.

MARJORAM

Early pearly? Where... here? ...

(to the audience, fascinated)

There is sound. I said "hum" before - no, an unheardable sound - that maybe is never on earth or always but we never hear it. Somewhere I read, astrophysicists listened to the universe -

SHE gestures for quiet. Listening to the silence.

There is music. There is a tone. It is middle C.

The Tallis music reduces to a soft middle C.

The sun is beating down heavily on the window blind. NARELLA does her routine checks. She tries to rouse EARL who is sound asleep. SHE sees the sleeping tablets.

NARELLA

(shaking her head)

Mr. Forrest...

ORDERLY enters. HE and NARELLA wheel out Marjoram's bed.

NARELLA (cont.)

C'mon Marjoram, let's see what's going on with you.

MARJORAM

EARL! HELP ME! EARLY PEARL COME GET ME! I WANT DON'T TO GO! I NT TO GO! I AM! MMMMM! I ALIVE!!!

SHE and the bed are gone.

A moment later, NARELLA and ORDERLY wheel in another patient and place that bed in a separate space. Monitors are quickly adjusted. The ORDERLY leaves, NARELLA checks the new patient and exits.

Lights go strange. EARL has a mild psychotic reaction to the sleeping tablets. HE wanders. .

EARL

Let there be light!!

HE suddenly raises the blind. Sunset gold/red light floods the room, along with some mist.

Shadows begone!

HE flicks on all the fluorescent lights. HE paces.

I need more light! LIGHT!

HE notices the missing bed. HE grabs at that area to make sure the bed really isn't there. HE stomps on the space. HE sinks to his knees.

Shadows, where have you taken her?

HE sees the other bed.

Ah! playing tricks!

HE goes over and sits on the other bed. HE looks into the face of the patient.

EARL

WAAAAAA! You've turned into a man!

HE quickly turns off all the lights and slowly sits on the floor where his wife's bed had been.

SCENE 10

NARELLA and the ORDERLY wheel MARJORAM back in. SHE is now wearing a soft head cap with small electrodes gently stimulating the brain. The ORDERLY turns on the lights. NARELLA sees EARL sitting on the floor, dazed. THEY help him to the chair.

NARELLA

(gently rousing him)

Mr. Forrest. Mr. Forrest.

EARL

(coming to)

Na - Narella?

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest...

EARL

Is my wife still alive? Did she turn into a man? It's okay, you can tell me.

NARELLA

She's right here. We took her to do another brain scan. And now we have brought her back. The doctor suggested we try the brain stimulating cap. These are gentle electrical pulses to stimulate parts of the brain. Sometimes, it helps.

EARL

Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you so much.

NARELLA

Now, did you take those sleeping pills?

EARL

No.

Pause.

Yes.

NARELLA

How many?

EARL

One. Well, two.

NARELLA

I think you had a bad reaction. Will you give me the rest of the package so I can dispose of it - or promise me you will not take them again?

EARL

I'll do both.

(as he hands her the package)

I will not take sleeping pills again.

NARELLA

Good.

SHE hands him a cup.

Drink as much water as you can. I've got to make sure you are okay before you drive home.

EARL

I can't go home.

A patient alarm goes off in another room.

NARELLA

Work something out. Drink your water.

NARELLA goes.

EARL drinks water throughout. HE kisses MARJORAM'S forehead. The lights glow brightly and slowly fade.

EARL

Oh honey, my. Well, I didn't find you in the psychotic zone.
(to himself)

That's a relief.

MARJORAM

Look! The drifts. Zot. Drifts of snow. Zot. Drifting drifts. Zot. Zot. Swirling. Crystals. Prisms. Zot, zot, zot, zot, zot.

EARL

(vulnerable)

You know my love... when we dance... and the whole world... goes away? That's where I want to be. In that peace. With you.

MARJORAM

Rainbows dancing everywhere in the light... Zzzzzzz.

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 11

EARL, in his car, puts the seat back, goes to sleep. Traffic passes. Lights fade.

SCENE 12

MARJORAM sits up.

MARJORAM

Now listen, get your act together Earl! I'm here right and I'm anywhere not going except home. Got that? And tell the kids, I am going to check their homework so they better be ready. And tell your mother the children are peanut butter banned until they eat three vegetables for green days.

SHE lies back down with purpose.

SCENE 13

Morning. EARL is in his car. HE wakes up. HE drives off.

SCENE 14

*NARELLA opens the blinds - a gloomy day. *

NARELLA

Good morning, Marjoram. I'll bet you feel like something from outer space with that cap on! Well, doctor says we need to

take it off and see if it has helped you. You'll get another scan in a while. For now...

SHE has removed the cap and hums a gentle melody as SHE brushes MARJORAM'S hair.

MARJORAM

Ah my hair... Ahhhhh.

NARELLA washes MARJORAM'S face and hands. MARJORAM holds the handkerchief tightly.

MARJORAM

Soooo coooooooooool. Lovely. Lovely. Love...

NARELLA

You won't let go of that handkerchief... and we won't let go of you... There you are, Marjoram. Ready for the world.

EARL enters, unkempt, on edge.

EARL

So when do we get the results of the scan?

NARELLA

Hello, Mr. Forrest. They need to do another one. Are you alright?

EARL

Why do they want another one?

NARELLA

Your wife showed some unusual brain activity overnight.

EARL

The cap worked!

NARELLA

Something is going on in there. But we don't know what.

EARL

If she could just send a signal. A wink. If I could just say the magic word...

NARELLA

It is so hard, I understand. Mr. Forrest, you really need a shower. Did you eat breakfast? Dinner?

EARL

I can't go home.

NARELLA

Depriving yourself won't bring your wife back. Counselling service is dropping in.

SHE goes.

EARL

I don't want counselling ser- ...

HE smells his armpit.

Ooh boy... Well, I don't know if the doctors have tried smelling salts but maybe -

He raises his arm near her.

- the smell of your stinky husband will do the trick? I took the kids back to my parents for a little while. I told them to lay off the peanut butter but I don't like the chances. I slept in the car. I know you would disapprove. Hell, I disapprove.

(agitated)

You've been having unusual brain activity and I've been having unusual personality activity.

You have a roommate, darling.

(calling out to the other bed)

Glad you made it!

(anxious)

Why am I talking?! To keep you company?! To keep me company. To deny... the silence.

Long silence but for the monitor machine beeps.

How could you do this? Leaving me with two kids? You can't get out of adolescence this easy! What about Esmé? How am I

supposed to talk to her about getting, you know, her period??
Ok, I know you're not exactly taking it easy but - Oh,
c'mon... Wake up! I've run out of things to say to the kids!
They visit you but sometimes get upset so they don't want to
visit but they want to visit...! I don't know what to do!
... They keep drawing pictures for you....

(panic building)

How are we supposed to survive?! Will we have to move?? We
could just make the mortgage! I don't know your passwords,
your IRA details -- you can't just leave me hanging! You
can't just leave me! You can't just leave! You can't.

HE shakes the bed vigorously.

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up and smell the coffee! Wake up and
smell your husband!!

*NARELLA rushes in. EARL stops. SHE checks the
monitors.*

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest what are you doing?

EARL

I'm sorry.

NARELLA

Your anger - we get it. It is normal and there are
strategies. Sit here, cool off and wait a minute. I'll be
right back.

*SHE exits quickly. EARL sits, exhausted.
MARJORAM rises very slowly. As SHE speaks, EARL
is increasingly despairing.*

MARJORAM

I did not order this, Earl. How could you let this happen,
Earl? What about the last time I almost fell, Earl? You
said you'd run right out and get a better one, Earl. I said I
could go get it but you said you would - Why didn't you,
Earl?! In your own world! Absorbed in your work! No, Earl
squeaking the top step back and forth is NOT funny! Childish!
IF I HAD MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE, I WOULD BE ALIVE!!

SHE stands in the bed, addressing the air.

GO AHEAD! FEEL THE GUILT! FEEL THE SHAME! OWN IT, EARL! I DO NOT DESERVE THIS! I WANT MY LIFE! I WANT MY CHILDREN! I WANT MY COFFEE BREAK! I WANT YOU-YOU-YOU...MADDENING LOVE OF MY LIFE! C-c-c-come get me... It's cold.

SHE sits back down and then gets under the covers muttering "so cold, so cold..."

NARELLA enters, hands EARL a card.

NARELLA

Dr. Morris, a resident therapist, will see you on the third floor. Go now.

EARL

It's probably best I do.

(to Marjoram)

You okay, darling?

NARELLA

She is fine - Take the second bank of elevators - not the first one, the second one - go to level three. The desk there will point you the way.

EARL

Do you mean the second bank of elevators next to the first bank or a whole separate bank?

NARELLA sits up.

MARJORAM

A twinkling hum.

NARELLA

No, go past the first whole set of elevators and further down the hall -

MARJORAM

Sparklings!

EARL

Are we talking the pink hall or the orange hall?

NARELLA

Through the pink, into the green hall.

EARL

Is that green? I thought it was olive.

MARJORAM

Pesky sparks filling my blood!

MARJORAM moves to the edge of the bed.

NARELLA

It is olive! It used to be more green.

EARL

So I'm in the olive hall -

MARJORAM

Do I still have blood?

EARL

I take the first set of elevators. Which, counting the set in the pink hall, makes it the second set.

MARJORAM gets out of bed.

NARELLA

Actually it's the last set of elevators.

EARL

Way down there, around the corner, opposite the vending machines?

NARELLA

Uh.- YES! Don't take the yellow hall - it looks like a short cut but it isn't.

EARL

Fine. Now where on the third floor?

NARELLA

Well you get off in the yellow hall -

EARL

You said don't take the yellow hall.

NARELLA

That's on this floor, third floor yellow is good. Follow that to the blue hall -

EARL

Blue?

NARELLA

It's more of a teal, really.

EARL

Yeah, is teal blue or green?

NARELLA

(catch breath)

... It's teal. Look, just get off into the yellow hall. The desk there will tell you where to go.

EARL

Sounds easy.

EARL exits.

MARJORAM

Dance with me, Earl.

NARELLA goes to MARJORAM as if she is still lying down, makes notes. SHE goes to the other patient.

MARJORAM is having a great time doing an "interpretive dance" of what she says. SHE uses her handkerchief.

MARJORAM

Now I am in the now. But I am not here. Where I am, there is no "here". There's only now. I am at ease. Like a rock. No fear - No worry... No memory.

(laughs)

I don't even know that I once had a memory! Change? Keep the change.

Stops dancing.

(drily)

Could I tell if there was a change?

SHE laughs. We hear their waltz music.

In a separate space, we see EARL dancing a waltz, confidently, as if MARJORAM was in his arms.

MARJORAM grasps the air, trying to hold on to something invisible.

MARJORAM (cont.)

A part. My part. You are my part-ner?

E..er...r...rrrrrlllllll....

SHE feels so close to coming out of her coma. SHE waltzes in time with EARL though they are separate. It is beautiful.

Change from what to what -two-three - Hilarious! -two-three-
From nearby to beyond? - two-three Lead me, Earl! Now to
now - two-three! Not that step!

*Stops dancing but retains her arms up in dance
"hold". The waltz and the image of EARL fades.*

That step. Top step! Earl catch me there too, lead me down
my life the stairs my life would be again... life... live!
Live!

(calling out with joy)

Esmé! Jasper!

*SHE looks for them. SHE realizes they are not to
be found. Silence.*

MARJORAM (cont.)

(to audience)

I would hug Esmé and Jasper and never, ever, ever, let them go.

SHE fades back into a less conscious state.

Never, ever,

SHE returns to the bed.

Ever, never, let them go.... them go... go...ohhhh...

SHE lies down, grasping the air, knocking a pillow onto the floor.

NARELLA has come and gone (oblivious to the dancing) and now returns. SHE notices the pillow again on the floor, puzzled.

MARJORAM has a spasm. NARELLA moves quickly.

NARELLA

Hang in there, darling. Hang in there. I'll page the doctor.

NARELLA runs out of the room. MARJORAM has another couple of small spasms.

SCENE 15

Lights rise on EARL sitting in the counselling room. He has bought a "Coke No Sugar".

EARL

Dr. Morris? Yes, I want to know what to do. Besides take a shower. (Pause) Goodsleep is hard to find. Sleeping pills? Been there, done that... Yes, I am eating properly.

Holds up his Coke No Sugar.

So, what do I do? What do you mean what do I mean? The nurse said you had some strategies. (Pause) About what I should do. (Pause) About?

(takes a deep breath)

About the fact that my wife is in a coma because she slipped on a faulty step of a cheaply Made in America step ladder I bought, hit her head on our carefully selected granite kitchen counter top, then slumped unconscious with blood coming out the back of her head on to the floor, remaining unconscious ever since, with cryptic fever, possibly ominous scan results,

our children who are the most wonderful children who need me and I am paralysed in their need, a woman I relied on for 11 years is lying inert for weeks now and you wonder what about??

Short pause.

"BE IN THE MOMENT?!" Now which moment do you mean exactly? Doctor, I've got a thousand to choose from! I could do my happy dance because my wife is alive, drag around because she's in a coma, leap out of this chair because "Damn it, I forgot to get gas!"? Slam the door because, I "feel the moment"? Sing "Akuna Matata" "*It means no worries, for the rest of your days!*" I don't think so! Worry about Esmé's next x-ray on her soccer ankle? Be dumbfounded at the huge box of "noisy things" Jasper collected to try out on his Mom - like this ray gun sabre thing (*he demonstrates an awful noise*)?! Or - !

Doctor interrupts him.

"Breathe"? You want me to breathe. Are you telling me that I'm dead because I'm not breathing? If I'm not breathing, then maybe I want to be dead! Do you have some strategies for *that*? Hostile? Yes! I am fucking hostile!

Holding his hand up to stop the doctor talking.

Maybe I need a moment of silence as my inner fortress hits 8 on the Richter scale.

Pause.

Doctor. Do you see the irony? I seek some inner peace and my wife is in a coma? Breathe. How?

SCENE 16

Lights rise on MARJORAM lying down. There is an additional monitor set up. SHE makes intermittent, incoherent sounds with her voice - a slow gibberish.

NARELLA, at the nurses' station, on the phone.

NARELLA

Doctor, a few definite spasms. Not violent. (*Pause*) I know. (*Pause*) No sounds from her so far. And the scans?... Well, we'll know when we know. Oh listen, the patient's husband is really struggling... He's there now.

Lights come back up on EARL, trying to do a breathing exercise. HE inhales but each time he

exhales he chokes on a sob. Eventually he breathes more successfully.

HE continues as lights rise on MARJORAM. The wires keep crossing. Fear and frustration as sounds SHE cannot control assert themselves.

MARJORAM

I barely breathe!

Gzzzsh.

Down up nobody. No - body.

SHZZY.

I don't have eyes.

Blblbl.

I don't have senses.

I am free of gender.

Oiinmontkuh. Kuh.

In place of all is awareness. No.... judgment.

Yes/no/yes/no/yes/noOOH. Oooo.

Or... is it... What,

That... coldness that isn't cold?

The darkness masquerading as light?

On the edges.

Gzzzzzzzzzzshhhshshshshhh. Aye!

I barely breathe. But I do!! I will!!

BREATHE! - THREE - TWO...

SCENE 17

EARL steps into the room and hums the waltz as he dances to her with elegance.

EARL

Hi honey - I just learned how to breathe. It's amazing. It's crazy how much they charge for flowers downstairs but... these were so nice - they even have fragrance!

HE gently places them near her nose for a moment.

I had a great session with a therapist. Let off some steam, you know. But I got to thinking about things - about how we feel about what we see. People look at you and say "that poor woman". I look at you and see the most wonderful

woman in the world. Most people will see these flowers and see their beauty. Depending on the reality, mean something different. Are they for someone who is ill, someone who is dead, someone as an apology? But in our reality, you love flowers and maybe, if you wake up and they are the first thing you see, you will know you are loved. And... even if you don't wake up, flowers will still mean that. But you will wake. Love conquers all.

HE continues to jabber away as he goes to the sink to replace old flowers in a vase with these, etc.

Quatlee, I am keeping the kid's routines, their activities going - it seems to help. The school has been so good. Somehow, we're figuring it out. Hallowe'en's here, darling. Jasper is trick or treating as a pirate this year - I know, just like last year; Ezmé is going as a peanut butter sandwich. I don't know how, but she says after staying so often at grandma's she's turning into one anyway.

MARJORAM moves slightly. EARL catches a glimpse of the pillow falling to the floor. HE slowly picks up the pillow, moves the chair up next to the bed and takes her hand.

Marjoram? Sweetheart, are you sending me a message with this falling pillow? Are you falling? Falling back to life? I feel you reaching out - I really do -- but are you?!

HE pushes the call button.

The nurses must have moved you. That's good. No bedsores for you.

NARELLA enters, clicking off the call button.

Narella - I think my wife is trying to communicate with me! Could that be?

NARELLA

Did you hear her make any sounds?

EARL

Did she make sounds!?

NARELLA

They can make a sort of gibberish. It's only a muscle-breath thing.

EARL

No, no - I swear she knocks this pillow out of the bed to get my attention.

Pause.

NARELLA

To be honest, Mr. Forrest, I have noticed this pillow on the floor a few times but -

EARL

SEE! She's saying - I'm coming back!

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest... Earl... While you were with the counsellor, she had some small seizures. She's accidently knocking things out of bed.

EARL

Accidentally? But it was so clear -- Seizures - that sounds bad or good! - A sign of life!

NARELLA

The doctor's ordered another scan - the last results were inconclusive. We've added monitor. I can tell you none of this is out of the ordinary -

EARL

So - she might be worse but she also might be better.

NARELLA

Maybe so.

SHE goes.

EARL

(to Marjoram)

I really thought you were trying to send me a message.
HE kisses her hand, pats the handkerchief.

I have always loved the old-fashioned way you carry your handkerchief, tucked up your sleeve... the little, fancy, monogramed "M", a token from your grandmother when you were just a girl.... It helps you keep her with you. And though I never met her, it also keeps her with me. Keep holding her, darling. I'm sure she is holding you, too.

HE lovingly strokes her hand, her arm, her face.

Then, with one more kiss, HE rises to leave.

Sweetie, I really have got to get home to shower. I don't know why I feel better - feelings just come in waves. So, I'd better ride this good one while I can. Plus, I'll come back all shiny and clean for you. I'll put on deodorant. It's so hot outside!

HE glances at the other patient. HE repositions the flowers so that the other patient might "see" them, too and goes.

MARJORAM

Gzzzzsh. Mummmmm. Bldblbldlda. Gzzzzsh. Mummmmm.
Bldblbldlda.

EARL (off)

Any more idea when the doctor will come by? I don't want to miss him.

NARELLA

(as she enters, over her shoulder)

End of the day - after 6.

EARL (off)

OK. I'll be back before then. See you later.

NARELLA enters.

MARJORAM

Gzzzzsh. Mummmmm. Bldblbldlda.

NARELLA

It's all right, Marjoram. It's all right.

SCENE 18 (Simultaneous action)

EARL driving. He is playing a high-spirited samba. Though seated, he is moving to the music, using arms and shoulders, occasionally calling out the dance moves:

EARL

Opposite arms, opposite arms, switch and switch, switch and switch, use those shoulders, baby!

Simultaneously, NARELLA opens the blinds to reveal a soft, pearly red sunset which becomes twilight. The monitor measuring MARJORAM'S oxygen level alarms. NARELLA hits the emergency button and the ORDERLY comes running in with ventilator equipment. They pull the curtain around MARJORAM.

EARL is now at home, samba continuing and he dances. It is as if he is partnering with MARJORAM:

EARL

Ooo use those hips honey! C'mon! You gettin' me so hot, I gotta have a shower! Um-um-um!"

HE turns off the music, exits.

NARELLA and ORDERLY get MARJORAM to breathe artificially. The ORDERLY exits. NARELLA calls Earl's cell phone while he's in the shower.

NARELLA

(leaving a voice mail)

Mr. Forest. Please call the nurses' station without delay. This is Narella. Goodbye.

Satisfied that Marjoram is stable, she opens the curtain. MARJORAM is sitting up with a breathing tube in her mouth, oxygen equipment next to the bed. NARELLA exits.

SCENE 19

MARJORAM

(muffled by the tube)

I m n air lan.

SHE removes the tube.

BLEH! I am an air plant. And this tube feels like plastic straw caught in my oesophagus because it is a plastic straw been caught in my oesophagus which is caught by a plastic straw in it is! A Diet Coke. Earl Coke likes No Sugar. It tastes more the real thing - ho, ho, ho, so suspicious! I believe in chemicals that are chemical clearly. Belief. I have tasted that I. Maybe that down rabbit hole is sky - Esmé loves her rabbit... Rabbits are strange. Sky. Between everything is upside down but from down, that's right-side up. "It's all one." Universe entire in three. Shakespeare. Sky. Here in this herelessness. This straw - makes me this reality. False. False-çade. Peel it back --- Beyond just something beyond. Like I'm in a play.

SCENE 20

EARL rushes in.

EARL

I got your message! I couldn't get through to the nurse's station! WAHHHH???

NARELLA

We got her on ventilation just in time. The doctor checked her - so far, so good.

EARL

Good!? This is not good!

HE goes to Marjoram.

Darling, please keep fighting!

NARELLA

She has had a small haemorrhage, there's danger of a stroke.

MARJORAM

I'll fight to fly to flight and flee.

EARL

We've got to stop more haemorrhages!

NARELLA

She was already on medication to stop them. There isn't much more we can do.

EARL

"Not much more"? That means there *is* something more,
something you're NOT doing!

NARELLA

We're following every protocol to maximize her chances.

EARL

Maybe this patient needs a different set of protocols!

NARELLA

These protocols -

EARL

(interrupting)

One size fits all! Protocols on, on, on - an assembly line of
the comatose!

NARELLA

This is not a factory, we are not robots.

EARL

You're just maintaining her! You've done nothing to make her
better!

NARELLA

That is not fair, Mr. Forrest.

EARL

FAIR?? WHAT ONE THING ABOUT THIS IS FAIR?

MARJORAM

Ferry me home, Earl. Ferry me on...

EARL

THIS IS A GRUESOME JOKE!

MARJORAM

SO many holes in the boat! Escape hatch!

SHE gets out of bed. SHE moves slowly about the room in a daze, perhaps avoiding holes in the floor.

EARL

You and the nurses gather around and watch ridiculous me, waltzing in with flowers and music and news about soccer matches and school concerts and broken cutting boards?? You've known my wife was a hopeless case from the first moment! You, the whole hospital, have been humoring us! YOU MUST LOVE THE CATASTROPHICALLY HILARIOUS!

NARELLA

We do not laugh at anyone. This is difficult for all of us! We want them to live!

MARJORAM is still. EARL is still also, seething.

NARELLA (cont.)

I look after your wife day and night. I move her, bathe her, brush her hair, trim her nails. I have dabbed the sweat from her brow.

MARJORAM

If ever when I touch his face they clean be will well.

EARL

(darkly)

Well why did you bother?

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest?!

MARJORAM

My head-office will sort this out.

EARL

Why did I come here every day? Why bring her a deck of cards, music - her electric juicer only to see my son's face fall when she didn't revive? Why put my kids through their prayers every single night? Why argue with my parents about them coming in the first place!? Seeing her here was SOOO hard but

we did it. They SANG SONGS FOR HER. Esmé and Jasper crying out for their mother - now their hearts will be doubly broken! I never should have brought them. Why did we keep her alive only for all of us to end up like this?

NARELLA

BECAUSE - there is a chance.

MARJORAM

A dance chance...Early?

During the following, SHE turns her focus towards the other voices.

NARELLA

Because you know your wife wants every chance. Because she wants to see you, her children, have her life again. Because not everyone has a brain haemorrhage. Because people survive them. Because for all our medicine we know so little. I *always* have hope.

EARL

You want to know hope? You look in my children's eyes. You look into my heart. We can't give up hope that she will come home. The more we believe it, the more it will happen, right?

MARJORAM

It's my pearly Earl...

EARL

You said that where there is love there is hope and that you "see a lot of love". Well?

MARJORAM

Hold me, my darling.

EARL

Hope just brings despair.

MARJORAM, NARELLA intersperse lines. Green indicates spoken in unison. EARL only speaks to NARELLA.

NAR Hope is how I get
BOTH up
NAR in the morning.
BOTH And
NAR calms me
BOTH down,
NAR to sleep after every shift. It is how things
happen. Not
BOTH everything we hope for
NAR but nothing good would happen without it.
MARJ Earl, my hope is your kiss.
NAR I believe Marjoram has hope.
MARJ I feel it so...
NAR It could be very
BOTH faint
NAR but it is there.
MARJ Esmé, read me a story.
EARL It's not beyond hope?
MARJ *I think I can, I think I can, I think I can.*
NAR Nothing ever is. Mr. Forest, if hope for one thing
dies, new hopes are always born.
EARL ...New hopes are always born.
NAR Hope is my...
MARJ I am a
BOTH rock.
MARJ I am an island. I. Land.

EARL

My brain is sludge...

NARELLA

The doctor will explain. She's next door in the consulting
room.

Lights change. NARELLA exits.

SCENE 21

EARL moves into the consulting room space where there are two chairs together. MARJORAM sits next to EARL. Somehow her thoughts coalesce normally. HE remains unaware of her, yet...

EARL

Yes, I'm listening... yes, she's on life support.

MARJORAM

Life support. Ah, there's a term. The dying don't need life support. The living do.

EARL

A hemorrhage - you knew that could happen - so why didn't you operate!? I'm sorry but this is not making a lot of sense...

MARJORAM

They didn't operate because there was too much damage.

EARL

Yes, you told me that - I'm sorry I don't mean to be unfair -

MARJORAM

So unfair for you, for Jasper, for Esmé.

EARL

But I we have to fight for her life! For our kids - for... me... for all the life we...

MARJORAM

Was I dying the minute I hit the kitchen floor -

EARL

You mean she'll never see us again.

MARJORAM

My children learn - so harder much on them ... I ease.. eeee.

EARL

Doctor, this is so... not easy.

MARJORAM

And Earl, my all blessing...

EARL

I feel her so close to me!

MARJORAM

Closest.

EARL

But you just said we don't know for sure. What am I supposed to do? What are you going to do?

MARJORAM

The tube went in -

EARL

What is wrong with everybody!? There is always something to be done. Even waiting to see if she comes around! That's something!

MARJORAM

I didn't know but I knew. You will face the most horrible choice of all.

SHE kisses the air near his head.

EARL

Ok. Good. Let's see what happens. Yes, I did see the counsellor.

MARJORAM

If only I could feel your hair --

EARL

I'm learning to breathe. I wish I could breathe for her... Thank you, Doctor.

MARJORAM

(so loudly, with love)

It will be okay, Rudy Bayga!

(tenderly, soft)

To reach, out, to touch, take my hand to your face. Please.

Lights change. EARL in light. MARJORAM looks with longing.

Oh my darling.

EARL takes out his cell phone.

SHE returns to bed, reattaches the tubes, lies down.

SCENE 22

Lights change.

EARL (on phone)

Hi Mom. ...Sorry... Look... Marjoram may have had a stroke. Luckily the nurse stabilized her just in time. Yeah, she's got a tube now. It'll be hard but... I think you, Dad and the kids should come tomorrow. Ok. I'll call her mother too - Just have to get myself together... Mom, I haven't been praying since I was 11. I don't think He'd listen to me now! Pray away. Dad too, great.

SCENE 23

NARELLA is checking the male patient. EARL is there. Fresh roses, are in the vase. A foil balloon reading "Get Well Soon" is tied on end of the bed.

EARL

How's he doing?

NARELLA

He's doing fine. Mr. Forrest, go home: eat, rest... shower.

EARL

I will in a minute. Thank you, Narella. I won't be here so much during the day, I'm going to try to go back to work.

NARELLA

Work can help steady the ship, to find acceptance.

EARL

I am so powerless.

NARELLA

But, you are strong.

SHE goes.

EARL

Sweetheart, after all these months, I'm vague-ing out. So to get some focus, I'm going to try to go back to the office. Let the kids see that things can sorta be normal. I know, I know. You'd say I was just re-maladjusting. Re-maladjusting to the abnormal!

The firm is working on this big new office building. I'll be designing the wiring and fibre optic conduits that are the spinal cord and brain stem of this skyscraper. Every single line I draw will send you a signal of my love, of my hope, of my... to reconnect you. And with you, so with me and with us, so with our family... Could I possibly miss you more than I do right now?

HE goes to the window, opens the blinds on a late autumn afternoon.

The trees are turning, my darling. So much maple magenta. Your favorite. Funny how leaves turn but remain in place.

MARJORAM

Turning, spinning, this prison prism prison prism prison prism sprinning, sprizzing, spurning -rizm...

HE kisses MARJORAM on the forehead which calms her. There is a faint glow, a crackling sound, giving way to middle C.

EARL

I hope you can hear me. The doctor says you aren't in any pain and I hope she is right... Darling, there are so many

things we haven't... With the kids and us on the go, we started to lose track of "us". You've got to come back. We lost talking about the nature of the universe or... which comes first, the feeling or the word? About the afterlife - oh, darling, if you were to die, I don't know where you would go! Come back. We will find "us" again. Now, not to waste another moment, there are a few things you need to know.

(fighting his ache)

You need to know that you are the best mother any child could have. You need to know that you are the best partner a partner could have. You need to know I will love you wherever you are, whatever ever happens.

HE takes her hand holding the handkerchief. The Tallis music is heard. It seems deliberate but hard to tell, MARJORAM opens her hand - as if to give EARL her handkerchief.

In a succession of quiet joy, disbelief and pain, EARL takes the handkerchief.

EARL

Honey! You're not!?

Checks the monitor.

Okay. Your heart still beats. You're there. Are you...are you talking to me? Sweetheart?

HE dries his eyes with it.

Oh, my love. I will wear your colors. I am your champion.

HE puts the handkerchief in his shirt pocket so it shows. NARELLA and the ORDERLY enter to shift MARJORAM. EARL kisses MARJORAM's forehead. The room glows slightly. EARL exits, we see him get in his car. NARELLA and the ORDERLY finish and exit.

SCENE 24

EARL in his car. HE sits in thought. Back in the room:

MARJORAM

(singsong, as if on a seesaw)

Es - mé

Jas - per

Es - mé
Jas - per
Jas - mé
Esp - per
Saw See
Saw
Up down
Up See
Down See

With a pillow on her right and one on her left as if one is Jasper and the other Esmerelda, SHE hugs each with all her might.

Jas - per
Es - mer
el - da
I saw
I see...
Don't go.
Don't go.
So much crystal snow color... it's all colors spin cycle -
so many again one. My hand... his.... fayyyyy-ce.

In reaching out as if to touch his face, both pillows fall on the floor. NARELLA enters. Picking up the pillows, she looks at MARJORAM in wonder.

SCENE 25

EARL re-enters, still with the handkerchief in his pocket.

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest?

EARL

Uh, where do they go?

NARELLA

Pardon me?

EARL

You've seen so many people die. Where do they go?

NARELLA

Well, they go into refrigeration until the funeral people come.

Short pause.

EARL

Ok, not the body. The person... you, know...

NARELLA

Oh, oh, oh. Well, if I may say that is a matter of faith not medicine. I think you know that.

EARL

What do you believe, Narella? May I ask you?

NARELLA

You just did. There are many faiths and they all pass through here. Perhaps people go to a lot of different places.

EARL

And what about those who have no faith?

NARELLA

What do you believe?

EARL

I... I don't know.

NARELLA

I see. Well. It's worth thinking about. Whatever you decide to believe, it will bring you comfort. In my view, a spirit seems to leave the body behind. But please know that represents my personal view and not that of the hospital.

EARL

That's all I asked for. Thank you. Good night. And thank you for being there for her. And for me. While she is here.

HE heads to the door.

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest?

EARL

Yes?

NARELLA

Whenever that time comes, there is one place I believe your wife will surely go.

EARL

Where?

NARELLA

With you.

EARL, thinks. HE nods and goes.

NARELLA puts the pillows on the bed. An alarm goes off in another room and SHE quickly exits.

SCENE 26

EARL is in his car. HE presses a number on his phone.

EARL

Mom...Sorry... Can you put Esmerelda on? Hi Super Esmé. How was school today? Yes, Science! Mr. Kearney is a good teacher. Yes - your DNA - amazing isn't it... RNA? - Oh, it does all the work. Sweetie, I had forgotten that - you know more than Daddy! (they laugh together). I don't know honey - you'll come and see her tomorrow. Yes, maybe Momma's RNA needs to work harder...

His heart breaks, he covers his feelings.

...Uhhh... Awww... We'll ask the doctors together tomorrow. And we'll have great big hugs - how's Jasper? Don't wake him, give him a little kiss on the forehead for me, ok? Just about your bedtime, too. Ok. I love you, too. And Ezzie Wezzie, you can teach me lots more. Big smacko! Good night, sweetie.

HE does deep breaths to try to recover. HE starts the car, drives off.

SCENE 27

NARELLA enters. SHE sits for a "breather". SHE sees the Exit sign has gone out and makes a note. MARJORAM quietly intersperses words () as follows.

NARELLA

I hope you don't mind if I just sit and rest for a minute Marjoram... Mr. Phelps down the hall... it was... hard. (**M: Life.**) Let's keep going, okay, Marjoram? (**M: My.**) You... you are too young to die. (**M: Live.**) Hey. Where's your handkerchief?

SHE looks around the bed.

It was in your husband's pocket! Ahhhh. Marjoram, you knew...

SHE begins to carefully wash MARJORAM'S face and hands giving extra care to the one now without the handkerchief.

Yes. You knew he needed it more than you.

SHE washes, like a meditation. She does not hear Marjoram.

MARJORAM

Saving... ...LifeMy.

Lights fade on them as they rise on:

SCENE 28

EARL in his car at night, driving along the same road we have seen. Music underscoring is intense. HE is shaky but maintaining himself. He drives faster and faster. Bizarre flashing lights. Caught in his nightmare, EARL is falling apart. Surreal traffic signs and billboards fly at him. "Cutting Board Road", "Marjoram Highway", "Jasper Ridge", "All Turns", a STOP shaped sign saying GO. The world spins.

EARL

I'm comin' to get you kumquaaaaaat!

Then all goes quiet, HE is in space, perhaps his voice reverberates:

Darling? Are you here? Where are you sweetheart?

Lights rise on MARJORAM spinning around and around.

MARJORAM

(fearful)

I am vortex in, I am still whirls but everything around like the Saturn rings - gaps in between! If could I just slip through the back, back, back home...

The music crashes back in. EARL drives a rollercoaster road. Sharp corners. His eyes shut. HE swerves madly.

EARL

I can't open my eyes!

Blackout.

SCENE 29 (composite scene)

MARJORAM stands in the room. The scenes with EARL are performed around her.

MARJORAM

Clearing. In a clearing. I journey. No expectations - nothing to expect. Cold not outer space cold, cold, cold empty cold --

(realizing as she touches her body)

My children here! My Earl is here! In my atoms forever altered. Forever emboldened. I will not cold. Earl, Jasper, Ezmé, buzzzzhummmm.

I wish everyone could coma. Not to stay - but a day - that would take it. If you were coma, you would see how much fear. After coma down and then waking up I'll bet you would laugh a hearty amazed laugh. We long hunkered before disease. Heads down in e-lives and expectations. Take inside the beauty. All around, love.

SHE sits in the chair as:

EARL is stopped in his car, their waltz coming out of his car speaker. HE calls out the car window. "Have a good day, kids! See you after practice!" He drives off.

MARJORAM

In the crystal clear. Luminescent particles everywhere - speak their beauty to me. And, I speak my beauty to them. OH! I'm flying up and I'm flying down! Scuba Diving to the Moon! Yes! Everywhere I feel a dance. My beauty in every space of me is love. And, should I leave my body behind as a shell upon a beach, my love indestructible. Wherever my journey goes. Until I wait. Up and down...

At home, EARL pounds schnitzel in perfect sanity. EARL calls out: "Kids! Dinner's ready!"

The waltz fades out.

SCENE 30

Silence. NARELLA is with MARJORAM who remains in the chair.

NARELLA

Marjoram... You hover. Like an angel. Suspended by a thread -- the earth below, what comes after, beyond. Where will you go? Can you find a path home? We're here. We will catch you.

SHE pats Marjoram's hands and exits as:

SCENE 31

A MAINTENANCE MAN enters with a stepladder, he is changing the light bulb in the Exit sign. EARL enters, wearing his warm winter coat. Amazed, HE watches the MAINTENANCE MAN finish his job. EARL steadies the stepladder so that the MAN descends safely.

MAINTENANCE MAN

Thank you.

EARL

That's a good stepladder.

MAINTENANCE MAN

It is, you know. It's German.

EARL

You don't say.

Reading his name on his uniform.

Are you...?

MAINTENANCE MAN

I am. The maintenance guy.

(extending his hand)

Jesus (pronounced Yay-zoosz)

EARL

(shaking hands)

Nice to meet you Jesus. I'm Earl.

MAINTENANCE MAN

I'm sorry for your loved one. God bless you both.

HE closes the stepladder and starts to exit.

EARL

Keep warm, it's cold out there!

MAINTENANCE MAN

Days like these I wish I was down South. I was in heaven.

The MAINTENANCE MAN is gone. EARL slowly takes off his coat and sits on the bed. MARJORAM remains in the chair looking at EARL as if it were a normal conversation.

EARL

Darling... I think I just saw God changing the light bulb in the exit sign! Well... I met Jesus.

MARJORAM laughs.

Kumquat, how are you today?

MARJORAM

I am in the here.

EARL

The doctors keep saying it would need a miracle for you to recover.

MARJORAM

A miracle I can hear you.

EARL

So some days, I think, "Ah! Today will be the miracle day!" I arrive, it is not the miracle day. Other days I pretend I don't hope for it so maybe it will happen, "There is no way today will be the miracle day". Those days are just a self-fulfilling prophecy.

MARJORAM

Miracles are unpredictable.

EARL

I went to church last week.

MARJORAM

You DID?

EARL

Mom put it in my head.

MARJORAM

So many realities today. Up.

EARL

Trying to pray for a miracle. And I did, sort of. But then the minister said that God was also in your heart. So I changed my focus from the cross to... my soul.

NARELLA enters to check the monitor.

Narella, can you wait just a few minutes? I'm talking to my wife.

NARELLA

(after a short pause)

Of course. Come and get me when you're done.

SHE exits.

EARL

I pray into my soul and, honey, from inside, a voice answers..
"She is going so let her go."

MARJORAM

Rise or fall.

SHE moves to the bed.

EARL

You'd be proud - I insisted to the voice: "No! I refuse! Bring her back!!" But the answer is always:

MARJORAM and EARL

"She is going so let her go."

EARL

My kumquatiest of kumquats, is your soul still there?

MARJORAM

See around.

EARL

Maybe you are up there floating looking down at me--

MARJORAM

I am in you as you are in me.

SHE is sitting on the bed, looking right at him.

Fear no more.

Pause.

EARL

"Fear no more"? Did I hear.... Or is it from my own heart?
Are you saying our poem, my love?

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:

Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimneysweepers, come to dust...

MARJORAM gets back in bed, sitting up.

EARL

Oh my love, it is so hard this mystery -

MARJORAM

Yes.

EARL

This second guessing -

MARJORAM

Yes.

EARL

These gymnastics of my heart...

MARJORAM

Yes.

EARL

...“Come to dust”... Are you... Why, why, why would I let you go?! I -- I could never...

MARJORAM

If the time comes, my golden lad. You will understand.

HE studies her hand carefully.

MARJORAM

So warm. Sunshine! A breeze!! Your voice is my all there is. Your voice is the sound of my love. Can you hear me? This one thing? Can you know that when you speak your voice is my love for you?

(to the audience)

Can you take this message to him, from my spinning silence?

EARL

This hand which held our children to your breast, and guided them safely across countless streets. Our hands as we danced - our... hold. We are on hold...

HE places her hand on his cheek - the very thing Marjoram wished she could do. The room fills with a golden glow. It spills in through the windows.

MARJORAM flickers to life.

MARJORAM

(gazing at Earl)

Ahhhhh! Pearly!!...

EARL

My darling! My darling! Yes, yes! I'm here! I told the doctor we couldn't give up! NARELLA!

MARJORAM

Up and down.... up and down...

EARL

What? Up and down? What do you want?! The bed up? Down? Sweetheart!

HE quickly adjusts the bed.

How's that, better, darling?

MARJORAM

Up. Down... uuu---P.

NARELLA enters.

EARL

Narella! She's coming to!! She's been fighting all this time! I knew it!

MARJORAM closes her eyes. NARELLA hits the alarm, rushes out.

NARELLA

I'll get the doctor.

Time rushes forward with a scramble of music. The ORDERLY enters, they wheel MARJORAM out. EARL paces. NARELLA and ORDERLY bring MARJORAM back in.

EARL

That has been the hardest three hours of my life. Is she okay?

NARELLA

Mr. Forrest... She is stable. She has had a large stroke. Her brain activity - it is weak.

EARL

But she's alive! She said "up and down..."

NARELLA

Ahhh, some patients say that.

EARL

They do!? What does it mean?

NARELLA

...Maybe it's how they feel. Did she say anything else?

EARL

I heard - maybe from her mind? From her heart? "Fear no more, the heat of the sun..."

NARELLA

Ah... from Cymbeline.

EARL

Yes. You know!

NARELLA

A release from the hardships of life to the comfort beyond.

EARL

Do people here know this verse?!

NARELLA

I doubt it. But it means something to me.

EARL

Narella ... it can't mean that the time for her has "come to

dust"?

NARELLA

I am so sorry to say this Mr. Forrest, but, patients in her condition...

EARL

She spoke to me.

NARELLA

I've seen person once come back but the damage was not this severe.

NARELLA

It's okay, Mr. Forrest. It is o-kay. Fear no more.

MARJORAM lets out a heaving sigh. A shudder.

NARELLA and EARL go to the bedside.

Oh my...

MARJORAM slowly sits up, looking at her hands.

EARL

Oh my darling, oh my sweet, oh my all the world.

MARJORAM

Have I taken the last trick?

Lights fade.

SCENE 32

The room. EARL is there. MARJORAM is in the same position looking at her hands.

EARL

Darling, yesterday, the kids said you seemed different. You are different. I hope, wherever you are, you can still hear me. Jasper wondered that if you hadn't come back after all this time - if you ever were going to. And so, with your Mom and my parents, we talked about that. We told them, with all the love in our hearts, and with all the love in yours, that... the doctors are very sure you will not come home. There Esmé and Jasper... how brave they are. Esmé said she

knows you did your very best. Oh darling, if you could just see them...

(trying to brave)

I... I. I know I have to let you go because... You must have gone... One day, when we are ready for a day we never thought would come, we will have to turn off the machines and truly let you go. Today, I have come to say goodbye. This isn't the first time I've said goodbye, of course. We've said a decade of goodbyes. But kumquat, with every goodbye there was a promise. A promise of the next hello. A "hi!", a kiss, an embrace be it for one second or for all the night long. And I have realized this wonderful thing. Now that I am saying goodbye, I won't need to say goodbye to you ever again. I can forever greet you. Hello, my love.

MARJORAM turns as if hearing the "hello". SHE hugs him with all her might. A glow slowly begins to surround them, like atoms of light.

MARJORAM

(sings)

You are my rutabaga,
 My only rutabaga
 You make me happy
 When skies are grey.
 You'll never know dear...
 How MUCH...
 I love you.
 Please don't take... my rutabaga...
 Up, up, and... AWAY.

The glow is glorious. As SHE lies back down, SHE feels as if she is flying. And so her spirit does, flies up and away, leaving her shell behind. EARL holds himself as if he has felt her hug. The monitors stop beeping. HE looks to heaven. NARELLA appears in the doorway.

EARL

(to Narella, overcome)

Oh Narella, she is gone.

NARELLA

And she is here.

EARL

Yes.

*Tallis music rises as lights fade, lingering on the
fresh flowers.*

THE END