

TRIPTYCH

by  
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(Based on the painting,  
"The Three Fates Gathering in the Stars" by Elihu Vedder)

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TRIPTYCH

The entire play takes place in three specific spaces which could be situated on a revolving stage. The first set gives rise to Sarah's chic and contemporary living room where a small cocktail party is in full swing.

The second set is Sarah's kitchen.

The third set is a bedroom in John's small apartment

ALONG WITH THE SPECIFICALLY MINIMAL SET, THE LIGHTING OF THE OUTDOOR "RIVER CAFÉ" REFLECTS A MOOD RESEMBLING SOMETHING OUT OF FOCUS - SOMETHING CELESTIAL - LIKE A DREAM REMEMBERED.

ACT I, SCENE 1

Three sisters, WINNIE and KRIS, both in their thirties, and SARAH, in her forties, sit at a table of the outdoor "River Café". Winnie and Kris drink the coffee as Sarah rummages through her tote bag.

SARAH

Damn it.

KRIS

What?

SARAH

I left my wallet in the car.

WINNIE

Do you need money?

SARAH

No. I'm sure I can get a free coffee just by flashing the boys at the counter.

KRIS

Winnie already tried that.

WINNIE

I already tried it.

SARAH

Oh, yeah. What happened?

KRIS

Yeah -- What happened?

WINNIE

I have my coffee.

SARAH

Could I just have some money for a  
coffee please?

Kris gives her some money. Sarah exits. Winnie looks in  
Sarah's tote bag and pulls out a manuscript.

WINNIE

Is this it?

KRIS

Yeah, yeah.

They pull up next to one another and begin reading.

WINNIE

Flip it.

KRIS

Wait a second.

WINNIE

Just let me have the next page.

KRIS

It's stapled. You know how she gets

--

WINNIE

Hurry up then.

After a moment Kris turns the page. They continue reading.

KRIS

When did this happen?

WINNIE

It didn't happen.

KRIS

Then what's it for?

WINNIE

Shhh!

KRIS

Don't shhh me.

They continue reading.

WINNIE

He wouldn't have done that.

KRIS  
Shut up! I haven't gotten there  
yet.

WINNIE  
You read so damn slow.

KRIS  
Am I in a hurry?

They continue reading.

WINNIE  
Did you know about any of this?

KRIS  
How would I know?

WINNIE  
Then it's just a story.

Winnie attempts to turn the page.

KRIS  
Do you mind?

WINNIE  
Turn the page.

KRIS  
I'll let you know when I'm ready to  
turn the page by turning the page.

WINNIE  
The part where Ben says -

KRIS  
Never happened. Couldn't happen.

WINNIE  
How do you know?

KRIS  
You don't think she would have told  
us? Come on - it's for The New  
Yorker or something.

WINNIE  
It's scary.

KRIS  
Page.

WINNIE  
Don't you think it's scary?

KRIS  
Shhh!

WINNIE  
Don't shhh me.

Sarah enters carrying her own cup of coffee. She sees them reading and sits in the open chair. After a moment, Winnie looks up and stares at Sarah. A moment later Kris does likewise.

SARAH  
Hello?

KRIS  
Another cup of coffee, Win?

WINNIE  
That'd be great, Kris.

KRIS  
I'll get it.

WINNIE  
I'll come with you.

They both stand.

SARAH  
Sit down. I didn't ask you to read it.

KRIS  
Read what?

WINNIE  
Oh this. Is this yours?

KRIS  
You didn't tell me this was Sarah's. Jeez, Winnie. You know how she is, Sarah.

SARAH  
No, how is she?

WINNIE  
I'm not the one who started reading it.

KRIS

I'm not the one who pulled it out  
of her bag.

WINNIE

Well, I'm not the one who - who -  
who --

KRIS

Winnie, Winnie, Winnie. I'm sorry,  
Sarah.

WINNIE

You're sorry, alright.

SARAH

Is there any sugar over there?

A moment passes as Sarah mixes the sugar in her coffee.

SARAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I realized something last night. I  
was really depressed - thinking  
about today being the third  
Wednesday and I realized I only had  
one expectation. All these months  
have gone by, all these third  
Wednesdays and all my hopes and  
dreams have been distilled into one  
thing -- an expectation of  
disappointment. So I poured myself  
a drink -

KRIS

Of soymilk.

SARAH

Of scotch, actually. And I wrote  
down everything to say, what Ben  
would say - what I thought he  
should say and how I felt about  
everything. I wrote this whole  
story out in one sitting - without  
editing. I finished my drink -  
poured another -

WINNIE

Scotch?

SARAH

Tea, actually - the scotch hurt my  
stomach. And I sent it to Herman -

WINNIE  
Who's Herman?

KRIS  
Her editor.

SARAH  
He's their editor actually. They'll print it in the next few months and through the grace of the world spinning the way it does, Ben will read it in some waiting room or something and remember the conversation we never had.

WINNIE  
Wow.

KRIS  
That's a good idea.

WINNIE  
It's good to write about it.

KRIS  
It's healthy.

WINNIE  
It's therapeutic.

KRIS  
It's purging.

WINNIE  
A purging exercise.

SARAH  
Purging?

KRIS  
Yes. Out with the old --

WINNIE  
In with the new.

SARAH  
I think it's already happened.

WINNIE  
What?

SARAH  
I think it was just something I remembered.

KRIS  
Aren't all your stories like that?

WINNIE  
Wait a sec - that's kinda  
compelling.

SARAH  
You know what I mean?

KRIS  
You just wrote it.

SARAH  
I did, didn't I? Or did I just  
remember it?

WINNIE  
It's mysterious.

KRIS  
Paradoxical.

WINNIE  
Enigmatic.

KRIS  
Like a parallel universe.

WINNIE  
A ripple in space-time.

KRIS  
That's good.

WINNIE  
Thank you.

SARAH  
And maybe someday Ben will show up  
without even realizing we've  
already worked everything out.

WINNIE  
Come on, Sarah -

KRIS  
It's hard to let go.

WINNIE  
You can't let go.

KRIS  
You're not helping.



WINNIE

She can't. She couldn't let go anyway. You don't just let love go.

KRIS

That's beautiful -

WINNIE

It true. It's out there and you can push it away but it's still out there. You can push it away or whatever but it's still out there waiting for you to remember. And you will remember because you can't help yourself but remember when love is there.

KRIS

Sarah?

SARAH

I'll tell you what I know, okay? I will go to my spot today -

WINNIE

Of course you will.

SARAH

And I will wait, just like I always wait. I will close my eyes and I will picture him turning the corner. I will see him walking up to the bench. I will reach out and hold him like he was my son again. Then I'll take a deep breath because when I open my eyes and realize I'm sitting there alone and the entire conversation is just a figment of my imagination I'll need that breath to jump start my heart again. I'll need something - so I'll push my pen across the page and write what might occur - what might occur if I write fast enough - because if I write fast enough I just might catch what will become. Maybe I'm just writing to spin away time. That almost makes sense to me. Did I see Ben? Does it even matter once I've written it down? Isn't the memory the same? Am I sitting here with you two?

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Are we having this conversation or  
is this just some dream I scribbled  
out on a few sheet of paper?

WINNIE

The writer.

KRIS

Maybe there's no difference between  
what we dream and what is.

WINNIE

This coming from a person who  
doesn't dream.

KRIS

I never said I didn't dream. I said  
I never remember them.

Sarah gets the things together and begins to exit.

WINNIE

Where are you going?

SARAH

Where do you think I'm going?

KRIS

Do you think there's a difference,  
Sarah?

SARAH

I'll see you later.

Sarah exits.

WINNIE

I don't think there's a difference.

KRIS

Oh, how I dreamt of things  
impossible.

WINNIE

You know who said that?

KRIS

Double grande mocha latte  
caffeinated crapola.

End scene.

## ACT I, Scene 2

SARAH sits on the end of a park bench. She is deeply engaged writing in a notebook. BEN, THE SON, mid-twenties, enters from behind her. He takes a deep breath and cautiously comes around to the other end of the bench and sits.

BEN  
Hello, Mom.

Sarah turns quickly to see her son.

SARAH  
I don't believe it.

Ben pauses for a moment - she goes to him and hugs him. It is an uncomfortable moment. He hugs back and breaks the embrace.

BEN  
Sit, Mom. Let's sit.

SARAH  
I can't believe -- you actually came.

BEN  
Well -- me either, I guess. How are you?

SARAH  
I'm okay. I'm good. I'm better. How are you?

BEN  
You look good.

SARAH  
You think so? Well, I feel pretty good. I can't complain, I guess. I mean, I could but what's the point.

A beat.

SARAH(CONTD.) (CONT'D)  
You look good too.

BEN  
Ah, I'm getting fat.

SARAH  
It looks good on you. Your hair is much shorter.

BEN  
Much thinner too.

A long beat.

SARAH  
You decided to come.

BEN  
Well, I guess I did.

SARAH  
I wasn't sure - I didn't think  
you'd ever decide to come.

BEN  
Me either. But - you know.

He sees her smiling.

BEN(CONTD.) (CONT'D)  
What?

SARAH  
What, what? I'm looking at you.

BEN  
I see that.

SARAH  
So you have been getting my  
messages.

BEN  
Yeah. Yeah, I've gotten them.

SARAH  
I didn't know. I wasn't sure but -  
well, I figured as long as you  
hadn't changed the number -

BEN  
No, it's the same. Obviously --

SARAH  
Oh, Benjamin. Lord, let me look at  
you. Everything's good? You're  
healthy?

BEN  
Everything's good. I'm healthy --  
happy.

SARAH

And, what do you know -- you're  
alive!

BEN

I am that. I am alive.

SARAH

You are alive.

BEN

Yeah - I grew a little beard and  
everything - makes me look like an  
adult or something. Makes me feel  
like one anyway - I don't know.  
It's different.

SARAH

It is different. I'd expect you to  
be different. There's nothing wrong  
with that. It looks good. You look  
good.

A beat.

SARAH(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

And how is Karen?

BEN

Karen is good. Karen is fine.

SARAH

I figured you were still together.

BEN

Yeah, she sends her love.

SARAH

I'll bet she does.

BEN

Karen always liked you, Mom.  
Believe it or not.

SARAH

I think I'll choose not to believe  
it but it doesn't matter.

BEN

Yes it does.

SARAH

Not to me it doesn't. You're here  
and I'm glad.

BEN

Let me just say this, Mom - Karen likes you, she's always liked you and regardless of what you thought you understood - let me just say - whatever it was was a misunderstanding, okay?

SARAH

A misunderstanding.

BEN

Yes. More from me than anyone else.

SARAH

From you?

BEN

Yes.

SARAH

Well, that's different.

BEN

Like I said --

SARAH

Okay, okay - it doesn't matter. You did come. Can I just look at you for a minute - let me just look at you.

He forces a warped smile.

SARAH(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Well, we've both gotten older.

BEN

That's an understatement. I mean me more than you. You look great.

SARAH

Do you know it's been two years?  
Almost two years, Ben.

BEN

Two years, Mom.

SARAH

Well, I'm glad you're alive.

A long beat.

BEN  
Are you still writing?

SARAH  
Am I -- what else would I be doing?

BEN  
Just curious.

SARAH  
Yes, I'm still writing -- still  
feeding myself.

BEN  
You just did something in The New  
Yorker, right?

SARAH  
That was few months ago. A short  
story.

BEN  
That's great, right? That's a good  
thing.

SARAH  
Yeah. Yeah, it's a good thing I  
think, Benjamin. Benjamin. You  
never really liked "Benjamin", did  
you?

BEN  
I like Benjamin. Just not for me.

SARAH  
You look more like a Ben now. When  
you were little you were a  
Benjamin.

BEN  
Benny.

SARAH  
Your father called you Benny. I  
always thought you more a Benjamin.

A beat.

BEN  
Karen and I got married.

SARAH  
What?

BEN  
We got married.

SARAH  
What do you mean you got married?

BEN  
Just that. We got married.

SARAH  
You're married?

BEN  
Yeah.

SARAH  
When did you -- when?

BEN  
Well -- about a year ago actually.

A beat.

SARAH  
Really.

BEN  
Yeah.

A long beat.

SARAH  
Well, congratulations.

BEN  
Thanks.

SARAH  
I don't know what to say.

BEN  
You don't have to say anything.

SARAH  
You must be very happy.

BEN  
We are, we are -- it's good  
actually, I'm --

SARAH  
That's great. You know, I think I'm  
gonna get going.



BEN

What?

SARAH

Yeah, yeah I have a meeting this  
afternoon, some errands --

She gets up.

BEN

Mom, please sit down.

SARAH

I really think I have to go.

BEN

I know I should have called to  
explain -

SARAH

What was there to explain -

BEN

I wanted to explain -

SARAH

I don't need an explanation -

BEN

Can I do - can I just explain,  
please?

SARAH

I don't want to hear -

BEN

I want to do this! Please, sit  
down. Can I do this?

SARAH

Sure. Okay. Fine. Go ahead.

A beat.

BEN

You always made it so hard -

SARAH

Oh -- okay.

BEN

Mom, with you everything changes  
and nothing changes and it seems I  
always feel the same. Like shit.

SARAH

I'm not asking you for anything.  
Don't blame me for what you feel or  
don't feel.

BEN

I'm not blaming you - I just feel  
like - I don't know if you and I -

SARAH

Look, I call you every month. I  
leave you a message where I'll be  
and when. I don't push. I don't  
beg. I make an effort. So, if you  
have something to say --

BEN

I'm just saying - I don't know why  
it's like this, or maybe I do - I'm  
willing to try to figure out --

SARAH

Well, you're a grown man, so be a  
man and make you're own decisions.

BEN

You make it harder and harder.

SARAH

Ben, if you have something to say,  
say it. Or was that it? You're  
married. Well, I'll send you a  
check or something.

BEN

Mother --

SARAH

Mother? You want me to play the  
mother? Tell me what that means to  
you so I know what I'm getting into  
--

BEN

Oh, that's beautiful -

SARAH

Every month I leave you a message -  
every month I sit here waiting - I  
assume that Karen is erasing them -  
that you never get any of my  
messages. I have to call to hear  
your voice on that god damn machine  
to find out you're alive.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Now you tell me I make it hard?  
It's been two years, Ben. You don't  
owe me anything - you're right. If  
you feel that way, fine. But if you  
do feel that way, that I'm not  
worth even the simplest of courtesy  
of an announcement of your wedding,  
then tell me why you decided to  
come, say your piece so I can move  
on. I've got errands to run.

BEN

Hey well, if you've got errands -

SARAH

What do you want, Ben?

He sits.

BEN

I miss you. Okay? I just - I miss  
you. Let's start over, all right?  
Let's just - let me just walk in  
and - look, I'm sorry -

SARAH

I'm don't want to hear -

BEN

I know you hate when people say  
they're sorry, but I have to say  
it, Mom. I have to hear myself  
saying it to you for no other  
reason than that. Okay?

SARAH

Ben -

BEN

Can I say it, please?

SARAH

No.

BEN

Well, I'm sorry anyway, okay? Damn  
it! You're - I'm trying to tell you  
that you were right and you -

SARAH

What was I right about?

BEN

You were right about -

SARAH  
There's no such thing.

BEN  
Would you just let me -

SARAH  
It's a difference, Ben. That's all it is. It's only a difference in memory. That's the difference between you and me, just memory. You're perspective versus mine. It wasn't anybody's fault.

BEN  
Yes it was! That's what I'm trying to say. It was me. I'm sorry because it was me, okay? Goddamn! I'm just like you. I'm stubborn and hard-headed and a pain-in-the-ass just like you and I hate it sometimes, you know?

A beat. She laughs.

BEN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
That's funny?

SARAH  
Funny, no. Ironic I think but not funny.

BEN  
You don't understand.

SARAH  
You're just like me?

BEN  
Does that hurt you?

SARAH  
Is that what you want?

BEN  
No, but I'll tell you something. If it does I'm glad. I'm glad it hurts. You know why?

SARAH  
No, why?

BEN

Because you care. If it didn't matter you wouldn't care.

SARAH

Oh, Ben. I'm touched, I really, really am. Well, you came. I'm glad you did. Like I said, congratulations, Benjamin.

BEN

I'm not telling you to hurt you but I'm glad you still care - that's what I'm saying. I'm glad you do because I do and I want you to know that - okay?

SARAH

Okay.

BEN

I'm saying I care, Mom. Okay? That's all I'm saying. I care.

A beat.

SARAH

So, that's why you came today. After months and months have gone by - you've gotten married - you finally told your pain-in-the-ass mother "you care". Thank you, Ben. I care too. But that's stating the obvious because I'm here every month -- I'm here every month "caring". I'm glad you care, Ben. I really am. Maybe we are too much alike. Maybe we missed out on a friendship or relationship -- maybe it ran its course two years ago and we feel this obligation -- or you feel this obligation because I'm your mother. Maybe we're better off spinning in our own worlds not worry about obligations.

She begins to exit.

BEN

Mom, wait.

SARAH

It's okay. It really is, Ben. You care, I care, everybody's happy.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I'll tell you what - no, never  
mind. Give Karen my best.

BEN  
Just wait, please. I need to give  
you this.

She stops. He pulls out a picture from his wallet, walks over  
to her and hands it to her.

BEN(CONTD.) (CONT'D)  
This is your granddaughter.

SARAH  
What?

BEN  
Your granddaughter, Lilly.

SARAH  
My - my what?

BEN  
Lillian Sarah.

SARAH  
When -

BEN  
Last month. May 4th, actually.  
Almost a month.

SARAH  
A granddaughter?

BEN  
Yeah.

SARAH  
My god, you really hate me that  
much.

BEN  
I don't hate you, Mom.

SARAH  
You can't - I don't even deserve -

She slowly sits on the bench and drops deeper and deeper into  
herself.

BEN  
Mom -

A long beat.

SARAH

You know why I'm here? I'm your mother. That's why I'm here today. I'm your mother and as a mother I have feelings that go beyond what you could ever know or what you'd ever want to know. I can be held responsible for what you've become and I am partly responsible I guess - but I never hated you - I never hated you and yet here I am - you cast me out of your life because of things you couldn't possibly understand - you've become a hateful, horrible little man and you throw me this picture of this - of this child knowing it would stab me - knowing it would hurt me beyond anything you could ever do. Let me tell you something, Benjamin Michael - you are nothing like me - you always thought that dead father of yours deserved more respect - you don't know anything about respect because you're just like him. You're just like him - and I - I'm nothing like --

She collapses in sobs.

BEN

Mom, please -

SARAH

Don't! Just - just leave me alone -

He sits at the other end of the bench. A long moment passes.

BEN

I did hate you. You're right. I did. I didn't want to -- I even thought I had my reasons - at the time. But it changed - it doesn't matter, I know - but it did change. Not the way it usually does. Not the way time sorta glosses over the details and leaves you with an impression. This was different - it was like time was clarifying the moments - the memories.

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

Every time I went to see Dad in the hospital those last few weeks before he died, every time I would see that look of pain on his face - and knowing - knowing that it was more than the cancer, more than that fucking disease ripping through him - he didn't care about that. He cared about you. He cared so deeply about you, Mom. It was killing him - slowly killing him - helping the cancer along. I don't know. I couldn't separate them - I couldn't separate the pain for him. I couldn't help him.

SARAH

And you thought I could?

BEN

I think you could have helped him die a little easier.

SARAH

You loved your father.

BEN

Yes, and --

SARAH

I'm glad you did. I never wanted you to feel any other way. Your father - you had a relationship beyond me and that was good. I gave you that just as your father gave me a relationship with you. Why is there a difference? Because he died?

BEN

Because he loved you, Mom. He loved you --

SARAH

Your father died. That's something I can't change. That something you can't change. That's life. But love? What is love, Ben? Is love denying the other person? Is love compromising? Isn't there a difference between love born out of need and love born out of convenience, or compromise? I am a writer.

(MORE)



SARAH (CONT'D)

When I started writing your father hated it. Did you know that? Your father didn't want me to write. He thought it was a hobby. He thought my time was better spent doing what he decided I should do. Why do you think your father and I were getting a divorce?

BEN

It doesn't matter.

SARAH

You're right - it doesn't matter - it shouldn't matter - it never should have mattered - but it did. Your father forbade me to write. Can you imagine that? I even tried to stop. That's not true. I told him I stopped, in the beginning. But I didn't. I couldn't. That's the difference, Ben. Real love grows with you. It flows freely from you both - or it should. It moves you to create more and more because you can't help yourselves.

BEN

The way he talked about you though - at the end, Mom - he would --

SARAH

He loved the memory of me, Ben. He loved those moments we had -- ancient moments that lived for a day, or a second. He didn't talk about the pain and suffering we put each other through. You realize that some things have to be allowed to die or you'll be forever miserably spinning trying to hold on to something that's gone. I've been spinning for two years trying to hold on to this relationship with my son. I can't. It's not fair for either of us. I can't do it anymore than you can.

BEN

What are you saying?

She looks at him, taking him in for a moment.

## SARAH

When you were born - I can remember holding you for the first time. They laid you across me and I reached down to feel your breath - I felt your tiny breath on my fingers. Your face was so flushed, perfect. I remember thinking that this is it. I know what love is. In that moment it didn't mean anything more than this new life breathing its hot little breath on the back of my hand. Spontaneous love. I was thinking this when the nurse came over to take you away - to take you back for tests. I was thinking this when she came back in my room a few minutes later and told me that you had developed a mild arrhythmia and that you needed to be placed in the IC unit. I was thinking this when I realized that you could be gone - you could be gone before I ever had the chance to tell you. I knew the most important feeling one could ever feel. I knew it. Then I realized that you could die and I would be left with just that feeling - just a feeling. And I thought - oh, god. In one moment I knew it all. The whole cycle of life and love and death happened in those five minutes. I realized that there was nothing I could do but if - if something happened - if, god forbid, something happened to this little life I created - please, please let me have another chance to feel that again, to feel that spontaneous love again. The next day you were fine. You were back in my arms breathing that hot little breath on my cheek. But it was different now. Two hours old and you had to go through your own little struggle that was just the beginning of countless struggles and I couldn't do anything about them. They weren't mine - they were yours. Now you have a child. Love is spontaneously born. And you know that that love - that life is going to suffer. That life you created is going to feel the pain of life.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

But what can you do? You want to be there to catch it when it falls - but you realize you can't. You can't be there all the time. You have to let it go. Let it go and give her her own life. Her own time. I'm letting go, Ben.

BEN

You're what?

SARAH

I'm letting you go. We can live our lives without each other. We've both proven that.

BEN

You think we're so different, Mom?

SARAH

No. I think we're a lot alike but we don't need each other, Ben. We shouldn't anyway. I thought I needed a relationship with my son. Maybe for the same reason your father thought - just go, Ben.

A beat. He stands, searching for something to say. He begins to exit.

SARAH(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Can I have this picture?

BEN

Yes. Of course.

SARAH

When can I see her?

BEN

What?

SARAH

When can I see my granddaughter?

BEN

You want to see her?

SARAH

Of course I want to see her.

BEN

What about us?

SARAH

My relationship with her isn't an obligation. This child is a spontaneous creation. She shouldn't have anything thing to do with us.

BEN

It's not an obligation, Mom.

SARAH

Isn't it? Karen convinced you to come, didn't she.

BEN

Yes, but -

SARAH

Yes, but.

BEN

Look, you said -- relationships - things live and die, right?

SARAH

Yes, they do.

BEN

And sometimes, rather than a spontaneous creation, we can consciously create these relationships, right? We can spin new ones to replace the old, right?

SARAH

Uh huh.

BEN

So how about -- what if we were just sitting here - just two people -- look, stay right here, okay? You sit here and write or whatever you were doing okay?

SARAH

What?

BEN

Just, just sit and - just sit.

He quickly exits. She sits down and watches him leave. She waits and waits. After a moment or three Ben returns very casually. He nods and sits at the other end of the bench.

A beat.

BEN (CONT'D)  
Hello.

SARAH  
Hello.

A beat.

BEN  
Nice day.

SARAH  
Yes, it is.

BEN  
Almost a perfect day.

SARAH  
Uh huh.

A beat.

BEN  
Would you like to see a picture of  
my daughter?

SARAH  
Would I -- sure.

He pulls out his wallet and moves over next to her. She looks  
at him for a moment or two.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
My name is Sarah.

BEN  
Hello, Sarah. I'm Ben. Or, you can  
call me Benjamin, if you like.

End Scene

ACT I, Scene 3

Winnie and Kris sit at the "River Café". Kris is reading  
Winnie's proposal with Winnie watching attentively.

KRIS  
This is the whole thing?

WINNIE  
Yes - why? What do you mean?

KRIS  
It just seems - it seems a little --

WINNIE

I figure I'd leave it sketched out as an outline and fill in the rest during the meeting.

KRIS

It's just you and him?

WINNIE

Initially. Hopefully this will just be the first of many.

KRIS

Can I ask you something?

WINNIE

Of course.

KRIS

Why?

WINNIE

Why? Why what?

KRIS

Just - just why?

WINNIE

What do you mean, why?

KRIS

Well, I'm just looking at it from his perspective - obviously he has his own agenda -

WINNIE

What agenda?

KRIS

Well - maybe agenda is the wrong word -

WINNIE

I don't even know what that means. There's no agenda --

KRIS

Don't get defensive -

WINNIE

I'm not defensive - I'm just -

KRIS

Look, all I'm saying is, isn't that a question he might ask? I mean, if I'm listening to this plan -

WINNIE

Proposal.

KRIS

Okay, this proposal, I mean, what's in it for me? You know? Why would I care if the - this artist's train -

WINNIE

The Art Train.

KRIS

The Art Train - why would I care if it happens or not?

Sarah enters with her cup of coffee.

SARAH

Is there any sugar over there?

WINNIE

No.

SARAH

Damn it.

Sarah exits.

KRIS

What in it for me, you know? That's all I'm asking.

WINNIE

That's so selfish.

KRIS

Not me - him.

WINNIE

He's not going to ask, "what's in it for me?"

KRIS

I'm not talking about me - I'm not talking about him personally -

WINNIE

This isn't about the individual.

KRIS  
I know that. All I'm saying is -

WINNIE  
So he wouldn't ask the question.  
"Why?" Why? I'll tell you why -  
because it's a good idea.

KRIS  
You're taking this personally?

WINNIE  
I'm not -

KRIS  
I'm not attacking you -

WINNIE  
Yes, you are.

KRIS  
I'm just trying to prepare you for  
the kinds of questions he might  
have, that's all.

Sarah returns with her sugar and sits. She looks at them both  
and stirs her coffee.

SARAH  
Okay -- Are you going to finish  
that cookie?

Winnie pushes her cookie over to Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
I just want a piece.

WINNIE  
Just finish the damn cookie!

SARAH  
Kris?

KRIS  
Don't look at me.

WINNIE  
She's just being her very typical  
helpful self.

KRIS  
You didn't give me a chance -



WINNIE

I'm nervous, okay? Kris doesn't know - no offense, I mean you're right, okay? Fine. Why? Why is a good question. A fair question, I guess. Who cares? Nobody. Except me maybe. I care. I think it's important. I think it's a great idea. I want to see it done. That's it. That's enough because I love it. So you asked me, "why"? and I have to go in there and talk to him and not sound like an idiot. Why waste his time unless there's something in it for him? But I know there's something in it for everyone even if there doesn't seem to be a point to it for any one person individually per se. Collectively, whether one takes the time to actually get on board, the presence of such a thing seeps into the community's consciousness. Maybe the only point is that I'm willing to take the time to give the idea a voice.

SARAH

Did I miss something?

KRIS

I don't think so -

WINNIE

I will carry the idea forth, move it along and watch it flourish into the consciousness of the city.

SARAH

I definitely missed something.

KRIS

I don't think so.

WINNIE

I will because it must be done!

SARAH

Joan of Arc?

KRIS

Susan B. Anthony?

SARAH  
The Suffragette?

KRIS  
Isn't that the woman on the coin?

SARAH  
Yes. Eleanor Roosevelt?

KRIS  
What about Jane Goodall?

SARAH  
The monkey woman?

KRIS  
Yes.

SARAH  
I think you're reaching.

WINNIE  
You can joke all you want --

SARAH  
I love the Art Train idea.

WINNIE  
There's two of us.

KRIS  
I never said I didn't like it.

WINNIE  
I guess you were just being you.

KRIS  
I was being him.

SARAH  
Who?

WINNIE  
She wasn't being him she was being her.

KRIS  
I was trying to be like him.

SARAH  
Like who?

KRIS

Him, this guy - the guy she's meeting with. I just asked a question.

WINNIE

Why?

SARAH

Why?

WINNIE

Why?

KRIS

That's a good question.

SARAH

It is a good question.

WINNIE

I said it was a good question.

SARAH

And you have a good answer.

WINNIE

That's right. What's my good answer?

SARAH

You love it.

KRIS

Oh, how I dreamt of things impossible.

WINNIE

Stop saying that.

SARAH

You already have the meeting. He agreed to hear it. Just tell him why you love it.

KRIS

I like the idea too, you know.

WINNIE

Not like! I love the idea. I love the idea.

KRIS

Easy, Win.

WINNIE

You know why?

SARAH

Why?

WINNIE

Because it's not my idea. The idea has always been there - art backs into the memories of every civilization - it is the defining aspect of civilization - every time another, yet older, cave is discovered with handprints and animal markings it reaches back into the memory record of civilized man and says, "we are here". Art is here. It represents the watershed of our ability to bring about conscious thought into the world.

SARAH

And The Art Train brings it full circle -

WINNIE

Not full circle - yeah, full circle, I guess because it represents the fact that the circle is continuous. What better way to bring art through the heart of the city - through the heart and soul of everyone who happens upon it in their station - what better way to remind them that they represent the engine that moves love - that makes love -

KRIS

Moves love?

WINNIE

Love and art are the same things, aren't they? Why else would we bother - why else are we compelled to dip our hands into an animal sacrifice and imprint our reality on the walls of a cave? Why would they have done that?

KRIS

Lack of napkins?

SARAH  
Let her finish.

WINNIE  
Art is the expression of the human  
experience of being alive - it's  
the exact same expression of the  
pain, sorrow, joy and ecstasy of  
love - manifested as artists do -  
Art is the human expression of love  
made conscious.

SARAH  
Go, Winnie.

KRIS  
Three cups of coffee.

WINNIE  
It ain't the coffee -

SARAH  
Love, love, love -

KRIS  
Love, love, love -

SARAH  
Love ,love, love -

KRIS  
I don't remember anymore lines -

SARAH  
Me either -

WINNIE  
All you need is love.

KRIS  
That's right -

End scene

ACT I, Scene 4

A contemporary NYC apartment. DAVID, late thirties, is opening a bottle of wine. Winnie talks from the off stage bathroom.

DAVID  
And he said he liked it?

WINNIE (O.S.)

He said he loved it. He said he thought the idea was ingenious. Ingenious! He said there was no reason he could think of why it shouldn't happen.

DAVID

Really?

WINNIE

Do you believe it?

DAVID

I don't know. And so --

WINNIE

And so, I think he means it's actually going to happen.

Winnie enters and David hands her a glass of wine.

DAVID

Seriously? The Art Train.

WINNIE

The Art Train, baby!

She clinks his glass.

DAVID

God, I can't believe it.

WINNIE

I can't think about it because now if it doesn't happen I'll be completely disappointed.

DAVID

But he said he really liked it.

WINNIE

He wants me to meet some of his "people". He's setting up a meeting for next week and everything.

DAVID

God, that's amazing.

WINNIE

I know. I mean, everybody wins - that's what's so great about it. Every single person involved wins.

(MORE)

WINNIE (CONT'D)

The MTA, the artists, the corporate sponsors, the guy paying \$1.50 to ride the subway. You bring The Art Train to the people. You bring art to 5.5 million people - to anybody that rides the subway everyday.

DAVID

It's unbelievable.

WINNIE

It's love, baby!

DAVID

It's something.

WINNIE

That's why it's so great. It's love. It's perfect. It's like this one little idea was out there and just because I gave the idea a voice I caused this event which then caused all these other events all because I gave the idea itself a voice. It's like the whole thing takes on this momentum and who knows, you know? It's timeless. It's magical. I feel like I'm just taking the ride and living, you know?

DAVID

Shit, I'll take that ride.

WINNIE

Well, let's just take the ride then.

DAVID

And they're going to let you run the project?

WINNIE

I hope so. I could get swept right out of the way once the powers that be take hold. But you know what? It wouldn't matter. If this happens - if this idea flies I'd still be happy because I know it's the right thing.

A beat.

DAVID  
So, if the Art Train happens -

WINNIE  
When the Art Train happens -

DAVID  
When the Art Train happens, New  
York is your home.

WINNIE  
New York is my home now. The man I  
love is here. Oh, yeah, and you're  
here too.

DAVID  
You're funny.

WINNIE  
Where else would I want to live  
anyway? Where else would you want  
to live? This city is great. But I  
do want to run the show. Don't get  
me wrong. I really want to run the  
show.

DAVID  
Be the master of ceremonies.

WINNIE  
Whatever they want to call me.

DAVID  
The pain-in-the-ass.

WINNIE  
I'm sure some of them are going to  
feel that way.

DAVID  
I get it all the time.

He gets up and walks away.

WINNIE  
It's all just crazy isn't it?

DAVID  
Yeah, it is. It's a great idea  
though, Win. It really is. You  
should be proud of yourself.

WINNIE  
Well, thank you. Are you all right?



DAVID

Yeah, I'm all right. I'm good. How are you?

WINNIE

You didn't think I could do this, did you?

DAVID

I never doubted you for a minute.

WINNIE

But you didn't think he would --

DAVID

I didn't think he would do anything but I definitely thought he should. Which he did.

WINNIE

Well, come back over here and celebrate with me or something.

He goes back over to her and kisses her. She pulls him down on the couch. They kiss for a minute - he gets up again.

DAVID

What do you want to do?

WINNIE

I was doing it. What's the matter?

DAVID

Nothing.

WINNIE

Yeah, right.

DAVID

What?

WINNIE

All right. Never mind. I'm just laying here all happy and horny and you don't want to be here with me so -

DAVID

You hungry?

WINNIE

I said horny, not hungry.

DAVID  
Oh, I thought you said hungry.

WINNIE  
Well, I'm not hungry. Are you?

DAVID  
No.

WINNIE  
What are you thinking about?

DAVID  
I don't know. I guess - I don't know. I'm really glad this is happening for you.

WINNIE  
Yeah, I can tell.

DAVID  
I am. I was just thinking about when we'd get to see each other.

WINNIE  
What do you mean?

DAVID  
I don't know. This kind of project, Win. I mean, this is an all-encompassing project.

WINNIE  
So.

DAVID  
It's just really, really, really, really time consuming.

WINNIE  
What are you talking about?

DAVID  
It's just - you can get so wrapped up in something sometimes you end up, I don't know, maybe missing out on something else.

WINNIE  
Yeah, you're right. I'd better call and tell him to forget everything.

DAVID  
Do you know what this means?

WINNIE  
It's exciting.

DAVID  
I know it's exciting but -

WINNIE  
We'll still see each other -

DAVID  
Maybe.

WINNIE  
Maybe?

DAVID  
Yeah, maybe.

WINNIE  
What's that mean?

DAVID  
Who knows, you know?

WINNIE  
Who knows?

DAVID  
Yeah. Something like this - I mean,  
shit.

WINNIE  
What's wrong, David?

DAVID  
Nothing.

WINNIE  
Okay, that's bullshit. What's  
wrong?

DAVID  
Nothing. Nothing's wrong.

WINNIE  
If you want to talk about something  
let's talk.

A beat.

DAVID  
Winnie -

WINNIE  
You think this is a stupid idea.

DAVID  
No, I think it's a great idea.

WINNIE  
You're seeing someone else.

DAVID  
What? No.

WINNIE  
You're gay.

DAVID  
No. Thank you very much.

WINNIE  
Then what! Come on, talk to me.  
Stop being all mysterious.

He goes over to his jacket and pulls out a letter. He hands it to her.

WINNIE (CONT'D)  
What's this?

DAVID  
Just read it.

WINNIE  
What is it?

DAVID  
Just read it.

She reads.

WINNIE  
They offered you the dig?

DAVID  
Keep reading.

WINNIE  
"We believe this to be one of the more historically significant in the region and hope you will agree to participate in the expedition."

DAVID  
Two years.

WINNIE

Two years.

DAVID

Yeah. Mexico. University of Chicago. Full funding.

WINNIE

That's incredible, right?

DAVID

Oh yeah.

WINNIE

This is great. This is everything, right?

DAVID

Sort of. Yeah, I guess it is.

WINNIE

So -

A long pause. She goes back to the letter

WINNIE (CONT'D)

When does all this happen?

DAVID

I'm supposed to leave next month.

WINNIE

Next month?

DAVID

Yeah.

WINNIE

A month?

DAVID

Yeah. One lousy month.

WINNIE

I think it's great. It's a wonderful opportunity, right?

DAVID

I'm not taking it.

WINNIE

What?

DAVID  
I said I'm not taking it.

WINNIE  
What are you talking about?

DAVID  
Look, I don't want to be away for  
two years and come back hoping  
you'll still be here.

WINNIE  
David, you have to go. This is  
important.

DAVID  
I know it's important.

WINNIE  
So, don't say that.

A beat -- he gives her a look.

WINNIE(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
What?

DAVID  
I didn't realize it was such an  
easy decision.

WINNIE  
Come on, David.

DAVID  
Come on, what?

WINNIE  
You have your career, your life,  
the things you think about, the  
things you create. I have mine --  
some things we control, other  
things we don't.

DAVID  
Oh, I see. Okay. That's great. See  
you later.

WINNIE  
If we don't move on then we can  
never come back.

DAVID  
What?

WINNIE

Look, I love you. I love you and it means everything to me, it really does. Love pulls us together and keeps us in touch with all the other things that we think are important. You do your work - you go to these sites and dig around in the dirt to keep ideas alive - to keep these people, these civilizations alive. That makes you a remarkable person. You love what you do and I love you for it. I don't want to compromise that. I wouldn't ask you. How can you compromise that? How could you even think of compromising that ideal -

DAVID

I'd be compromising you.

A beat.

WINNIE

You're going on that dig.

DAVID

If you come with me.

WINNIE

David --

DAVID

I'll be in Mexico, Win. Mexico. You can't fly to Mexico every few weeks from New York.

WINNIE

Well, maybe not that often --

DAVID

Then what? Every few months? We see each other every few months?

WINNIE

When ever we can.

DAVID

That's bullshit. That's bullshit and you know it.

WINNIE

Why is it bullshit?

DAVID

Because the reality is, Win -- "out of sight, out of mind".

WINNIE

I don't believe that.

DAVID

You don't want to believe it but it's true.

WINNIE

Why is it true? Since when do you live your life based on a cliché.

DAVID

I'm just being realistic.

WINNIE

I guess I have more faith than that.

DAVID

I'll be in Mexico. You'll be in New York. Unless one of us compromises that's not going to change.

WINNIE

Why does it have to change? I don't want it to change. I want it to stay the same.

DAVID

You want to what?

WINNIE

You are with me now. Here and now. But you're also with me here too and here. (she points to her head and heart).

DAVID

But I want to wake up with you and talk with you and see you looking back at me - smiling at me --

WINNIE

But we do all those things.

DAVID

It's not enough.



WINNIE

But what would be enough? I mean,  
what's enough?

DAVID

God damn it, Winnie! I don't want  
to lose you! Okay? That's it.  
That's the bottom line. If I take  
this job I lose you. The fact is,  
time can do a lot of damage on a  
relationship. People forget, people  
meet other people, people fall in  
and out of love. This dig, I mean,  
no matter how fucking great it is  
for my - my career or whatever, it  
would pale, it would be a pale  
experience without you. I want the  
experience with you. I want to  
experience as much as I can with  
you. Shit, Win -- I just don't want  
to lose you, that's all.

WINNIE

You're not going to lose me.

DAVID

Can you guarantee that?

WINNIE

I can guarantee I love you. I can  
guarantee I've never met anyone  
like you. I can guarantee that how  
I feel means more to me than time  
or space or anything else.

A beat.

DAVID

I have this crazy idea.

WINNIE

Okay.

DAVID

Or maybe it's a stupid idea. Either  
way. I don't know, it's either  
crazy or stupid. Or both.

WINNIE

What is it?

DAVID

What is it, I don't know. Are you  
game? Are you feeling saucy?

WINNIE  
Shut up. What is it?

DAVID  
I want you to be prepared.

WINNIE  
You want me to beg?

DAVID  
No, I don't want you to beg.

WINNIE  
Because I will. I'm in the begging mood.

DAVID  
I don't want you to beg.

WINNIE  
Please! Oh, please, David. Be crazy for me --

DAVID  
Keep going.

WINNIE  
Tell me your crazy idea!

DAVID  
You want to get married?

WINNIE  
What?

DAVID  
I said I want to get married.

WINNIE  
To whom?

DAVID  
I'm being serious.

WINNIE  
Shut up.

DAVID  
Winnie -- I'm asking you to marry me.

WINNIE  
Why would you do that?

DAVID

Well, let's see - there are a couple of answers I could give - how about - I love you?

WINNIE

David - you're not serious.

DAVID

I am.

WINNIE

My sisters told me never to believe a marriage proposal unless he has a ring --

He pulls a ring out of his pocket.

WINNIE(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

David -

DAVID

I told you it was crazy.

A beat.

WINNIE

David, I uh --

DAVID

This is a spot, I know. But that's the nature of handing someone a ring and asking, will you marry me - - you're on the spot together, see?

WINNIE

I don't know what to say.

DAVID

How about yes?

WINNIE

But why? I mean -- what's the point?

DAVID

What's the point?

WINNIE

People get married -- it's, it's an ending, do you see? It's a conscious ending to what, in all likelihood is already a really great thing. Like us. Like us now.

(MORE)

WINNIE (CONT'D)

We're great. We see each other when we can, we have dinner, we talk, we make love, we lose ourselves for these moments and that allows us to move each other on to bigger things.

DAVID

So, what you're saying is -

WINNIE

What I'm saying is - what I'm saying is - what am I saying?

DAVID

What you're saying is no.

WINNIE

No, I'm not. I'm just --

DAVID

Yes. That's what you're saying. No.

WINNIE

That's not what I'm saying.

DAVID

Then what are you saying, Win? I'm asking you to marry me.

A beat.

WINNIE

David, I love you -

DAVID

Oh, boy.

WINNIE

What?

DAVID

But --

WINNIE

There's no but.

DAVID

Okay.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

David, I love you -

WINNIE

But -

DAVID

See! I knew it. I knew there was a but.

WINNIE

But, marriage? That's all. That's the but. "But marriage".

DAVID

But marriage what?

WINNIE

Just, just -- but marriage.

DAVID

Jesus Christ --

WINNIE

I just don't understand!

DAVID

What - what don't you understand?

WINNIE

David, when I was younger I never thought I'd meet someone like you. I mean, the thought of being in a relationship seemed so far removed from anything I ever wanted -- anything I ever even thought about. I didn't think relationships work - I don't think they're supposed to work the way they're set up -

DAVID

Oh, that's great.

WINNIE

Let me finish, okay? It's true. I don't think - I watch my friends, I listen to people talk about their relationships and it seems so odd to me the way they talk about their experiences as "the time spent". Everything is time spent. How many weeks or months or years they've been together.

(MORE)

WINNIE (CONT'D)

How long they're going on vacation, how long before the next one, how old their kids are, how long before the next birthday, before they start school before they go to college, get married, have babies of their own. Then we met and -- I mean, I can't even remember when we met. I can't remember a date. I don't want to remember. I feel like we've known each other -- like we've always known each other. I feel like you're a part of me. It goes beyond this thing here, this physical thing. It's everywhere. I don't love you to love you, I tell you I love you because it's the only way I have of expressing the profound. Do you know what I mean?

DAVID

I know I'm holding a ring in my hand.

WINNIE

And I'm holding this letter. But what do they mean? If I take this ring what happens?

DAVID

If you take this ring -- I'm not making light of this, you know?

WINNIE

I know.

DAVID

I mean, I know what you're saying, it's just -- isn't this a symbol? Isn't that what a ring is?

WINNIE

Yes. It's a symbol. I know.

DAVID

I want to marry you to express to the world what I feel through this symbol. This ring is where we come together full circle, you know? This symbol is how I feel about you, how I feel about everything, how you make me feel about everything. I want you to understand this.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I want you to understand that you make my life make sense. Everything I think about, everything I do comes around and is validated because of you. You're in my mind when I wake up, you're in my dreams when I sleep. You make me a better person and I want you to know that.

WINNIE

But I do.

DAVID

Then why do you look so defeated?

WINNIE

I'm not defeated. I'm scared.

DAVID

What are you scared about?

WINNIE

About marking time.

DAVID

What do you mean?

WINNIE

It's only time. You'll be gone for two years but so what? What's the difference between two years or two days? Nothing. There's no difference at all. It comes and goes like this. In an instant. I don't want to mark time, I don't want to be one of those people measuring how long before I see you, when our first date was, our anniversary. I want to live the quality of time not the quantity.

DAVID

The quality.

WINNIE

Yeah. Do you know what I remember about when we first met? I remember the sun. I was walking through central park. The sun had just begun to set somewhere behind the trees and buildings.

(MORE)

WINNIE (CONT'D)

The sky was orange and purple and red and gold -- it had so many colors it looked ridiculous, like someone tried to paint but their paints all spilled on the canvas. I mean, it made me laugh. And then we ran into each other under the fountain --

DAVID

Under Bethesda fountain --

WINNIE

We literally ran into each other.

DAVID

I was turning the corner at the steps.

WINNIE

And that was funny.

DAVID

I thought I killed you.

WINNIE

You did. But then you smiled back at me and brought me back to life.

A beat.

DAVID

I remember that sunset. I probably wouldn't have noticed it if you hadn't been there.

WINNIE

David -- we can be together -- we are together no matter where we are. You have to know that. Somewhere deep inside you know that.

DAVID

I know.

She takes the ring.

WINNIE

I'll wear this ring on two conditions.

DAVID

What's that?



WINNIE

Number one, that you'll go on this dig. And number two -- that by wearing this symbol you'll know that where ever you are I'm with you. Okay?

A beat.

DAVID

I do love you, you know.

WINNIE

You know what? It's the only thing I want to know.

End scene.

INTERMISSION

ACT II, SCENE 1

Kris sits drinking coffee at the River Café. She looks through a box of loose photographs, stacking them accordingly. After a moment, Sarah enters.

KRIS

Start with this pile.

SARAH

Where is this from?

KRIS

That pile - Italy.

SARAH

Who is this?

KRIS

Oh, god - what the hell was his name? Barry, or Bobby. Barney maybe?

SARAH

He doesn't look like a Barney.

KRIS

Bernard, I think it was. He was Greek. Or he said he was Greek.

SARAH  
Bernie the Greek?

KRIS  
Bernard.

SARAH  
He looks a little like Bernard the  
Rubble.

KRIS  
He was from Greece.

SARAH  
So what does that mean?

KRIS  
All Greek men look like Barney  
Rubble. Everybody knows that. This  
one is from Florence. The Ponte  
Vecchio.

SARAH  
Did you take this one?

KRIS  
I think so. Let me see it. Yeah.  
Wait, look at this one.

SARAH  
Wow - who is he?

KRIS  
You know what? I remember him - oh,  
do I remember him and I am  
absolutely certain I have no idea  
what his name is.

Winnie enters with a cup of coffee.

WINNIE  
Okay, okay, what did I miss? You  
started looking without me?

SARAH  
Just the Italy trip. Here.

WINNIE  
Oh, yeah. Wow - these are really  
good. Okay, who's this? Wait - and  
this guy? Who are these people? You  
slept with all these guys?

KRIS  
Every single one of them, Win.

SARAH  
And those are only the ones from  
Italy.

WINNIE  
Even Fred Flintstone here?

KRIS  
Give me that! That's Barney Rubble -

SARAH  
Bernard.

KRIS  
Bernard Rubble and he's Greek.

WINNIE  
You said he was Italian.

KRIS  
I said I was in Italy - he said he  
was Greek.

WINNIE  
He said he was Greek in Italian.

KRIS  
In English.

SARAH  
Here's the best one though.

WINNIE  
Woah - he is cute.

SARAH  
Gorgeous.

WINNIE  
I mean, he's no Barney Rubble -

SARAH  
Bernard.

WINNIE  
You didn't really sleep with  
Barney, did you?

KRIS  
Please. He was a tour guide on the  
bus.

(MORE)

KRIS (CONT'D)

He was friendly enough and he offered to drive me around. He showed me around Rome on my first night there.

WINNIE

And?

KRIS

And he drove his car with his feet and had a big club - what do you want me to say here?

WINNIE

What about this guy - the cutie?

KRIS

Did you see the ones of the Ponte Vecchio?

SARAH

Kris showed mister no-name, around her Ponte Vecchio.

WINNIE

Mister no-name?

KRIS

He never told me his name. So what.

SARAH

But that didn't stop her from -

KRIS

Hello --

SARAH

Come on, I'm living vicariously here --

WINNIE

Scandalous.

SARAH

Our sister the tramp.

WINNIE

Ever family has one.

KRIS

I simply seized the moment. A man like that comes up to me in a fantasy setting like that - my mortality was instantly placed on hold.

WINNIE

You mean morality.

KRIS

Oh, please! Morality? I mean mortality. When a moment like that thrusts himself into your consciousness -

SARAH

Well said --

KRIS

You either live or die in that moment. And believe me, I decided that before I die, I was going to Italy and live some moments - a few, multiple moments with Mr. No-name Roman cutie driving the chariot.

SARAH

To screw or not to screw.

KRIS

No question. Listen to Winnie here with her morality. You're the one with the bone man.

WINNIE

That's paleontology. He's a cultural anthropologist.

Sarah reaches for a new pile of pictures.

SARAH

Oh, my god.

WINNIE

What?

SARAH

Where the hell did these come from?

WINNIE

Holy shit.

SARAH  
I haven't seen these -

KRIS  
A long time. I forgot I had them.

WINNIE  
This is - this must be from - I was  
like ten maybe?

SARAH  
Let me see. You were ten. That's  
the house in the country.

WINNIE  
I remember the house. The back  
porch, right?

SARAH  
Exactly.

WINNIE  
Yellow roses to the left of the  
porch. Dad would park the station  
wagon to the side of them.

SARAH  
Here's the station wagon.

WINNIE  
Oh, my god.

KRIS  
Remember the rusted-out holes over  
the tire wells.

SARAH  
Where did you find these?

KRIS  
I don't know - everything was sent  
to us in these boxes. When I got  
back and had the ones from my trip  
developed, I started pulling all  
the loose pictures I had and I came  
across this box.

WINNIE  
Sarah, do you have that picture of  
Lilly?

SARAH  
Yes.

Sarah reaches to find the picture in her bag.

WINNIE

Look at this - look at these two.  
Isn't that you?

SARAH

Yes.

Kris comes around to see the two pictures side by side.

KRIS

Let's see. Good lord, you were an  
ugly kid.

SARAH

Nice.

KRIS

I'm joking. She's adorable. So were  
you - wow. Well, no question where  
the blood line runs.

WINNIE

You really are the spinner.

SARAH

The spinner?

KRIS

She means, the spinster.

SARAH

Not yet.

WINNIE

I mean spinner. The fabric of life  
spins into life, spins into time.  
You know, the Fates, the spinner,  
the weaver, and the cutter of the  
fabric of time.

KRIS

The three witches with the single  
eye.

SARAH

The Graeae. (grey-eye)

KRIS

Oh, my god. I have to tell you this  
dream.

SARAH

What dream?

KRIS

I just remembered my dream from last night.

WINNIE

I thought you didn't remember your dreams.

KRIS

Stop! I am in this hall -- this enormous hall, like a ballroom within a castle. The walls are filled, I mean beautifully decorated with these like masterfully carved wood panels. The panels are of -- I don't know how to describe them -- scenes of life and death, of love and pain -- women giving birth, proposals of marriage, people at the moment of dying -- all these scenes - but they all seem - they are all - or they feel so familiar to me. The scenes are like art. It's like all the art -- like I'm in the art gallery of humanity. The room has four windows, four huge windows directly in the center of each of the walls that look out on nothing - - almost like the room itself was set in the heavens. All I can see around me through the windows are stars - the stars are all around me and through me. It is the same for the ceiling -- that is there is no ceiling -- just the open heavens above me and in every direction holding me in place, in this room. It's like I'm standing, or I'm suspended in this place, in the center of this place and as I focus on the panels -- on each of the panels - when I look at one specifically I'm transported into the image itself. In that instant I become the person in the scene - In here, I'm dying, in this moment, I'm giving birth, and here I'm the bride. Here I am with a baby, with a mother, with a man.

(MORE)



KRIS (CONT'D)

It's like I'm caught in the image for that moment to remember -- to notice the moment and complete it somehow. To complete the moment so it can end. So it's over.

WINNIE

See -- the cutter.

SARAH

The cutter of time.

WINNIE

The cutter. She has the eye!

SARAH

Wow.

WINNIE

Now, that's a dream.

KRIS

I remembered a dream.

SARAH

Your new job starts when?

KRIS

Monday, why?

WINNIE

The cutter.

KRIS

Stop saying that.

WINNIE

I didn't say it - you said it in your dream.

SARAH

You did say it.

KRIS

Okay - I'm officially freaking out.

End scene

ACT II, SCENE 2

Lights up on a small, sparsely furnished studio apartment where JOHN, 72, sits by his window.

There is a bed in the center of the room and a pair of chairs. (In the beginning he is only semi-coherent). He fingers an unlit cigarette, putting it in and out of his mouth. After a moment, Kris knocks on the slightly opened door and enters dressed appropriately as a hospice nurse.

KRIS

Mr. Wright? Are you in here?

JOHN

All them smokers.

KRIS

Mr. Wright?

JOHN

Look at all that, would you? Crazy smoking.

KRIS

What smoke is that?

JOHN

That smoke from all them smokers out there. All them people smoking don't know what the hell it's doing to their insides - Just eating them up.

KRIS

Nancy said you called in a few minutes ago. Are you okay today?

JOHN

I'm just watching them people put themselves in pain like they do. Giving themselves cancer is what they're doing.

KRIS

How are you feeling, Mr. Wright. Are you feeling okay today?

She prepares a new patch of pain-killers.

JOHN

I'm dying is how I'm doing. All that smoke just giving everybody the cancer. You know the wife died on me five years ago. Cancer got her too.

KRIS

I'm gonna give you something to make you feel better okay?

JOHN

Give me that god-damn patch! All that smoke is gonna kill them all. Don't they realize what they're doing?

KRIS

Are you smoking?

She takes the cigarette from his mouth. He smiles knowingly.

JOHN

I used to smoke five packs a day. Now I only smoke three. I'm only 72 years old. That's young.

He gets up and walks around.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I got to blow these leaves off the porch. You want to see inside? The wife's got the inside made up real nice. Go on, take a look inside.

KRIS

Why don't you sit down over here for a second, Mr. Wright?

JOHN

I don't have time to play cards with you, Dee Dee.

KRIS

I'm gonna make some of that pain go away.

JOHN

You gotta give your mother a hand sometimes, you know.

KRIS

Have a seat over here, okay?

JOHN

I got cancer, little lady. You know that, don't you?

KRIS

Yeah, I know. Let me help you, okay?

He sits down in front of her. She rolls up his sleeve and replaces his patch of painkillers.

JOHN

I'm gonna die today. That's my plan. Like it or not.

She begins giving him a mini-examination, listening to his heart, etc.

KRIS

Can you take a big breath for me?

JOHN

Take a look inside. She got it all set up nice. Did you see?

KRIS

It's beautiful.

JOHN

Yeah, it is beautiful. That's a nice word for it. It's beautiful. I haven't been in that trailer going on five years now. Trailer up on the mountain. That's what we could afford. This is what you call a poor man's country home.

She gets up to pull over the other chair next to him. John takes a big, labored breath.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I want to die today. You gonna let me die today, aren't you? Seems like I been waiting so long to die -  
- I thought it'd be a lot more fun. I'm only 72 years old. The wife went and died on me a few years back. All that cancer.

KRIS

Must be awfully lonely.

JOHN

It is. I come up here blow the leaves off the deck. The wife, she bought the barn awhile back. I kind of fancied it up a little with the deck and all. She planted flowers and hung them up on those hooks there. You can see them if you look out the window there. The dew keeps them watered when we're not around.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

They'd be full blooming all the time when we was up here. You should go in and see what she did in there. She always kept it so damn clean. I can't go in there anymore. I gotta sit down or something.

KRIS

You can lie down if you want.

JOHN

Yeah, she had her bathroom and gave me the other one. She kept it clean in there. Too clean if you ask me.

KRIS

It's really nice.

JOHN

I could cook you up some steak. You want a steak? I gotta barbecue pit I could make some steak.

KRIS

I'm not hungry. Thanks though. I'm gonna close this window, okay?

JOHN

I never had no diet or nothing. Hell, I eat pork chops with the fat and everything. I'd cut off the fat and save it for dessert. Never liked sweets too much anyhow.

He rocks and swoons a bit as the patch of drugs takes off an edge. Kris jumps up to help him back down into the chair. He drops his head and after a moment comes back a bit more coherent.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Dee Dee?

KRIS

Ah, no -

JOHN

You're not Dee Dee, are you?

KRIS

No, I'm Kris.

JOHN

How are you doing, little lady?

KRIS

I'm fine, Mr. Wright. How are you doing?

JOHN

Are you from the hospital?

KRIS

Yes. Nancy said you called -

JOHN

Nancy from the hospital. I'm with you - I remember. Who are you now?

KRIS

I'm Kris.

JOHN

Hello Kris. Good lord you must be a teenager.

KRIS

No. I'm a little older than that.

JOHN

Is this your job or you just here for fun?

KRIS

Well - this is my job, yes.

JOHN

Hell of a job for a pretty girl like you, watching an old man die.

KRIS

Are you in any pain?

JOHN

Well, I've felt better I have to admit.

KRIS

I could give you something more for the pain.

JOHN

No, no - I want to feel this one. This one feels different to me somehow.

KRIS

Okay.

JOHN  
How old are you?

KRIS  
How old do you think I am?

JOHN  
Seventeen.

KRIS  
Nope.

JOHN  
Fifteen.

KRIS  
You're close. Thirty five.

JOHN  
Thirty five? You might as well be  
fifteen. You know how old I am?

KRIS  
You're 72.

JOHN  
How'd you know that?

KRIS  
You told me when I came in. Plus I  
have your chart.

JOHN  
Well that's not fair, hell. My  
daughter is your age, I think.  
Something like that. Twenties or  
thirties or something. I got lay  
down here.

KRIS  
Okay, okay. Here let me help you  
over.

JOHN  
Nope, never mind me. I'm just gonna  
sit over here. Don't have time to  
be moving all over the place.

KRIS  
Okay. Are you doing okay?

JOHN  
I'm dying. Today I'm gonna die.  
That's my plan.

KRIS

Okay.

JOHN

Is that okay with you?

KRIS

It's okay with me.

JOHN

I was hoping to die in January -- middle of winter, like an Indian or something -- but I kept waking up in the morning. Now look at this. Beautiful day like this - spring day like this. Never a good time to die, is there? Not like the movies.

KRIS

Not like the movies, no.

JOHN

You married?

KRIS

No. No I'm not.

JOHN

My wife died a few years back. What do you think the chances are of me seeing her again?

KRIS

I don't know. What do you think?

JOHN

Hell, I don't know why I'm asking. Not married, huh? You still have your parents?

KRIS

No. No, just my sisters. Two sisters.

JOHN

My daughter, Dee Dee, she's not married -- I don't think she is -- she could be. What happened to your parents?

KRIS

My mom died when I was nine. My father died when I was in college.



JOHN

Nine years old? That's a hell of a thing.

KRIS

Yeah, but she's still around.

JOHN

Oh yeah. Like what -- an angel or something?

KRIS

I don't know. Maybe. In my head. There's both still around in my head. In my heart.

JOHN

Hell, I don't want to be no angel. My daughter - my daughter see me around - I wouldn't wish that on her.

KRIS

Does your daughter live around here?

JOHN

I haven't seen my daughter in five years. Huh? That's a hell of a thing, ain't it? She'd see me -- it wouldn't be no angel. I'm a god damn ghost is what I am.

KRIS

Oh, I don't know about that.

JOHN

Oh, I know. I will be. Don't want to be but I gotta live with it. What about your dad?

KRIS

He was in an accident. A car accident.

JOHN

You miss him?

KRIS

Sure. Sure I do.

JOHN

I don't mean to be personal.

KRIS  
That's okay.

JOHN  
Just like to know what I'm getting  
myself into, that's all.

KRIS  
I understand. It's okay.

JOHN  
So, you think you could help me  
out?

KRIS  
What do you mean?

JOHN  
Tell me what - what do you think  
I'm in for?

KRIS  
I don't know if I could help you  
with that one.

JOHN  
Give it a try.

KRIS  
I don't think I could help you - I  
could call somebody from your  
church if you like?

JOHN  
Church? What the hell I want them  
around for? I like real people, you  
know what I mean?

KRIS  
I think so.

JOHN  
You got any ideas about it? I'm not  
going to hold it against you if  
you're wrong. How about if I  
promise not to haunt you? Okay, I  
promise not to haunt you if you're  
wrong.

KRIS  
What if I'm right?

JOHN

Then I can haunt you - but in a good way. Wait - wait a second now -

He doubles over in the chair. She rushes over to him

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I need to lie down. Can I get over to that bed?

KRIS

Sure. I'm going to give you something for the pain.

JOHN

No - no. Don't want anything. Just let me lie down here for a second, okay?

KRIS

I could make you more comfortable.

JOHN

You just stay there. You want me to be comfortable?

KRIS

Yes.

JOHN

No whispering, okay? None of that "pss, pss everything is gonna be okay" stuff. I know the score all ready. Okay?

KRIS

Okay.

JOHN

Let me just lay here for a second. Can you give me that box over there. Those pictures over there?

She bring him over a small picture box.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

That a hell of a thing, ain't it. Pathetic old man dying on a beautiful day like this. You should be outside kissing your boyfriend in the park or something.

KRIS

I'm okay here.

JOHN

I'm talking too much. Let me see here. There she is, yeah. See here? Here's my daughter.

He shows her a picture.

KRIS

Her name is -

JOHN

Dee Dee. I called her Dee Dee when she was younger. Denise.

KRIS

She's very pretty.

JOHN

She's all right. Her mother was a looker though. Very handsome woman. Beautiful woman. She went and died on me five years back. Cancer got her too.

KRIS

Oh yeah.

JOHN

You can look if you want - you go over there and sit. I'm just going to close my eyes here, okay? I'm just going to close my eyes for a second. I'll let you know when I'm dead, okay?

KRIS

Okay.

JOHN

Go sit over there!

KRIS

Okay, okay.

She goes over with the album and watches him, looking through the album while keeping an eye on him. John closes his eyes and tries a few labored deep breaths.

A moment passes.

JOHN

My father died in the war. Hope I don't run into him. He always hated me I think.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

He was a son of a bitch. I don't really remember him. Hell, I'm probably just like him. That'd make sense. He's in there somewhere too. They're all there somewhere. All there in that box somewhere. That's a funny thing, ain't it? All them memories held up in that little box.

KRIS

My dad used to call photographs time tokens.

JOHN

Is that right?

KRIS

Like they were souvenir coins you'd get at a fair or a carnival or something. I remember he had this picture of my mother he had taken on their honeymoon. He said he could relive a thousand memories of her just by holding that one picture in his hand. That's always the picture I think of when I think of her. She was wearing a gold dress and the sun was waving through her hair. She had a look on her face as though she was smiling across time. Her eyes were blue and quiet. She was a handsome woman too. See that - we lock memories away on a piece of paper with ink and chemicals and we relive them anytime we want just by picking them up and looking. Is this your wedding picture?

JOHN

Let's take a look at that one.

She crosses over and shows him the photo.

JOHN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's a good one. Look at that. She didn't know what the hell she was getting into. Me either I guess.

KRIS

Can you remember that day?

JOHN  
Hell, that could have been  
yesterday -- I remember.

KRIS  
Maybe it was yesterday.

JOHN  
That was 1952.

KRIS  
But the memory is today.

He looks at her for a minute.

KRIS(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
See - it's a time token. It's like  
looking back at everything - at any  
experience you've ever had and  
reliving the moment you want again  
and again without time.

JOHN  
That's an awful lot of thinking  
coming out of such a little girl.

A moment passes. John lets out a piercing moan. Kris jumps up  
and over to him.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Don't give me anything, damn it!

KRIS  
I can give you something to make  
the pain go away.

He laughs a bit.

JOHN  
I don't think you can. Just sit  
down, little lady. I just need to  
breath a bit.

KRIS  
Okay. Are you sure?

JOHN  
I'm sure.

A moment passes.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
I'm your first patient, ain't I?

KRIS  
What? Why do you say that?

JOHN  
Am I your first?

KRIS  
My second, actually.

JOHN  
Damn, second? That would have been something though, huh?

KRIS  
How did you know that?

JOHN  
Well, you're still here.

KRIS  
What do you mean?

JOHN  
Well, look at me. Hell, I could go on living for days, weeks - not that I want too but - you know that, don't you?

KRIS  
I don't mind sitting here with you, Mr. Wright.

JOHN  
But I could go on for days or weeks, right?

KRIS  
Yes.

JOHN  
Well, I don't want to, damn it! Don't get me wrong. I want to die, I really do. I just can't seem to bring it on. I keep thinking this pain will shoot through me and take me or something, you know?

KRIS  
Yeah, I know.

JOHN  
I don't mean to yell.

KRIS

It's okay.

JOHN

Lords know I've done enough yelling  
in my life.

A beat.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

It would have been an honor to be  
your first patient.

KRIS

Well, I guess - thank you.

He doubles over in pain and nearly falls out of the bed.

JOHN

Oh boy, oh shit - you better give  
me something for that one.

She quickly puts together a needle and administers it -

A moment passes - John's breath slowly returns to normal but  
he is a bit less coherent.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I'm a god damn coward is what I am.

KRIS

Mr. Wright -

JOHN

God damn it, call me John. Please  
call me John.

KRIS

Okay. John.

JOHN

That a hell of a thing, ain't it?  
I'm saying god damn this - god damn  
that - that's a hell of a thing.

KRIS

I think he understands.

JOHN

You think so, huh?

KRIS

Yes.



A beat.

JOHN  
Did my daughter call?

KRIS  
Uh, no. Is she gonna call? Are you expecting her?

JOHN  
Only if she needs a ride. If she needs a ride I need to pick her up or something. I don't remember.

KRIS  
Do you want me to call her?

JOHN  
What's that?

KRIS  
Do you want me to call your daughter?

JOHN  
My daughter? Call my daughter? No - no you can't call her. She wouldn't answer the phone if I called her. I'm so hot - I feel like I'm burning up or something.

She gives him a towel for his head, goes over and opens the window.

KRIS  
That better?

She looks through his chart for anything about his daughter.

JOHN  
You can. Dee Dee? I've got to get this damn truck running -- where's your mother? Go help your mother. Can you hear me?

KRIS  
It's okay, John. It's all right.

A moment passes.

JOHN  
Kris. You're name is Kris, right?

KRIS

Yes.

JOHN

Kris, you think a man can redeem himself before he dies?

KRIS

Yes. It think so.

JOHN

Even if he's been a son-of-a-bitch his whole life?

KRIS

Yes. I think he can still redeem himself.

JOHN

I got a problem with all that religion though. I tried that stuff but it just didn't work for me. I tried it with the wife -- she died anyway. I tried it with me a few months ago but I just kept hanging on in pain. I sorta felt like I was trying to slip in because I knew I was dying rather than really believing it. You know what I mean?

KRIS

I think so.

JOHN

You religious? Cause if you are I don't mean anything against it -- just feels like I'm different from all that. Maybe you're born a son-of-a-bitch you die a son-of-a-bitch.

KRIS

I don't know, John. You loved your wife, didn't you?

JOHN

Yes. Yes I did.

KRIS

And she loved you?

JOHN

I believe she did.

KRIS

Well, that's some kind of redemption right there, I'd say.

JOHN

I don't think I told her enough. That's a regret -- she should have known how much she meant to me.

KRIS

Maybe she does.

JOHN

Why is it that the dead always have a better chance at knowing the truth than the living?

KRIS

Maybe because the dead don't have to apologize anymore.

He struggles a bit. He tries to sit up, tries to get himself out of bed with no luck.

JOHN

Don't walk away from me, damn it!

KRIS

It's okay, John.

JOHN

I'm so damn hot. I'm hot.

Kris comes over and gives him a drink of water.

JOHN(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

You're a good girl, Dee Dee. Your old man's a son-of-a-bitch. I got to lie down I think.

KRIS

Let me help you, okay?

JOHN

Dee Dee? Is that you?

KRIS

It's okay, John. You're all right.

JOHN

I never meant to hurt you, Dee Dee. You should know that I never meant to hurt you or your momma.

KRIS  
It's okay, John.

JOHN  
It took your momma dying before I  
could see what I was doing. I'm  
just an old son-of-a-bitch, Dee  
Dee.

KRIS  
It's okay.

JOHN  
I'm dying, Dee Dee. I'm dying.

KRIS  
I know you are.

JOHN  
I want to see your momma again.

KRIS  
You will.

JOHN  
Can I tell her how much I love her?

KRIS  
You can tell her right now.

JOHN  
Dee Dee? I'm gonna tell her, okay?

KRIS  
I know, Daddy. You will.

JOHN  
When I see her I'm going to tell  
her how much I love you too, Dee  
Dee. You're a good girl. You were  
always such a good girl.

KRIS  
It's okay, Daddy.

JOHN  
Don't hate your old man, Dee Dee.  
He loves you.

He dies.

KRIS  
No apologies anymore, John. No  
apologies.

End scene.

ACT II, Scene 3

The Winnie and Sarah sit at the "River Café" sipping their coffee. After a moment, Kris enters and sits sipping her own coffee. They all look out at the audience, each occupied in their own daydream. After a moment a celestial effect washes over the stage. The stars eventually take over all "practical" lighting until the women are completely bathed in only starlight. As the starlight begins to slowly circle the stage, the women rise and take their "place" on the stage creating a tableau -- achieving the effect of a constellation.

Lights fade.

END PLAY

(c) Michael Bassett