

USE ALL AVAILABLE DOORS

a play

by

Tristan B Willis

Tristan B Willis
tristanbwillis.com
tristbwillis@gmail.com
Washington, DC

SHERRY: a train operator, woman, black, 30s-40s
and **AN ENSEMBLE OF METRO RIDERS**

PLACE: WMATA Train Car 4020, Red Line, Washington, D.C.

TIME: Before the retirement of the 1000 and 4000 series train cars (July 2017)

NOTES:

* denotes where Randi Miller's announcements and door bells would normally take place.

/ indicates an overlap in dialogue where the next line begins

"Exit. Enter." is a general indicator of passengers deboarding and boarding. Ensemble characters whirl in and out for every scene (just changing small costume pieces), ride for a few scenes before a scene in which they are featured begins, sit alongside audience members and quietly read their books, provide a constant undercurrent of conversation when applicable or, y'know, none of those things. It's your show.

This play can be performed with as few as 7 performers and as many as ride the metro every day.

Every public transportation system lives as a microcosm of its city. The ensemble should be as diverse and representative of DC as possible. Productions should not live in an unrealistic land of all thin, able-bodied, cis and gender-binary white people. I encourage you to populate the stage and production team with groups historically underrepresented in North American and DC theatre at large. When casting, I suggest investigating what is considered "default" with my under-described characters and working to find people of varied backgrounds, instead of hoping one casting call will do the job. Regarding gender: characters that read as women or men can be played by trans and cis women or men, or non-binary actors as long as the performer is comfortable. As long as translations evoke the same intent as the scene as written, feel free to translate scenes into other languages (both verbal and nonverbal) to fit both your performers and character choices.

The Red Line is a real place and a map of Sherry's mind.

ACT I
SCENE 1: TRAIN CAR 4020

Morning. Our train operator, SHERRY, enters and notices one of the train car's ads is peeling. She reaches up to stick the small corner down. A pointless endeavor - it immediately rolls back up. She rests against the train and then, aware of a precious moment alone, fumbles through her pockets. She pulls out a notebook and pen.

And stares.

And stares.

And gives up.

SHERRY

Never written a eulogy before. Written lots of things, but never a eulogy.

She looks down at the train car's number on the control room's door.

4020. How's 4021 doing, y'all still going strong? Maybe you could help with the eulogy, since you old cans are on your way out too.

This is supposed to be a joke. It's more a foundation under a house sinking in salty mud.

SHERRY knows this.

That makes it worse.

Could be I'm right behind you, really... Y'know, the first car I ever operated was a 4000--that was back when we let you 1000s and 4000s lead the train...

Pause.

I could start with a poem. You think they'd mind?

The train car doesn't answer.

Maybe Ecclesiastes? To everything there is a season, and time to...all purposes under heaven? A time to live and a time... That's trite as hell.

She thinks.

And thinks.

And...nothing. Whatever. She puts away the notebook and

pen and looks down the train car one more time.

SHERRY (*cont*)

Well. Guess it's time for me to go up front. Have a good ride, old-timer. This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Rockville.

SHERRY goes up one car to operate the train.

SCENE 2: SHADY GROVE TO ROCKVILLE

Enter: the train fills. Perhaps people move each other in and out of the train with their whole selves, finding the negative spaces and sitting then standing then being whirled out. As they move, they stare out blankly.

Someone or everyone or a recording or a scrawling of text on the wall speaks over the movement:

SPEAKER

How many asses do you think these seats see every day? I know someone has the fare-gate numbers but that doesn't account for people who jump it or get on the wrong train and have to switch back or children four years and younger or everyone's personal demons, right? I bet the numbers man rides too. I'm not trying to romanticize this bumbling metal bin, I swear, but there's a soul in this system and most days it feels...

SHERRY

Rockville, doors opening on the left.

**Exit. Enter.* The train doors close as a RUNNER dashes to the train. And misses.*

RUNNER

FUCK!

SPEAKER

...vindictive.

*The RUNNER turns away and the doors *jangle* again and open. The RUNNER turns back, joyous, and does a YES gesture before trying to jump on... and manages to get caught by the doors. Another *jangle* and the RUNNER can finally board.*

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont. Next station, Twinbrook.

SCENE 3: ROCKVILLE TO TWINBROOK

A REPORTER and CAMERAPERSON scout out someone to interview. They snag an unsuspecting rider, DEVON.

REPORTER

Hi! I'm Corey with WTF News and we're wondering if you would be willing to answer a few questions?

DEVON

What?

REPORTER

Answer a few questions? We're doing a Facebook Live event interviewing metro riders! It's about WMATA and the Red Line!

DEVON

What kind of questions?

REPORTER

Oh, really simple stuff, how often do you ride,

DEVON

What kind of segment is this for?

REPORTER

It's really short!

DEVON

Uh, god, yeah, okay, I'm the next stop though.

REPORTER

Great, thank you, thank you very much, we really appreciate it

DEVON

Yeah, yeah no problem. Where should I, where do you

REPORTER

There's fine, just make sure to talk to me and speak clearly, streaming is shit in here

DEVON

Uh. Sure. Yeah.

REPORTER

What's your name?

DEVON

Devon.

REPORTER straightens themself and waits for the CAMERAPERSON's cue. CAMERAPERSON holds out their phone, cues the REPORTER and presses the LIVE button.

REPORTER

Hey everybody, I'm Corey, this is Devon and we're back live! So we are now on the Actual Red Line in an Actual older metro car, interviewing every day riders. Thanks for joining us!

DEVON

Yeah, sure, sure. Happy to.

REPORTER

How are you doing today, Devon?

DEVON

I'm good, thanks.

REPORTER

Now, Devon, do you personally hate the Red Line?

DEVON

Personally?

REPORTER

Do you personally hate the Red Line?

DEVON

I'm not sure I understand the question.

REPORTER

Do you personally/hate the Red Line

DEVON

I understand the words you're saying and how they fit together I just... No, I don't personally hate the Red Line, no.

REPORTER

Would you say the Red Line is cursed OR the pinnacle of human failure, our new Tower of Babel?

DEVON

Neither?

REPORTER

Alright, well, would you say WMATA is directly to blame for all the deaths and injuries that have happened on the Red Line?

DEVON

What?!

REPORTER

Would you say WMATA is directly

DEVON

I-I don't think anyone wants terrible things to happen.

REPORTER

So you *don't* think WMATA should worry about employing measures to ensure the safety of their riders?

DEVON

I didn't say that!!

SHERRY

Twinbrook Station, doors opening on the left. Red Line train to Glenmont, your next station will be White Flint.

REPORTER

This is your stop!

DEVON

Fuck you.

REPORTER

Well, folks, that's the metro for you! We're going to jet to the next car for some more

REPORTER (*cont*)
metro horror stories from riders! Let's go!

**Exit.*

*INNOCENT BYSTANDER enters along with WET WIPES MAN. INNOCENT BYSTANDER sits across from the LADY.**

SCENE 4: TWINBROOK TO WHITE FLINT

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

So this one time I get on the train and there's this woman sitting across from me. And she's normal. I mean, like, that sounds rude but I wouldn't have thought anything about her, just some lady on the metro. So, she's looking out and this man, this guy who must've got on the train behind me, well, he... well...

WET WIPES MAN delicately removes the LADY's shoes and sets them carefully to the side. He pulls a wet wipe from the pack with a flourish and begins washing the LADY's feet as if polishing a nice pair of leather shoes.

She stares into the distance. Maybe she cries. This is a moment.

He puts the wet wipe in his pocket and rubs her shoes as if massaging a lover's feet before he helps her slip them back on.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

THAT, he... THAT. He did THAT. And there's no way she knew him, right? And I don't think, I don't even think he asked? But the three of us are all sitting there together, I mean, we're all aware this happened! Her and her newly cleaned feet and him and his Weird Wet Wipes and me. And we just ride out the rest of the stop in silence. Like nothing happened.

SHERRY

White Flint, doors opening on the left.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

...He must've asked, RIGHT?

Exit. Enter.

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Grosvenor-Strathmore.

SCENE 5: WHITE FLINT TO GROSVENOR-STRATHMORE

Men everywhere, blocking the aisles, unaware as they bump into people and generally take up space.

The women et al (to be played by trans and/or cis women and femme performers) perform an apology dance trying to find their seats, sorries and excuse mes abound.

THAT GUY, holding a notebook and phone, bumps into an already FED UP WOMAN as he tries to get a seat before her.

He proceeds to manspread.

This is the final straw.

FED UP WOMAN

Are you KIDDING me?

THAT GUY

Woah, what the hell is your problem?

FED UP WOMAN

You know.

THAT GUY

Did you want to sit?

FED UP WOMAN

Fuck you.

THAT GUY

No reason to be a bitch.

A beat. She knocks his papers out of his hand. He stands, menacingly. They stare for a moment. He moves forward and she snatches his phone and begins keep away.

THAT GUY
Are you KIDDING me?

FED UP WOMAN
What the hell is YOUR problem?

THAT GUY
Give it back.

FED UP WOMAN
Oh, did you want this?

THAT GUY
Fuck you.

FED UP WOMAN
No reason to be a dick.

She tosses it to ANOTHER WOMAN. He saunters over and holds out a hand.

ANOTHER WOMAN
Can I help you?

THAT GUY
Just give me my goddamn phone back.

She tosses it to someone else and now the most epic game of keep away begins, with the women et al joyously tossing and running and THAT GUY climbing over seats while the other men trying their damndest to ignore everything.

SHERRY
Doors opening on the left.

The phone ends back in the FED UP WOMAN's hands and THAT GUY faces her. We're almost scared he's going to hit her.

SHERRY
Red Line Train to Glenmont. Next stop, Medical Center.

**The doors open and as some passengers exit and enter the*

*FED UP WOMAN tosses THAT GUY's phone as far out the door as she can. THAT GUY scrambles off the train after his phone and misses getting back on the train, cursing outside as the doors close.**

Everyone left on the train stares at the FED UP WOMAN.

She notices, shrugs, and sits back down.

FED UP WOMAN

Last week a guy tried to jack off on me and I threw his pants off the train.

SCENE 6: GROSVENOR-STRATHMORE TO MEDICAL CENTER

If offstage, SHERRY enters. Is she in her driver seat? A special place in her mind?

The INTERVIEWER is never seen, just a voice, a distant memory passing through SHERRY's head as she speaks of other things.

INTERVIEWER

Hello, Sherry? Have a seat.

SHERRY

I've been here too long.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, I heard. We're running low on interviewers today. Set us all back. You took the Behavior Assessment Test, didn't you?

SHERRY

Just too fucking long.

INTERVIEWER

I thought you did, I must've just misplaced my notes. Doesn't matter. I'll need you to stay around after the interview for the physical, did they tell you that?

SHERRY

I was almost late for work yesterday. I'm never late.

INTERVIEWER

Good. Let's get started. I see you recently left a job at Clyde's. What was your reason for leaving?

SHERRY

I saw two popsicles melting on a bench in the station this morning. And I just, I got it, you know?

INTERVIEWER

Why do you want to work for WMATA?

SHERRY

Those melting popsicles, they have an entire history. They were made, they were bought, they were half-eaten alive, they were forgotten on a train bench and now they're forming a massive pool of sticky soup that someone's gonna be upset about and and and

INTERVIEWER

What would you say is your biggest weakness?

SHERRY

I never said I could make you care about the popsicles. I don't know many people capable of caring about the popsicles.

INTERVIEWER

Describe a time you assisted an unsatisfied client or customer and how you resolved the problem they had.

SHERRY

My mother never liked the way I loaded the dishwasher. Not just through childhood, I mean, she'd visit and we'd eat and as soon as I opened the dishwasher to put the plates and forks in she'd start pulling all the dishes out to reload the damn thing.

Recently I've taken to hand-washing everything.

INTERVIEWER

Why are you the best candidate for this position?

SHERRY

When I was a kid, I rode the train with paper glued together like a little booklet. I used to write poems and stories about the people riding with me. When one booklet filled I'd make another. On my sixteenth birthday I got a job and a journal. And honestly the only reason I wanted the job was to buy more journals. All my needs seemed simple and everything was enjoyable because I hadn't learned jack shit yet and now

Now I can't make sense of my own life,

SHERRY (*cont*)

My life has never been a story.

There's no rising action, no climax, just this endless expanse of moments and people I can't perfectly remember.

INTERRUPTING RIDER

Well, I think your understanding might be a little limited. You see, you're looking at your story inside out. How can you know what the climax is if you haven't reached the ending?

SHERRY

Please sit down or hold onto a rail while the train is moving.

SHERRY opens her notebook to try the eulogy again.

What we have once enjoyed

We can never lose;

All that we love deeply...ugh.

This isn't it, so:

Medical Center, doors opening on the left. This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next stop Bethesda.

Exit. Enter.

SCENE 7: MEDICAL CENTER TO BETHESDA

An undercurrent of constant conversation.

I can't believe it

Keep trying, man

I've got time

I'm out of time

Needed that coffee this morning huh

Chasing and chasing and chasing and chasing

It really calmed my mind, you know

Oh he's always been an asshole

Upper level management right

I know better

I know

I know

I know

I know

I don't know any better

Boots on the ground as it were

Oh, they've always been useless

It really messed with my mind, you know

falling and falling and falling and falling

Needed some soul this morning huh

I've got time

I'm out of time

I can't keep this up

Please believe me

*Train stops. *Exit. Enter.**

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Friendship Heights.

SCENE 8: BETHESDA TO FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

Simultaneous conversations.

FRIEND 1

I mean, I get it? Shit job, shit money.

FRIEND 2

Yeah.

SPOUSE 1

It's okay pay. It'd definitely help us stay out of the red.

FRIEND 1

But the truth is I'm busting my ass right now. You think part-time at two jobs would just equal full-time at another one, you know? But really I've ended up with two *almost* full-time jobs that both expect complete loyalty and flexibility from me and that'd be fine if I could *afford* anything after the commute and the bills and the fucking rent.

FRIEND 2

It costs too much to live.

FRIEND 1

Yeah. To be honest, I'm always one paycheck away from getting thrown out.

FRIEND 2

Do you think if one of them offered you full-time or, like, better pay it'd be easier?

FRIEND 1

Probably... I'd at least have the insurance. I haven't had new glasses since high school. I mean, these are fine, it's just...it'd be a bit easier, yeah.

FRIEND 2

Would you quit the other one?

FRIEND 1

Maybe? I mean, I'd have to get a really good pay rate to be able to quit either.

FRIEND 2

Is there one you'd like better if you were paid more? Maybe you could put a little more work into that one?

SPOUSE 2

And, just from hearing your side of the convo, they seem nice?

SPOUSE 1

Yeah! Yeah, I mean he seemed really friendly, made sure I knew exactly where it was, asked if I needed another day or two to prep since they responded so quickly.

SPOUSE 2

That's cool, not many places would care about that.

SPOUSE 1

Yeah.

Long pause.

SPOUSE 2

Soooo, what's wrong with it?

SPOUSE 1

What?

SPOUSE 2

You're doing that thing where you get all spacey and tell me how you know it's not gonna work.

SPOUSE 1

No, no. That's not, I don't do that. I do that?

SPOUSE 2

Only all the time.

SPOUSE 1

I'm not doing it now.

Pause.

FRIEND 1

Like I'm putting everything I got into them both now?

FRIEND 2

I'm sorry, that's not what I meant/I was just trying

FRIEND 1

I know. I'm not, don't worry about it. I'm just tired. You're asking if I'd like working at one more than the other?

FRIEND 2

Yeah.

FRIEND 1

I pretty much hate them equally...

Pause.

FRIEND 1

What about you though? How's yours going?

FRIEND 2

Oh, you know, shit job, shit money.

SHERRY

This is Friendship Heights, first station in the District of Columbia. Doors opening on the left.

FRIEND 1

Yeah.

FRIEND 2

Yeah.

SPOUSE 1

I'm not!

SPOUSE 2

I'm only asking because when you get that way you're usually right.

SPOUSE 1

My mom thinks she has a sixth sense about things like that.

SPOUSE 2

She told me.

SPOUSE 1

I don't think I do.

SPOUSE 2

I know.

SPOUSE 1

And I'm sure it'll all be great. I'm qualified for the job, they're very friendly, as far as I know the company doesn't have heinous skeletons in the closet.

SPOUSE 2

So what is it?

SPOUSE 1

I just, I don't want to say it out loud because it's selfish and stupid and isn't gonna affect how hard I work for this job or if I take it and I didn't want you to worry about that

SPOUSE 2

It's not what you want to do.

Pause.

SPOUSE 1

I'm scared there's nothing I want to do.

Exit. Enter

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Tenleytown-American University.

SCENE 9: FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS TO TENLEYTOWN-AU

SHERRY, in her spot.

SHERRY

I went out with a friend recently and as she talked about something important--I know it was important because she started crying and this friend never cries--I tried desperately to pay attention, I wanted to help but something pulled the back of my brain to the front, yanking out all these memories:

times my mother cried, times my ex cried, times I cried

the time I saw my cousin's cat die, the first death I ever saw, and I cried every morning for a week, begged to stay home from school, terrified of walking by roads, incapacitated when I heard cars behind me

the time I heard my ex sobbing in the bathroom and knew we were over,

the time I walked in on my supervisor at my first job crying in the walk-in fridge and knew I had to quit,

and it was all too much, I felt like it was all happening again, everything at once, the cat and the job and

I wanted to tell my friend, to finally release everything welling up in my mind, but I realized she was sobbing uncontrollably in my arms. I still have no idea what was hurting her.

Tenleytown-American University, doors opening on the left.

Pause.

I don't know if I'm more tired of driving or feeling. This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Van Ness-UDC.

Exit. Enter.

SCENE 10: TENLEYTOWN-AU TO VAN NESS-UDC

LOVER 1

Look, I'm not weird I don't try and talk to people on the train I keep my bag on my lap I look out or straight ahead and I know I'm about to like negate all this uh qualifying but I fell in love on a train car I know shut up shut up I know but I'd never seen you before and I ride this line every day and you sat so naturally like you rode this line every day too but but you haven't been in any of the cars since...

Now I change cars at every station and as I do I play our stops over and over in my head.

LOVER 1 sits opposite LOVER 2.

Their eyes meet. Twice. And they've fallen in love in a train car.

Everyone has fallen in love in the train car.

We're all in love in this train car and we move as it moves sliding closer to our new lovers and shyly turning away before everything's too much and the car erupts in a celebration of finding an other. Any other, really.

But:

SHERRY

Van Ness-UDC, doors opening on the left.

The train stops and everyone forgets immediately. They fall out of each others' arms, untangle themselves, blank faced as they pick up their bags. Except LOVERS 1 and 2.

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Cleveland Park.

Or maybe they do as well.

Exit. Enter.

SCENE 11: VAN NESS-UDC TO CLEVELAND PARK

As they enter:

BOB

I don't care; she didn't need to yell in my ear like that.

TANYA

She was pretty rude.

ROBERT, JR

Tanya, you don't have to - Dad, I told you when we picked you up, if you stand on the left of the escalator people are gonna get upset. It's just like driving.

BOB

Nothing like driving.

ROBERT, JR

You know what I mean.

BOB

Why're we riding this thing anyway? More stress than it's worth.

ROBERT, JR

You told us not to bother with anything special.

BOB

I would've paid for a taxi.

ROBERT, JR

That's great, but you *told* us to just pick you up the way we'd normally commute, not to go out of our way.

BOB

You ride this thing every day?

TANYA

Not every day, no. I drive into work sometimes.

BOB

Not Junior/though, huh

ROBERT, JR

Robert

BOB

Still hates driving?

TANYA

With a passion. He has, like, a personal vendetta against our car. He's always saying it pulls/to the right

BOB

To the right, yep. That's how he got outta lessons with his mom.

ROBERT, JR

Dad

BOB

Not 'cause she was worried about the car pulling, mind you; she just hated his complaining. I had to give him lessons after that. He did alright, actually, once he put his mind to it.

Pause.

BOB

She flown in already? Your mom?

ROBERT, JR

Yeah, she landed yesterday.

TANYA

She's been a great help already. We didn't know what to do with the programs--

ROBERT, JR

our friend was supposed to design them and then flaked--

TANYA

and your mom had a sample one ready in, what, an hour?

BOB

Never was a problem she couldn't fix. Did she bring her, uh, the kaboodle thing with the

TANYA

The kit, yes! The party emergency kit. She thought of *everything*.

BOB

It'll be good to see her.

Pause.

TANYA

So your hotel seems nice... My sister's staying there too, actually.

BOB

You should've let me pay for one closer to the venue.

ROBERT, JR

Dad

BOB

No, it's fine, I'm sure it's a great place, but I could've taken care of it on my own and then I could've gotten one a bit

ROBERT, JR

Stop it, Dad

TANYA

Robert, it's fine

BOB

So a double military wedding, huh? Both of y'all gonna be in uniform?

TANYA

Yes.

ROBERT, JR

We've gotten enough opinions on that, so

BOB

I thought it was nice. Important, even. For both of you.

TANYA

Thank you.

Silence. It's uncomfortable.

Maybe TANYA prods ROBERT, JR.

ROBERT, JR

Uh. Hey...Dad, we were, I mean, it's late notice so you don't have to do it if you don't want

BOB

Stop qualifying, Junior

ROBERT, JR

Robert.

BOB

Just spit it out.

ROBERT, JR

We wanted to know if you'd read a poem in the ceremony.

TANYA

We, uh, we picked it out together and we think it'd feel best coming from a family member who also served...

ROBERT, JR

But if you don't want to, it's fine, I mean, it's not like a flowery poem but

BOB

That'd be nice.

ROBERT, JR

Yeah?

BOB

Yeah, I'd like that.

SHERRY

Cleveland Park, doors opening on the left.

They prepare to leave.

**As they exit:*

BOB

So where're we eating tonight?

*Enter.**

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan.

SCENE 12: CLEVELAND PARK TO WOODLEY PARK-ZOO/ADAMS MORGAN

The ANGEL sings an aria, collects tips or passes out flyers for their show and then heads to the door, ready to switch train cars at the next stop.

A FORMER SINGER

You know, once... there was an opera singer

KID

Is this a true story?

FORMER SINGER

a beloved opera singer who travelled to

KID

Is this a true story?

FORMER SINGER

Just listen would you

KID

Sorry.

FORMER SINGER

So this famous singer, she travelled back to her family home to collect all of her childhood belongings--toys and clothes and fairy tale books--before her father sold the house.

KID

Why was he selling it?

FORMER SINGER

It wasn't needed anymore.

KID

Why?

FORMER SINGER

Do you want to hear the story?

KID

Sorry.

FORMER SINGER

So she's walking through the rooms, picking up the things that matter, the things with her sticker on them

KID

Her sticker?

FORMER SINGER

Everything had color-coded stickers.

KID

Why?

FORMER SINGER

So people knew what belonged to them.

KID

They didn't already know it belonged to them?

FORMER SINGER

Just listen. So she gets to the kitchen and there's this tiny crystal vase and it doesn't have her sticker on it and she knows she shouldn't take it but she goes ahead and slips it in her bag, doesn't even know why, just walks away with it.

Long pause.

KID

Then what?

FORMER SINGER

That's it.

KID

But what happened to her?

FORMER SINGER

I said that's it.

KID

It's not a story if it doesn't have an ending.

FORMER SINGER

Fine. One night she was practicing her favorite aria and at the climactic note the vase

FORMER SINGER (*cont*)

broke and a small shard lodged itself in her throat and she never sang again.

SHERRY

Woodley Park-Zoo/Adams Morgan, doors opening on the left.

KID

That's not even possible.

FORMER SINGER

I'm sitting here telling you facts, kid.

KID

Was she upset?

Pause.

FORMER SINGER

She finally cried.

Exit. Enter

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont. Next station will be Dupont Circle.

SCENE 13: WOODLEY PARK-ZOO/ADAMS MORGAN TO DUPONT CIRCLE

"THIS TRAIN" by Sister Rosetta Tharpe plays. SHERRY listens for awhile. A couple of verses if possible.

SHERRY

My mother loved this song. Every Saturday she'd slide Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "Precious Memories" out of the protective cover, her fingers only touching the very edges as she deposited it on our record-player. She'd play the album all the way through while cleaning and then take it right back to this song, playing "This Train" at least four times again.

It's a good song. The lyrics aren't true for this train but it's a good song.

To the train:

And, who knows, maybe you are bound for glory. I don't get to make those decisions.

I found this record a few days ago. It was in a box sitting on a cabinet filled with school projects and crayon drawings. One of the projects was a family tree, my genealogy.

SHERRY (*cont*)

This is what I know:

My name is Sherry. I began operating trains when I was about 25 years old.

I am the daughter of my mother, a teacher,
who was the daughter of her mother, Phyllis,
a seamstress, the daughter of Grace,
Grace was the daughter of her mother,
we think they lived somewhere near Virginia,
Grace's mother was the daughter of her mother,
who was the daughter of her mother,
who was the daughter of her mother,
and I'm sure this travels all the way back to Eve, whose lover was Adam.

Centuries of mothers bound for glory and I only have three names. I'm probably lucky to have this much.

I keep... I keep hoping,
if I can connect to these stories,
to these people I don't know,
to these ancestors who branch back to the furthest beginnings of our species, to the first cell, to the stretching of the universe...
if I can find a way to connect with these women who passed before I was even born
maybe I can still...maybe I can...connect...

Silence... Sherry tries the eulogy again.

I'm Sherry and, for those of you who don't know me, I'm the daughter of... Who wouldn't know me? Who would be at my own mother's--this is terrible.

Dupont Circle, doors opening on the right.

Exit. The HISTORIAN, FAST-FOOD WORKER, YOUNG BUSINESSMAN (played by a white person), FATHER, MOTHER & LITTLE JOHNNY enter.

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Farragut North.

SCENE 14: DUPONT CIRCLE TO FARRAGUT NORTH

The train takes off. After a bit it shudders to a halt.

SHERRY

Attention, passengers, we will be holding for the train on the platform ahead of us. Thank you for your patience and I'm sorry for the inconvenience.

Mass groans. A long pause. The audience should shift in their seats. Finally:

A YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

UGH we've been waiting here forever, right?well, right?!

Pause.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

What time is it?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Don't have a phone?

MOTHER

It's 11:20.

HISTORIAN

I was born the same year as the WMATA's Metrorail. The first time I can remember riding I must've been seven or eight? It was my aunt's funeral. I didn't know her well; I didn't know any of them well and I really didn't care. My mother had made me a new dress, a dress so dark and fluttery I felt like a galactic princess boarding a space shuttle... We were riding in from Maryland all the way to Farragut North and just past Metro Center our train stopped deep in the tunnel, shuddering a bit from the brake...It was so dark I couldn't even see the tunnel walls. They might not have existed, it was so empty. We were abandoned in the far reaches of the galaxy and to be honest I don't know what happened next I could've lived the last thirty something years stuck in this same train car aging as slowly as the stars.

FATHER

This is little Johnny's first time riding, actually.

He gestures toward LITTLE JOHNNY, a grown adult dressed as a child, squeezed between FATHER and MOTHER.

HISTORIAN

I hope he feels as important as I did.

SHERRY

Sorry for the inconvenience, passengers, we are still holding/for the train on the platform ahead of us.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

No shit!

SHERRY

We will continue shortly.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Yeah, right. This is the worst. It's like she's just TRYING to make me late.

He collapses on a seat.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Got somewhere important to be?

The YOUNG BUSINESSMAN ignores this. The HISTORIAN turns to the FAST-FOOD WORKER.

HISTORIAN

What about you? Can you remember your first Metro ride?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Yeah.

HISTORIAN

When was it? What stops?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Does it matter?

HISTORIAN

I'm just interested.

No response.

HISTORIAN

I like, I like collecting stories.

No response.

HISTORIAN

I'm a historian, it's in my nature.

No response.

HISTORIAN

What else are we gonna do?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Five years ago. Ish. Just moved here, needed a job. I got on the Green Line and rode to Gallery Place. Applied at the closest restaurant, interviewed, and got the job all in the same hour. Still work there.

HISTORIAN

Do you like it there?

FAST-FOOD WORKER does not like it there and feels this should be obvious.

SHERRY

Attention, passengers, I'm sorry for the inconvenience/but the train in front of us is being moved from the station.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

You've GOT to be fucking kidding me!

FATHER

There's really no need for that kind of language.

SHERRY

We will be holding while it is moved.

FATHER

What does that mean?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Probably had a malfunction.

MOTHER

They did that to a train I was on near Fort Totten once. Not the, not like the one in 2009, it was years later. I don't know what was wrong with the train. The operator didn't seem worried, just bustled around, lifting the big center seats up to look at switches and things under them while we just sat there high high high in the air/on the elevated tracks

FATHER

(shushing her)

Bupbupbupbupbupbup, you're going to scare little Johnny.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Well, how long did it take?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Got somewhere important to be?

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Of COURSE I have somewhere important to fucking be, doesn't fucking everyone?

FATHER

Look, can we please not use that kind of language in front of little Johnny?

HISTORIAN

Maybe we could, we could tell some more stories or something.

(to FAST-FOOD WORKER)

Why did you move to DC?

Everyone looks at FAST-FOOD WORKER.

Expectant pause.

Finally:

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Really? I don't know about you all, but I'd rather not.

FATHER

You don't have to be rude.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I'm...not being rude? Do you normally carry long conversations with strangers in public places?

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

You didn't mind saying snippy things to me.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Well, yeah, you're an asshole.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

You got that from the last couple minutes?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I read people well.

FAST-FOOD WORKER starts fiddling with their phone.

FATHER

How long have we been here?

HISTORIAN

What?

FATHER

I mean, when was the last time she even made an announcement?

HISTORIAN

I never know.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

It's been forever.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Shit.

FATHER

Not in front of little Johnny!

HISTORIAN

What is it?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

There's no service here. Of course.

The lights flicker. LITTLE JOHNNY screams.

They flicker again. FATHER, YOUNG BUSINESSMAN and FAST-FOOD WORKER are in a circle playing cards. LITTLE JOHNNY naps or plays on a set of seats nearby and THE HISTORIAN sits a bit farther off, rummaging through a bag. MOTHER sits near HISTORIAN, writing in a journal.

FATHER

Go fish.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Fuuuuuuu-

FAST-FOOD WORKER

SHH. Not in front of little Johnny.

FATHER

Do you haaaaave.....any twos?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Go fish.

FATHER

Really?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Think I'm lying?

HISTORIAN turns to MOTHER as the others continue playing.

HISTORIAN

We probably wouldn't be stuck here if they'd introduced the 7000 series trains earlier. Have you been able to ride on one yet?

MOTHER doesn't answer.

HISTORIAN

They're very sleek, bright stainless steel. The seats are okay. Not my favorite shade of blue. Fancy screens with ads, of course. But no carpet, thank god. Soon these orangey, aluminum ones will all be gone, scrapped for parts or used for emergency training or sold... End of an era.

MOTHER

You'll miss them.

HISTORIAN

I was born the same year as WMATA's Metrorail.

HISTORIAN turns back to the bag, rummaging again, before emerging victorious, a large box of breakfast bars in hand.

HISTORIAN

I KNEW I hadn't taken those breakfast bars out! Let's divvy some up!

HISTORIAN begins handing out two bars to each person.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I want another.

HISTORIAN

I'm sure you do.

HISTORIAN deposits the box back in the bag.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

You didn't even divide them all out. Is that gonna be your secret fucking

FATHER/FAST-FOOD WORKER

not in front of little Johnny

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

STASH?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Don't be that guy.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

What guy?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

THAT guy, the effing, the effing guy. In all the wilderness or like apocalypse movies. The one who gets all greedy and has to be taken out.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Taken out?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I will take you out.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Why does little Johnny need two? He's a BABY for godsake.

FATHER

Don't pick on him! He's got the best chance of surviving this!

HISTORIAN

I'm rationing.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I am CLEARLY the most fit here

Groans.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

AND therefore in need of more sustenance!

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN dives at LITTLE JOHNNY. Lights flicker.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN is tied up by his own tie at the far end of the train. The others are gathered, talking. FAST-FOOD WORKER is brushing LITTLE JOHNNY'S hair or playing a game with him.

MOTHER

We can probably let him go now.

FATHER

I'm just worried for little Johnny's safety.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I think he's calmed down.

HISTORIAN

Let's untie him after we eat.

THE HISTORIAN grabs the box and begins passing out one bar each, with a warning:

HISTORIAN

This is the last.

As the others eat their bars, the FAST-FOOD WORKER takes one to YOUNG BUSINESSMAN.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

We decided to let you out.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Thank god.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Whatever.

FAST-FOOD WORKER begins untying the YOUNG BUSINESSMAN.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I was... I was thinking.

No response.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Maybe we could, like team up...

Pause.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

No.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Look, do you think the others are gonna last? They definitely aren't as strong as we are, if you and I took that dad out or/got the

FAST-FOOD WORKER

No

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Hear me/out

FAST-FOOD WORKER

No

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

If you'd just let me tell you this plan I OW

FAST-FOOD WORKER begins tying YOUNG BUSINESSMAN back up again, calling back to the others:

FAST-FOOD WORKER

He's still dangerous; we should give it some more time!

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN
I've got to get out of here OW

Lights flicker.

Everyone is asleep except FAST-FOOD WORKER who sits with a flashlight, watch duty. MOTHER joins, offering a pack of saltine crackers.

FAST-FOOD WORKER
Where did you-

MOTHER
I remembered I stuffed a packet in Johnny's diaper bag.

FAST-FOOD WORKER eats a cracker and begins coughing, trying to stay quiet.

FAST-FOOD WORKER
Oh, god

MOTHER
Fuck, are you okay, fuck

FAST-FOOD WORKER
No, no, I'm good. They were just, they're dry.

MOTHER
Oh, sorry, I didn't even think about it.

Everything's still, suspended.

FAST-FOOD WORKER
Why'd you give them to me?

No response.

I noticed you two aren't bunked near each other anymore.

MOTHER
That's nosy.

FAST-FOOD WORKER
Yeah.

MOTHER

We separated, yes. And you care because?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I don't. I was just....nosy. What're you working on? In the journal?

MOTHER

Would you like to see it?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Yeah.

MOTHER

Actually, could I read it to you?

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Yeah, sure.

MOTHER

I saw someone today, someone
who looked like you. Your hands
her hands your eyes her eyes
and she sat just feet away from me.
I could feel you stirring I could feel
a quickening in my nerve endings
but I had picked the wrong train
and suddenly she blurred by,
a blue and black streak hurtling
mid-air farther and farther away.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Oh.

MOTHER

Yeah.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

I'm sorry.

MOTHER

It's okay.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

It's pretty good.

MOTHER

You're very beautiful.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Thank you.

MOTHER

I just thought you should know.

They sit in silence. FATHER gets up.

FATHER

(to FAST-FOOD WORKER)

Go on to bed. I've got next shift anyways.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

(to MOTHER)

You okay?

MOTHER

Good night.

FAST-FOOD WORKER finds a spot to settle. MOTHER and FATHER stare at each other for a moment.

MOTHER takes a blanket to another area and rolls up. FATHER sits, resigned.

After a moment:

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

SSSss. Hey! Over here! SSSSsss.

FATHER comes over.

FATHER

What?

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

You want out too.

Pause.

FATHER

Yes.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I can get us out. I have a plan. I just need someone to let me out of this tie.

FATHER

I don't think-

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

What did you eat on your last birthday?

Pause.

You can't remember, can you? But there's a part of you, a large part of you so sure, so terrified that it was a breakfast bar.

FATHER is horrified. It's true! Lights flicker.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN holds a pen like a weapon against LITTLE JOHNNY. Everyone begins speaking at once.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Everyone stand back!

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Why are you, nonono, let him go

HISTORIAN

Look there's no need for this, I'm sure we can come to an agreement.

MOTHER

(to FATHER)

What are you doing?

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Give us the rest of the food and we'll be on our way.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN digs the pen into LITTLE JOHNNY's neck a little.

HISTORIAN

What the/FUCK

LITTLE JOHNNY

Fuck! Not in front of little Johnny!

Pause. The eye of the storm. FATHER has made his choice.

FATHER

Give us the food.

HISTORIAN

THERE ISN'T ANY MORE FOOD!

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I HEARD IT. I HEARD SOMEONE EATING LAST NIGHT. DON'T LIE TO ME.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

Just, just put down the pen, this isn't necessary, we can figure something out.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

I KNOW WHAT I HEARD

FAST-FOOD WORKER

It was me. I found some crackers, okay? I should've shared.

FAST-FOOD WORKER begins to inch closer.

FAST-FOOD WORKER

We'll let you leave, please just let go of little Johnny

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

BACK OFF OR I SWEAR TO GOD

He swipes the pen at FAST-FOOD WORKER, who leans back. LITTLE JOHNNY bites YOUNG BUSINESSMAN's arm. He screams and drops LITTLE JOHNNY. FAST-FOOD WORKER ducks another swipe, grabs YOUNG BUSINESSMAN's wrist, twists and makes him drop the pen before pushing him back into a seat where he stays and groans. FATHER grabs the pen and faces MOTHER, who brandishes her writing pen.

MOTHER

Please don't do this.

FATHER

You started it.

*And right as we're sure someone is going to suffer blood loss
from a pen stabbing:*

SHERRY

Attention passengers, thank you so much for your patience. The train at the platform
has moved and we are on our way. Train moving!

Pause.

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

What time is it

MOTHER

11:35...

THE HISTORIAN

It's only been fif/teen minutes

FATHER

I know

FAST-FOOD WORKER

This didn't happen

THE HISTORIAN

But

FAST-FOOD WORKER

It didn't fucking/happen

LITTLE JOHNNY

Not in front of little Johnny!

*They gather their things and stand at the doors
uncomfortably.*

FAST-FOOD WORKER
(to MOTHER)

Good luck.

MOTHER

Thanks.

SHERRY

Farragut North, doors opening on the left. This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next stop Metro Center.

**Exit.
Intermission if you want one.*

ACT II
SCENE 15: FARRAGUT NORTH TO METRO CENTER

Enter. A STUDENT enters, laughing at something their friends on the outside said.

SHERRY

Stand back, stand clear, doors closing.* Next stop Gallery Place/Chinatown.

The STUDENT sits in the window seat of the train beside an EXPRESS READER. The STUDENT tries to look into the next car by leaning towards center a bit but accidentally bumps into the EXPRESS READER.

STUDENT

Sorry, sorry.

Pause. Then:

Have you ever been on the train just looking at the train car in front of you

EXPRESS READER

Oh, sure

STUDENT

And then

EXPRESS READER

I mean, usually I bring a book or

EXPRESS READER gestures at the Express.

STUDENT

And then there's a, like, bend?

EXPRESS READER

Like a turn in the track?

STUDENT

Yeah, like a turn in the track, even a small one, just a bend, and the car in front turns away

EXPRESS READER

The one in front of us

STUDENT

Yeah, the one we're looking at

EXPRESS READER

It just turns on the track like a car on a track with a turn would do and

STUDENT

And for a sec... For a second it looks like there are two cars... the real one and another one

EXPRESS READER

A metaphorical one?

STUDENT

No that's not right

EXPRESS READER

A metaphysical one?

STUDENT

Oh, I don't know, I guess, and it feels like you could open the door and walk through into a train car that chose a different path.

EXPRESS READER

Are there people there?

STUDENT

Yes, like... shades of people who followed the real path, like

EXPRESS READER

Spirits

STUDENT

Shadows, shadows of themselves.

EXPRESS READER

Do they act the same

STUDENT

No, I think they're different... More... true

EXPRESS READER

Look. There's a bend.

Now: a parade. The riders of the imaginary car have crossed into this one. Everything is bright and colorful and everyone is swept up in it; there are streamers and confetti and flowers being passed to audience members, this is a celebration.

And then it pauses as everyone listens to SHERRY.

SHERRY

My footsteps echoed behind me, crunching the fiery leaves as I crunched them. I felt my own presence walking behind me--arms clutched tightly against the cold, absentmindedly staring at the back of my head, wondering what I thought as I wondered what I thought.

Then:

This is Metro Center, connections to the Orange, Blue and Silver Line on the lower platform. Doors opening on the right. Next stop, Gallery Place/Chinatown.

The parade dissolves into normal riders exiting and entering onto the train.

SCENE 16: METRO CENTER TO GALLERY PLACE/CHINATOWN

CHARLEY, a veteran in an old wool coat, walks down the aisle, asking for change to fill his fare card and get out of the station. Finally he stops, maybe he rests next to an audience member, and begins:

CHARLEY

I haven't seen my wife, my son in more than a decade. My former bed's probably full of rats or new lovers or what are those little bugs, bed mites, is it bed mites?

I am the man who never returned. My current bed's this rocking metal bin, and I float aimlessly wherever it carries me.

I've been gone twenty years. I've lost all my friends; I've lost everyone. I saw my mother's picture on the obituary page of an abandoned paper and I wasn't even mentioned because I am long gone, long dead, long lost...

I think we won the war? Oh, hell if I know, hell if anyone knows, it doesn't matter much, I still had everything taken away and I'm not sure what I want anymore I am only sure of this ever-present pit, this gut-wrenching need. This need to go home. I-I, I...I...

I won't bother you any longer, I'm sorry.

CHARLEY gets up and moves down the car.

Change? Do you have any change? I just need change, some change for exit fare.
Change?

SHERRY

This is Gallery Place/Chinatown, connections to the Yellow and Green line on the lower platform, doors opening on the right!

Pause.

Large groups on the platform: if you find one car is congested move to the next. Please board safely and efficiently. This is a six car train, please use all available doors.

**Exit. Enter.* CHARLEY stays on board. TOURISTS, loaded with Smithsonian shopping bags and stuffed backpacks, push through the doors and TOURIST WITH FANNY PACK jumps through right as they close. Their TOUR GUIDE is left off the train. The horror! FANNY PACK yelps in fear, hands against the window.*

SHERRY

Next stop, Judiciary Square!

SCENE 17: GALLERY PLACE/CHINATOWN TO JUDICIARY SQUARE

FANNY PACK

No! Our guide! They left her!

TOURIST 1

She didn't make it?

TOURIST 2

SHE DIDN'T MAKE IT

TOURIST 3

NOOOoooooooo!!!!

FANNY PACK

These doors are broken, they should've reopened, I was coming through as they closed!

UNLUCKY RIDER

They don't sense motion. They just close... Like they say they will. That's why you shouldn't try to run through them.

The TOURISTS stare in shock and huddle closer together.

UNLUCKY RIDER

She'll be fine. She'll just get on the next train.

TOURIST 3

But the next train, it said it was fifteen minutes away.

UNLUCKY RIDER

Well, yeah...

TOURISTS stare, hoping for an answer to this horrific situation.

UNLUCKY RIDER

I mean, you can just wait for her at the station, right?

FANNY PACK

She was taking us to the Postal Museum, does this train go to the Postal Museum?

UNLUCKY RIDER

That's Union Station, right? It's just a couple of stops.

Blank stares.

UNLUCKY RIDER

I mean, the train doesn't drive straight up to the museum but it'll get you close.

TOURIST 3

We don't have a map!

TOURIST 2

THE GUIDE HAS THE MAP

UNLUCKY RIDER

Look, she'll probably be on the train after this one. If you're that helpless without her, just get off at the next stop and jump on the next train.

FANNY PACK

JUMP?

UNLUCKY RIDER

Board, I meant board the next train... please.

TOURIST 1 sees an empty seat and pushes TOURIST 2 to sit with them. They move through, bumping other passengers with their bags. Suddenly, a noise, a slightly louder whoosh. Probably just another train passing somewhere nearby. The TOURISTS gasp and regroup.

TOURIST 1

What's that?!

FANNY PACK

We should ask the driver.

TOURIST 1

How do we ask the driver?

TOURIST 3

Isn't there an emergency button?!

TOURIST 2

IS THERE AN EMERGENCY BUTTON

UNLUCKY RIDER

NO. Please. Don't, it's fine. It's probably just another train passing somewhere nearby.

TOURIST 3
How close do the other trains get?!

TOURIST 2
COULD IT HIT US

UNLUCKY RIDER
NO, you're fine, it's not gonna....

Pause.

UNLUCKY RIDER
It's probably not gonna hit us.

The TOURISTS huddle together. CHARLEY walks up.

CHARLEY
Could you/spare any

TOURISTS scream and back up.

SHERRY
This is

TOURISTS gasp in fright. They're getting whiplash.

SHERRY
Judiciary Square, doors opening on the right! Thank you for choosing WMATA and have a good day!

The TOURISTS run away. Enter.

SHERRY
Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Union Station.

SCENE 18: JUDICIARY SQUARE TO UNION STATION

SHERRY
How do you... How do you move on without what's left behind?

Not the things you choose to leave behind, not the broken chair you put on the curb, the itchy sweater you give to a cousin, the ex you leave in Baltimore, the job you want to quit.

SHERRY (*cont*)

More like

Like the great purse you left on the MARC before switching to the Red Line on your way home and you're near New York Ave before you even realize, it's too late, that train is gone, you're never getting that purse back, and worse yet it's out of style, they don't even sell your favorite purse anymore.

Like that.

Something like that.

Pause.

Sometimes it feels like if...if I cling to every memory, if I replay them over and over, if I just pay close enough attention, nothing will be left behind.

I think about the constant smile in the corner of my mother's mouth, the time I laughed so hard rice came out of my nose, the feeling of fingers brushing against the back of my neck, the sound of aluminum cans bouncing away from the tips of my toes, the texture of the wool coat my father brought back from war...

Pause.

This is Union Station, connections to AMTRAC, MARC, and VRE. Doors open on the left. Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Noma-Gallaudet U.

SCENE 19: UNION STATION TO NOMA-GALLAUDET U

*A WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE slowly battles it into a seat.
She has a patch from giving blood.*

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE

My medicine cost two hundred dollars, pills sixty five, I do not have this. This is why I give of my blood. Bad blood. It's funny they want my blood. I want someone else's.

Pause.

No one wants her to continue.

Everyone is quiet and staring out and putting headphones in and trying to ignore her.

I wanted to be a nurse. I came here to study but you have to...

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE (*cont*)

Where I am from. Where am I from.

You have to pay for knowledge then tests then license then jobs how can I do this?
Some people nurse without a license because the cost is too much.

Where I am from. Where am I from.

Look out there. Look outside the window. Look out there. This is America. America
America America. And yet this is more my my mine home than...

Where I am from with my family I should be working in the White House.

Someone begins watching a video on their phone. It'd be great if the audience could see it as well. They let the video play through the phone speakers so the sound fills the train car. The person speaking is a Silicon Valley exec or well-known athlete or celebrity musician or host on a morning show.

Shelter I won't go to a shelter no.

Where I am from. Where am I from.

SPEAKER ON VIDEO

You know, it's true there's no place like home. No place like the home where you were born and raised, so maybe I'm a little biased but... Is there really any country better than America? I mean,

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE

Look out there.

SPEAKER ON VID

Look at me!

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE/SPEAKER ON VID

This is America.

SPEAKER ON VID

And this great country is such a gracious home for so many people. Like, if I can make it, if I can work my way here, you can achieve your dreams, too! Now I know things feel a little scary right now and that makes sense, but let's not forget that *America is great*.

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE

Really? America is shit. But I chose this, this home. This is more my home than... I met

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE (*cont*)

a man and woman, Sarah and Abe,

The video cuts out as the person watching locks their phone and puts it away, getting ready to get off the train at the next stop.

WOMAN WITH LUGGAGE

just adopted a baby. She was not given the egg so they got one from someone else. They chose one. She says this baby is more hers than one from her egg. And this choice, this I understand.

SHERRY

This is NOMA-Gallaudet U, doors opening on the left.

PROTESTERS enter, on their way to an demonstration. They are silent but excited.

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Rhode Island Avenue- Brentwood.

SCENE 20: NOMA GALLAUDET U TO RHODE ISLAND AVENUE-BRENTWOOD

An unseen force begins to whip around the PROTESTERS. They fight through the force, moving closer and closer together and eventually forming a blockade. They say nothing as the force tries to rip them apart and off the train, one by one. Or maybe they find a way to push it off, standing together by the end.

Exit. The SELLER, POLO SHIRT, SIBLING, and GLOVE OWNER enter.

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Brookland-CUA.

SCENE 21: RHODE ISLAND AVE-BRENTWOOD TO BROOKLAND-CUA

The SELLER is a travelling salesman confident in their pitch, a successful businessperson.

SELLER

Found Articles, here! Get your Found Articles! Baubles, trinkets, halves of pairs, nothing you asked for but definitely something you'd like to take with you!

POLO SHIRT

What did you call them?

SELLER

Found Articles.

GLOVE OWNER

Where do they come from?

SELLER

Oh, you know, people leave them on a seat, or drop them by the escalator.

POLO SHIRT

Shouldn't they be called Lost Articles?

SELLER

They aren't lost, are they, I found them.

SIBLING

Are you sure... well, isn't...

SELLER

I'm not a thief.

SIBLING

Oh, oh no! I'm sorry I wasn't

GLOVE OWNER

I like it! It's clever.

POLO SHIRT

I bet most people do. As a society we're very voyeuristic.

SELLER

What?

POLO SHIRT

Voyeuristic!

SELLER

I'd say people tend to see themselves more than others.

GLOVE OWNER

What do you have?

SELLER

I found some beauties along the Orange Line this morning. There's a silver chain broken at the clasp, a much-loved blue pen, a glove with a powerful dark patina, a bright turquoise scarf tassel with--

SIBLING

That pen...

SELLER

You like it?

SIBLING

My older brother used that brand.
He used to, to put the pen in between his teeth like a,
you know that thing, you know, like a dancer with a rose
in his teeth, with the petals dangling and the thorns broken off.

And he'd just chew.
Chew chew chew.
I thought it was so gross.
Chew chew chew chew chew chew chew.

The pens, they always ended up like this one, a little bent in the middle and textured...
I don't know how he wrote with them but every night
I fell asleep to the point scratching against paper in short strokes,
words rocking me through paper-thin walls.

One of my friends, an only child, once asked me what it's like to have an older brother.
Wasn't too bad, I guess.
Mostly we just avoided each other.

SELLER

He still use that brand?

SIBLING

He doesn't write anymore...

SELLER

That's unfortunate.

SIBLING

I'll take it. How much?

SELLER

Whatever's in your pocket.

POLO SHIRT

Doesn't seem like a profitable way to do business.

SELLER

You'd be surprised.

SIBLING pays.

GLOVE OWNER

Wait, that's--that's my glove!

SELLER

I'm afraid you'll have to prove it.

GLOVE OWNER

I recognize it!

Pause. This is not enough, so:

They were brand new. I bought them with my first paycheck at my new job. Red gloves with fleece lining. And touch screen compatible! Which seemed like a luxury at the time...

But...

I dropped the right one at Metro Center and a train vaulted it into the air, whipping it about until it landed on a grate across the tracks, perfectly posed like someone delicately resting their hand on a lover's arm.

I stared at my right glove every day waiting for the train on my way to work.

The fingers started to blacken--I couldn't tell if they burned or just collected dirt--and once the palm was plump with a rat making a nest. Every morning I watched my right

GLOVE OWNER (*cont*)

glove dip farther and farther into the grate as my right hand became number and number in the cold.

It was during this winter that I became increasingly aware all my favorite love poems were actually tragedies.

SELLER

Alright.

SELLER passes over the glove. The GLOVE OWNER puts it on. They show it off to someone else, demonstrating the touch screen compatibility.

While SELLER and POLO SHIRT continue, the GLOVE OWNER dances with the glove. Not silly dancing, a genuine celebratory exultation.

Maybe the SIBLING dances with the pen. Maybe not.

The moment passes. GLOVE OWNER remembers how red the glove used to be and notices the stark difference between then and now.

POLO SHIRT

Just like that? You don't need to see the matching glove or something?

SELLER shrugs.

SELLER

I found it on a grate at Metro Center.

POLO SHIRT

Excuse me, I just, I have to ask, how did you start this work?

SELLER

You don't really wanna hear all that.

POLO SHIRT

I do, really.

SELLER is pleased.

SELLER

After I finished mapping the vast ghost habitat in the sewers of London--this was also after my work cross-breeding emotions and instincts in Norway--I travelled on to LA to catalogue rote human existence. It was there I met the President of the now defunct Nicholson Lane Station Leatherworkers.

POLO SHIRT

Leatherworkers?

SELLER

Leatherworkers. Of course that business fell under which was a blessing in disguise since now I have my dream job.

Beat.

Nothing for you in here, is there.

POLO SHIRT

No, no I don't/imagine so.

SELLER

No, no I guess not.

POLO SHIRT

Thank you.

SHERRY

Brookland-Catholic University of America, doors opening on the left.

Exit. Enter.

SHERRY

Red Line train to Glenmont, next station Fort Totten.

SCENE 22: BROOKLAND-CUA TO FORT TOTTEN

SHERRY tries the eulogy, once again.

In *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman wrote "Do anything, but let it produce joy." Even in the most mundane of tasks, in her most every-day days, my...

This sounds like a paper for school; I'm writing a damn essay.

SHERRY (*cont*)

Walt Whitman once said “do anything but...”

This sucks, too. Fuck it:

If I had to pick one thing--just one thing--I loved about my mom, it'd be how much she enjoyed choices. All she could see were all the good things that could happen. Like, you know the pros and cons list? You got the pros over here and the cons over here...

Like my job, you know as a total hypothetical here, the pros and cons of staying at my job. Pro - the pay is good. Con - tourists. Pro - benefits. Con - everyone hates you. Pro - funny stories. Con - have to be available weekends and holidays. Pro - I like some of my coworkers... and what if the next place is worse?

So anyways, Mom never, uh, she never did it that way. She did it all pros. The pros of the one option and the pros of the other.

Pros for staying - pay, benefits, funny stories

Pros for leaving - see Dad on more holidays, less tourists, learn something new?

My mother savored choices like spices. Even the small ones. Even the mundane things.

It just stresses me the hell out.

This is Fort Totten, connections to the Yellow and Green Line on the lower platform. Doors opening on the left!

Exit. Enter

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont. Next station, Takoma.

SCENE 23: FORT TOTTEN TO TAKOMA

Everyone has earphones in.

Someone hums along to a song.

Someone turns on a radio and begins dancing.

Someone starts mouthing the words to the song.

Someone starts quietly singing.

And this grows to everyone leading the entire train car (ideally audience included) in a rousing verse, ripping out their earphones, and singing the whole song.

The song ends. Everyone puts their earbuds back in as

SHERRY announces:

SHERRY

Takoma, your last station in the District of Columbia, doors opening on the left.

Exit. Enter.

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont. Next station, Silver Spring.

SCENE 24: TAKOMA TO SILVER SPRING

FORMER LOVER 1 barely makes it through the doors and turns to see FORMER LOVER 2. This is not necessarily the same couple from the LOVERS scene.

FORMER LOVER 2

Hey.

FORMER LOVER 1

Oh, hi. Hi, how are you.

FORMER LOVER 2

Good, you?

FORMER LOVER 1

I'm good, I'm good.

FORMER LOVER 2

On your way home from

FORMER LOVER 1

Work, yeah, you too?

FORMER LOVER 2

Yeah.

FORMER LOVER 1

It's weird I was. I was just thinking about you the other day.

FORMER LOVER 2

Really?

FORMER LOVER 1

Yeah. I have some music for you. One day. I'm not sure when, but you need it.

FORMER LOVER 2

Can I have it now?

FORMER LOVER 1

I'm not ready.

FORMER LOVER 2

I am.

Pause.

FORMER LOVER 1

Have you ever listened to a song and thought of someone?

FORMER LOVER 2

Of course.

Pause.

Why can't I have it now?

FORMER LOVER 1

Because I'm not ready.

FORMER LOVER 2

Why?

FORMER LOVER 1

Because when I give it to you, I can't have it anymore.

FORMER LOVER 2

Why?

FORMER LOVER 1

Because it'll be yours. And you'll know. And I'll know. And everything will be ruined. And I'll never listen to it again

FORMER LOVER 2

That's dramatic

FORMER LOVER 1

I'll throw away the album

I'll skip it if I accidentally leave it on a playlist

I'll yell no when it plays on the radio and scramble to change the station

I'll hate every movie it plays in

any crush who likes it will be off limits

I'll never go to that coffee shop that always finds the songs I love that will be the songs I can't hear without grinding my teeth after I give you this music.

FORMER LOVER 2

Then never give it to me.

FORMER LOVER 1

I have to.

SHERRY

This is Silver Spring, doors opening on the left.

FORMER LOVER 2

This is/me.

FORMER LOVER 1

Yeah, I know.

FORMER LOVER 2

I-uh-I hope I see you again... sooner next time...

FORMER LOVER 1

Yeah, bye.

SHERRY

Stand back, stand clear, train moving.

The train inches ahead.

SHERRY

Train moving.

Inch. Stop. Inch. Stop. Inch inch inch. Stop. Finally the doors open and FORMER LOVER 2 can escape.

Exit. Enter.

SHERRY

This is the Red Line train to Glenmont. Next station, Forest Glen.

SCENE 25: SILVER SPRING TO FOREST GLEN

Everyone rides the train in silence and stillness.

A CRASH--people swing to the side.

A BANG--they swing back.

This continues and builds into a crashing beat, people adding to the rhythmic song with pounds on the walls or legs or seats, saying snippets from previous scenes. They aren't riders anymore; they are the traveling train and Sherry's memories and a bubbling mess in her mind that refuses to be contained.

And SHERRY is on the loudspeaker trying to keep the feelings at bay, repeating something like "Everything's fine, folks, no need to worry. Everything's fine, folks, everything's fine, everything." etc. We can hear her radio crackling and maybe even "I can't hear you, Central. I can't hear you, Central."

And this builds and builds until it is a cacophonous, raucous mess and SHERRY can finally admit, can finally say what has been true since the beginning of her day, since before even--since her mother passed:

SHERRY

NO. EVERYTHING'S NOT FINE. EVERYTHING'S NOT FUCKING FINE.

Silence as everyone breathes and lives in this. This moment of silence continues as long as SHERRY needs. The audience can wait. Then:

SHERRY

Forest Glen.

Exit. Enter

SHERRY

Next station, Wheaton.

SCENE 26: FOREST GLEN TO WHEATON

TEEN 1

What's wrong?

TEEN 2

There was a rat, on the, on the tracks.

TEEN 1

It scared you?

TEEN 2

It was dead.

I couldn't tell what it was at first,
the legs were so disjointed.

I thought it might be an old glove but then I saw the tail and whiskers...

How did that even happen?

Somewhere else, maybe even talking to an audience member.

MAN

And staring at it

I suddenly remembered my high school crush.

He used to fold his legs around each other
when he sat on the floor of the gym, more
pretzel than criss-cross. He moved to the West
Coast and the loss of him ruined me for a whole
semester.

High school sucked.

Somewhere else.

A SPOUSE

I just realized, I used to buy flowers from this guy
outside Dupont Circle, Tom, his name was Tom.

I used to buy flowers from him once a week,
just a half dozen for my wife. I just realized I haven't

A SPOUSE (*cont*)

seen him for six months, longer even.
I still buy flowers every week.
Just not from Tom.

Somewhere else.

A WOMAN

I can't stop thinking about it.

OTHER WOMAN

I know.

A WOMAN

I can't help but think I should've done something.

OTHER WOMAN

I know.

A WOMAN

At least sent my condolences, paid my respects.

OTHER WOMAN

I know.

A WOMAN

I'm sorry.

OTHER WOMAN

I know.

And now TEEN 2 stands and leads a procession down the train car, a very respectful funeral for the rat.

They walk all the way down to SHERRY, who stands stiffly and formally.

There is a moment of silence and then she begins her eulogy.

SHERRY

My mother was a kind woman who took joy in every moment, even the... even the...

She can't continue. A eulogy isn't right.

SHERRY

I'm sorry, this, this doesn't work, give me. Just give me a second.

A breath.

SHERRY

Wheaton, doors opening on the left. Next stop Glenmont, last and final stop for this train.

SCENE 27: WHEATON TO GLENMONT

SHERRY is in her usual place. Her MOTHER is unseen throughout this and SHERRY never acts like a child. (In the original production, the ensemble read SHERRY'S MOTHER'S lines.)

Lighting creates the physical scene for us. When they appear, the fireflies flicker across the train car, the room, the audience, even glowing three dimensionally.

SHERRY

I've always loved stories. Fairy tales, fables, parables, memories. Probably came from my father. Dad used to wear this sweatshirt that said "Storyteller" and every time he put it on my mom would kiss his cheek and say "you know, most liars don't advertise."

Dad said stories were greater than facts.

I think everyone who rides Metrorail has a metro story. I've been operating this thing for years and everyone I've met wants to tell me about the time they were on the train and... well... you know. I've told you some of them. Maybe one day I could collect them all.

But for now, here's my metro story. And my mother's. The only story I ever heard her tell.

Preparatory pause.

My mother and I'd taken the Red Line into the city to visit my aunt for dinner. She lived near this small church with a grassy playground and while I was there my aunt let me borrow a mason jar to catch fireflies. On the way home I asked my mom why fireflies

SHERRY (*cont*)

light up and she told me

SHERRY'S MOTHER

There's a chemical in their bodies that makes them glow and they use it to warn predators.

SHERRY

Warn predators?

SHERRY'S MOTHER

They taste bad so predators attach that taste to the glow. And they also glow to attract mates. A male firefly will glow and flit about the air to attract a female firefly below.

SHERRY

So the whole way home I was enamored with these fireflies who kept calling out for other fireflies who weren't even there. The stops went by quickly and suddenly the operator called Silver Spring, end of the line.

When I was a kid, Silver Spring was the very end of the line...

My mother took a moment to rifle through her bag, looking for a, a, a

wallet or a cough drop or a tissue, I want to remember, I wish I could remember what she searched for but the sparkling lights held my gaze...

and before she could... before she even knew what was happening, I opened the jar and shooed the fireflies into the train car.

The train lights flashed to warn any sleepers and in the dark everything paused as the fireflies lazily waltzed about the car, flickering lights.

Felt like we were in that moment

in the dark

on the train car

forever.

Feels like I'm still there.

I turn to see my mother, desperately trying to fix my disaster, and she holds the stars cupped in the palms of her hands.

A moment. Let the fireflies glow.

SHERRY (*cont*)

Last stop, Glenmont. This is the end of the line, folks, end of the line. Have a good evening and thank you for riding Metrorail.

End of play.