

“We aim to remember what we choose to forget”

-Saul Williams

NOTE: *When I started this play I thought it was going to be an adaptation of Kurt Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions. I was wrong.*

(At the top of the show a projection screen is located downstage, blocking the remainder of the space. I imagine this projection screen dangles from the sky on a giant rolling pin. To the side stage right sounds good to me if it does to you, is the "board" or "booth" depending on which theatrical tradition you come from. This should be a simple table, facing the audience, where The Stage Manager and his or her amigos and assistants can call the show. Writing of which, this would be a good time for said Stage Manager to enter the stage and sit behind the table with said board.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Start of show. Fade house lights.

(The house lights fade to a dead black. By the way, the audience should be well lit until this moment. And it is important to know that the audience should be able to hear every cue The Stage Manager utters. I've added a few cues for dramatic flair, and I hope The Stage Manager doesn't mind. And, while I'm at it, The Stage Manager may wish to speak some of the stage direction in this script to help clarify a few things.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Start of "Media." And...3...2...1...

(The sound of movie projector is heard as various lights begin to flicker across the projection screen. The numbers "3" then "2" then "1" are seen on the screen, then a quick cut to the words "...Or My View From The Gershwin Hotel" is seen. Perhaps these words are in a glorious type. Perhaps this film appears to be amateurish. Now, it's important to write that I have penned a few screenplays and television shows and find the usual format of those scripts to be tedious. Thus, I am just going to write what happens on the screen and you can use your imagination with regards to things such as camera angles. And, if you find yourself being a person who is filming this episode of the performance, please be curious, have fun, and use some artistic license. A person without curiosity and artistic license is like a toothless beaver.)

THE FILM: ...Or My View From The Gershwin Hotel.

(Jacob Murakami sits in his bed. He is a white American male in his thirties. He is in room 1313 at the Gershwin Hotel. It is raining. He wears shorts and little else. The room

is a mess. There is a portable computer, ink pens, paper, and a television that hangs from the ceiling on meat hook. The television is on, but the picture is fuzzy, and the sound cannot be heard. Jacob Murakami picks up the phone and dials a number on a menu by his bedside. The phone rings. A person answers.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

Delivery.

(The voice on the phone doesn't understand.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

Delivery.

(The voice on the phone still doesn't understand.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

May I speak to someone who knows English?

(The voice on the phone doesn't understand.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

English.

(A new voice is on the phone. This voice knows him.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

It's me. I'm hungry. I want noodles. And shrimp toast. Yeah. Still room 1313. Then check to see if you have shrimp toast and if you don't call me back and I'll order something else. I'm paying in cash. No more checks. I promise.

(Jacob Murakami hangs up the phone and walks to his window. It looks out on a brick wall. The phone rings. He answers.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

Hello.

(Through the phone.)

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Hello, you. The front desk won't give me your room number.

(Everything stops.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

I'm in 1313.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

God. Peter put you on the thirteenth floor?

JACOB MURAKAMI

The hotel put me on the thirteenth floor.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I'll be right up.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Stop.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

You don't want me to come up?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I didn't say that.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Then what are you saying?

(Silence.)

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Then. I'll be right up.

(He hangs up the phone. He puts on pants. He puts on a shirt. He looks in the bathroom mirror and checks his eyes and his teeth. He quickly brushes his teeth. A knock at the door is heard. He stops.)

(Silence.)

(Another knock at the door is heard. He walks to the door and opens it to reveal The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat. She is about the same age as Jacob Murakami and wears, well, a yellow raincoat. Do you think I am making this up as I go along? She holds in one hand a bottle of wine. Probably "Oliver," or another average bottle of Midwestern table red.)

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Well? Are you going invite me in?

JACOB MURAKAMI

How did you find me?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

How do you think? Peter. Peter told me.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I didn't know you still talked to Peter.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I didn't know you still talked to Peter. He told me he gave you a job. And he told me he gave you money. I didn't know you needed money. You should have come to me.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I didn't need his money. And I don't need yours.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

That is not what I heard. Are you going let me in or not?

(She walks into his room, just walks right by him, and looks around, goes to the bathroom and feels his toothbrush.)

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Your teeth smell good. Are they health?

JACOB MURAKAMI

Yes.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

A girl won't like a man with bad teeth.

JACOB MURAKAMI

That is what you said the last time we met.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

And when was that?

JACOB MURAKAMI

Jim and Seliah's wedding.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Has it been that long?

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why are you here?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I'm here to see you, dummy.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Not the hotel. In New York?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I'm here to see you. Dummy.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Don't call me "dummy".

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Don't you think it is time to come home, Jacob? Here. Let's have a glass of wine.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Peter doesn't want me drinking while I'm working for him.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Oh.

JACOB MURAKAMI

When are you leaving?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Whenever I want.

JACOB MURAKAMI

You want to sleep with me, don't you?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I knew you were going to say that. You always think women want to sleep with you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

They always do.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I am sorry I hurt you. But you hurt me first. You aren't working on the story for Peter are you?

JACOB MURAKAMI

The story for Peter is no good. I'm working on something else.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Like...

JACOB MURAKAMI

A play.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

You don't know anything about plays.

JACOB MURAKAMI

That is what makes it all so perfect.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

What is your "play" about? It's about me, isn't it?

JACOB MURAKAMI

You get more and more predictable every time I see you.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I like being consistent. What is your play about, Dummy?

JACOB MURAKAMI

It's about...

(Just then the picture begins to get fuzzy, a little blurry, there are projection issues, and the entire film stops. The screen goes black, and then reads "Jacob Murakami". Jacob Murakami enters the space between the audience and the projection screen wearing a suit, but no shoes. These cloths he put on as The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat arrived.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Enter Murakami.

Movement One: Introduction

JACOB MURAKAMI

(Addressing the audience.) Good evening, or afternoon if this is matinee. My name is Jacob Murakami, and I am the author of this play. I would like to start this performance by thanking you all for coming, and by saying that I have never actually written a play before, nor do I go to plays, or musicals, or the ballet. In fact, I haven't seen a play since I was in high school fifteen years ago, when I sat through something called *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, or *A Man Who Came To Dinner*, or something like that. It's really not important. I only went because a friend of mine was in it. The story was about a radio personality in a wheelchair trying to trick people into liking him. It wasn't very good. The kid who played the lead had a fake beard stapled to his face. I could see blood dripping down his chin. After each performance, e was taken to the hospital. I've always thought there had to be a better way to apply a beard to a teenagers face than staples, but I honestly don't know much about theater, or how any of this works. I asked six different people what a dramaturge does, and I've gotten six different answers.

THE STAGE MANAGER

A dramaturge tells you what's wrong with your play. Then, you buy them drinks.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I've learned the only person you can trust in the theatre is The Stage Manager. Where was I? *The Man Who Came To Dinner*. It was a simple play. It was a play about disruption. It was formulaic and child could have written it. But I have never figured out why it is called "*The Man Who Came To Dinner*." Although I never go to the theater, and I don't know many people who go anymore, I do think of that story often. It was simple. Much more simple than the real word. That play was just people, moving around in time and space. One thing seemed to happen after the other and everything ended so perfectly.

(The sound of "machines" can be heard from behind the screen.)

(Silence.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

I'm writing this play at the Gershwin Hotel in New York City. The Gershwin is a remarkably bad hotel that likens itself to a haven for artists from all over the globe. I have been here for weeks, maybe months. It's 2007, I think. March something, I'm certain of that. But, I don't know the exact date. I don't remember any dates anymore. It's cold and raining, and the Gershwin put me on the thirteenth floor. Yes, the Gershwin Hotel has a thirteen the floor. It's the top floor and the ceiling is smothered in skylights that leak all over the floor with this damn rain, and the rain is heavy as lead. Did I mention it is raining? I did, didn't I? The shower doesn't work, or at least work well. There is no hot water and little water pressure. And the only window I have opens to a brick wall. It's what I imagine East Germany was like when there was an East Germany. I'm a journalist. Before this, I was in Beirut, writing an article about something. Something about the Beirut drink scene, and Beirut cocktails. I don't really recall what I was writing exactly. I think it was how beautiful Beirut had become, and maybe it was a sign of progress. I was in that city when the Israel's came, and dropped bombs. Someone hired U.S. Marines to get me out of Lebanon and I can't recall how I ended up in this hotel. I think the marines got me out on train and I have no idea where that train went. I know a childhood friend of mine is the editor of a fancy magazine and offered me a job. That's why I am here.

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Childhood friend.

(The sound of a phone ringing. Then, the sound of a recorded conversation.)

THE VOICE OF A CHILDHOOD FRIEND

I heard you need money and a place to stay.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Everybody needs money. Everybody needs a place to stay.

THE VOICE OF A CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Don't talk smart with me. I want you to write a story about the Gershwin Hotel.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why?

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Because. You do need money, and I've made an arrangement for you to stay for free. There's a rumor the hotel is for sale and it might make a good story. And I think you need to work on a story that is less complicated than your Lebanon article. Something simple.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Will it get published?

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Maybe.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Fine.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

How are your teeth?

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why are you asking about my teeth, Peter?

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

I heard they are turning brown.

JACOB MURAKAMI

What, do you have spies looking after me? Some are turning brown. Some are staying white. You know I drink a lot of coffee.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

I want you to go to a dentist.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I don't need a dentist.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Go anyway.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why do you want this story about the Gershwin?

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

It's supposed to be wonderful. And there is something about "wonderful" being for sale that I like. Jacob. You have to stay sober.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Fine.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Or I won't pay.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I said "fine."

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Hey. I wrote a joke this morning. What happens when two snails fight? They slug it out. You like it? I'm gonna send it to a bubble gum wrapper.

JACOB MURAKAMI

It has potential.

THE VOICE OF THE CHILDHOOD FRIEND

Jacob. Stay clean, or I won't pay.

(The conversations ends with the sound of a dead phone. Then, the sound of "machines" can be heard from behind the screen again.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

When I first got to the Gershwin I did everything I was supposed to do. I talked to everyone, but no one would say anything. This hotel has no story, and I need to write something for my friend. And I need to write something for myself. I have locked myself into this room until I'm done, and when I am done I am never coming back. I'm going to go to the desert, or some place where it never rains. I have not left my room in ten days. I have my food delivered to me and the bellboy does my laundry. I've spent all my money,

(Jacob Murakami cont.)

and all the money Peter gave me to write about this hotel. The only thing I can write is “The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat” over and over and over again. I wrote that on the bathroom wall forty two times with a piece of charcoal. Last night, or maybe two nights ago, I had Chinese food delivered to my room, shrimp toast and noodles with slices of cow, pork, cat, and eel. I have never been to China, but I have always wanted to go. I’ve heard it is wonderful. And in the bag of food came a flyer for an Irish play at a theater on East 59th Street called “Wampters, Foma, and Granfalloon.” The flyer had a picture of a girl wearing a Chinese dress and red lipstick and laughing in my face. The play looked fun. I wanted to kiss the girl on the advertisement. I decided to write my own play. This is that play, and this is a play about disruption.

(Sort of.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

The story you are about to see is absolutely true, or at least I keep telling myself that. Thus, I make no claims of narrative, common sense, or remote safety for the audience or the actors on stage. I make no claims of thought or reason. The truth doesn’t work that way. Now, the dialogue is more than likely going to be very bad, this is my first play after all, but what fun is good dialogue, and if we aren’t going to have some level of fun with this I just don’t see the reason for doing this play at all? I have decided to break this play into large fragments that slip in and out of time. And, as opposed to plays like *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, time and space will not move across the stage. Time and space will stay in one place, and the stage will move around it.

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Nice music.

(Nice music can be heard softly playing.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

When I look at the hotel map of New York, my eyes are always drawn to the yellow subway line. I bet that train has a mind of it’s own, and does what it wants. The yellow line leads right out to Coney Island. And I can’t help but wonder if all trains at one point time stopped at Coney Island. Everyone who takes the train to Coney Island has the same intention. They want to recapture long-gone memories, and feel innocent again. Because

(Jacob Murakami cont.)

nothing ever changes in Coney Island. It's been the same place since it started. Frozen in time.

(Then the projection screen lifts into the sky revealing the beach of Coney Island with a large silhouette of various fun-time rides, such as a rollercoaster, a parachute drop, and a mighty wheel. Other rides could include The Tidal Wave, Swinging Fire Ball, the largest Bumper Car in Coney, Giant Power Surge, The Storm, Giant Century Wheel, Crusty Crab Wheel, Demolition Derby, Super Fun Slide, Mini Indianapolis, Giant Avalanche, Starship 2000, Drive in Go-Round, Rocking Tug Boat, Crazy Bus, Tilt-a-Whirl and Bumble Bee. Hanging above the stage is a giant digital clock that counts down the hours, minutes, and seconds. This clock is based after the Nathan's 4th of July Hotdog Eating Contest Clock. On the beach stands Juan Antonio, Penelope, "The Girl...", and "The Boy...". I place "The Girl..." and "The Boy..." in quotations because these two actors will play various characters across the course of the play. It might be an idea to have these two multi-talented actors carry a flip-board that says "...as Velvet Freeze" to show the audience whom they are playing at the moment. Now, just because one character may have the name "The Boy..." this doesn't mean the actual character is young. It could mean that the character is childish, immature, or innocent. Perhaps even proud, or petty. Allow the actor, let alone the director, to use their brains. An actor without brains is like a beaver with no teeth. Trust me. I went to college. Also, these characters should be played by any race of actor. Don't be influenced by names. For example, I chose Juan Antonio, because that name sounds cool. For all I know he might be Irish. Let's get back to the play, shall we. These four look out onto the audience and sway to the nice music.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

Welcome to Coney Island. One day before the last Mermaid Parade.

(The music slowly moves from "nice" to what I like to call "evil". The four actors stop swaying to the music, look at one another, and then scatter. Jacob Murakami grabs a chair out of the audience, places it next to The Stage Manager, takes a bottle of wine out from under the "board", opens it, sits down and watches the action on stage. It should be noted that this is the same bottle of wine The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat brought him in the film that started the whole evening off. By the way, I think Jacob Murakami should drink straight from the bottle.)

Movement Two: Everything

(The Boy Named Monday and The Girl Named Tuesday stand together on the beach holding hands. They are dressed as refugees from a time long ago, where apple pies sat in open windows, people said “Golly” and meant it, and no one locked their doors. They address the audience.)

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I'm not from New York City...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We are not from New York City...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

...but Coney Island is one of my favorite places on God's green little earth. My first visit to Coney Island...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Our first visit...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Was it your first visit too?

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Yes. I've told you that before.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Our first visit was in September of 2007. I knew nothing of Coney Island...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We knew nothing of Coney Island...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I'll get it right someday, "we" knew nothing of Coney Island, except for that I knew it had an extremely interesting history. Nonetheless, I..."we"... still wanted to go. It was a warm evening and my girlfriend...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Then girlfriend...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Then "girlfriend", and I took the subway from Time Square.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

...it was a long one!

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

It felt like time stopped on that subway car. As we approached the shore, we passed the trailers and boarded up shops, and the occasional guard dog behind the chain link fence.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

The dogs really weren't that mean. They were more "sad" than mean.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The Astro-Land was deserted.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

It was a ghost town. It felt like no one was within miles of us. It was just you and me. And no one else.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

There we were, walking toward the ol' boardwalk - two Canadian tourists. I've heard from so many friends that Coney Island was a place where you can get hurt. But there was something that felt so very safe about it.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We began walking along the boardwalk and noticed that one of the bars was open. It was called Ruby's...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

My mother's name is Ruby...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We grabbed a quick beer...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

You had beer, I had water.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

My husband doesn't drink...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

You drink enough for the both us...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Not funny...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Oh.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

...and we were told we could take my beer anywhere we wanted, as the police just don't hang around Coney Island that time of year.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The man at Ruby's deep fat fried an Oreo cookie for me.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We shared it.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I burnt my tongue.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Do you remember that man's name?

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

No. Do you?

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Sammy. I love that name. So simple. And it could mean so many things. We strolled up the pier, took a few photos, saw the locals fishing, saw a magnificent sunset, and went into Brooklyn for pizza. The pizza shop we went to had books for drink coasters. I had *The Man Who Came To Dinner*.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I had *The Little Prince*. The best line in that book is "*On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur, l'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.*"

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I'm so glad you know French. We hopped on the subway and went back to Manhattan. Back to Times Square. It was one of my favorite experiences, and to this day, I just can't explain why...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We can't explain why.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We went home and made bumper stickers for Coney Island we gave our neighbors and friends at church. Coney Island: Land of Dreams.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Coney Island: Land of Desire.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Coney Island: A thousand grains of sand.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Coney Island: We've got booze!

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Coney Island: We've got Oreos!

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Coney Island: Let's have sex!

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Coney Island: Fall in love.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Coney Island: It's okay to touch your wife!

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Coney Island: as far from the Square of Time as you can get. I don't like Times Square. They have a Red Lobster. I just don't like Red Lobster. That day was one of my favorite experiences...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

One of our favorite experiences...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I can't explain why.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We never rode a ride at Astro-Land, and now they are ripping it all down. I'm very sad about that.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We are very sad...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We are very sad. I want to watch the sunset one last time. And remember that Oreo which burnt your tongue.

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. The sound of the ocean.

(The sounds of the ocean are heard.)

Movement Three: Meet Juan Antonio

(Juan Antonio enters. He wears little, and drinks a rather fancy looking beverage. Penelope, "The Girl...", and "The Boy..." all stand around him and adore what he has to say. All of them have drinks and should feel free to laugh and smile until the last stage direction of this "movement". Juan Antonio can have oodles of charm, when he wants to. Even The Stage Manger is impressed with Juan Antonio. In fact, I think I'm a little smitten with him as well.)

JUAN ANTONIO

...And the only reason I am assigned to interview her is because I just got back from China, and people think I am gonna be able to talk to her, and I have no idea what to say, let alone what to say in Chinese, but that is hardly the point. I pick her up from the airport, but I explain to her that I don't have a lot of time to deal with her, but I'm gonna deal with her anyways because I'm nothing but a good guy, and the first thing she wants to do is hit the five and dime for a few supplies, and she placed "supplies" in quotations with her fingers in the air, and I have absolutely no clue what kind of "supply" she might be able to obtain at a five and dime? Shampoo? Feminine napkins? Those things you can get at anyplace, but she instructs me to go a five and dime she read about in newspaper or something. And I am thinking, she is the biggest movie star in Hong Kong, right? Who am I to tell her what "supplies" she might need?

PENELOPE

So, she does speak English?

JUAN ANTONIO

As good and you and me. And I found out, at this five and dime, you can buy a fortune telling, wish giving fish, a flimsy piece of plastic that comes in a birdcage, and grants wishes, and tells fortunes, and on and on.

PENELOPE

(Laughing.) Why a birdcage?

JUAN ANTONIO

(He places his finger close to her lips.) Shhhhhhhhh. I am trying to tell a story. We pick up the fortune telling fish, and she disappears behind a big blue dumpster in the parking lot. She comes back two minutes later and tells me she “will” be having Indian food for dinner. So I take her to the best Indian restaurant in Austin, TX, which is pretty damn good if I say so myself, and she orders almond-yogurt chicken, curried spinach, eggplant, lamb, she orders half the menu. And she orders three Bombay martinis, infused with Indian chili peppers, and she weighs, like 85 pounds so she gets intoxicated rather quickly, and it is clear she is drinking for speed not distance, and all she wants to do is talk about how China is better than America, and all I want to do is interview her about her first English language film...she puts her foot in my lap, right as the almond-chicken thingy arrives. And she dips her finger in her drink and starts rubbing the martini on her neck and lips. There must be a hundred people in the restaurant, and I’m just trying to get my interview, and she keeps asking if I have any tattoos, and do I want to see hers, and I just can’t believe any of this. And the bill comes. And it’s two hundred and fifty dollars. And before I can say anything, she says “I didn’t bring my wallet.”

PENELOPE

A girl always brings her wallet.

JUAN ANTONIO

And I realize, I have no real interview, and now I have to pay for this. And I ask her why she didn't bring money and she say "the fish told me not to".

THE STAGE MANGER

Warning. The sound of Hell.

(The sound of Hell happens. This sound makes everything stop. Then the sound of "machines" can be heard. Time and space shifts around the stage. Everyone runs.)

(Sort of.)

Movement Four: Our Situation

(When trying to run away from "the sound of Hell", Juan Antonio is thrown back on to the stage from the right wing. He stops. He reflects on this. He attempts to exit stage right again. He gets thrown back on to the stage. He stops. He reflects. He tries to exit stage left. He gets thrown back on to the stage. He reflects. He sits on the beach. A girl whistling at him from the left wing can be heard. He notices her, than ignores this.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. The sound of the ocean.

(The sound of the ocean is heard. I can be heard through out this movement.)

(Penelope enters. She might enter from the left wing. She wears a Chinese dress. She goes to Juan Antonio. She sits next to him. She runs her fingers in the sand.)

PENELOPE

You were quiet last night.

JUAN ANTONIO

I didn't mean to be.

PENELOPE

You're never quiet.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm always amazed you can hear me through the wall.

PENELOPE

Why did you break up with me?

JUAN ANTONIO

You're married.

PENELOPE

That never bothered you before.

JUAN ANTONIO

You being married don't bother me.

PENELOPE

Then why did you break up with me?

JUAN ANTONIO

I didn't know we had something that could be broken.

PENELOPE

You stopped calling.

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't need to call. You can hear me through the walls.

PENELOPE

And you are always quiet.

JUAN ANTONIO

Your hair smells good. Is that a new shampoo?

PENELOPE

I haven't washed my hair in weeks.

JUAN ANTONIO

It still smells good. I can smell it from here. It smells like coconut. Your husband must like it.

PENELOPE

You always know what to say.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah, I always do, don't I? Your husband is in Japan?

PENELOPE

I don't care. He wrote me a postcard. I got it yesterday.

JUAN ANTONIO

What did the postcard say?

PENELOPE

I haven't read it yet.

JUAN ANTONIO

What do you think it says?

PENELOPE

Nothing special. His postcards never say anything special. I'm tired of his postcards never saying anything special. I imagine my husband is having an affair. With your wife.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm not married. You knew that.

PENELOPE

I like to imagine my husband is having an affair with your wife.

JUAN ANTONIO

What do they do?

PENELOPE

What do they not do? They eat together. They sleep together. She likes to eat hot mustard on crackers while my husband holds her hand. And to get back at them, you and I run away together.

JUAN ANTONIO

Where do we go?

PENELOPE

China.

JUAN ANTONIO

Is that why you always wear Chinese dresses?

PENELOPE

I like Chinese dresses. I wore one to the Mermaid Parade one year, and all the men whistled at me when I wasn't looking. I've always wanted to go to China. But my husband won't take me. You've been to China. You can be my guide.

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't think my wife would cheat on me.

PENELOPE

Why not?

JUAN ANTONIO

It's not responsible. And I would be married to a responsible woman.

PENELOPE

When you are married, the only person you have to be responsible to is yourself. You don't have to give a damn about the person you are married with.

JUAN ANTONIO

Then I wouldn't be married.

PENELOPE

How much longer are you going to be in my building?

JUAN ANTONIO

My train leaves in a week.

PENELOPE

Then?

JUAN ANTONIO

“Then” what?

PENELOPE

I'm beginning to hate you. (*She takes a moment to reflect, and think carefully on what she is about to say.*) I know what love is. I saw it once in commercial for a movie when I was a girl. *The Blue Lagoon* starring Brooke Shields. She was playing on beach with boy. The local cinema refused to show it. A Christian owned the local cinema, and he refused to show it. I've thought of a way we can be together. It will be hard, but we can make it work. We can get on the train and see where it will take us.

JUAN ANTONIO

Don't say that. Just don't.

(Silence. She stops playing with the sand and looks at him for the first time. A whistle is heard from stage left. He looks to wing left. She doesn't.)

PENELOPE

All I...

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't want to talk about this right now.

PENELOPE

Will you stay for the mermaid parade? I thought we could go together. It's going to be the last one of its kind. If you would rather not, I don't mind.

(He slowly moves his hand to hers. They hold hands and look out onto the ocean.)

JUAN ANTONIO

Fine.

PENELOPE

You don't want to...

JUAN ANTONIO

I said "fine."

PENELOPE

You still owe my husband rent. I will pay it for you.

(Disruption.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. French music.

(A nice romantic song begins to play and overtake the sound of waves. I imagine this song is sung in French.)

JUAN ANTONIO

Thank you.

(A whistle is heard from wing left. Penelope quickly looks towards the sounds of the whistle, then runs off stage leaving our good man, Juan Antonio. The sound of the nice romantic song, which I imagine is sung in French, gets louder, and louder, and louder, then suddenly stops. Juan Antonio looks to the audience as if they are the oceans. He reflects.)

Movement Five: Matinee

(Juan Antonio is still reflecting on the beach. The Girl Named Sally-Reno enters. She is dressed as Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis, specifically the outfit she wore when her husband was murdered in front of her, eats a corn dog on a stick with one hand, and has a postcard in the other.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Mr. Antonio. Mr. Antonio.

(Juan Antonio doesn't answer, for he is still deep in that reflection I told you about.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Mr. Antonio. You have mail.

JUAN ANTONIO

Who is it from?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

The return address has no name.

JUAN ANTONIO

Then what is the return address?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

42 Gold Street. Albuquerque, New Mexico.

JUAN ANTONIO

What color is the ink?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

It's black.

JUAN ANTONIO

Are you sure it is black? It's not blue?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Why does it matter? It's black ink, Mr. Antonio. It's a postcard. Do you want me to tell you what is on the front as well? It's a picture of a sailor kissing a mermaid.

(He reflects. She takes another bite out of the corn dog. Some time does a small shift.)

JUAN ANTONIO

You're back early.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I was only gone for the weekend.

JUAN ANTONIO

I've never been to Atlantic City. Was it wonderful?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Don't bother going. The food was disgusting.

JUAN ANTONIO

That corn dog will ruin your dinner.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

The corn dog is my dinner, Mr. Antonio. Don't you want your postcard?

JUAN ANTONIO

Shouldn't you be having dinner with your boyfriend?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I told you. He is not my boyfriend.

JUAN ANTONIO

He seems to think different. He sure as hell calls you his girlfriend.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I'm not his girlfriend, and I am not having dinner with him.

JUAN ANTONIO

Then have supper with me.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I'm already having my supper. It's the corn dog. I'm eating. Here. In front of you. Waiting for you to take your postcard. Anyways, you have so many girlfriends, I am certain you won't eat alone.

JUAN ANTONIO

Especially if I eat with you.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I'm not in a good mood today.

JUAN ANTONIO

You are never in a good mood.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY RENO

I might get drunk and slap you again.

JUAN ANTONIO

You didn't slap me, you hit me.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I might get drunk and hit you again. Would you please take your postcard?

JUAN ANTONIO

You might get drunk and hit me again? That's fine. I like it. I adore it. I'm used to it.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY RENO

My sister never lets me drink.

JUAN ANTONIO

You been drunk every night since I got to Coney Island.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY RENO

She lets me have one drink. And then I wait for her to drunk and then have more. She thinks it is funny.

JUAN ANTONIO

I like funny girls. Do you like being fun?

(She places the corn dog in her mouth slowly and seductively, as if hinting towards oral sex, then takes a chomping, shark-like bite out of the poor corn dog.)

(A moment of silence for the corn dog.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

(Eating with her mouth full of corn dog. In fact, some of the corn dog falls out of her mouth.) I already have dinner. See? *(She opens her mouth the show the chewed corn dog.)* Are you gonna take this postcard, or am I gonna throw it in the water?

(He takes the postcard from her. Reflects, then looks at the note.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. First postcard.

JACOB MURAKAMI

(Speaking to Juan Antonio from behind the board, while Juan reads the note.)

Dear Juan,

I hope this message finds you well. My spies, and yes I have what I like to call spies, who are former students and associates, have kept me informed on your whereabouts and exploitations. I've read most of your collections of travel essays, the ones on Route 66 are my favorite, but they seemed rather derivative of Mark Twain's earlier writings and got bored with them. Yet, you have never written the article on Coney Island, and it's destruction I hired you to write almost a year ago. My spies say you're slumming around Astro-Land. You're a good writer, Juan, and could really be somebody if you got shit together. I am coming to New York. I would like to see you and I want my article. I will be arriving...

JUAN ANTONIO

...he's coming tonight...

JACOB MURAKAMI

...and we can meet in the lounge of my hotel. I am staying at the Gershwin in the Flatiron District. I am assuming you still drink heavily.

Sincerely,

D.A. Williamson

PS

I just wrote this joke. Battered Women. They sure taste great with lemon and tartar sauce. What do you think, old friend?

JUAN ANTONIO

I think you're tasteless.

(Everything stops. Time shifts for a moment.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Who's it from?

JUAN ANTONIO

A man who writes bad jokes. He's my editor. The man I work for. That is what I do for a living. Sort of.

(Sort of.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

That is why you can't pay rent on time.

JUAN ANTONIO

I have to clean myself. Wash my hair. He'll know I've been drinking. I'm gonna need a shirt. He can't see me look like this.

(He stands, begins to exits. Stops. Goes to The Girl Named Sally-Reno, kisses her on face, then leaves. For some reason, that only this actress can know, she allows him to kiss her. The Girl Named Sally-Reno stands alone. Reflects. Takes another postcard from her Jackie-O inspired outfit and begins to read as Jacob Murakami takes control of the board and calls the show.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

Warning. The second postcard.

THE STAGE MANAGER

(Speaking to The Girl Named Sally-Reno from behind the board, while she reads the note.)

Dearest Sally,

I would like to see you, just one last time. Then I will let you go. I write songs for you, songs with no music, that I play on a broom while I sit on my bed. I write these songs using a picture I took of you the night we rode the big wheel on the beach, and danced, danced, danced. I keep the picture under my pillow and look at it right before I turn the lights out. You smile in this picture and I let that feeling you must have had then be my feeling as I sleep. The picture of you is tinted blue. You have dark hair in it, and wonder if it is still the same color...

(...The Girl Named Sally-Reno should have different colored hair...)

(The Stage Manger cont.)

...you wore a strapless silver dress that shines in the photo. You told me that night, you wished your life was like that of Jackie Kennedy's that you wanted to hold JFK and kiss him when he died. I can only write so many songs about the same face. I need to see your face again. See how it has changed, if it has changed. One last time. Then I will stop writing letters. And maybe I will stop playing my broom like a dumb boy. I need to see you again.

I am waiting for your answer.

I Love You,

The Boy Named Hugo Jones

(The Girl Named Sally-Reno sits on the beach and looks out at the audience, as if they are an ocean. She reflects. Now, this may sound odd, but she touches the end of her corn dog. A whistle is heard off stage. She reacts to this whistle. The sound of Hell happens. Then the sounds of "machines" can be heard, like the heart of a hungry animal. The Girl Named Sally-Reno may want to sit on the beach, but something tells me she might just run to communicate that "something wicked this way comes.")

Movement Six: Welcome To The Last Days of Astro-Land

(The sounds of "machines" rumble, as The Boy Named Velvet Freeze enters the playing space. He is dressed in what I'm guessing to be a cross between cowboy duds and a bright explosion of neon lights. Regardless, he does have a Bible in one hand and megaphone in the other. He barks at the audience with passion as rides in on a giant metal fish we shall call "Francesca." Francesca is large and looks like the kind of fish

you would buy at five and dime to tell fortunes. If at all possible, try to obtain 500 volunteers to play various Coney Island sideshow characters to back these two. If not, just keep to Velvet Freeze and the fish.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

I wanna thank you all for coming here today. I love you all. You know that, don't you? I know that's gross for a complete stranger to say, but I do. Love you all. I love all the people of Coney Island. And I need to ask you a question. Are you dissatisfied? Are you disappointed? Do you have disdain? God knows I did, brothers and sisters. God knows I did. I looked out of my apartment window just last summer and saw how sad my neighborhood had become, our neighborhood, with the crime, and the immigrants, and the bastards from hell. When I looked out on to the Coney Island Boardwalk I had to ask myself "is this the kind of place I can be proud of?" Is this the kind of place where we can raise our children and attract people from all over the seas and have them say out loud "I wish I lived in good ol' Coney Island"! Francesca, stop for a sec, will you honey?

(Francesca stops moving. The Boy Named Velvet Freeze gets off her back. A voice from inside the metal mouth of Francesca says "I'm thirst." The Boy Named Velvet Freeze puts his megaphone on the ground, and holds his Bible with both hands.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

Yes. Yes you are. And so is I. Thirsty for goodness. Do we really wanna have some honest words here? Do we really wanna talk the talk and do the real listening? Folks. One year ago, just last summer it was, for the first time in my life I was ashamed to be a New Yorker. I was ashamed to live in what was, and what should be, the greatest city in the greatest nation in the world. A place where people from all over God's green little earth can feel like they can do anything they want, and it'll all be okay. A place of freedom. A place of ideals. You know, people in other countries, Christian countries, Muslim countries, Jew countries, or whatever, who feel like they are gonna get blown to bits and pieces, or have their throat cut, or have their daughters raped and killed and feed to wild pigs, they could come to America and just be safe. They can live their lives. Isn't that the Christian thing to do? To welcome all our friends, regardless of what they believe and say, "Settle down here, we'll have some food. Together. My children can play with your children. You can tell me about where you come from, and I can tell you all about me, and we never have to worry about roadside bombs, or earthquakes, or danger. We aren't supposed to have those things at Coney Island. Last summer I looked out my window, right over there, you can see my window right there, two floors up, five doors down, and I saw the Mermaid Parade. I saw topless women. I saw a topless woman, with a fish bottom, and plastic harpoon glued to her nipple, and what I guess must have been strawberry jam dripping down her stomach, as if it were blood. And I saw men, dressed as sailors, kissing each other. Worst of all, I saw people pay money to fire little balls of

(The Boy Named Velvet Freeze cont.)

hot paint at a young black boy for fun. That attraction was called “Shoot The Freak.” My neighbor is an African American. He comes from a place called the “Congo” where people aren’t safe to live side-by-side. His wife was sexually assaulted there. Coney Island is a place of dreams, not nightmares. How can we take our children, and our neighbor’s children to the beach with a scene like that? To a scene where blacks are called “freaks” and you can shoot them.

(The Boy Named Velvet Freeze squats as if he is in front of a neon campfire, takes out a camping mug, and bottle of water, pours himself a little water, and sips. The voice from Francesca the fish yelps “My water dish is empty.”)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

All our water dishes are empty, aren’t they? Didn’t have much to believe in anymore. So I went out to the prairie. Just jumped on train to escape the madness. Jumped on that yellow line right there, and went out past New Jersey, and West Virginia, and Ohio. Took the train out to Peoria, a perfect town in Illinois, out into the corn and the wheat, looking for something I could believe in. I think I was looking for some sign from God, I really don’t know. I was walking down by the river, the Illinois River they call it, and saw the most wonderful things. I saw “India Fest” in a park, under a great big bridge where all the folks from the country of India came out to dance and serve lamb and share their culture with the rest of Peoria. I saw all these broken down warehouses that had been turned into fresh art galleries and great jazz halls. There was a brewpub owned by a Scottish fellah named Mark. Mark smiled at me. He has great teeth. But it wasn’t always this way in Peoria. The riverfront used to be a bad part of town. The people had to find progress. The people of Peoria loved their city so much, they had to find a way to change, to make it good once again. I went into the art gallery on the riverfront and saw a painting, it was a singular orange band on a big green canvas. It was called “The Temptation of Saint Anthony”. And that is when it hit me. That is when God gave me his glorious sign. *(To the fish.)* NOW!

(The voice inside Francesca begins to sing, or hum, “Eternal Flame” by The Bengals. Of course, if you are younger than twenty-five, you probably think the Atomic Kittens wrote this song. They didn’t. But that mean British guy from “American Idol” produced it.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

Why can’t we do this? Why can’t we revitalize Coney Island? We can gut all the eyesores, and make it livable again. We can have development, we can have progress, we

(The Boy Named Velvet Freeze cont.)

can have jazz halls, and art galleries, and Scottish guys named Mark serving us beer. People won't want to go to Atlantic City anymore for their fun, and salad bars. They can come back to Coney Island, like they did when they were kids, and bring their own children and have a good, safe time for all right here on the water. I'm not talking about "change" people! I'm talking about "progress"!

(Everything stops.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

And I am proud to say, Thor Equities has answered the call. Thor is bringing the machines that will cut this Hellhole down, and make it all good again. Thor is bringing humanity. We break ground at dawn. This will be the last of the Coney Island Mermaid Parades. This will be the last of this dump called Astro-Land. A new world starts at dawn! I hope we get an Olive Garden.

(Francesca can be heard saying "Can I get out now?")

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Long costume change.

(The sounds of "machines" can be heard again.)

Movement Seven: A Poem About Sparrows

(The Boy Named Monday and The Girl Named Tuesday return, yet they are a little older, maybe one or two minutes older. And considering that the same actor as who plays The Boy Named Velvet Freeze should play The Boy Named Monday, I have no idea how a costume change could happen. Perhaps a stage hand could bring out a cardboard cut out, the kind people stick their heads through for silly pictures and the such.)

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The second time I came to New York...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

The second time we came to New York...

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The second we came to New York...forgive me...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

It's okay.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We stayed closer to the Coney Island...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We got the hell out of Times Square.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Times Square is just not my kind of place.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We aren't Times Square kind of people.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We stayed at Astor Place.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Which sounded like Astro-Land to my husband.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

And we were closer to the yellow train so we could go right out to Coney Island.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We should have stayed at Coney Island that time.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I don't know why we didn't.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

The second time we went to Coney Island, everything was cold and grey.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

It was fixin' to rain...

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

But it never did.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

And we were the only ones there.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

That's not true. There were some people there.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

Homeless people. We were the only people there to ride the amusements.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Which we never did.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We talked about it.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

We never rode the rides.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

We went back to Ruby's.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Sammy was still behind the bar.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

He remembered us.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

Sammy did not remember us.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

He remembered what you drank. He said you looked like a little bird.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

He said I looked like a little sparrow.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

It was so cold that day.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

I looked in the mirror behind the bar and thought I looked very ugly while I drank my beer.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

You never look ugly.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

I knew you were going to say that. You followed me to the bathroom at Ruby's that day and you kissed me.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

I could taste the beer on your lips.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

It was bliss.

(The sound of waves is heard.)

(Then we hear the sound of "machines.")

(The two reflect. Then, they go away, running.)

Movement Eight: The Piano

(The simple sound of a piano can be heard, playing simple music. Perhaps something a child would learn to play after a few years of afternoon lessons. A simple table is placed on stage with two simple chairs. Penelope sits at the table, eating noodles from a Chinese take out box. She is dressed the same as she was on the beach. Juan Antonio is attempting to put on nicer clothing. These clothes aren't "nice" by many standards, but they are easier on the eyes than his previous attire. He runs his fingers across his teeth. A lone box of Chinese noodles sits by the empty chair.)

JUAN ANTONIO

My teeth hurt. Do they look funny to you?

PENELOPE

No. What do you want?

JUAN ANTONIO

What are you saying?

PENELOPE

The noodles. You haven't touched them. What do you want? I will get it for you.

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't like noodles. I like chop suey.

PENELOPE

You always ate noodles when I made them.

JUAN ANTONIO

That is because you made them.

PENELOPE

The restaurant hasn't had chop suey in days. Days upon days. I know. I asked them. I knew you liked chop suey.

JUAN ANTONIO

Does your husband have a tie I can borrow?

PENELOPE

I'll try again tomorrow. If the restaurant doesn't have chop suey by then, I will call another restaurant.

JUAN ANTONIO

There's no need for that. Does your husband have a tie I can wear?

PENELOPE

Tell me honestly.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yes.

PENELOPE

Are you having an affair?

JUAN ANTONIO

What do you mean?

PENELOPE

You know what I mean.

JUAN ANTONIO

No. I don't know what you mean.

PENELOPE

Are you seeing another woman? Behind my back.

JUAN ANTONIO

Behind your back?

PENELOPE

Are you having an affair behind my back?

JUAN ANTONIO

Who told you that?

PENELOPE

Be honest with me.

JUAN ANTONIO

I think you are crazy.

PENELOPE

Do not say that I am crazy. Are you having an affair?

JUAN ANTONIO

Why are you asking me this question?

PENELOPE

Don't lie to me. I'm asking you. Are you seeing another woman?

JUAN ANTONIO

Why are you asking this question?

PENELOPE

I saw you. I saw you on the beach. With my sister.

JUAN ANTONIO

She delivered my mail.

PENELOPE

Why would my sister go all the way to the beach to give you your mail?

JUAN ANTONIO

You are crazy.

PENELOPE

Don't lie. Tell me. Look at me. Have you let her touch you?

JUAN ANTONIO

No.

(Penelope walks off stage, grabs a broom, comes to center stage, and pounds the floor with the blunt end until the sound of piano stops.)

PENELOPE

Juan. Have you let my sister touch you?

JUAN ANTONIO

Yes. Are you going to be fine?

PENELOPE

I didn't think this would hurt so much.

JUAN ANTONIO

Don't take it so hard.

PENELOPE

My husband is in Tokyo, sleeping with his little Tokyo girl...

JUAN ANTONIO

Your husband is in Tokyo for business.

PENELOPE

And I can't have a proper affair. You aren't even having sex with another woman. You're having sex with my sister.

JUAN ANTONIO

We haven't had sex.

PENELOPE

Yet.

(The sound of the piano slowly comes back.)

PENELOPE

(She takes a moment, then goes to him and helps straighten his shirt.) My husband has a red tie that will look good on you.

JUAN ANTONIO

Thank you.

PENELOPE

Your shirt is dirty. I'll clean it for you.

JUAN ANTONIO

The shirt is fine.

PENELOPE

I need to do laundry anyways. Give me your damn shirt.

(Nothing happens. She goes to him and takes his shirt off, button by button. They stop. They reflect.)

PENELOPE

I wish you would kiss me again.

JUAN ANTONIO

You are married.

PENELOPE

You're like a broken record. I'll call another Chinese restaurant and get you your chop suey.

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Piano music gets louder.

(The piano music begins to play louder and louder, to a painful point. Jacob Murakami and The Stage Manger are forced to cover their ears. But, Juan Antonio and Penelope just look at one another.)

Movement Nine: Fever

(The Girl Named Sally-Reno and The Boy Named Hugo Jones at center stage. She is still dress like Jackie-O. He is dressed like John Kennedy. They look at each other. She has a cone of French fries. She slowly eats the fries one by one. He takes one fry and eats it. She takes one fry and feeds him. Then silence. All time stops.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Is this what you wanted?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

No. I want more.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

You're not from here, are you Hugo Jones?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm from Iowa. Does it matter where I am from?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

When did you get to the beach?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Does it matter when I got here?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

When did you get here?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

At least two weeks ago. I can't recall.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

You can't remember, or you don't want to remember?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I choose to forget.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Where have you been sleeping since I last saw you? Since we met on the beach.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I slept on the beach until I met you.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Oh. Where do you sleep now?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Under your window in a plastic bag.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I haven't seen you under my window.

THE BOY NAME HUGO JONES

Then maybe you should get a new window.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Charming. You never told me what you do to make money?

THE BOY NAME HUGO JONES

Is that important?

THE GIRL NAMDE SALLY-RENO

To a girl it is very important.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I can't find a job.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

How do you eat?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I eat the trash under your window.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

So that has been you? I thought we had rats.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm no rat, Sally-Reno.

(She takes another French fry and feeds him slowly.)

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I want to take your picture again.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

No.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Please.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Say please again.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Please.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

One more time.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

One more time. Please.

(They stop and laugh like children in a schoolyard. This has all been a game. They take a moment to compose themselves, and the game begins again, yet this time it has more honesty to it. Sort of. I think.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

No. You can't have another picture of me. Your memory will have to do.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Then I'm going to need more memories.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Like what?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Walking on the beach.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

And?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Bumper cars.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I don't like the bumper cars. People always gang-up on me at the bumper cars.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

We can ride together. In one car. So you won't be alone.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

And?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Anything that makes me want to write a song about you.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I didn't know you were a musician.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm not, I just write songs about you. I lied. I've been sleeping in a small room off Coney Island Avenue. That's where I write songs for you.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I know. I followed you home last night. But I like the idea of you sleeping under my window more.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Yeah?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

It's innocent.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I tried to dress like John Kennedy for you today.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I can tell. I could tell the very first moment I saw you. Thank you.

(The Boy Named Hugo Jones goes into the audience, takes two chairs, returns to the stage, and places the chairs facing the audience.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

You remembered what I told you the night you took my picture.

(The two sit in the chair and face the audience, motionless, like the calm before a storm.)

THE STAGE MANGER

Warning. Back and to the left.

(A gunshot is heard. The Boy Named Hugo Jones slowly jerks his head back and slumps to one side. The Girl Named Sally-Reno softly touches his face.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

One more time.

(The Boy Named Hugo Jones resets his position.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Back and to the left.

(A gunshot is heard. The Boy Named Hugo Jones slowly jerks his head back and slumps to one side. The Girl Named Sally-Reno softly puts her arm around him.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

One more time.

(The Boy Named Hugo Jones resets his position.)

THE STAGE MANGER

Warning. Back and to the left.

(A gunshot is heard. The Boy Named Hugo Jones slowly jerks his head back and slumps to one side. The Girl Named Sally-Reno grabs his body and holds him. She smells his hair.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I've always thought Jack's hair should smell like lavender. It should have been this way. His wife holding him while he died.

(He begins to stand up.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Not yet. Please.

(He stops moving. They look at one another. They reflect. She feeds him a French fry. They laugh. They stop. They reflect. The two move closer to kiss, probably the way Jack and Jackie did long-long ago, but before they can...)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Evil music.

(Evil music begins to play. The Girl Named Sally-Reno and The Boy Named Hugo Jones grab the chairs and run off stage. The rolling pin with the projection screen begins to drop from the sky. However, it only makes a little over half the distance it was before, giving the audience only half of a picture. Writing of which, the sound of the projector begins to start once again, but it is the sound of a projection machine in terrible trouble, not unlike the sound of bobcat being introduced to a lawnmower. The picture of what appears to be the room with the Gershwin Hotel starts once again, but with no sound. Only the sound of the Evil music can be heard. Jacob Murakami sits on a bed and talks to The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat. She opens the bottle of wine and offers it to him. He stops. He reflects. She offers the wine again. He takes the bottle and begins to drink. She shows him three pictures of a little boy, in the first this boy plays in snow. Then the same little boy in a class photo. Then the same little boy on an amusement park ride. That is right, an amusement park ride. She places her hand on his leg, then whispers in his ear. He takes her hand off his leg. Then the film goes fuzzy and stops. The sound of the projector begins to scream once again, and the projection screen goes back into the sky.)

Movement Ten: Metamorphosis

(The stage fills with smoke. The sounds of “machines” can be heard, and felt. The Boy Named Velvet Freeze enters with a large shovel in one hand, about twenty feet tall or so, which he uses as a walking stick of sorts, and a boom box in the other hand. The shovel is multi-colored and covered in bells and whistles and various things that make oodles of noise. He pounds this shovel on the ground in a rhythm, like the sound of a machine. Catch my drift? Every time he hits the ground, the stage, and audience for that matter, shake with after shock. This can be accomplished by getting some 500 volunteers to jump up and down in unison.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

People of Coney Island, our day is here, our day has arrived, our day to build peace, and love, and a commitment to our fellow man has arrived! People say to be me, people say “Velvet, your ideas cannot be so.” But I say they can. It can be so. IT CAN BE SO! The Scripture tells us all that when Joshua and the Israelites arrived at the gates of Jericho, they could not enter. The walls of the city were too steep for any one person to climb; too strong to be taken down with brute force. But God told them to stand as one, stand as one for what they believed in, stand as one for what they all wanted, stand as one and march together around the city, and on the seventh day God told them that when they heard the

(The Boy Named Velvet Freeze cont.)

sound of a ram's horn, that's right a simple little ram's horn, they must speak with one voice for the change they all wanted and hoped and desired. At the chosen hour, when the horn screamed into the sky and a chorus of voices cried out together, those walls of Jericho came rumbling down. This is our chosen hour!

(He presses play on his boom box. The sound of people saying "Yeah" is heard. However, it is not impressive, nor does it have glee.)

THE BOY NAMED VELEVET FREEZE

A man said to me the other day "Do you think bringing an Olive Garden to this neighborhood is gonna make things better? Yes. Yes I do. If we raise the standards of our environment, the people will come back to Coney Island. If you put businesses, if you put buildings that this community can be proud of, there will be less crime, and drugs. Have you ever considered the idea that maybe, just maybe so many desperate souls are strung out on this beach, because they are trapped? When they look out on this beach, when they look out on this ocean, when they look out on this community, the must feel like they stand alone at the walls of Jericho. I can't blame half the people for doing the drugs on the beach. If we work together we can bring the good things to Coney Island. If we bring in an Olive Garden, a Hooters, and put up brand new buildings, and rides, people will be proud of this community and they will take care of it. Brothers and sisters, as of today, I will no longer be using the word "if" when referring to Coney Island!

(He presses play on his boom box. The sound of people saying "Yeah" is heard. However, it is not impressive, nor does it have glee.)

THE BOY NAMED VELVET FREEZE

Brothers and sisters, what we have here is called progress. What we have here is called gentrification. Christopher Columbus was a master at it, and who doesn't admire a man who has his own day named after him? Today, we break ground on "dreams!"

(The Boy Named Velvet Freeze presses play on the boom box one last time. The sound of a ram's horn blows. He then takes his shovel and cuts into the stage floor. The sound of "machines" can be heard.)

Movement Eleven: In the Kitchen

(Juan Antonio and The Boy Named Hugo Jones talk and drink from warm bottles of beer. The Boy Named Hugo Jones wants to be heard. Juan Antonio is nothing more than polite. I have it in my mind, they both drink in a rhythm, between speaking lines. The sounds of the ocean can be heard in the distance.)

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

She doesn't give me attention.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I don't mean sexual attention, but she doesn't give me that either.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Not since she got pregnant, but you can't have sex when your girl is pregnant anyways.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah. When is she due?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

July.

JUAN ANTONIO

July what?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

The fifth. The fifth of July.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Yeah. It's a boy.

JUAN ANTONIO

Congratulations.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Are you a father?

JUAN ANTONIO

What makes you ask?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Curiosity.

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't know if I'm a father. I have seen pictures of a boy who might be mine, but I don't know. Do you have a name?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

We each came up with five names, but we won't tell each other the names until he is born.

JUAN ANTONIO

Are you drunk?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

No. Why? Am I slurring?

JUAN ANTONIO

No. Your words are very thought out. Very isolated.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Does that mean I am drunk?

JUAN ANTONIO

No. But, it's a distinct possibility. What are the names? The names you came up with for your kid?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm not telling. I'm not gonna tell anyone until he is born. I wrote the names of my son on the bathroom mirror with my finger, so when Sally got out of the shower, out of all the steam, she could see the names. But something went wrong. She never saw my names.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm...can this stay between us?

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

She had an abortion one time. Sally. With her last boyfriend.

JUAN ANTONIO

Oh.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Is that wrong?

JUAN ANTONIO

What do you think?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I think it's wrong.

JUAN ANTONIO

Does she know how you feel?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

We've talked about it. I've told her what I think the Bible says. I don't agree with it. I don't come close to agreeing with it. But, I don't think it was an easy choice for her. And I respect that.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah. The Bible. You like the Bible?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Only parts.

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Are you drunk?

JUAN ANTONIO

No. I try, but I can't get drunk anymore.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

How's that?

JUAN ANTONIO

Booze does nothing for me now. It just makes me slower.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Can I tell you something? Between you and me?

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah. Knock yourself out.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Sally and I were gonna have two children. We were gonna have twins. Two boys. One died.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm sorry. I'm sorry to hear that.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I'm not. We have one healthy baby. He's almost here. He's almost with us. And that is all we really need. I told my Sally, "at least we have one healthy baby." The child who died, had a bad heart. It just stopped. But we have one healthy baby boy. My girlfriend was very upset and blamed herself. She said it's because of all the bad things she has done in life. She didn't...or doesn't understand why she let the child die.

JUAN ANTONIO

She didn't "let" the child die, the kid just died. Kids die. It's not her fault.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

That is what I told her. That's when she started ignoring me. I hope she will stop ignoring me when the baby comes.

JUAN ANTONIO

It'll get worse. The baby is not in the room yet. When the baby is in the room, nothing will change. It will just get worse. And worse, and worse. The family will come over to see the baby. Her friends will come over to see the baby. But no one will want to pay attention to you. And you will have to watch your language and what you say around the kid, or you'll be yelled at. You won't be ignored, Hugo. You just can't do anything right. Don't feel bad. It's just the way it is.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Can I tell you something? Something I haven't told anyone?

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

When the baby died, I scratched a name off the list, my list of names.

JUAN ANTONIO

Good for you.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Francis.

JUAN ANTONIO

Francis?

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Francis.

JUAN ANTONIO

My mother wanted to call me Francis. It's a wonderful name.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

It is a wonderful name. I think Penelope enjoys your company.

JUAN ANTONIO

You are beginning to slur your speech.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

Am I? She's married. Penelope. You know that. I'm sure it's nothing big. I heard her talking on the phone with her mother. She said she thinks of the man who rents the spare room when he goes out. It's innocent.

JUAN ANTONIO

Right.

THE BOY NAMED HUGO JONES

I love her name. Penelope. Do you love it?

JUAN ANTONIO

Yeah.

(The sound of the ocean is heard. The Stage Manger is very quiet.)

Movement Twelve: "All I Wanna Do Is Go To China With Juan Antonio"

(Lightning smacks down on the stage and it begins to rain. Penelope sorts through laundry, a large hill of laundry, organizing and folding it all rather neatly. The Girl Named Sally-Reno is eating ice cream. They say nothing at first.)

PENELOPE

I'm going to say something because I know you aren't going to say anything. I like to think that I don't ask for much around this house, at least I don't think I ask that much from you. Or my husband. I like to think that I have always done my best to make a good home for you, for both of you. I let you live here rent free, and I cook for you. And I have given up things...

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

What have you given up?

PENELOPE

School. My youth. I've wanted to travel, but I can't because my husband is always traveling...

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

He has a name...

PENELOPE

Not to me. Not anymore. He is just my husband. It doesn't matter. I never see him anymore. If he walked through that door, I wouldn't recognize him. I've never liked him anyways. But I do like Juan. I do like Juan Antonio, and you know that. You know that.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

We didn't have sex.

PENELOPE

I don't care. Do you understand me? I don't care that you didn't have sex with him, although I think I am a little impressed. I care that you went out of your way to do something with him, to do something with Juan, anything with Juan when I was in the next room. And you knew what he meant to me. You knew.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I didn't know.

PENELOPE

You knew. You knew. You always knew. The moment we had our first dinner together, you knew. And after you "didn't" have sex with him, he stopped listening to me. He stopped talking with me. Like my husband.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

And you blame me.

PENELOPE

Damn right I blame you. Since you moved in here, you have brought home fifty men. And you laugh, and they talk, and you have sex. You pick-up any man you want on the boardwalk, but you couldn't leave one man alone. You couldn't have given me a chance.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Penny, we didn't have sex.

PENELOPE

I don't care about the sex. He stopped listening to me. He stopped spending time with me.

(Penelope finds his shirt in the mess of laundry. She reflects.)

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

We aren't good sisters, are we?

PENELOPE

All I want to do is go to China. All I want to do is go to China with Juan Antonio. And get the hell away from Coney Island.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

Penny. I'm pregnant.

PENELOPE

Again? Since when?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

The doctor says I am due in June.

PENELOPE

Oh. Is it...

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I think it is Hugo Jones's. He dressed like JFK. We had sex without a condom. I've decided to keep it.

PENELOPE

Nice. My. It'll be nice to have a child in this house. You need to start eating better. When Juan leaves, I will start redecorating his room for the baby. Babies can be expensive. We can get baby cloths from Gloria...

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I'm moving out. I'm moving in with Hugo. I got a job at Ruby's. I can pay my own rent now, but I will talk with Gloria about children's clothing. And I may need your help. With some things.

PENELOPE

You don't have to leave.

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

I think it is time. I'll be just a block away. We haven't been very good sisters.

PENELOPE

Maybe I can come over. And cook you dinner. So you are eating right.

(Juan Antonio enters, as if he is being thrown on stage again. He has no dress shirt on, but carries a large toy fish under his arm that, I imagine, looks a great deal like the kind of fish one buys at a five and dime. The kind of fish that can grant wishes. The kind of fish that looks like Francesca.)

JUAN ANTONIO

Good evening. I went to Astro-Land. I won you this fish. Playing darts.

PENELOPE

No one ever wins at darts. It's a rigged game.

JUAN ANTONIO

I won. I always win when the game is rigged. I would like for you to have this fish. Thank you for washing my shirt. And thank you for the chop suey.

(Penelope goes to Juan Antonio and takes his fish. She then takes his shirt and dresses him.)

JUAN ANTONIO

Penny, did I ever tell you they don't have chop suey in China? This is completely and totally true, and I'm not making this up. Chop suey is basically an Americanized dish. The one thing that I think is honestly interesting in China right now is that they love tomatoes.

PENELOPE

Stop. You are trying too hard. It's better when you don't try. You wore this shirt the first night you came her, the first night you rented a room from us and had dinner with me. And my sister. And when you went to bed, my sister looked at me and said "who is that man who came to dinner?" You look handsome in this shirt. Doesn't he look handsome?

THE GIRL NAMED SALLY-RENO

You look lovely, Mr. Antonio.

(A telephone rings. No one answers. The telephone rings again, but the sound becomes distorted. The telephone rings one more time. This time, the phone sounds like it is melting. The answering machine picks up the call... "please leave a message at the beep." The voice is the same as "Peter" from the film at the beginning.)

THE VOICE ON THE ANSWERING MACHINE

Juan. It's me. I'm here. My spies told me how to call you. I want you to meet me tomorrow morning for breakfast, and I want my article. I want my article, or you will never work again. Hey. I wrote a joke today. I'm no Fred Flintstone, but I will make your bed...rock! Good? I'm gonna send it to the bubble gum wrapper people. I wrote it all by myself. I look forward to seeing you, buddy. I know this article is gonna be great.

(The beep of the answering machine is heard.)

PENELOPE

How is your article?

JUAN ANTONIO

It's terrible I've just written a girl's name over and over and over again on the same piece of paper.

PENELOPE

What is the name?

(The sounds of "machines" can be heard.)

PENELOPE

Sleep with me tonight. In my bed. So you don't oversleep. I'll wake you early and help you get dressed.

(The sounds of "machines" are heard again and the reproductions can be felt across the audience. Smoke floods the stage.)

Interlude

(Everything on stage stops, including the countdown clock, and Jacob Murakami walks to center stage to address the audience.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

I fall asleep for a short time while I am writing this play. I wake up, fall asleep again, wake up, fall asleep again. Wake up, fall asleep again, over and over and over. I don't want to miss the moment she appears. But, I do miss the moment... I wake up and she is standing between my writing desk and the window. I thought I closed the blinds, but there is the brick wall. It mocks me. It's still raining outside.

(Through the smoke on stage The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat comes, and looks as if she is about to say something. She holds her hand out. She stops then stands still. A whistle is heard off stage. She runs to it, exiting. The Boy Named Timothy Braun enters, and I am too embarrassed to tell you what he is dressed in.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Evil Music.

(Evil music begins to play, softly, under it all.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

(To the audience.) Then the worst man I have ever known comes to me. His name is Timothy Braun. His name is on your program tonight, or this afternoon if this is a

(Jacob Murakami cont.)

matinee. Don't be afraid, I won't let him hurt you. *(To The Boy Named Timothy Braun.)*
You killed me in your last play.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

You killed yourself. Remember? You were the one who drank bleach under the sink. I didn't make you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why are you here?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

This play you're writing. It'll never get produced.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Who said I wanted to get it produced? And who in the hell asked you about the play I am writing?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

You are not writing the play. I am. And you are not writing it from the Gershwin Hotel. I am writing it in a rope factory, in Peoria, Illinois. And don't you ever talk to me that way again.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why did you bring me back?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Because. I am not done with you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Why are you having me tell this story?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

It should be obvious to you by now. As I get older, you stay the same age.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Will you kill me at the end this play?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

There's a possibility. You would like that, wouldn't you?

JACOB MURAKAMI

You'd like to think you know me, but you don't.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

You and I should go bowling together. Will I get to know you that way, Jacob?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I thought I was a version of you.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

That's what I thought too. But I started figure out you were just a birthday present for an old friend. But you are becoming something.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I'm not writing this play, you are?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Sort of.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Let me finish this story.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Why should I let you do that?

JACOB MURAKAMI

You owe me. You killed me in the last play. So you owe me that much.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

I didn't kill you, you killed yourself.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Just let me finish this play. Please.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

I never say please. When I think of you, I try to find ways to be kind. Finish the story, but don't you think for one moment I am done with you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

I know you are not.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Finish the story, Jacob. And when you're done, burn the theater to the ground.

(The Boy Named Timothy Braun exists, which is good because he really bothers me. The countdown clock begins again.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

(To the audience.) I am sorry you had to see that. He comes and goes as he likes. He is the only character I can't stop. Him and the train. I can't stop the train that goes to and from Coney Island. Afraid of facing his boss and old friend, a day before the Coney Island Mermaid Parade, Juan Antonio left. He left in the middle of night, when everyone is sleeping so he can't be caught. He got on the yellow train and cuts across Brooklyn and Manhattan all the way to the "Square of Time", as our Canadian friends like to call it. And right as Juan Antonio was about to exit the yellow train, the doors slam shut. The yellow train goes across the Hudson River and into New Jersey, and down to the city of Brotherly Love. And the train kept going out into West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas. And the train kept going faster and faster and the wind ripped the roof the top, and the people on board were sucked out by a tornado that sounded like a machine. Except for Juan Antonio. The wind never touched him. The train stopped right on the boarder, it rolled on its side, like a dog wanting to be scratched, and dropped Juan Antonio into the desert, away from the ocean, and the rides, and mermaids, and hot dogs. Someplace dry and warm. Needing a job, Juan Antonio walked into an Irish Pub with a "Help Wanted" sign in the window. He washed dishes for cowboys, and slept in a storage room on loaves of bread. In a previous draft of this play, he boxed a kangaroo. I bet you didn't know Juan liked the boxing. In this draft, Juan made more money by staging bug fights in the back alleyway, usually scorpions against Japanese beetles. The cowboys loved to watch the bug fights. He would try to work on the article for his friend every morning, but he always wrote the word "Penelope" over and over and over again. Penny got a postcard in the mail. It had a picture of a man in a cowboy hat standing next to a cactus. The only thing written on it was "From The Man Who Came to Dinner." Sally-Reno had her baby. His name was Jacob. He had a healthy heart. Sally and Hugo got married and moved to Atlantic City. Hugo Jones became a magician and now works at a casino, and Sally makes him dinner every night. Usually French fries and corn dogs. The Boy Named Velvet Freeze led his followers, just like Joshua at Jericho, in destroying a city, or at least a part of a city, Astro-Land, for the good of his people. At least, that is what Velvet Freeze liked to tell himself. He helped bring in new business and buildings, but sadly, he never got his Olive Garden. No, he had to go to Times Square for that. Penelope never left her home, even with all the construction and disruptions of the new Coney Island. Penelope sat in her apartment, alone, and waited for her husband to return from his business trip to Japan, where she was certain he was having an affair, but she was really waiting for some one else. She would say to herself "maybe he is at the Chinese restaurant getting noodles and chop suey, and he will come back any minute now". But she knew this was not the case. Penelope looked out her apartment window at all the machines, the bulldozers, and big cranes killing Astro-Land piece by piece. Leveling it all to the ground. And she could see the ocean clearly for the first time. It was cold and rainy that day. The rain dripped from a sky light in her bathroom, a bathroom with no hot water. Penelope breathed warm air onto the window that over looked Coney

(Jacob Murakami cont.)

Island and wrote “Penny and Juan” with a heart around both names. And Penny got up and packed her bags, but only with the Chinese dresses she owned, and the fish Juan gave her. Penelope walked to the train station and got on the yellow line, which took her past the City of Brotherly Love, and Kentucky, and Arkansas, and down to the Texan desert until the train stopped and turned on its side, like a dog wanting to be scratched. And for some reason without knowing, she walked into the local five and dime. She wanted to buy a fish that would give her great fortune, but the store was sold out. So she bought a cheap bottle of wine instead.

Movement Twelve: One Last Time

(For the first time, the world is clear. Juan Antonio is sweeping the stage with a broom. Penelope visits Juan Antonio. More and more she looks like The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat. She has a bottle of wine with her. Coney Island can still be seen in the distance. Juan Antonio tries to walk off stage. He gets thrown back onto the stage.)

PENELOPE

Why did you break up with me?

JUAN ANTONIO

I think about you. I think about you more than I should. I think about you more than I want. I must admit I never thought I would see you again.

PENELOPE

I knew I would see you again. I knew you wouldn't come back to Coney Island, but I knew I would leave. I sat by the phone...

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't have a phone...

PENELOPE

Of course you don't. A man named Juan Antonio is not the kind of man who has a phone. I've left my husband.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm sorry.

PENELOPE

I'm sure he hasn't noticed.

JUAN ANTONIO

How did you tell him?

PENELOPE

I left a note pinned to the fridge. He can read it if he ever comes back. You still owe my husband rent.

JUAN ANTONIO

I know.

PENELOPE

Which means you owe me rent.

JUAN ANTONIO

Is that why you are here?

PENELOPE

Maybe.

JUAN ANTONIO

How much do I owe?

PENELOPE

I don't care. How much do you have?

JUAN ANTONIO

Nothing. I have nothing.

PENELOPE

I think you owe me....anything I want. I've brought every Chinese dress I own with me.

(She opens the bottle of wine. It's probably a screw top. She begins to rub the wine on her neck. He goes to her and begins to kiss the wine off her neck. In this act, Penelope drops the bottle and all the wine spills out onto the floor. She then stops Juan, and shoves him away from her. She fixes herself.)

PENELOPE

Are there any Chinese restaurants here?

JUAN ANTONIO

One.

PENELOPE

Is it good?

JUAN ANTONIO

It's average.

PENELOPE

Would you like me to order you something?

JUAN ANTONIO

No.

PENELOPE

Chop suey?

JUAN ANTONIO

No.

PENELOPE

Why did you leave me?

JUAN ANTONIO

It was easy.

PENELOPE

Your friend kept calling. He told bad jokes. He kept asking about his article and the Mermaid Parade. I didn't know what to say, so I just cried. I haven't cried in years. Let's go to China. You and me. And we don't have to tell a soul.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm going to Portland. Another friend runs a paper out there. Wants me to cover boxing and obituaries.

PENELOPE

I'll come with you. You can tell me stories. *(She smiles. This smile can change things.)*
You will need someone to do your shirts and order chop suey.

(He reflects. A whistle is heard offstage. He looks. He stops. By now, the countdown clock has reached zero. Juan Antonio looks to the clock.)

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't want you to come with me. I can't let you come with me. Go home.

PENELOPE

But the train took me to you. You owe me that.

JUAN ANTONIO

Go home, Penelope. I don't owe you anything.

(Penelope sits on the floor in the spilt wine. She reflects. Juan Antonio begins to sweep the stage.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Movement The Last.

Movement The Last: Requiem For The Place Called Astro-Land

(The Boy Named Monday and The Girl Named Tuesday come back to the stage one last time, but this time they are just a little bit older, maybe by a minute or two. Juan Antonio sweeps the stage while they talk. Maybe Penelope still sits on the floor, in all the wine.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Nice music.

(Nice music begins to play. The two begin to sway to this music, just the way they did at the top of this "Play".)

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

I was so glad I got a chance to take a look around Coney Island last year, right before everything was destroyed. I guess it was due a major facelift. Being a big *Annie Hall* fan, I felt I couldn't pass up the opportunity to visit.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

"We" ...we couldn't pass up the opportunity.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

I couldn't believe that such a great beach was only a deserted subway ride away.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

On our last trip, we happened upon a 40's photo shoot and a whole school full of Orthodox Jewish children lining up to get on the Cyclone.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

This made me think that I was just another extra in some random movie.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The place was full of the charm of a forgotten age, and overall it was so much better than the museums we visited.

THE GIRL NAMED TUESDAY

How sad. You know I can still smell the popcorn and those one of a kind hotdogs when I think of Coney Island.

THE BOY NAMED MONDAY

The last time we went to Coney Island, we were in a bumper car and we sat there and sang "Oh How Lovely Is The Evening". You sing it like "Row, Row, Row" your boat. We had an audience outside the car. All the carnies watching us and laughing. I remember thinking how lucky I was to have you...

(The silhouette of Coney Island fades away, revealing this is no backdrop, but rather a second projection screen, yet deeper in the space. The sounds of a film projector can be heard, then the numbers "3" then "2" then "1" can be seen. The Boy Named Monday and The Girl Named Tuesday see the lights of the projection and run off stage, but Juan Antonio stays. He turns his back to the audience and watches the numbers count down as the movie starts again. He watches the movie, even blocking portions of it from the audience.)

The Film...Once Again.

(The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat is now looking out of the window, at the bricks, in the Gershwin Hotel, room 1313. Jacob Murakami sits in bed.)

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Someone has broken into my email. There are messages opened that I haven't read.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Change your password.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I shouldn't have to change my password. I shouldn't be in that position.

JACOB MURAKAMI

It's not me...

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

No. It's not. And that is the issue. It's not you. It's my husband. But it I want it to be you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

How is your husband? We haven't talked about him yet.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I've been reading your work. I hate it when you write about me.

JACOB MURAKAMI

The characters I write about are fictional.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

Yeah. Of course.

JACOB MURAKAMI

How is your husband?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

He snores when he sleeps. He eats dry breakfast cereal from the box with his hands, like a child. He works from home now, so he never leaves.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Tell him I said...

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

He doesn't want hear your name. He never wants to hear your name again.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Does he know you are here?

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I don't care.

JACOB MURAKAMI

It's a long way from Indianapolis.

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

I don't care. Jacob, my son means nothing to me without you.

JACOB MURAKAMI

If I had one wish...

(There is a knock at the door. Jacob Murakami goes to it. It is the Chinese delivery. The same actor who plays Juan Antonio plays the Delivery Man. Jacob Murakami tips well.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

(Giving the Delivery Man cash.) Keep it.

DELIVERY MAN

Thanks.

(Jacob Murakami closes the door and turn to The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat. She is now lying on the bed. She takes the wine, and begins to rub it on her neck. Jacob Murakami goes to the bed. Sits next to her. He reflects. Then...)

(The picture on the screen abruptly freezes. I suggest this be a picture of The Girl In The Yellow Raincoat. Jacob Murakami moves away from the board and heads to center stage. As he speaks, Juan Antonio comes to him.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

As I write this portion of this play, a play that the playwright likes to think will never be produced, I get a postcard from an old school friend, who just happens to be an old school friend of the editor of the magazine that hired me to write about the Gershwin. This friend is a robot designer, who built a robot out of meat for a Henrik Ibsen adaptation years ago. I am writing this ending on this friend's birthday, of which I wished him his best. My friend marveled on how I can remember birthdays, and claimed not even his parents remembered his birthday, and he thanked me. He wrote to me "I got a plastic fish as a gift and wished for a birthday cards from old friends, and you are the only person who has come through. You have always been good at making wishes come true." *(To Juan Antonio.)* Mr. Antonio, for the most part I am in control of this story, unless Tim Braun comes back, or the train takes you some place else. Do you understand you are a character in a play?

JUAN ANTONIO

Excuse me?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I am attempting to write my first play. You are the main...guy. Sort of.

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't understand.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Mr. Antonio, I am your creator. You're in the middle of a play right now, close to the end in all honesty. I could kill you. I could put you in a wheelchair. I could give you a puppy or a groundhog as a pet. This is my play and I can do whatever I want to my characters. Do you have any questions?

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't understand.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Yes you do. You're just acting stupid to avoid responsibility. I'm giving you an opportunity to ask questions. If I were you, if I was the main character in a play, I would want to ask the person who created me a thousand questions.

JUAN ANTONIO

Like what?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I think I would start with "Why do you treat me this way?"

JUAN ANTONIO

I don't think I would like to know the answer to that question.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Good for you.

JUAN ANTONIO

I'm in a play. I saw a play once. It was called...

JUAN ANTONIO/JACOB MURAKAMI

(At the same time.) "The Man Who Came To Dinner."

JACOB MURAKAMI

I've only met one playwright before. I found him to be very hard. You being my character, I would like to be easy with you. I've decided to grant you one wish. You can have anything you want. Any fortune. Like a dime store fish. I could clean your liver, repair all the damage your drinking has done. In a few years, you will have back issues. I could change that for you right now. I could make you famous and rich. I could make you like yourself more. I could put you on the moon, fighting vampires, if you would like.

JUAN ANTONIO

Are you insane?

JACOB MURAKAMI

No. Some people think I am, but I'm not. I can transport you to the Taj Mahal, or to downtown Indianapolis. I was in a country called Lebanon and watched a child die. A metal egg filled with oil dropped from the sky and part of that egg ripped his stomach open. It was hard for me to see that. When I started this play, I broke you to pieces, because I needed a person I could relate with. I damaged you so much off stage, before the play, you hurt others on stage and didn't even get it. I think I might have been wrong in damaging you. I want to make you whole, I want to make you whole the way you were before I started writing all of this down. I'll give you anything you want. Just this once.

(Juan Antonio stops. He reflects.)

JUAN ANTONIO

Anything?

JACO MURAKAMI

Anything.

JUAN ANTONIO

Make me innocent again. Make me feel innocent.

JACOB MURAKAMI

No man over the age of thirty wouldn't want that.

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Nice music.

JACOB MURAKAMI

(To The Stage Manager.) Stop!

(Everything stops. Jacob Murakami looks at the frozen picture on the projection screen, which fades to nothingness.)

JACOB MURAKAMI

I'm going to you leave now, but I won't let that come between us.

JUAN ANTONIO

Will I see you again?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I don't know.

(Then, Jacob Murakami signals The Stage Manger.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Nice music.

(Nice music begins to play. I just can't help but think this music sounds a little French. Juan Antonio puts the broom down and goes to Penelope. He takes her by the hand, and picks her up, out of the wine. They sway to the "nice" music.)

THE STAGE MANAGER

Warning. Fade to black.

(Juan Antonio takes Penelope and moves to kiss her on the mouth as the lights fade. It is important to note that the stage should be black right before their lips touch. Let the audience use some curiosity and imagination, as an audience member without curiosity and imagination is like a beaver with no teeth.)

(The sound of the nice music fades away into the sounds of the ocean brushing against Coney Island. Then, silence as The Boy Named Timothy Braun and Jacob Murakami meet at center stage with on simple light.)

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Is that why you wanted to finish the play?

JACOB MURAKAMI

I wanted to finish it for Penelope. She deserved that ending.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

So did Juan.

JACOB MURAKAMI

You were in *The Man Who Came To Dinner*. When you were young.

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

Yes I was.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Do you remember how it ends?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

A girl falls in love with a newspaperman. It ended with everyone laughing. I probably would've ended *The Man Who Came To Dinner* with a bunch of death and destruction.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Are you going to kill me now?

THE BOY NAMED TIMOTHY BRAUN

No. Not in this play. You did a good job with that ending.

JACOB MURAKAMI

Better than you could have done.

(The two men smile, and slowly look at one another as the lights go out.)

END OF PLAY