

**A Beginner's Guide to Floating**  
by Nicole Moeller

DRAFT

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**Characters:**

**Peter**, early – mid 50s,

**Cassandra (Cas)**, early – mid 30s

In Scenes 1, 3 and 5, Cas is in a wheelchair with partial paralysis on her left side as a result of a stroke and has limited ability on her right side. She suffers from verbal apraxia, making it difficult for her to produce speech sounds and rhythm. This is indicated in the way her lines are written (with ellipsis, periods, dashes).

**Scene One**

*Cassandra and Peter's home. It's big, furniture but no clutter. It's beautiful but feels empty, not "homey". A walker sits in the corner of the room. Peter stands at the window staring out. Cassandra sits in a motorized wheelchair staring out the window.*

*Silence. For a long time.*

**PETER:** Do you see that robin in the tree up there? She's been trying to build that nest for weeks. Trying to balance it on that one branch... it keeps breaking. The nest, I mean. She keeps coming back with stuff to rebuild it, grass, newspaper, coffee cups that she rips into tiny pieces...

*Beat*

You too warm?

*Beat*

Anyway. It's... quite an incredible thing to see. If you look right on the second branch, you can see her. No eggs far as I can tell. Just her. Or him, maybe. Sitting there. Staring at us.

*Beat*

Anyway.

*Beat*

*Beat*

You're awfully quiet these days. You don't even try. Everything okay?

*Beat*

If you have something you want to talk about, we can talk.

*Beat*  
*Beat*

I actually have something to talk about.

Pauline is going to be graduating next month. She'd like us to be there.  
Both of us.

I know you don't really like to go out, but if you don't want to fly, we can take the train, I've talked to them. I've talked to your doctor, Marie said we'd be okay on our own.

It'll be good for us. It's a beautiful city. You been there?

Picture it... us strolling along the canal, warm breeze on our arms, we can smell the flowers that are in bloom, roses, geraniums - your favourite, surrounded by yellow, purple, red...

We can try and get a selfie with Justin...

It'll just be for a few days.

Two days.

What do you say?

*Beat*

My little girl has worked very hard to get to this point. Please come with me.

*Beat*

I'm going. If you don't want to go then... that's fine. That's your choice. But I'm going. Okay?

*He stares at her for a response. She doesn't give one.*

Dammit Cassandra, I have to go!

*Silence. Peter makes himself a drink. He looks out the window.*

You know I mentioned to Dr. Mortinson that you aren't talking very much. At all. I told him I was confused by this because it went against what he said would happen, that things would progress. Inch by inch. And he gets this look on his face-

“She does love to talk when she’s here. It’s frustrating for her, but she does it. To be honest Pete, some days we can barely get her to leave.”

So then what’s the problem, Cas?

*Beat*

Or is it me? Disappeared so far into my own head I don’t know how many minutes have gone by since I’ve said something...how many hours... days...

*Beat*

So why don’t we try this talking thing? I’ll tell you about my day.

Let’s see... I went to work. Ten minutes late. Construction. Still. No workers, of course. Just three lanes blocked off and an apparent speed limit of negative fifty.

Classes were okay. Attendance seems to be dwindling... again. Starting to wonder if it’s me...

Oh, you’ll love this. I played squash at lunchtime. Squash. You believe that?

What else? I had a guest speaker in one of my afternoon classes, and her voice... I swear it was like nails on a chalkboard so I politely excused myself for ten minutes and ran to the pool to play the piano.

*Beat*

But of course it’s not there anymore.

*Beat*

So instead I... stripped down, completely naked, jumped in.

*Cassandra looks at him.*

And when I hit the water it was so... cold...and clear and silent... I just... sank... right to the bottom...

*Beat*

Your turn.

*Cassandra looks away.*

Even if you tell me one thing that you did...

*Beat*

Fine.

You went to physio. You worked on the extremities. The therapist's assistant, that twenty-year-old intern, what's his name, *Legend*, pulled on your toes chanting 'This little piggy goes to the market, This little piggy goes home'. Asshole.

You talked to Marie. You listened to Marie talk. You watched TV. The news. A gorilla nearly escaped from the San Francisco zoo, *again*. Fighting started up in the Gaza strip, *again*.

What else? You spied on the neighbours. Frank across the street got a new car, a shiny red porche, convertible, mid-life crisis. You're pretty sure Rita next door is having an affair because there's a man in a white van that shows up every day at 2pm and stays until exactly 3pm, which it's assumed is the exact hour that little Billy takes his afternoon nap.

*Beat*

Am I close?

*Beat*

I cheated. Marie always tells me about your day.

*Beat*

*Beat*

I know this is difficult.

I'm not saying I know how difficult it is for *you*...

I'm just saying... it's difficult.

*Beat*

*Beat*

Cassandra...

Have you ever thought about...

*Beat*

Maybe...

*Beat*

*Beat*

This house feels so damn big now... why is that?

It used to fit us perfectly, remember?

Here was our dance floor...

Here's where you lay on your back, sprawled out, staring up at the ceiling making up those insane stories, while I play the piano. Here is where you insist we make love. With the curtains open.

*He stares out the window.*

So the moon can shine in...

## **SCENE TWO**

*Shift. Cassandra leaves her wheelchair. Cassandra and Peter address the audience.*

**CAS:** So the neighbours can watch.

**PETER:** We meet on my birthday.

**CAS:** My birthday. In a grocery store.

**PETER:** I put my basket down.

**CAS:** Beside mine. I throw my apples into his basket. Pick it up, walk away.

**PETER:** *(To Cassandra)* Excuse me... miss?

Mam?

Excuse me?

*He taps her on the shoulder.*

**CAS:** Yeah?

**PETER:** It's just that... You stole my basket.

**CAS:** Sorry?

**PETER:** Your basket. It's mine.

*She looks at it.*

**CAS:** Nope.

**PETER:** This one is yours.

**CAS:** I don't think so.

*She turns and starts walking.*

**PETER:** Um... actually-

*He taps her again. She turns around.*

**CAS:** Yeah?

*Beat. They stare at each other.*

**PETER:** ... Never mind.

*To the audience.*

**CAS:** He leaves the store.

**PETER:** It doesn't matter.

**CAS:** I follow him. Leave the groceries at his door. Ring the bell.

**PETER:** Open the door.

**CAS:** Watch from across the street.

**PETER:** It's pouring-

**CAS:** I like the rain.

**PETER:** I should give her money. I get out my -

**CAS:** I run away.

**PETER:** I find the whole thing very...

**CAS:** Exciting.

**PETER:** Probably the most exciting thing that happened that week.... month.

*The sound of a doorbell ringing.*

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* Hi.

**PETER:** Four days later.

*To each other.*

**CAS:** I brought you a mango. As a peace offering. For stealing your basket.

**PETER:** The groceries.

*He gets his wallet.*

**CAS:** Don't worry about it.

*She turns to leave.*

**PETER:** You can't pay for my groceries. I don't know you.

**CAS:** Cas. Cassie. Cassandra.

*She holds out her hand. He hesitates before shaking it.*

**PETER:** ...Peter... Just... Peter. Nice to meet you.

**CAS:** I've seen you before. At the University.

**PETER:** I teach. You too?

**CAS:** No.

**PETER:** Oh.

**CAS:** Disappointed?

**PETER:** No-

**CAS:** I'm a student.

**PETER:** Oh-

**CAS:** Too old?

**PETER:** No-

**CAS:** You eat lunch above the pool.

**PETER:** Sometimes.

**CAS:** It's like you're hiding. In the corner, your back to everyone.

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** I saw you play the piano.

**PETER:** Why do they have a piano by the pool, anyway?

**CAS:** I like it. I swim. You're very good.

**PETER:** Thank you.

*Beat*

**CAS:** Anyway... enjoy the...

**PETER:** I will. Thanks.

*She starts to leave.*

Wait-

Do you want to share? I... I can't eat the whole thing myself.

**CAS:** ...sure.

*They sit. Peter awkwardly tries to cut the mango.*

**PETER:** So...

**CAS:** So.

*Beat*

**PETER:** Are they in season...now...mangoes-

**CAS:** You don't talk to a lot of strangers, do you?

**PETER:** You talk to a lot?

**CAS:** Easier a stranger than someone I know. Here, do you want me to...?

*She takes the mango, cuts it properly, gives him a piece.*

The liquid is-

*She points to his chin.*

**PETER:** I forgot napkins.

*Cas wipes her mouth with the back of her sleeve.*

**CAS:** So your job. You like it?

**PETER:** Oh.. you know.

**CAS:** I don't. That's why I'm asking.

**PETER:** It's okay. You like school?

**CAS:** What's not to like? Philosophy, psychology, sociology.

**PETER:** Little bit of everything.

**CAS:** I like to keep my options open.

**PETER:** Probably a good thing.

**CAS:** For a while at least. So what do you love, if not your job?

**PETER:** ... still figuring that out, I guess.

**CAS:** Probably a good thing.

**PETER:** For a while at least.

*Beat*

**CAS:** I should...

**PETER:** Right.

**CAS:** This was... nice.

**PETER:** Yeah. Thanks.

**CAS:** I'm sure I'll see you around.

*To the audience.*

**PETER:** She stands by the edge of the water every afternoon at exactly 12:15.

**CAS:** He eats his lunch from a brown paper bag. Always a sandwich.

**PETER:** Always alone.

**CAS:** Then he comes to the water.

**PETER:** She stares down the length of the pool.

**CAS:** Takes off his shoes, folds up his socks.

**PETER:** Stays completely still.

**CAS:** Sits down at the piano.

**PETER:** And then-

**PETE/CAS:** Finally.

**PETER:** She dives in.

**CAS:** He starts to play.

**PETER:** Five feet below the surface.

**CAS:** After a moment, he stops. Waits.

**PETER:** Glides.

**CAS:** Breathes.

**PETER:** Not moving a muscle.

**CAS:** Making a sound.

**PETER:** She disappears.

**CAS:** He starts to play again. Completely-

**PETER:** in her own world. Not aware of-

**CAS:** anything else. It's incredible

**PETER:** to watch.

**CAS:** To listen to.

**PETER:** She floats to the top of the water.

**CAS:** As if his hands barely touch the keys.

**PETER:** Driven on instinct.

**CAS:** Every muscle

**PETER:** Movement

**CAS:** In sync

**PETER:** Like a machine

**CAS:** On fire

**PETER:** At peace

**CAS:** All at once. Focused

**PETER:** Alive

**CAS:** I can't stop-

**PETER:** Watching her. As if-

**CAS:** I'm drawn to him.

**PETER:** Our eyes meet only once.

**CAS:** For a moment. His face goes bright red.

**PETER:** She gets this smile-

**PETE/CAS:** Breathe.

**PETER:** And then

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* Peter-

**PETER:** I see her in the hallway.

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* You dropped your pen.

**PETER:** *(To Cas)* That's not my-  
*He stops himself.*

Did I?

**CAS:** I leave a mango outside his office door.

**PETER:** A week later another. I see her getting coffee.

**CAS:** I wave.

**PETER:** Smile.

**CAS:** And say nothing. I sit in his classroom.

**PETER:** She's not one of my students.

**CAS:** He's different with them. Like this weight is lifted.

**PETER:** I forget what I'm saying.

**CAS:** He starts laughing.

**PETER:** *She* starts laughing.

**CAS:** This... Whatever it is

**PETER:** Goes on for weeks

**CAS:** And then-

**PETER:** A Saturday.

**CAS:** Outdoor café.

**PETER:** Beside the grocery store.

**CAS:** That he knows I go to.

**PETER:** That *she* knows I-

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* Just out having a lemonade alone?

**PETER:** Working up the courage to go inside. You live around here?

*She points across the street.*

**CAS:** Three floors up. Balcony.

**PETER:** Nice flowers.

**CAS:** Roommate's.

**PETER:** You have a roommate.

**CAS:** Sort of. She has a lover. A couple of them. I hardly ever see her.

**PETER:** That's too bad.

**CAS:** Is it? I've actually been thinking about moving.

**PETER:** Different neighbourhood?

**CAS:** Different city. Life's too short to grow roots, you know?

**PETER:** I've been in the same house for twenty years.

**CAS:** Divorced.

**PETER:** Two years.

**CAS:** Sorry. Or not.

**PETER:** Ever been married?

**CAS:** ... Almost.

**PETER:** Sorry.

**CAS:** Or not. Kids?

**PETER:** Two. University. Down east. What about you? Family? Parents?

**CAS:** Dead.

**PETER:** ... I'm sorry.

**CAS:** I'm lying.

*Beat*

Drink?

*To audience.*

**PETER:** Drinks turn into dinner.

**CAS:** Turns into more drinks.

**PETER:** Turns into-

*To each other.*

How'd you end up here?

**CAS:** I was looking for you.

**PETER:** I mean this city.

**CAS:** I threw a dart at a map on my wall.

**PETER:** Really?

**CAS:** Maybe. How did you end up here?

**PETER:** My wife got a job.

**CAS:** And you followed her.

**PETER:** I was in love.

**CAS:** And now?

**PETER:** ... Did you say you were looking for me?

**CAS:** What's your greatest fear?

**PETER:** Why should I tell you that?

**CAS:** Because I want to know.

**PETER:** I... I don't-

**CAS:** C'mon.

**PETER:** Dying alone.

**CAS:** Regret.

*Beat. She gets up.*

**PETER:** Where are you going?

**CAS:** I'll see you around.

*To the audience.*

One week goes by.

**PETER:** I tell myself

**CAS:** just wait.

**PETER:** Forget it. What I'm thinking is not actually what's... but then I think about what she said "life is short" so-

**CAS:** Finally.

*Knock at the door.*

**PETER:** It's me. Peter.

**CAS:** I see that.

**PETER:** I just wanted to... say hi.

**CAS:** Hi.

**PETER:** ...hi.

*Beat. He holds out a book.*

I brought you this. You mentioned... so I thought-

**CAS:** Is it yours?

**PETER:** Yeah, but-

**CAS:** Are you giving it to me because then I'll have to give it back to you?

**PETER:** What?

**CAS:** As a way to stay in touch with me?

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** No?

**PETER:** ... Maybe. ... I guess... subconsciously-

**CAS:** Subconsciously?

*Beat. She takes the book.*

Thank you for the book.

**PETER:** You're welcome.

*Beat*

I guess I should... It was nice seeing you.

**CAS:** You too.

*Beat. Peter starts to walk away.*

Peter?

*He turns back around.*

Give me a piano lesson.

**PETER:** ... Sure. Any time.

**CAS:** Now.

**PETER:** Now? It's-

**CAS:** Kind of late. So?

*To the audience.*

**PETER:** She has no interest in learning the piano.

**CAS:** We drink ten-year-old bourbon on his front porch instead. He teaches me to play crib.

**PETER:** She beats me at poker.

*To each other.*

**CAS:** Pants. Off.

**PETER:** Excuse me?

**CAS:** It's strip poker-

**PETER:** Says who?

**CAS:** Says me!

**PETER:** Why are you here anyway?

**CAS:** I wanted to see what the inside of your house looks like. Someone's home says a lot about them, you know.

**PETER:** And?

**CAS:** I'm surprised you don't have a dog. People like you... they usually have dogs.

**PETER:** People like me?

**CAS:** Lonely.

**PETER:** What makes you think I'm lonely?

**CAS:** You're always alone.

**PETER:** So then why don't you have a dog?

**CAS:** I have problems with commitment.

**PETER:** Is that why you're not married?

**CAS:** Why aren't you? Let me guess. You fell out of love.

**PETER:** More like she fell in love. With someone else. Your turn.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** What? You can ask questions and I can't?

**CAS:** It wasn't right.

**PETER:** Where is he?

**CAS:** West...ish.

**PETER:** Is that where home is?

**CAS:** What's your definition of home?

**PETER:** You miss it?

**CAS:** You miss your wife?

**PETER:** I do.

**CAS:** These things are supposed to be forever.

**PETER:** Life never quite works out that way though, does it?

**CAS:** You regret it?

**PETER:** I have two wonderful kids so...

*Beat. She stares at him.*

Sometimes.

*Beat*

Why are you here?

**CAS:** Where else would I want to be?

*Beat*

Tell me something you've never told anyone.

**PETER:** You first.

**CAS:** I spent the last half of my parents' funeral, the part with the egg salad sandwiches and the Nanaimo bars, making love to the Minister's son in the back seat of his chevy Malibu. Let me tell you, it was way better than the best egg salad sandwich you have ever had.

**PETER:** You're parents aren't dead.

**CAS:** No, they're in Arizona.

**PETER:** So why do you pretend?

**CAS:** It's easier to talk to them this way. Your turn.

**PETER:** I... cheated on my wife. Once. Twice.

**CAS:** Once or twice?

**PETER:** One night. Two different people. It was... they were... twins. Lesbians...

**CAS:** Lesbian twins? Hot.

**PETER:** Uh huh.

**CAS:** What else you got?

**PETER:** Truth?

**CAS:** If that's your thing.

**PETER:** When my mother was in the nursing home, I'd visit her every day. But my marriage was falling apart, Pauline was moving and some days I just didn't want to do it. Half the time, she didn't know who I was. So when I went to her room and she mistook me for the cleaning staff... I'd let her believe that. I'd dust a few things off and walk out.

It felt so good to walk out.

*Beat*

**CAS:** Play me something. Something you've written.

**PETER:** I don't like to share my own-

**CAS:** Do it anyway.

*Peter plays the piano.*

**CAS:** Beautiful.

*To the audience*

**PETER:** Eventually it turns into-

**CAS:** *Ain't got nothin' but love babe, eight days a week!*

**PETER:** and watching the sun rise

**CAS:** On the roof of his house.  
*(To Peter)* I'll give you five bucks to moon the entire neighbourhood.

**PETER:** No one needs to see that.

**CAS:** They're all sleeping anyway.

**PETER:** And if they're not?

**CAS:** Fuck 'em. On the count of three.

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** One...

**PETER:** I'm not-

**CAS:** Two...

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** Three-

*Peter grabs Cas and kisses her. Beat. Cas breaks out of the scene.*

That's not what happens.

**PETER:** But I wish-

**CAS:** This is.

*Cassandra kisses Peter.*

**PETER:** *(To the audience)* The next Sunday, I talk to my daughter Pauline. She says I seem happy. She seems to find this irritating.

*(Imitating daughter)* “Do I need to come home, dad?”

I insist she doesn't. I don't tell her about Cassandra. What would I say?

“There's a young...ish woman... we've taken to drinking bourbon and smoking cigars while she tells me wild stories that we both know aren't true but are enthralling all the same. We watch movies and cook dinner and it is-

**CAS:** Incredible. That's what I tell my roommate. He's goofy and his heart is... I mean, he holds the car door-

“Whatever turns your crank,” she says as she walks out the door.

**PETER:** I get up the nerve to tell my son.

*She's funny... exciting. Don't tell your sister though. No need to get her all-*

“Tell her what?” he says. “Listen dad, my buddy Dragon just showed up we're gonna play x-box.”

I put down the phone.

I pick it up again.

*I know it's early -*

**CAS:** I'll be right over.

**PETER:** She's here in ten minutes. Wearing a trench coat.

**CAS:** Only a trench coat.

*To each other.*

**PETER:** You just happened to have this in your closet?

**CAS:** Sometimes I like to dress up as Inspector Gadget.

**PETER:** Who?

**CAS:** Nevermind.

*They start to kiss.*

**PETER:** Wait. What are you doing here?

**CAS:** You asked me to come-

**PETER:** But really.

**CAS:** I like you.

**PETER:** Why?

**CAS:** Because you ask questions like that.

*They kiss.*

*To the audience.*

**CAS:** We have sex for hours.

**PETER:** Twenty-five minutes.

**CAS:** I lay on his chest, listening to the sound of his breath. I pretend that we're laying on the floor of a tiny boat in the middle of the ocean. The waves rocking us back and forth. The most perfect blue water and sky all around us.

**PETER:** Miles and miles from anyone else.

*To each other.*

**CAS:** If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?

**PETER:** I'm pretty happy where I am.

**CAS:** Pretend.

**PETER:** A jazz club... in Chicago.

**CAS:** Snorkeling in the Galapagos.

**PETER:** Hiking the pacific coast trail.

**CAS:** Hiking the El Camino.

**PETER:** ...Paris.

**CAS:** Yes. A coffee shop. It's raining out.

**PETER:** You're sipping your latte.

**CAS:** Trying to get warm.

**PETER:** Eating a chocolate croissant.

**CAS:** Wearing a black and white striped dress. And five inch heels. And a big, floppy white hat. My name is Monique. I'm devastatingly gorgeous. My lips are always bright red and pouty. I've never married because I believe in an old fashioned romance that doesn't exist anymore.

**PETER:** Who am I?

**CAS:** You are Jacques from Paris, of course. Actually, you're Jack from Alberta. But your wife just died and you're looking to forget yourself, so now you're Jacque from Paris. But you can't shake who you are at your core. So you still wear your running shoes when you go to a museum-

**PETER:** I do not do that.

**CAS:** Yes, you do. But this isn't you anyway, this is Jack. Jacque. Your umbrella breaks and you get trapped in the rain, you come inside the coffee shop for shelter-

**PETER:** And my shoes are wet, so I slip on the tile floor-

**CAS:** But you grab the counter at the last second to stop yourself from falling, but not before putting your back out just slightly. You grab your latte-

**PETER:** Though I'm not certain what that is-

**CAS:** And you try your best to stand up straight as you walk to a table.

**PETER:** But I have to hobble and end up spilling my coffee.

**CAS:** And tripping over your shoelaces that have come undone for the hundredth time that day.

**PETER:** I slam involuntarily into the chair next to you.

**CAS:** And in a desperate attempt to cling to even a shred of your identity as Jacque from Paris you ask me:

**PETER:** Est ce siège prise?

*Beat*

**CAS:** Exactly.

*Beat*

Monique takes a tissue from her purse-

**PETER:** Her purse shaped like a poodle.

**CAS:** She wipes the water-

**PETER:** Or is it sweat-

**CAS:** Away from the side of his face. Like this-

*She touches the side of Peter's face. She leaves it there.*

And there's this moment.

**PETER:** A moment?

*Beat.*

*Beat.*

And then what happens?

**CAS:** They fall in love.

**PETER:** They barely know each other.

**CAS:** Something's can't be explained.

**PETER:** It's in the stars.

*To the audience.*

**CAS:** On the weekends we take daytrips to small towns. Eat dinner in truckstops.

**PETER:** Take pictures by the welcome signs.

**CAS:** Have sex at all the rest-stops.

**PETER:** One rest stop.

**CAS:** Two. We get caught by the cops.

**PETER:** Get off with a warning.

**CAS:** Guess he's never seen a grown man cry.

**PETER:** *(To Cassandra)* I did not cry.

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* You're right, it was more like weeping.

**PETER:** She takes me camping.

**CAS:** He burns off his eyebrow trying to make a fire.

**PETER:** Her tent collapses on us in the middle of the night.

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* So? We'll sleep under the stars. It'll be an adventure.

**PETER:** Is everything an adventure to you?

*To the audience.*

She tries to teach me to swim.

**CAS:** In Mexico.

**PETER:** We go for a week. One of those all-inclusive things.

**CAS:** Do tequila shots on the beach.

**PETER:** She throws up in the pool.

**CAS:** Mexico is awesome.

**PETER:** I take her to Italy. For two weeks. It's a surprise. I book the flights, the trains, the hotels.

**CAS:** I don't know where we're going until we board the plane.

**PETER:** I act casual.

**CAS:** He's a nervous wreck.

**PETER:** We take train rides through the countryside.

**CAS:** Stay in quaint hotels.

**PETER:** Wander aimlessly  
(*To Cas*) Cas...um...are we...lost?

**CAS:** (*To Peter*) Yes, Peter. That's the point.

*To the audience.*

**PETER:** On the last night

**CAS:** We sit by the Trevi Fountain.

**PETER:** In silence.

**CAS:** Drinking wine.

**PETER:** I've never seen her cry before.

**CAS:** (*To Peter*) I don't want to leave.

**PETER:** Without thinking, I say-

(*To Cassandra*) ... maybe when we get back... you could... move in with me. If you want. No pressure-

**CAS:** Why don't we get married?

*Beat*

I'm serious, Peter. Why don't we get married?

*Beat*

**PETER:** ... We can't... just... get married.

**CAS:** Why not? Let's just do it. Right here. Right now. We're in the most beautiful city on earth. We're a little tipsy. We're in love. We are in love, right?

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** Do you love me?

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** Are you in love with me?

*Beat*

**PETER:** Sure, yeah, I mean-

**CAS:** Well, then...

*She gets down on one knee and takes his hand.*

Peter, will you marry me?

*Beat.*

*Beat*

*He pulls her up. They dance, Lou Reed's Perfect Day plays. At some point in the dance she gets back into her wheelchair, lights shift.*

### **Scene Three**

**PETER:** Midnight ceremony. Just like you wanted. No Trevi Fountain, but candles and Chinese lanterns. You, barefoot walking through the backyard in that bright red dress.

Everyone leaves as the sun comes up...

*Beat*

Maybe we should do it again.

Not the wedding... just a date. Like we used to.

What do you say?

*Peter goes into the back, as he does he sings 'Perfect Day.'*  
*He returns with the red dress, make up, a hairbrush.*

How many times did I walk through that door after a bad day and all I see is a flash of red as you run up behind me in this dress, kiss the back of my neck...

Okay?

*Beat. Cassandra hesitates before lifting up her right arm just slightly indicating that Peter can put the dress on her. With great difficulty Peter removes the clothes that Cassandra is wearing, and he puts the dress on her. Cassandra moans at times throughout.*

*After he has the dress on her, Peter grabs the hairbrush, and brushes Cassandra's hair. Then he takes out her makeup and applies it – eye shadow, blush, lipstick.*

*He grabs a mirror and begins to bring it to Cassandra.*

**CAS:** No!

*She squeezes her eyes shut.*

**PETER:** She speaks.

*They stare at each other.*

You look beautiful. As always.

*Beat*

Okay. I'll be right back.

*Peter goes to the table. He brings out food, he lights candles, moves flowers onto the table. Puts on music.*

**PETER:** Ta da...

How about tonight we are not Peter and Cassandra... tonight we are...  
Jacque and Monique.

And this isn't just some house, in some ordinary city... this is... the finest  
restaurant in all of Paris.

*(In a French accent)* Paris, as you say.

*Beat*

We're sitting right by the window, your favourite, watching these tourists...lost, screaming at each other, clutching their guidebooks. *Stupide Americans*, you say and we laugh. Our waiter is François. He has one of those curly mustaches, and pants that are too short. For dinner...

*Peter gets bowls of pureed and soft food. He puts a bib on Cassandra. He puts the bowl and spoon in front of her.*

We're eating escargot...

and soupe à l'oignon

and blanquette de veau

and drinking the finest red wine they have.

*Peter begins eating.*

Mmmm. Magnifique. You must try it.

*Beat*

Cassandra, just try. You can do it.

*Beat*

*Peter gives in, grabs the spoon and holds it to her mouth. She resists at first and then opens her mouth and lets him feed her.*

**PETER:** Anyway, of course Jack-

**CAS:** Stop.

**PETER:** Sorry, I mean Jacque, has forgotten his wallet, but he doesn't want Monique to know, so-

**CAS:** Stop!

**PETER:** ... But you love Jacque and Monique.

You love Jacque and Monique more than you love Peter and Cassandra. We have those fights. I say-

"This is reality Cassandra. A real moment."

And you say-

*He imitates Cassandra smoking an invisible cigarette talking in a French accent.*

“But I am Monique.”

Do you know how hard it is to do a French accent when you're angry?

*(In French accent)* “Monique, when will you ever clean your disgusting old food out of the refrigerator, huh?”

**CAS:** No... more.

**PETER:** You've barely eaten-

**CAS:** No. more.

**PETER:** You'll get hungry.

**CAS:** NoMore!

*Peter removes her bib, moves the food away. They move away from the table.*

**PETER:** You cold? You want your sweater?

*Peter gets Cassandra's sweater. He struggles to put it on her. She moans loudly.*

Sorry -

*She moans again.*

I'm trying.

*She moans again.*

Cassandra-

**CAS:** Stop-

**PETER:** No, I-

**CAS:** Leave... it.

**PETER:** I can do it-

**CAS:** Leave..it!

*Peter moves away from her, leaving the sweater half on. He stares out the window.*

*Beat.*

*He closes his eyes.*

**PETER:** Sometimes I can catch that feeling. I've just jumped out of the plane, my chute opens...

**CAS:** ... Free

**PETER:** Just for a moment.

*Beat. He opens his eyes.*

Two nights ago I had this dream. I don't know where we were, you were so far away from me, but I can see you. And you don't have to say anything, or do anything, I know you need me. So I run to you. But I can't find you. I get all turned around and confused. But then I see you again, so I run towards you but again I can't find you.

That's what I feel like. Everyday...

*Beat*

*Beat.*

*He looks out the window.*

There comes Frank home again. In his little red porche. You know I saw his wife hit it the other day with her Buick. She looked around, drove away like nothing ever happened.

*Beat*

You want to go outside for a bit?

*Beat. Cassandra doesn't answer.*

Y'know you don't have to say anything for me to know what you're thinking about me.

I'm more nervous around you now then when we first met. Thank God for Marie, Michelle, Gloria, at least when they're here, I feel like I can... breathe... and when I can breathe then I can talk to you.

**CAS:** Wi-dow.

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** You...should.be.a...wid-

**PETER:** Why would you say that?

*Beat*

If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?

A carriage ride in Central Park?  
Backpacking through Calcutta...

That's the beauty of us Cassandra. We can go anywhere. We know how to float out of our bodies. To survive is to escape. You taught me that.

Go with me. Please. If you could be anywhere-

**CAS:** With.my...June.Bug.

*Beat*

*Beat*

*He moves away from her.*

**PETER:** Cassandra...

Maybe...

*He looks at her. He can't finish his thought. Beat.*

Maybe we should go to bed.

Marie said you refused to let her help you with the bath this morning, so now we'll have to do it tonight. What's that about anyway?

*Cassandra moans.*

I've told you she's just trying to do her job.

**CAS:** You. treat. me. like. kid.

**PETER:** Well, sometimes that's how you act.

**CAS:** No. bed. yet.

**PETER:** Yes. Bed. Now. I'm tired.

**CAS:** Go.

**PETER:** And leave you here? Right. And in the morning, when you've been in your chair all night and you're completely cramped up, then what?

**CAS:** Go! Get-

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** A-WAY! GET A-WAYFROM ME!

**PETER:** Don't you think I want to?

*Beat*

I'm sorry. I didn't mean...

Yes, I did mean. And for that I'm very, very sorry.

**CAS:** You.look.at..her.

**PETER:** Who?

**CAS:** Ma-rie..My..house.My...life.

**PETER:** What are you talking about?

**CAS:** She...touch.you-

**PETER:** Are you serious?

**CAS:** You want to fffuck...her.

**PETER:** Stop it.

**CAS:** I. can. be. Ma-rie.

**PETER:** Cas-

**CAS:** I. can-

**PETER:** I don't want you to be-

**CAS:** You. can. fuck. me.... You... fuck... me.

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** Now!

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** Now!

**PETER:** You know what, you're right. I do want to fuck Marie. In fact, when I'm at work, I wonder... is tonight going to be the night. That I'll fuck her. That I'll come home, go into the kitchen, walk up behind her, rub up against her, she doesn't say anything, because she's been waiting for it, for me fuck her. And maybe I'll take her from behind, right there or maybe I'll lead her to the kitchen table, it's all set, plates, silverware, but I don't care because that's how good she feels, that's how good it feels to fuck her and before I finish I lead her to the bedroom, our bedroom, walk right past you, and then I fuck her in our bed, harder, harder, over and over-

**CAS:** Stop!

**PETER:** You want to know the truth about Marie? I do love coming home to her. I walk in the door, she chatters away about her day, you, the news, the weather, asks me about my day, tells me I look tired. But if you notice, I don't look at her. I sit down on the couch, close my eyes and listen to her moving around the house. Opening cupboards, closing drawers. She always thinks I've fallen asleep. She puts her hand on my arm, right here, to tell me she's leaving. I don't open my eyes, I leave her hand on my arm. Because I'm pretending she's you.

*Beat*

**CAS:** ... Touch... me. Please.

*Peter goes to her.*

I...miss-

**PETER:** I miss you-

**CAS:** Take me... a-way... from here.

*He holds her, kisses her, touches her. It gets increasingly intense.*

Put... your. hand... back.on.my...bel-ly.

*Beat*

Please.

*Peter does.*

You... feel her... kick?

*Peter stops. He stares at her. Beat.*

#### **Scene Four**

*Shift.*

**PETER:** No.

*Cassandra leaves her wheelchair.*

**CAS:** Yes.

**PETER:** Cas-

*Cassandra sticks her belly out. She starts speaking in a French accent.*

**CAS:** What about now?

*She puts Peter's hand on her belly. He hesitates, looks at Cassandra and then joins in.*

**PETER:** Ahhh... there it is. Guess we should've controlled ourselves. What number is this now?

**CAS:** Un...deux...trois...quatre...cinq...at least.

**PETER:** Maybe we should think next time before we-

**CAS:** I try to tell you, but you just won't stop.

**PETER:** And you have no say in this?

**CAS:** I have five children. I'm so tired, it's all I can do to just lay on my back and take it.

**PETER:** I'll believe that when I see it.

*He starts kissing her.*

**CAS:** No, no, no. Let's go out.

**PETER:** It's our honeymoon. We're supposed to stay in.

**CAS:** And we're in Vegas! We should be gambling at the Bellagio or flying over the Grand Canyon.

**PETER:** I like my idea better.

*He kisses her. To the audience.*

**CAS:** We stay at the Paris Hotel.

**PETER:** Obviously.

**CAS:** Every night we go to the top of the Eifel Tower-

**PETER:** The "Eifel Tower".

**CAS:** To look out over the lights.

*Beat. He stares at her.*

**PETER:** She is so beautiful.

*To each other.*

Are you going to stay with me when I'm in diapers?

**CAS:** Shouldn't you have asked me that before we got married?

**PETER:** Probably.

**CAS:** Well, I haven't thought about it much.

**PETER:** Shouldn't you have thought about it before we got married?

**CAS:** Probably.

*She realizes that Peter is serious.*

Peter. Yes, I'll stay with you when you're in diapers.

**PETER:** Do you promise?

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** Do you ever worry-

**CAS:** No.

**PETER:** Marriage is kind of a big... maybe we should talk about how we're going to...

**CAS:** ...going to?

**PETER:** Most people take a year to plan a wedding, we took-

**CAS:** Don't think so much. Just enjoy the view, okay.

*Beat. To the audience.*

**PETER:** I sell my house.

*To each other.*

**CAS:** Why don't we rent?

**PETER:** And throw our money away?

**CAS:** What if we want to move?

**PETER:** Where would we go?

*To the audience.*

**CAS:** We compromise.

**PETER:** She picks the new house.

**CAS:** It's a hundred years old.

**PETER:** *(less enthused)* A hundred years old.

**CAS:** Like in a fairytale. Two stories. Three if you count the attic.

**PETER:** I paint the walls. She renovates the kitchen.

**CAS:** We build a porch.

**PETER:** Plant a garden.

**CAS:** And when that's all done-

**PETER:** There we are. Bumping into each other in the hallway.

**CAS:** Walking in on each other in the bathroom. He snores sometimes...

**PETER:** She takes up the entire bed.

*To each other*

**CAS:** Peter, why is your laundry in my basket?

**PETER:** Because it's a laundry basket.

**CAS:** Am I supposed to do your laundry?

**PETER:** If you want *me* to cook dinner.

**CAS:** Are you insinuating that I don't cook?

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** I cooked three times last week, thank you very much.

**PETER:** Hot dogs.

**CAS:** And hamburgers.

**PETER:** With fries. You didn't even make a salad.

**CAS:** They were sweet potato!

*Beat. To the audience.*

**PETER:** We figure it out. And what we don't figure out-

**CAS:** *(To Peter)* Arm wrestle?

**PETER:** *(To Cas)* You're on.

*To audience*

**PETER:** We light candles with our meals and have wine.

**CAS:** Moonlit dance parties and drunken games of charades.

**PETER:** We start finishing each other's sentences.

**CAS:** ....swapping sections of the newspaper over breakfast.

**PETER:** Taking long walks after dinner, drives on Sunday, sitting in the most comfortable silence. Soon I start to feel like-

**CAS:** ... I'm someone else.

**PETER:** myself. Twenty years ago.

**CAS:** It's... different.

**PETER:** I stop looking in mirrors and instead see myself reflected in her.

**CAS:** I come home. A random Tuesday.

*To each other.*

What did you do, crash the car?

**PETER:** I'm offended.

**CAS:** No one cooks a four-course meal on a Tuesday unless they've done something wrong.

**PETER:** Well, I'm different. Besides, don't you think you deserve it?

*Beat. She stares at him.*

Okay, fine. But I haven't done anything wrong, I just want to talk to you. About an idea I have.

**CAS:** Sounds exciting.

**PETER:** It is. I hope.

**CAS:** And you're shaking. Now it's even more exciting.

*Beat. He breathes.*

**PETER:** Cassandra, I was thinking that-

**CAS:** Wait! Let me guess. You got a new job? Somewhere exciting-

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** We're going on a trip? Barcelona? Portugal? Paris... Oh... we're finally going to Paris!

**PETER:** We're not going to Paris. Or on a trip.

**CAS:** ...oh.

**PETER:** But it is an adventure....

**CAS:** That doesn't require leaving the city, *some adventure*.... Canoeing?

**PETER:** No-

**CAS:** Guess we could do the hot air balloon thing again-

**PETER:** Can you stop-

**CAS:** Some kind of guided walk, though I'm not sure-

**PETER:** A baby, Cassandra. I think we should have a baby.

*Beat. He goes up to her, he tries to joke.*

Not cinq... just une.

*She doesn't respond. Beat*

It's just an idea.

*Beat*

A thought.

*Silence.*

Just forget I said anything, okay?

**CAS:** Okay.

**PETER:** Okay what?

**CAS:** I'll forget you said anything. When's dinner, I'm starving.

**PETER:** ... about twenty minutes.

*Silence.*

I don't really want to forget it.

**CAS:** We talked about this.

**PETER:** Did we? I just... we're so happy right now so imagine how happy we could be raising a kid together. A baby...a toddler... I want to do that with you.

We have all this space-

**CAS:** You don't have a baby because you have lots of space, Peter.

**PETER:** I know that. That's not what I mean.

**CAS:** Then what do you mean?

**PETER:** I mean... it would be an incredible experience.

**CAS:** Which you've had. Twice.

**PETER:** Not with you.

**CAS:** Peter... you're... Do you really want to be changing diapers?

**PETER:** Yes. I do.

**CAS:** Well, I don't.

*Beat*

You knew that. Every time we hear a baby crying on a plane, or in a restaurant, I say "Ugh, who would do that to themselves." What do you think I meant?

**PETER:** That you wouldn't bring a baby on a plane.

**CAS:** Bullshit.

**PETER:** Well you didn't know if I wanted kids -

**CAS:** I thought it was a given. I mean, what about when the kids a teenager and you're...

**PETER:** old?

**CAS:** ...der. Do you really want-

**PETER:** Yes.

*Beat*

**CAS:** We're happy. Why would we want something to get in the way of that?

**PETER:** It's not a something, Cassandra. It's a baby.

**CAS:** Yeah, I got that part.

**PETER:** I want to change diapers, and get up in the middle of the night. At least it's something to do, instead of lying awake for hours, staring at the ceiling. I want the thrill of throwing my little girl up in the air, knowing that she trusts me to catch her. I want the responsibility of carrying her, the weight on my chest when she falls asleep. I want to come home after a shitty day to her standing by the door holding a finger-painted sign that says 'I love you daddy.'

I want all of that. Again.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** You'll regret it if you don't do it. And then you'll blame me. It'll creep in. At night, in the middle of the day, you'll let your mind wander and you'll start to wonder. What if... what if you had met someone younger, made different decisions. But by that point it'll be too late.

I don't want this to be the thing that breaks us years from now. I don't want to be the one to hold you back.

**CAS:** Or maybe you don't want *me* to be the one to hold *you* back.

*Beat*

Look, can we just...

**PETER:** Drop it?

**CAS:** Yeah.

**PETER:** Like always.

**CAS:** Peter. We'll talk about it-

**PETER:** Later.

**CAS:** Yes, later. Let's not ruin tonight. Your dinner smells delicious. I'll put on some music, you can tell me about your day-

**PETER:** We *will* talk about it later.

**CAS:** Of course we will. But for tonight... our house is a castle, our living room a dance floor, our kitchen a tiny table on a secluded beach in San Paolo. Okay?

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** The beach is in Spain.

*Beat*

**CAS:** One week goes by.

**PETER:** Two weeks.

**CAS:** A month. I wait.

**PETER:** For *her* to bring it up to *me*.

**CAS:** I know he's dying to talk about it.

**PETER:** I buy her flowers

**CAS:** Almost every day. It's excessive.

**PETER:** I agree to go to Cuba on a whim.

**CAS:** Four days in a dodgy hotel in a back corner of Havana.

**PETER:** I get a tiny tattoo of her initials

**CAS:** right over his heart.

**PETER:** It's fake, but still.

**CAS:** I almost feel guilty

**PETER:** Finally I can't take it anymore.

**CAS:** until I come home to the smell of fresh paint coming from the second bedroom.

*To each other.*

Pale yellow?

**PETER:** You don't like it?

**CAS:** Gender neutral.

**PETER:** What do you mean?

**CAS:** I'm not an idiot. Did you buy the crib already too?

**PETER:** Just a rocking chair, it was handcrafted, on sale.

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** It was a good deal!

**CAS:** Peter!

**PETER:** Just go with me. Like I always go with you. No beaches this time, no castles. Just you and me and our baby. Here in this house. We watch her sleep. For hours. We put her in the stroller and take long walks along the river. We judge all the other parents at T-ball, because their kid isn't nearly as good as ours. At night when she's asleep we sit on the porch drinking red wine arguing over what she's going to be when she grows up. Doesn't that sound perfect?

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** When you think about motherhood-

**CAS:** I think about a woman who'd take off for days at a time, who insisted I call her by her first name-

**PETER:** Cas-

**CAS:** -who suggested I get my tubes tied when I was sixteen so I didn't 'ruin my life.'

**PETER:** Okay-

**CAS:** Who warned me no matter what happens, never, ever let myself-

*(She doesn't finish saying 'get stuck'.)*

**PETER:** Okay!

**CAS:** There's no going back Peter. Once it's done, it's done.

**PETER:** That's why it's a risk.

**CAS:** So I'm supposed to say yes... for you?

**PETER:** No-

**CAS:** Maybe I am, I mean relationships are about sacrifice, you can't always have your own way, give and take-

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** And what if it's a mistake?

**PETER:** Then it's a mistake. You adapt. Besides, what if it's not a mistake. I thought it might be a mistake to get married, but I'm so happy that I-

**CAS:** Sorry?

**PETER:** My point is-

**CAS:** You thought it might be a mistake to get married?

**PETER:** - just because you're not sure about something, doesn't mean it's the wrong choice-

**CAS:** Then why did you say yes?

**PETER:** ...I didn't. Technically.

**CAS:** Why did you say, I do?

**PETER:** I didn't want to lose you.

**CAS:** But you didn't *want* to get married?

**PETER:** No, I did-

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** This isn't-

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** I was scared. We barely knew each other. I didn't know if-

**CAS:** Didn't you think that we were meant to be together?

**PETER:** Yes, but I was still... The point is I'm ecstatic now. I'm ecstatic that I, that *we* decided to-

**CAS:** Why didn't you just tell me?

**PETER:** Because I knew how happy you were.

*Beat*

You got down on your knee. It was a thrill for you. And that made you happy. And I loved seeing you happy. I *love* seeing you happy.

**CAS:** So you said 'I do'. For me. And I'm now supposed to say 'I do'. To the baby. For you.

**PETER:** No, that's not what I-

**CAS:** But really, it's true. If it's going to be give and take.

**PETER:** I want you to say yes because you're happy about the decision.

**CAS:** But I might be happy later. That's what you're saying.

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** And what if I was doing it for you?

Would you still go through with it?

*Beat*

**PETER:** ...yes.

*To the audience. She studies Peter. Beat.*

**CAS:** It's the way his feet come off the ground. The way he can still barely look at me. *Me.*

*Beat*

First the images come to me when I'm sleeping. Me with a baby.

A toddler.

A nine-year-old.

Then they come when I'm trying to sleep. Then in the middle of the day. Middle of a conversation. Middle of a completely different thought. I can't see myself anymore. Or even the two of us.

**PETER:** It's just the three of us.

*To each other.*

**CAS:** Apparently when you plant an idea in someone's head and it starts to grow roots.

**PETER:** Sorry?

**CAS:** I guess... maybe we could... *try.* For a bit. I mean-

**PETER:** Yeah?

**CAS:** Leave it up to fate or whatever.

**PETER:** The stars.

**CAS:** If it happens it happens and if it doesn't-

*To the audience*

**PETER:** But it does.

**CAS:** Almost immediately.

**PETER:** Means it was meant to be.

**CAS:** You think?

I know before I take the test.

**PETER:** She doesn't tell me for weeks.

**CAS:** I walk around with this presence.

**PETER:** She starts running all the time.

**CAS:** Faster, longer, get in the car, onto the highway, drive for hours, the weight crushes my chest, can't breathe, pull over, get out, open my mouth to scream and instead I just...

**PETER/CAS:** let go.

**PETER:** Buy in.

**CAS:** Put my hand on my belly...if I can shut off my thoughts long enough... I swear I can hear her heartbeat.

**PETER:** It's almost two months before she can admit-

*To each other.*

**CAS:** ...I'm... happy.

**PETER:** You're happy?

**CAS:** That we're having a baby.

**PETER:** You're happy.

**CAS:** Uh huh.

**PETER:** You're happy...

You're happy!

*Peter laughs, he grabs her, they hug, laughing.*

**PETER:** Where's the champagne?

**CAS:** I can't drink.

**PETER:** Right. Gingerale. We should go right now, we still need to buy a crib. And clothes and a car seat.

**CAS:** Slow down-

**PETER:** There's so many things I've been waiting to talk about... church, baptism-

**CAS:** We're not religious-

**PETER:** So? It's like insurance. And what about school? Public or private? French immersion or-

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** And University, we'll have to start saving.

**CAS:** Maybe our kid won't-

**PETER:** They have to.

**CAS:** I think we're getting ahead of ourselves.

**PETER:** Have you been thinking names?

**CAS:** ... June.

**PETER:** After my mother. Perfect. And if it's a boy?

**CAS:** It won't be a boy.

*To the audience.*

We spend months getting the room ready.

**PETER:** Baby proofing the house.

**CAS:** Buying clothes.

**PETER:** Reading books. 'So you're a father... *again.*'

**CAS:** When she keeps me awake kicking at night, I get up and tell her stories. I imagine my mother doing the same for me.

**PETER:** When Cas naps I lay my head by her belly so June will get used to the sound and rhythm of my breath. It's perfect.

**CAS:** Almost.

**PETER:** I'm at a conference. I get a phone call in the middle of the night-

**CAS:** soaked sheets  
stomach cramping  
pain  
hospital  
nurse holding the phone to my ear, Peter saying-

**PETER:** "I'm on my way to the airport... but it's snowing like crazy, I don't know if any of the planes are going to go, Cas, I'm sorry--"

**CAS:** *Hang up the goddamn phone!*

Doctor telling me that the state things are in they'll have to induce labour and me saying but I'm not even six months and her saying 'You've had a late-term.' I squeeze the metal bars on the bed so hard I'm sure they'll break. "A late-term?"

You've miscarried.

*Beat*  
*Beat*

**PETER:** She stays in bed for a month. I lay beside her for a week. She says nothing. I hold her hand-

**CAS:** He keeps going to work.

**PETER:** She doesn't even turn on the light.

**CAS:** And showering and cooking dinner.

**PETER:** I come downstairs one night at three in the morning to a table full of papers and her standing in the middle of the room, eyes closed, arms wide.

*(To Cassandra)* What are you doing?

**CAS:** Floating.

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** I've just jumped out of a plane, my parachute just opened, the wind has caught me and there I am... weightless.

**PETER:** What do you see from up there?

**CAS:** Nothing.

**PETER:** What's this on the table?

**CAS:** Lists. The foods I was eating, the vitamins, the articles I read, the books, my doctors appointments.

**PETER:** Why?

**CAS:** It's proof. That I did the best I could.

**PETER:** I've told you this isn't your fault.

**CAS:** You say that now. But just wait. It'll creep in. You'll let your mind wander and you'll start to wonder. What I did.

**PETER:** Come back to bed. Please.

**CAS:** I left my body. It was like I was watching this scene that I had imagined so many times but yet it was so...very... different. I kept hearing this sound... finally I realized it was *me*... screaming for my mother. Can you believe that? *My mother*...

*Beat*

Stand with me.

*Peter stands beside her, grabs her hand, closes his eyes.*

**PETER:** How do I know when I should open my chute?

**CAS:** We're flying tandem, silly. Can you hear that?

**PETER:** Hear what?

**CAS:** Nothing. Absolutely nothing. That's the best part of being up here.

*Beat.*

*Beat.*

What did you imagine your life would be like?

**PETER:** Nothing like this. In a good way.

**CAS:** Why didn't you move to New York? Try to make it as a musician?

**PETER:** ...scared, I guess.

**CAS:** Or did you just stop moving. Let the walls come up around you-

**PETER:** I'm happy with my life. Why, what did you imagine?

**CAS:** ...That one day I wouldn't *have* to imagine.

*He looks at her.*

If you could change one thing-

**PETER:** I can't-

**CAS:** If you could.

**PETER:** What's with all the questions?

**CAS:** There's so much I don't know about you.

**PETER:** Well, we have our whole lives to get to know each other.

**CAS:** I guess...

*Beat*

**PETER:** I would've held her.

**CAS:** We didn't need to. I still feel her with me, don't you?

**PETER:** But it would've been nice.

*Beat*

It will be nice. Someday. Right?

*Beat*

**CAS:** Junebug. I like saying her name. I like the way it feels in my mouth.

*Beat*

Dance with me. We can pretend we're-

**PETER:** How about tonight we just stay here? In this moment. In this house. You and me.

**CAS:** Sure.

*Beat.*

*Beat*

Maybe we should go to Argentina.

**PETER:** What?

**CAS:** We'll stand on a bridge by the Iguazu Falls, like we saw on TV, feel the mist on our face... so cold.

**PETER:** Cassandra, what happened-

**CAS:** Doesn't that sound amazing?

**PETER:** It doesn't have to change anything.

*Beat. The stare at each other.*

**CAS:** Argentina?

*Beat*

**PETER:** Sure. Maybe. For now... bed?

**CAS:** In a minute.

*To the audience*

He starts cleaning the entire house.

**PETER:** She starts planning every waking second of every day.

**CAS:** The walls, the cupboards, the furniture.

**PETER:** Drag racing, hose racing, monster truck.

**CAS:** He cleans the floors with a toothbrush.

**PETER:** She gives me an itinerary for the weekends.

**CAS:** We talk about

**PETER:** everything else.

**CAS:** Why is that?

**PETER:** Why is that?

**CAS:** But then he comes home early one day to find me packing up the pale yellow room-

*To each other.*

**PETER:** What are you doing?

**CAS:** I thought we could donate this stuff, it's brand new. Unless you want to sell it-

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** You have someone to-

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** Peter, we can't leave it here.

**PETER:** Why not?

**CAS:** It's depressing.

**PETER:** To who?

**CAS:** To me.

**PETER:** Well, I like it. I find it comforting. It reminds me of her.

**CAS:** Well I don't want to be reminded.

**PETER:** Of course not.

**CAS:** What is that supposed to mean?

**PETER:** I think you're having trouble dealing with-

**CAS:** You think *I'm* having trouble-

**PETER:** Yes.

**CAS:** You don't talk about it either.

**PETER:** I know.

*Beat*

Why don't we talk about it?

**CAS:** I don't know.

**PETER:** Why don't we talk about anything? Anything... real.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** Think about it Cassandra. Why don't we ever talk about anything-

**CAS:** Because it's so much more fun to disappear.

*Beat*

Let's go out. My bones are starting to push through my skin. I can't breathe.

**PETER:** What happened to staying in?

**CAS:** Is that real?

*Beat*

Sure. Whatever you want.

*To the audience*

**PETER:** She starts swimming again.

**CAS:** He starts playing more often.

**PETER:** I watch

**CAS:** listen

**PETER:** She dives in, five feet below the surface

**CAS:** After a moment, he stops. Waits.

**PETER:** Glides

**CAS:** Breathes

**PETER:** Not moving a muscle.

**CAS:** Making a sound.

**PETER:** I can see her body perfectly.

**CAS:** And then he starts to play again.

**PETER:** She floats to the top of the water.

**CAS:** As if his hands barely touch the keys.

**PETER:** Driven on instinct.

**CAS:** Every muscle

**PETER:** Movement

**CAS:** In sync. I can't stop-

**PETER:** Watching her. As if-

**CAS:** He's completely-

**PETER:** unaware of anything else.

**CAS:** I'm still drawn to him.

**PETER:** to her.

**CAS/PETER:** Breathe.

*Beat*

**CAS:** I go away. To the mountains. For a few days.

**PETER:** I stay here.

**CAS:** I wake up at five in the morning.

**PETER:** I don't sleep without her beside me. I tiptoe around the house.

**CAS:** I hike as high as I can go. The silence is

**PETER:** Deafening

**CAS:** Comforting

**PETER:** Familiar. I stare out the window

**CAS:** watching the sun rise.

**PETER:** I think about how much I love her.

**CAS:** How I wish he was here

**PETER:** At home, with me.

**CAS:** to see this. If I close my eyes long enough

**PETER:** I can still see the three of us

**CAS:** Hear his laugh.

**PETER:** *Hush little baby don't say a word,  
daddies gonna buy you a mockingbird*

**CAS:** I see us hand in hand

**PETER:** watching our daughter sleep

**CAS:** in some city we don't know, navigating our way through cobblestone streets

**PETER:** watching her chest rise and fall

**CAS:** the buildings, the streets, the smell

**PETER:** the sound

**CAS:** Just him and me.

**PETER:** it's all so

**CAS:** perfect. We could be-

**PETER:** We are so-

**CAS:** ...happy.

*To each other.*

**PETER:** How was your trip?

**CAS:** I missed you.

**PETER:** I didn't miss you.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** That was a joke. I'm sorry. I'm nervous.

**CAS:** Why?

**PETER:** I don't know.

*Beat*

**CAS:** I think we need a fresh start.

**PETER:** I agree.

**CAS:** I think we need to go back. To the way things were.

**PETER:** Before. Exactly.

**CAS:** Because I want to be with you.

**PETER:** I need to be with you.

**CAS:** So I think we should move.

**PETER:** ...Why?

**CAS:** Why not? It'll be fun. A total new adventure. You and me and no one else.

**PETER:** How is that different than now?

**CAS:** Because we'll be in Vancouver. Just listen, I found this perfect little condo we can rent in Coal Harbour, Peter, it's-

**PETER:** We have jobs.

**CAS:** We'll get new jobs.

**PETER:** It's not that easy.

**CAS:** Sure it is.

**PETER:** My kids-

**CAS:** They live a million miles away. What's a few more? Picture it... we'll get completely out of our comfort zone... buy a boat, start fishing, do hot yoga, I don't know. And on the weekends we'll get dressed up, change our names, crash corporate parties downtown, abuse the open bar.

*Peter doesn't react.*

Fine. Forget Vancouver. We'll buy a farm... a potato farm on Prince Edward Island. And we'll have a white picket fence and the dirt road to our house will go on forever and every dinner will be a picnic and we'll fall asleep in the fields staring at the stars, naked of course because the nearest neighbour will be like ten miles away.

*Peter stares at her, not amused.*

What? I just want to be with you.

**PETER:** I'm right here.

*Beat  
Beat*

I didn't clean the room. I know I said I would. But I left everything the way it was.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** Because I thought we should...

*Beat*

**CAS:** Try again?

**PETER:** What do you think?

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** Cassandra?

**CAS:** I think...

*(Speaking in a French accent)* you look oh so scrumptious right now.

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** Monique.

**PETER:** Stay with me.

**CAS:** Come with me.

**PETER:** Cas-

**CAS:** Jacque.

**PETER:** I don't want to pretend.

**CAS:** It's all pretend Peter. Don't kid yourself.

**PETER:** *(Breaking out of the scene)* That's not what you say.

**CAS:** ... Fine. No pretend.

**PETER:** That's not what you say.

**CAS:** ...

**PETER:** Cassandra, I said 'I don't want to pretend' and you said-

**CAS:** ...Maybe we want different things.

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** Maybe this isn't working.

**PETER:** We're just having a conversation Cassandra.

**CAS:** So then let's have it.

**PETER:** ...

**CAS:** Peter-

*Beat*

**PETER:** No. Nevermind.

**CAS:** Let's have the conversation.

**PETER:** No.

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** I love you.

**CAS:** Peter-

**PETER:** I need you. I need you with me.

*Beat*

**CAS:** That's all you're going to say?

**PETER:** No.

The way the sun is shining on your face right now... it's really beautiful.

## SCENE FIVE

*Sound lighting shift*

**PETER:** *(To himself)* That's how much I needed you.

**CAS:** Peter –

*She touches him.*

**PETER:** What if we had had that conversation?

**CAS:** We didn't.

**PETER:** You're right. It's all pretend.

**CAS:** So?

*Beat. She gets back in her wheelchair.*

Can...you. hear...JuneBug....She... laugh.

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** We...play...pad-dy.cake.

**PETER:** What are we doing?

**CAS:** Dad-dy's girl..look-

**PETER:** No-

**CAS:** Her jump-er say-

**PETER:** It's not real.

**CAS:** What.is-

**PETER:** You talking to your doctor's receptionist more than you talk to me.

Me waking up, getting you out of bed, cleaning you up, changing you, feeding you, going to work, coming home, feeding you, changing you, getting you back into bed. You refusing to walk, to even try, even from the stairs to the bloody kitchen table-

**CAS:** You..try.this-

**PETER:** I wish I could-

**CAS:** I.wish..this.was..you-

**PETER:** And would you have stayed with me?

**CAS:** You.kept.me...your choice-

**PETER:** My choice. But was there every any question in *either* of our minds that I'd take care of you? Despite how things were between us. Before. Right before.

But that's how I preferred it.

The doctor is trying to explain to me what's going on, some kind of blood disorder, a clot formed when you were induced, undetected, travelling it's way to your brain, he's even drawing a diagram but it all keeps jumbling together bleeding, hemorrhaging, clamping, cutting, slicing, and I know I need to pay attention, I know how important it is but in my mind I'm already packing up the house, making arrangements, leaving a note to

Pauline and Jason, choosing a way to do it... rope, pills, bridge, whatever.  
Because if you go, I go too.

*Beat*

But then something changes. The weeks go on and I'm listening to you go through physio screaming as if you're an animal being tortured or I'm in your room praying they don't kick me out because I don't want to go home because the house is upside down because of the renovations. And it's nighttime and I'm tired and there it is...this new thought... clawing it's way into my mind...

I wish I had never met you.

*Beat*

There are no words for how sorry I am for-

*(He is going to say 'what happened.')*

**CAS:** Not.your.fault-

**PETER:** You can say that, but-

**CAS:** I.fol-low.you. My..ap-ples.

**PETER:** My basket.

What ends up happening to Jacque and Monique?

**CAS:** They...fall-in-

**PETER:** After that.

*Beat*

Cassandra...

**CAS:** Hold.her-

**PETER:** Do you think it's possible-

**CAS:** June.Bug-

**PETER:** to live with the weight?

**CAS:** She reach for you.

**PETER:** Cas, please-

**CAS:** We can..all be hap-

**PETER:** We're not-

**CAS:** For me-

**PETER:** Cassandra-

**CAS:** Please-

**PETER:** There's this place.

*Beat*

It's the best there is. There's people to look after you 24-7, I've met them, they're lovely...

*Cassandra moans.*

... It's right in the city, there's a big yard, things to do all day long-

**CAS:** No.

**PETER:** It's not good for you here-

**CAS:** No no-

**PETER:** You're not happy-

**CAS:** no no no no no no no

**PETER:** You're not improving -

*Cassandra moans.*

**PETER:** Then I'll go-

*Cassandra moans*

**PETER:** and your mom said she would-

**CAS:** NO!

**PETER:** Well, I can't do this!

like this

not anymore

*Cassandra moans*

Cas-

**CAS:** I.need.you. You.need-

**PETER:** I'm sorry-

**CAS:** Don't.leave.me

**PETER:** I'll visit.

*Cassandra moans.*

Every day if that's what you want-

*Cassandra moans.*

or not if you don't.

*Cassandra moans.*

Maybe we can start over.

*Cassandra moans.*

A new story. No pretend.

*Cassandra moans.*

And we'll fall in love. All over again.

Because it's in the stars.

Remember?

*Beat. Cassandra is silent.*

Cassandra?

*Beat*

Stand with me? Please. Just for a moment.

*Beat. Beat. She hesitates but then finally begins to stand up. He assists her as she needs. They stand together, more grounded this time, eyes open.*

*Beat*

*Beat*

**CAS:** ...Pe...ter and Cass...an-dra.

**PETER:** Peter and Cassandra.

**CAS:** happ-i-ly...ev...er...af-ter.

*Beat*

**PETER:** Something like that.

*Beat. Lou Reed's Perfect Day plays as lights fade.*

-End-