

THIS RANDOM WORLD

THE MYTH OF SERENDIPITY

BY STEVEN DIETZ



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

A series of seven vertical black lines of varying heights, stacked on the left side of the page.

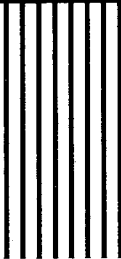
THIS RANDOM WORLD

THE MYTH OF SERENDIPITY

BY STEVEN DIETZ



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

A series of seven vertical black lines of varying heights, stacked on the right side of the page.

CHARACTERS

SCOTTIE WARD, a woman in her 70s.

TIM WARD, her son, 29.

BETH WARD, her daughter, 38.

BERNADETTE, her aide, 30s.

RHONDA, Bernadette's younger sister, late 20s.

CLAIRE, Tim's ex-girlfriend, 29.

GARY, Claire's ex-boyfriend, 30s.

A MAN, 60s/flexible. [*Not listed in playbill, if possible.*]

A multi-ethnic cast is strongly encouraged.

PLACE

An American city. And various distant lands.

TIME

The present. Late winter and early spring.

NOTES

A few simple and permanent units should suffice for everything.

Transformations between them should be quick and easy.

Beyond that, a world that is warm, mysterious, and evocative would be appreciated.

And rain would be good.

Thank you.

"We must unlearn the constellations to see the stars."

—Jack Gilbert, "Tear It Down"

THIS RANDOM WORLD

Tim's Small Apartment. February. Rain.

Tim sits on the ground, noodling around on his laptop. He is dressed for a lazy day inside.

Beth, his older sister, is nicely dressed. She reads from a document.

BETH. (Gravely.) "...Elizabeth Ward—known to all as Beth—was a loving sister and a caring friend. Though she will be missed by many, her laughter, her warmth, and her passion for living will continue to echo within our hearts. Memorial services will be held at—"

(Brightly, lowering the paper, to Tim.) —and here you'll just insert whichever place you have the service for me. I've included two options in my End Of Life papers. All that info is in the same folder as my will, which as you know is in my safe deposit box. You've got the key to my safe deposit box I gave you, right?

Tim?

TIM. Oh, to your little box at the bank—

BETH. Safe deposit box.

TIM. (Overlapping.) —yes, right, of course. Got it. Safe and sound.

BETH. Where is it?

TIM. I know where it is.

BETH. Tell me. Say it out loud.

TIM. Beth, you are not dying!

BETH. No—but when the day comes, I am counting on you.

TIM. You just stop living. I'll take care of everything else.

BETH. There's no backup plan for us, you know. With Dad gone and Scottie ready to follow him, now it's just us. Just you and me.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

TIM. It's weird that you call Mom "Scottie." When did you start doing that?

BETH. That's what everyone's always called her.

TIM. Still—it's weird.

BETH. What do you call her?

TIM. (*Incredulous.*) I call her... "Mom"...! And I think she's doing okay.

BETH. How would you know that? Have you talked to her? Of course you haven't talked to her. Why don't you talk to her? You're Scottie's favorite.

TIM. No, I am not her—

BETH. Oh my god! You are the golden boy on top of the shining chariot!

TIM. Don't do that. Don't put that "you are the perfect son" pressure on me. No one should have to live up to that.

BETH. Oh, please—

TIM. I've wanted to talk to her—I've been meaning to talk to her.

BETH. But communication is so hard in these days of the telegraph and the Pony Express.

TIM. Forget it.

BETH. You can call her aide. If you can't reach Mom, sometimes it's good to call her aide.

TIM. Mom has an aide?

BETH. Bernadette. You know this. And Bernie says Mom only gets out once a day. To look at the sunrise.

TIM. The *sunrise*—why?

BETH. I don't know but that's it. That's all she does. She has no friends, from what I can tell—no activities she's interested in—even though the senior center has bridge and bingo and an a cappella group that does those old-timey songs—

TIM. Mom would hate that!

BETH. —yes, okay—but she's got to do something! I thought sure she'd want to travel. They have those package tours for seniors. Remember all the books she had about India, China, Japan?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

It's maddening.

Do you have any tissues? Anywhere?

TIM. No. Sorry.

Are you crying?

BETH. She's our mom, Tim.

Pause.

TIM. But she can't travel. What if something happened?

BETH. Like she met someone? Or had a conversation? Or saw more of the world than the three-mile radius she's lived in for the last fifty years?

TIM. But what if she's not—

BETH. Her health is not great—okay—we know that—but her doctor told me if she really wanted to travel she could travel.

TIM. And you'd do nothing but worry about her—call to check up on her—

BETH. That's not true.

That's true.

Does she let you in?

TIM. What?

BETH. She doesn't let me in. Doesn't tell me things. She never calls. And she doesn't seem to want me to call her.

TIM. She doesn't want you to worry.

BETH. I worry because she doesn't want me to call!

TIM. And what would you say if you did? *Hey, Mom: Go on a trip so I'll feel better, but don't go on a trip because I'll worry about you.*

Pause.

BETH. Yes. That's exactly what I'd say.

TIM. Maybe she just wants to stay home and piss off the Travel Nazis.

(Off Beth's look.) You know those people! The ones who travel just to shame other people for *not* traveling. "Oh my god—you haven't been to Such-and-Such?! How can you NOT have been to Such-and-Such?! You *have* to go. I mean, you *HAVE* to go."—

(Before Beth can respond.)—You just know they take those trips so

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

they can *lord it over you later*—when in fact all they are doing is running away from their lives.

Tim goes back to noodling on his laptop.

BETH. So, I'm off to Nepal.

Tim turns to her.

I told you this—over a year ago. A group expedition.

Dangerous. Expensive.

I told you this. I sent you a link.

TIM. No, you—

BETH. Yes, I did! This Travel Nazi is going on a very expensive and dangerous adventure to Nepal because apparently I need to *run away from my life!*

(Before Tim can respond.) And what about you? I am looking at what passes for your life and your apartment and your “career” and—well—I don't see a lot of proof of your existence either!—

TIM. What kind of thing is—

BETH. *(Overlapping.)* —I mean—really—do you have any *actual evidence* that you are, in fact, living and breathing and connected in some way to the known world?!

He stares at her, seemingly preparing a really good answer. Then...

He goes back to his laptop, avidly.

You should have tissues.

Doesn't Marlene ever need tissues when she comes over?

Does Marlene still come over?

Okay, what's up with Marlene?

Oh, Tim...

TIM. It's okay. We were done.

BETH. I'm so sorry.

Pause.

Maybe it will give you something to write about.

TIM. That's not happening either.

BETH. Since when?

TIM. That has never happened. You know that. Calling me a “writer”

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

is something you and Mom cooked up to keep from calling me a "failure."

BETH. That is not—

His look stops her.

Okay. That's true.

Pause.

What about work?

You had that big freelance project? Those websites? Some kind of programming that I don't understand.

Did you do it?

Did that end?

Did they let you go?

They let you go.

You did something.

You said something.

It ended badly.

Oh Jesus, Tim—not again!

TIM. It's okay.

BETH. You seem sad. Are you sad?

TIM. I'm not sad. I'm— (*Stops.*)

BETH. What?

TIM. I'm...*composting*.

A lot of shit has happened to me lately—not just Marlene and the jobs—other stuff too—and so I am just...*sitting with it* and letting it *settle the way it needs to*...

He's just making this up now, but doing so earnestly, convincing himself.

...letting the—you know—little flies and worms and things sort of buzz and dig all around in it...

BETH. Oh Jesus God.

TIM. ...until my shit isn't shit anymore...until my shit is, like, *nutrients*...and then my shit will be *awesome*...my shit will be *good for me*.

Pause.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BETH. Any word from Claire?

TIM. Why do you always bring up Claire?

BETH. We all liked Claire. Especially Mom.

TIM. Claire was high school! Claire was a dozen years ago! I haven't heard from Claire in forever.

BETH. Okay. I just—

TIM. I don't bug you about your love life!

BETH. Because I don't have a love life!

TIM. That's not true!—there was that—

BETH. I have NEVER had a love life.

TIM. Because you've never TRIED.

BETH. CAN WE PLEASE JUST TALK ABOUT MY DEATH?

Tim stares at her.

Beth lifts the paper again.

Okay, so: right before you post my obit, you'll just add in whichever place ends up being chosen for the memorial service. I've got a springtime choice and a fall-winter choice. It's all written down.

TIM. Why two choices?

BETH. Well it obviously varies because of the light, the weather, seasonal expenses—

TIM. What if you die in the summer?

BETH. I won't die in the summer. I've run the numbers.

TIM. You've *run the numbers*?

BETH. Odds are I die on this trip to Nepal—midwinter, March at the latest—but in case that doesn't kill me, I'll likely die two years from now when I'm sky-diving.

(Off Tim's look.) For my 40th. You know I'm sky-diving for my 40th. I told you. I sent you a link. And anyway that death would be, like, October–November. If I survive both of those, I'll likely live to be 90 or 92—at least according to my doctor—and in the long-recorded history of our family not a single female has died in June, July, or August. Apparently, the women of the Ward family *thrive on summer*.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

TIM. Do you just sit around and think about this?

BETH. Of course I do.

She gathers her things, preparing to leave.

I'll try to check in from an airport somewhere. But if it's a couple weeks, don't freak out.

TIM. I won't freak out.

BETH. I mean, you can freak out a little—if too much time passes. This is a very dangerous trip—

TIM. Yes, you keep saying that—

BETH. —we are WAY off the grid over there, but for once in my life I think that's the thing I want. See you in a month.

TIM. If you live.

BETH. Correct. Oh, you know something fun I did? I googled obituaries of people with my same name. Found a whole bunch of dead Beth Wards.

TIM. You did this for fun?

BETH. It's really odd to read your own name and then see another life listed under it. You feel like a...kinship with these people. Strangers. But not really strangers, you know? (*Off his look.*) Have you written your obit?

TIM. Have I *what*?

BETH. Things happen, you know.

TIM. Nothing is going to happen! I am not going on a dangerous trip and then jumping out of a perfectly good airplane.

BETH. Take control of your death, Tim Ward. Or somebody else will.

She goes.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

A Park. February. Dawn.

Scottie is standing behind her walker, wearing a coat. Staring front, into the distance. Her mood is serene.

(Note: Despite her walker [or cane], Scottie is not obviously frail in any way.)

Bernadette, her aide, is standing nearby. She holds Scottie's enormous and somewhat garish purse. She also stares front, into the distance.

SCOTTIE. Look at that sunrise.

Isn't that something?

BERNADETTE. *(Droll, but friendly.)* It's a lot like yesterday.

Scottie turns to her.

And the day before.

SCOTTIE. When I interviewed you, Bernadette, I tried to make it clear that I was a kind but impulsive lady of a certain age, and that—

BERNADETTE. —and that you planned to see the sunrise every day.

SCOTTIE. Yes.

BERNADETTE. *Every single day.*

SCOTTIE. And hasn't it been lovely?

BERNADETTE. Four years and seven months.

SCOTTIE. *(A friendly dig.)* But who's counting, yes?

Bernadette smiles a bit, patiently.

They turn back and view the sunrise.

Do they really all look the same to you?

I bet I thought that, too. When I was younger.

They view the sunrise.

I heard your mother passed.

BERNADETTE. Yes.

SCOTTIE. I'm sorry.

You didn't mention it.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BERNADETTE. No.

SCOTTIE. Well. If there's anything I can do.

Pause.

Scottie needs something from her purse. Before she even turns and asks, Bernadette has produced and handed it to Scottie:

(Re: the cup.) Thank you.

It is a small, unadorned bronze cup—no handles, about the size of a small tumbler.

Scottie holds the cup in her hands. She is comforted by its feel, its weight.

This cup is well-traveled, you know. It came with us last year to Iceland.

BERNADETTE. Yes, it did.

SCOTTIE. Iceland was so nice. I rode my first horse there, remember? In Iceland of all places! And you took all those pictures.

BERNADETTE. I wanted to send some to Beth and Tim.

SCOTTIE. Thank you again for not doing that. I appreciate your discretion.

BERNADETTE. You told me to lie to them!

SCOTTIE. And you've done a wonderful job with that. Thank you.

BERNADETTE. Why won't you tell your kids you take these trips?!

Beat. Scottie stares at her.

SCOTTIE. Have you heard of the Shimogamo shrine? It is in Kyoto, Japan. The path to the Shimogamo shrine goes through what is called "The Forest Where Lies Are Revealed." This forest has been left to grow wild. Never planted, never pruned. This I would love to see.

I've planned a trip for us.

You are very quiet.

BERNADETTE. Could my sister go in my place?

Scottie says nothing.

My younger sister, Rhonda. I'd be so grateful if she could go instead of me—just this one time. Rhonda's never traveled. And things

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

have been hard for her since our mom died. Rhonda's gotten... strange...sort of mystical or something...she's obsessed with this guy at her work named Steve Greene—who sounds like he might be a shaman or a medium or something—

(Before Scottie can respond.) —and yes I'm feeling guilty because she keeps saying, "Bernie, it's not fair!—Bernie, Mom liked you best!"—but since you've asked if there's something you could do, I thought maybe—

SCOTTIE. Absolutely not. You will come with me on this trip—as you always do—because that is why I hired you—

BERNADETTE. Yes, I know, but—

SCOTTIE. *(Overlapping.)* —and that is the end of this discussion. We leave a week from Tuesday. I expect the standard discretion.

Pause.

BERNADETTE. Yes, Mrs. Ward.

SCOTTIE. And don't let people call you Bernie. Your name is Bernadette.

Scottie is staring at the sunrise.

That sunrise is not like yesterday.

Not like yesterday at all.

A Not-Great Diner. February. Rain.

After the meal, Claire sits alone with the dirty plates. The check has been paid.

Claire stares blankly for a long moment. Gary arrives.

He is carrying a small plastic "take-away" container for leftovers. He sets the container down carefully in front of Claire.

Claire stares at the container for a while.

GARY. Is that big enough? Claire?

(Off her look.) Will that hold the rest of your quesadilla?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

CLAIRE. I think it's fine.

Thank you, Gary.

GARY. Sure.

CLAIRE. Thank you for going up there and getting this take-away container for me.

I know I stood up and wanted to leave—but you were right to remind me that I still had a four-inch section of quesadilla on my plate. And that's wasteful. I should have known better. "*People are hungry in the world, Claire*"—you said that to me, and how right you are—

GARY. Claire, listen—

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) —*how right you are, Gary.*

Gary stares at her. Then looks away. The sound of rain continues.

Now: Claire uses a few pieces of her silverware to slowly and carefully lift the section of quesadilla from her plate...and set it with great precision inside the take-away container. It's as though she were working with radium.

Before she closes the lid of the take-away container, she looks up at Gary.

Any final words?

GARY. What?

CLAIRE. Before I close the lid. Anything we want to say to this last little bit of quesadilla?

GARY. Jesus, Claire—

CLAIRE. Let's bow our heads, shall we?

Gary stands—

GARY. I'm not doing this.

CLAIRE. Oh, I see: You get to have final words but I don't? Isn't that why we came here today?—it sure wasn't for the food—didn't we come here to listen to your final words to me, Gary?

Gary stares at her. Then...

Gary sits back down at the table.

And we are bowing our heads...

They do.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

And we are closing our eyes...

They do.

(*Solemn, real.*) Before the closing of this lid—on this rainy day in February—let us mark for one another this moment:

GARY. (*Opening his eyes.*) Oh, c'mon—

CLAIRE. (*Quickly, eyes still closed.*) Close your eyes, Gary.

And he does.

This lone section of quesadilla—these humble four inches of salt and flour and water and cheese...this represents the very last thing that Gary and Claire will ever share in this world.

GARY. (*Quietly, eyes closed.*) Please don't do this...

CLAIRE. So let us properly mark the moment here today when Gary told Claire it was over.

And the next moment when Claire asked Gary why.

And the moment after that when Gary said it seemed like Claire could not be "present"—truly present with him—

GARY. (*Eyes still closed.*) Those are not the words I used—

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) —because she is filled with what Gary calls "misplaced nostalgias"—because she still talks about high school and childhood and growing up way too much—as though she were stuck in the past—

GARY. Claire, please—

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) —and if Claire is already stuck like that, how will she and Gary ever look to the future!—live the moment!—*Carpe The Diem and All That?!*

She opens her eyes and looks at Gary.

And let the record note that Claire said:

Okay, Gary. Maybe you're right. Give me another chance. Let's give it one more try.

Gary has opened his eyes now, too.

And Gary said...

And you said:

No.

You said: *We've tried for more than a year. It didn't work. I don't*

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

think we should try anymore.

Silence.

And I said: *Man, it's really raining out there. We're going to get soaked.*
And you didn't say anything.

And I said: *The hell with it—I don't care if I get soaked. I need to go.*
And I stood up.

And here, Gary...here is where I was waiting for you to say something really Great. I was thinking to myself, "God, he could say something really Great right here—and maybe that would change everything—maybe we'd still work things out."

(Before Gary can respond.) I know that's unfair. I know there was no way for you to know it was time to come up with the Awesome Thing and Say It—but *right there, Gary...that was the time for you to say Something Great.*

And you said...

Claire looks down at the quesadilla.

"You should box that up. There are homeless people around the corner. You should give that food to them."

In silence—and with a kind of reverence: Claire slowly closes the lid to the take-away container. It snaps shut with finality.

I suck at life, Gary. I suck big time.

GARY. No, don't say—

CLAIRE. Here I am thinking about my little shattered heart when there are people with nothing to eat. Thank you for reminding me of that.

And thank you for bringing me to a shitty restaurant for our break-up. I should have seen it coming. We've walked by this place so many times and we always said: *God, what a pit.* We always joked that people should break up at shitty places they were never gonna want to visit again. Because of the memories...

The way that goodbyes...

The way that endings just...*stick to a place...*

Pause.

Will you please go now? Please go—and give the homeless people this food—and leave me alone so I can have a good cry, you asshole.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

GARY. *Claire—*

CLAIRE. *Please.*

She hands him the take-away container.

(Re: the container.) Tell them I'm sorry. Tell them I wish there was more.

He takes the container and leaves. Claire is alone.

Arbor View Memory Gardens. Day.

Rhonda is nicely and conservatively dressed. She stands near a simple counter that holds a laptop computer, a pot of coffee, and a box of tissues.

Nearby is a large wreath of flowers on a stand. Tim appears, wearing old jeans and a sweatshirt.

RHONDA. *(Kind, genuine.)* Good morning and welcome to Arbor View Memory Gardens. I'm Rhonda. Would you like a tissue? They're beige.

TIM. Yeah, no, I don't—

RHONDA. It's a comforting color. White tissues are so *strident*, don't you think? But the beige are more suited to our work here at Arbor View. Now, if I may I ask:
How did you know the deceased?

TIM. I am the deceased.

She stares at him. He smiles a bit.

I know—it's weird. My name is Tim Ward. Timothy Ward. My name just *showed up* online.

RHONDA. It must be odd. To see your own name like that.

TIM. Yes! It is very odd, because—

RHONDA. We get young men who are "Juniors"—you know, same name as their dad—and they see the words on the tombstone and oh my gosh there it is—there is their actual name.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

TIM. Tim Ward is my actual name. It's there on your site. You can see for yourself: I'm 29. The dead guy is 29.

RHONDA. We don't say "dead." We say "deceased."

TIM. Okay—look—it's a mistake and I'm sorry, but I need you to please correct it.

RHONDA. Correct it?

TIM. Because obviously I'm not dead!—

No reaction from Rhonda.

—because I'm standing right here!

RHONDA. Yes, I see you...

TIM. Great—okay—

RHONDA. That is remarkable...

TIM. —yeah, pretty weird, right?

RHONDA. (*Sincere.*) Steve Greene told me about this. Steve Greene trained me at this job. And he said every now and again they come back—one *final time*—to look at their own casket, check out the flowers and cards, see who came to mourn them and how they were dressed.

TIM. Wait—

RHONDA. Steve Greene told me they'd walk in the door—or maybe *through* the door—I'm not sure, I wish I'd asked him that—and they would find Steve Greene and talk to him. Steve Greene was the only one who could see them—and I think that's why they fired him. But let me tell you this:

No better friend did the dead ever have than the man we knew as Steve Greene.

TIM. Is there someone else I can talk to?

RHONDA. There was something about Steve Greene that put the deceased at ease: a *quality of mercy*, I guess—

TIM. Okay, listen—

RHONDA. (*Overlapping.*) —and Steve Greene told me if I projected a "merciful countenance"...he said maybe one day the deceased would approach me, too. Like you've done.

TIM. I didn't come to see you, Rhonda.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

RHONDA. You came for Steve. I know.

TIM. I came because I was googling obituaries with the same name as me—some ridiculous thing my sister told me to do—and I found some guy named Tim Ward, age 67 [*or age of actor*], who had just died. And since your site is so porous—I mean it is *seriously non-secure*—

RHONDA. I'm sorry.

TIM. —you should tell your I.T. guys—

RHONDA. I will.

TIM. —since it was so easy to hack into, I thought, just as a joke, that I'd put my own obit on the site, in place of the other Tim Ward. Maybe take a screenshot to show my sister. I thought it was really funny. For about a minute. But then I went to remove it and I couldn't get back “in”—there was some firewall and my obit was stuck there, on your site—

RHONDA. Oh, wow—

TIM. —*but I think you can see for yourself that I am not dead!*

RHONDA. —yes—of course—

TIM. Thank you!

RHONDA. —that's what Steve *said you would say*.

TIM. No—Rhonda—

RHONDA. There's a “period of transition” for the recently deceased—

TIM. —listen—

RHONDA. (*Overlapping.*) —and Steve Greene was very adamant that “*this period is not to be rushed!*” I'll get you some coffee.

Rhonda pours Tim some coffee, as—

Tim steps away and makes a call on his phone.

TIM. (*On his phone.*) Hey Beth—it's Tim. I know you're trying to not check messages while you're gone, but when you get this I just want you to know that—well—there's been a *thing*—and if you happen to see something about me online, please don't worry—it was a dumb mistake and I'm sorry and just know that I'm fine. Please don't worry. Safe travels.

He ends the call. Rhonda sets the coffee near him.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

RHONDA. That's a lovely gesture. Telling them not to worry. I wonder why more people don't do that.

TIM. Rhonda...

RHONDA. I bet they save that voicemail forever. (*Re: the coffee.*) Cream and sugar?

TIM. ...can you please find someone who can help me? I have things to do.

RHONDA. What things?

TIM. Huh?

RHONDA. What are the things you still need to do?

TIM. All sorts of things! I have to—oh god, I don't have to tell you that!—

RHONDA. I'd love to know.

TIM. (*Overlapping.*) It's really none of your—

RHONDA. My mom had things left to do. I know she did. I wish I'd known what they were.

TIM. Look—

RHONDA. It's such a blurry line, don't you think? There you are: *dead*—but still you have things you need to do—

TIM. Rhonda—

RHONDA. —and here I am: supposedly *alive*—but could I prove it? Do I have any evidence of it? Have I done anything lately that anyone would ever notice or remember?

TIM. Touch me.

I'll show you that I'm real.

Go ahead.

Tentatively...Rhonda places the palm of her hand against Tim's chest. She leaves it there.

RHONDA. Oh my...

TIM. (*Holding her hand to his chest.*) I'm real, Rhonda. I'm real and I'm alive.

*Rhonda nods, keeping her hand on his chest.
Tim lifts the cup of coffee.*

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

And I am drinking this coffee. This actual coffee. Put your fingers on my neck.

RHONDA. What?

TIM. Right here.

Feel me swallow the coffee, Rhonda.

He drinks. She feels it.

What does that feel like?

RHONDA. That feels really cool.

TIM. Okay—good...

RHONDA. You are here.

TIM. I am here.

RHONDA. You are not a ghost.

TIM. No I am not.

RHONDA. That's very kind of you. To show me that even now—*even in death*—

TIM. No...Rhonda...

RHONDA. (*Overlapping.*) —you are as nice as everyone on your Memory Page says you were.

Rhonda indicates the page on her computer.

Have you seen your Memory Page? It's a real outpouring on there. Forty-three Memorial messages already. That number is going to grow.

TIM. I am not going to read those.

Tim is trying not to look at the screen—as much as he wants to.

RHONDA. So many nice words about you. Like this one...from a woman named Claire. Don't you want to see?

Rhonda's phone rings/beeps.

Oh, this is my sister—just a sec.

As Rhonda turns away to speak into her phone—Tim leans in to look at the screen.

(*On phone, sharp.*) What is it Bernie?

My passport? Why?

Look—it can't be that important—call me tonight.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

I'm at work, Bernie!—call me tonight.

Rhonda ends the call. She turns back and sees Tim reading the Memorial Page.

Isn't it nice what they wrote?

Tim turns to her.

You had an impact on this world, Tim Ward. Do you know how rare that is?

TIM. I need to go home, Rhonda.

RHONDA. Yes. They say it's a *process*. And in the end, maybe we are all just trying to go home.

Tim goes, as we see—

A Light on Claire.

CLAIRE. Dear Tim.

Hi.

This is hard.

Everyone else is writing "about" you on this Memorial Page.

I don't want to write about you.

I want to write to you.

I've wanted to write to you for a long time, but I haven't.

Because I suck.

I suck at life, Tim.

I went to some pretty dark places after we broke up. I know that was years ago. God, that was a dozen years ago.

And I know it made sense to call it quits since we were going to different colleges. But I hated that everyone said it was no big deal.

Everyone said, "You're both so young—don't narrow your options.

You'll meet so many new people in college and out in the world."

Sorry, but they all said I would outgrow you.

I didn't outgrow you.

I miss you.

As Claire continues, lights also rise on:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Tim's Apartment.

During the following, Tim opens a beer and sits in front of his laptop. He begins reading online what Claire is saying.

CLAIRE: And I never told you this...but even though we "went our separate ways," I always thought that if things got hard, down the road, if there was no one out there who would ever love me... well...I knew I'd come back. *I'd come running back to you so fast—* saying, "Okay, there, we did that—we went out and met people and did stuff—but now I'm done. Please take me back, Tim Ward. Take me back and let's just be...you know...you and me..."

I broke up with a guy named Gary. He was kind to me—but it didn't work. We tried. No, that's not fair. *He did. Gary really tried.* I mainly really tried not to get hurt. And then I got hurt.

I suck at love.

And I think about ninth grade—when we took keyboarding. Remember Ms. Underwood was trying to teach us keyboarding—but even back then you already knew so much more than any of us.

I remember you told us about "dead keys." The keys on our keyboards that don't do anything when you press them on their own. On their own—you said—they don't make anything happen. Things only happen when you press the key beside them.

And I think that's me. I think I'm a Dead Key.

I think unless I was paired with you...unless we were pressed at the same time...I was never worth a damn.

They said the good stuff—the real stuff—was supposed to happen later, when we got older. But all my good stuff happened with you. In fourteen months. Till we said goodbye. And went out into our... "lives."

Tim lies down now—putting his face very close to his laptop screen.

I've come back, Tim Ward.

And I'm too late.

I loved you.

Did I ever say that?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Claire.

P.S.—I know total strangers are gonna read this now, but I don't care.

As Tim very slowly closes his laptop...

Lights fade on Claire.

Tim feels his own chest with his palm.

He take another swig of beer and then...

As he swallows, he feels his neck with his fingers.

A Rugged Wooden Bench. Outside. Somewhere in Nepal. Cold.

*Two very bundled-up people sit on the bench, staring front.
They've been there a while. They are not happy.*

*Perhaps, at first, only their eyes are visible through their
huge arctic-weather coats and hoods. During the scene, as
some coverings are removed, we come to recognize them as
Beth and Gary.*

BETH. I don't want to hear it—

GARY. Well, tough luck for you.

BETH. —I don't want to hear how far you came. I came farther.

GARY. I planned for years. I've been planning—

BETH. I don't want to hear how long you planned. I planned longer.
I planned WAY longer than you.

GARY. Do you want to know how much this COST me?—

BETH. I don't care how much this—

GARY. (*Overlapping.*) —no—you listen to me—whoever you are
in there that made us miss the last bus to the village that we were
supposed to depart from!—

BETH. You made us miss that bus!

GARY. I did no such thing—

BETH. Whatever you need to tell yourself.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

GARY. (*Overlapping.*) —and I want you to know this trip cost me EVERYTHING. My job—my girlfriend—my life savings—

BETH. It could have cost you your life.

GARY. No chance of that now, is there?!

BETH. I don't know, *I kind of want to kill you.*

They sit.

Your phone updates the time, you know. Even way up here.

He glares at her. Says nothing.

Even in Nepal. Your phone does that on its own. Unless you manage to turn it off somehow. Which you clearly must have found a way to do.

GARY. Gee—that's neat. I had no idea my phone could do something like that.

BETH. I mention that since you were *in charge of the Time*—

GARY. It's especially *neat* since I worked for the company that built this phone. I repped these phones to distributors for years—

BETH. Okay okay okay okay okay—

GARY. (*Overlapping.*) —but now—here—finally—on the other side of the world—I get the expertise of a layman, an informed consumer who cares enough to speak to me about the specific uses and features of *this thing I know like the back of my hand.*

Pause.

BETH. I can't feel my toes.

Can you feel your toes?

He looks at her. Then he looks away.

You're mad because we went to the wrong place at first.

GARY. That was your fault.

BETH. Yes—but if we had been operating on the correct TIME—

GARY. You—

BETH. (*Overlapping.*) —we could have realized our mistake and still found our group.

GARY. YOU are the reason we missed our group. You are the reason we are stuck here.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BETH. Yes—that's what I expected you would say. Men are never wrong. They are only *chronically misinformed*.

Pause.

GARY. I can feel my toes. Most of them.

BETH. Lucky you.

GARY. But not my fingers.

Can you feel your fingers?

BETH. Did you buy the gloves they recommended?

He says nothing.

I bought the gloves they recommended.

GARY. Good for you.

BETH. They weren't cheap.

GARY. But you can feel your fingers.

BETH. No, I can't. Stupid gloves.

I can't feel my fingers. Or my toes. But I am not going to cry. No matter what.

I am not going to cry.

Pause.

Then Gary slowly lifts his gloved hand...and pats Beth on the knee twice, slowly.

Gary takes his hand back. They sit there.

I'm Beth.

GARY. Gary.

It's a stupid name.

BETH. It's not a stupid name.

It's a little stupid.

But not bad stupid.

It's not like...Dirk.

Pause.

GARY. Dirk is my brother.

(*Off her look.*) Really.

Okay. Not really.

He's my step-brother.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BETH. (*Quickly.*) Stop it!

GARY. They said there'd be a group coming down the mountain in a couple three hours. I guess we ride back to the base with them. They also said there'd be no refunds.

BETH. I will get a refund.

GARY. They were very clear about—

BETH. *I will get a refund, Gary.* And I will travel somewhere else. Somewhere *warm*.

Does a "couple three" mean two hours or three?

GARY. Three for sure. Maybe four. If the weather holds.

Pause.

BETH. You know any jokes?

GARY. No.

Do you?

Pause.

BETH. What do you get when you cross a priest with a microwave?

GARY. I don't know—what?

BETH. (*As though it is the punch line.*) I don't know any jokes either.

Pause.

Your job and your girlfriend?

He looks at her.

This cost you both?

GARY. The job was ending anyway. I left a few months early—took my severance pay—put it toward this trip. I put everything towards this trip.

BETH. And the girlfriend?

GARY. That was ending too. But neither of us wanted to say it.

BETH. Was she supposed to come with you?

GARY. No. I never told her about this trip. It was going to be my last big bachelor thing. One crazy solo adventure to the other side of the world before I bought the ring—and popped the question—and she and I settled down to raise our family and—

Stops, beat.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

God, how stupid of me.

BETH. Not at all. It was your trip. You wanted to do it on your own. I get that. I'd do that. I'd totally do that. But the problem is, after you dumped her—did you dump her or did she dump you? (*Before he can respond.*) You dumped her. I can tell. It is so clear. Anyway—after that, you couldn't really say: "Oh by the way—I'm heading off to Nepal. Have a nice life."

GARY. Right. That is so right.

BETH. She's probably relieved, Gary. I tell my brother this all the time. That girl you broke up with who you think is so bereft—who you think is going to go to all these dark places because you broke her heart in half—the fact is: She's probably *relieved*. She's probably already moved on.

GARY. Really?

BETH. I would. I'd move on right away.

GARY. You've done that?

BETH. Oh, yeah.

GARY. Moved on like that when some guy dumped you?

BETH. Sure, of course.

GARY. Wow, okay—

BETH. I mean, it's been a while since I was dumped.

GARY. Oh, you're in a long-term relation—

BETH. *She has moved on, Gary.* She'll be fine. And when you get home you can give her a call and tell her how I ruined your trip.

GARY. I wouldn't do that.

BETH. Thank you.

GARY. I can't imagine calling her. Not now. She'd expect me to say Something Great. Whatever that is.

They sit.

BETH. I thought it would feel different. I was so eager to be "way off the grid"...on the other side of the world...and here we are...

GARY. You're not off the grid.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BETH. We're on a remote bench in Nepal!

GARY. With phones in our pockets.

(*Off her look.*) You can't be off the grid with a phone in your pocket. If someone can call you, you are still tethered.

BETH. *Tethered? You think I'm tethered.*

GARY. You would never get rid of your phone.

BETH. You don't know that. You don't know anything about me. I would never get rid of my phone.

Pause.

They sit.

A little while ago...when I was really really mad at you...

GARY. Yeah.

BETH. ...right in the middle of being really really mad at you I realized that I really wanted to kiss you. Maybe because I could pretty much *only see your lips*—but also because I was *feeling things—even in this arctic snowman suit, I was aroused*—and though I was probably just aroused by *what a friggin' idiot you had been and how you had ruined my expensive and dangerous trip to Nepal*, it was still a great feeling, Gary.

I wanted you to know that.

GARY. Thanks.

And now?

BETH. I'm over it. No offense.

GARY. None taken.

Pause.

BETH. I don't want to kiss people very often. My friend says I'm "too much of an island. Too self-sufficient and self-contained." I think that's true. I try not to be an island. I try to stay open to being...you know...at least...more of a...*peninsula* maybe.

But then I think...*why?* What am I missing?

I bet I'm not missing anything at all.

GARY. So no men in your life? Or women?

BETH. No. I guess I don't let them in.
I don't let them in.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

I haven't made room. For people. Humans. Humans with hearts.
And lips.
I should make room.

Pause.

GARY. Well, at least I know how to arouse you.

BETH. I suppose you do.

Pause.

GARY. (*Pushing a little too obviously.*) God, I can't believe this! Trip of a lifetime!—down the drain!—and all because of you!!!

BETH. (*Droll.*) Not gonna work, Gary.

An Airport Concourse. Dawn.

Scottie stands at her walker, staring front, looking out the large airport windows toward the sunrise.

Rhonda stands nearby, holding Scottie's same enormous purse. Near her are two small roller bags. Rhonda is also staring front.

SCOTTIE. And speaking of sisters!—oh my goodness, Rhonda—my sister was a life-long pain in the ass! Thankfully she died in the month of May when I have my bad allergies. That made it look like I had cried. I hadn't cried. I had danced a little jig of joy around my kitchen—which I am not proud of mind you. But I felt nothing when they put my sister Eunice in the ground. Can you imagine?

No response.

Don't let that happen to you. Work things out with Bernadette. She's a good person. She convinced me to bring you on this trip to Japan, didn't she? (*Looking toward the windows.*) And she booked us this flight at sunrise. Look at that! Not at all like yesterday.

RHONDA. She's doing it out of guilt.

SCOTTIE. Well, maybe, but—

RHONDA. Just guilt. Pure and simple.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

SCOTTIE. Oh, there is nothing simple about guilt.

RHONDA. Our mother left everything to Bernie. Made her the executor of the will. Gave her the house, most all the money. Who does something like that?—

SCOTTIE. Bernadette was the eldest—that happens—

RHONDA. (*Overlapping.*) —and all Bernie can say is “Sorry, Sis—nothing I can do—I am bound by the terms of the will. I’ve got to honor Mother’s wishes.”

SCOTTIE. Well, that’s true—she does.

RHONDA. Of course you’d take her side.

I thought she’d come back. I thought my mom would come back one more time.

Pause.

SCOTTIE. Yes. I know that feeling.

RHONDA. I thought she’d come back and talk to Steve Greene. If we’d done the service at Arbor View, she could have done that—

SCOTTIE. Rhonda, what are you talking about?

RHONDA. —but Bernie made us have the service at this place across town—and it was all wrong!—nothing Mom would have liked at all—but Bernie kept saying, “It’s in her papers, Rhonda”—“it’s what she wanted, Rhonda”—“it’s paid for, Rhonda”—but it was cold and dark and the flowers were wrong *and there was not a quality of mercy—not anywhere.*

Pause.

SCOTTIE. You haven’t grieved yet.

Rhonda says nothing.

You’ve been too busy fighting with your sister. Haven’t you?

Rhonda says nothing.

Forgive me, Rhonda—I don’t know you...but when we lose someone we get very sad and very angry. And we know everyone is watching. And so sometimes we pick fights and lash out—we start to *behave our pain*—we start to *perform how bereft and distraught we are*. And we call that feeling “grief.”

That is not grief.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Grief doesn't want attention.
Grief is a hand on your chest.
A hand no one can see.

Pause.

What was your mother's name?

RHONDA. Beatrice. They called her Bea.

SCOTTIE. No—I want to know her full name.

RHONDA. But no one called her by her—

SCOTTIE. Men get all kinds of things added to their names—because, of course, men want to imagine that the things they possess are actually *much longer than they really are*. So men get: “Junior,” “the Third,” “Esquire”—all that nonsense.

But women?—we just end up with *the name our daddy called us when we were three*. When our mother gave us a haircut with floppy little bangs—and our father decided we looked like the Scottish terrier next door. Seventy years later: I'm still “Scottie.”

I wish to know your mother's full, entire name.

RHONDA. Her “full, entire name” was: Beatrice Anne Mitchell.

SCOTTIE. That's a wonderful name. That name could start a railroad. Claim a continent for the Queen.

Pause.

RHONDA. Why don't you tell your kids about these trips?

SCOTTIE. (*Smiles.*) Oh, yes—what you must think of me. Asking my kids to have lives of their own that don't revolve around me.

RHONDA. Wouldn't they be glad you were traveling?

SCOTTIE. They'd feel obligated to worry and they'd appreciate the excuse.

RHONDA. What excuse?

SCOTTIE. My sister and I took care of our mother. Worried about her, cared for her, wrapped our plans around her plans—*none* of which she needed or asked for, *none* of which she appreciated in the least. But oh boy—it was great for us! It was the best excuse possible for why we managed to risk *nothing* with our own lives! We blamed all our cowardice on her. Oh the great things we could have done, but we needed to “be there for Mom.”

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Someone should have slapped us.
I am likely my children's worst nightmare, Rhonda.
But I refuse to be their best excuse.

Pause.

Rhonda readies the bags, saying—

RHONDA. I think we're boarding now.

SCOTTIE. In my bag is a small bronze cup. Will you take it out?

Rhonda does.

Feel it in your hand. The weight. The substance of it. Do you feel that?

RHONDA. Maybe. I guess.

SCOTTIE. I don't know why, but I feel centered—comforted—when I hold that cup in my hands. I like to imagine that it has a merciful countenance.

RHONDA. Where did you get it?

SCOTTIE. And here is where I should have a good answer...but I have no idea where this came from. When they moved me out of the house and into the senior center, I was throwing away a lot of knick knacks and junk...and I found that cup.

Rhonda gives the cup to Scottie.

It will be filled about halfway with water. Rain water if you can find it. Rain water is best.

You'll place a tiny stone, or pebble inside. Just pick one off the ground that you like. You'll know—you *will know* the right pebble to choose.

And you'll drop it in the cup.

And then you'll say my full, entire name: I am Elizabeth McHenry Ward.

I've written it down for you.

Scottie hands a piece of paper to Rhonda.

As you say my name...you'll set this cup somewhere near the Shimogamo shrine. Not the main one. It will be too crowded, I'm told. One of the smaller garden shrines. You'll know the one.

You will set this cup there.

And after a few minutes you will leave. And that will be the end of it.

Rhonda is staring—confused—at Scottie.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

I can't travel with you. I hoped I could. But yesterday my doctor found a little something. A little more of the same something he found last year and the year before. Apparently this little something has taken up residence in me for good.

Bernadette knows. I told her last night. I asked if she wanted to travel with you—in my place...but she said no.

She said: "This is Rhonda's trip. I want this for Rhonda."

RHONDA. And your kids?

SCOTTIE. I'll tell them when the time is right. The doctor thinks I've still got a little time.

RHONDA. How much?

SCOTTIE. He's not sure. I like that about him.

I wish I'd been less sure. If I could do it all over again, Rhonda, I would have *doubted more*. What was I so busy being *certain about*? I chased away most of the wonder from my life by telling myself I already knew good from bad, right from wrong, left from right, and all the rest of it. God, what a *tedious woman* I must have been.

But uncertainty...doubt...oh, lord, *doubt is so appealing to me now*. Doubt is the unmarked door.

Scottie puts the cup in Rhonda's hands.

Do this, Rhonda.

Do this for both of us.

The Not-Great Diner. Day. Sunshine.

This is the same booth/table we saw earlier. Tim and Claire sit across from each other. They each have menus.

Tim is looking over his menu; Claire is just staring at Tim. Really staring at him. For a long time.

CLAIRE. The quesadilla is pretty good.

TIM. Is it?

CLAIRE. Yes.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Pause.

TIM. Do you come here a lot?

CLAIRE. Not too much. No.

It's kind of terrible. This place.

It is really one of the worst places to eat on earth that I know of.

TIM. Why did you want to come here?

CLAIRE. I wanted to change it. Change my memories of it.

I thought maybe we could do that.

TIM. Sure.

How do we do that?

A long silence.

Does anyone ever come wait on us?

CLAIRE. Not really. But it's okay. You won't like the food anyway.

Why rush it?

TIM. Oh. Okay.

Claire...

How are you?

She just stares at him.

Thank you for what you wrote.

On that Memorial Page.

My name and photo didn't belong on there—I'm sorry. But the mortuary gave me your contact info. They weren't supposed to, but there was this woman, Rhonda. She was leaving on a trip—but before she left she got me your number. She was really determined to make everything right for me.

You look good. I think it's eleven years. Twelve, maybe. We were on blankets. After high school—summer before college—on blankets in the sun. Some lake or park. And people were dancing and drinking...and we were...I guess we were lying on blankets and eating red licorice and trying to decide our lives.

We were trying to decide what we were going to be *great at*.

Pause.

CLAIRE. I can order for you, if you want.

TIM. Oh, it's okay...

CLAIRE. I used to order for him—because I knew what he liked.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

He liked french fries and a vanilla milkshake and coffee. But it had to be good coffee. The coffee here is awful but we can pretend. It seems like that's what we're doing—*pretending*. Isn't that what we're doing?

TIM. Claire...

CLAIRE. And Tim—oh god, Tim had the best plans. He was going to freelance in computer design—websites and stuff like that—just to pay the bills. And then after work he was going to sit in coffee shops and write his novels.

TIM. ...right, but Claire...

CLAIRE. He was never so happy as when he was sitting with his coffee, noodling on his computer, working on all the novels he was going to write.

TIM. ...no—it's me—I'm here...

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) And he'd dip his fries in the vanilla shake. He liked the salty-sugary taste. And god—you remind me of him so much.

I know he'd be older now—and your hair is a little shorter, but other than that—I mean, god, it's creepy. And on the phone you knew so many things about me—things that only Tim would know. So, whoever you are—however you learned this stuff—maybe you talked to his sister, I don't know—but whatever it was, it's creepy as hell for me because I loved Tim Ward and I know that he is dead. I saw the obituary.

TIM. Wait—listen—

Yes, of course, because—

Would you let me explain, please?

TIM. *I wrote that obit.*

Beat.

CLAIRE. Why would you say that? His sister would never let you do that.

TIM. You mean his—I mean *my* sister, Beth?

CLAIRE. Yes.

TIM. It was her idea. "Take charge of your death, Tim Ward." And

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

so I was looking at obits of people with my same name—and *god what a terrible idea that is—*

CLAIRE. Stop it—you can't expect me to believe that—

TIM. (*Overlapping.*) —but no—please—listen to me—none of it matters because the only thing I wanted—the only thing I *want*—is to *see you*.

** Pause. Tears in Claire's eyes.*

I missed you.

Please say something.

Pause. She wipes her eyes.

CLAIRE. This is a shitty thing you're doing. To pretend like this—

TIM. No—listen—

CLAIRE. —are you doing this just to hurt me? I don't even know you!

TIM. Claire, please—

CLAIRE. But I hate you.

I hate that you are not him.

You can't be.

Maybe you're another one. Is that it? Maybe you're another Tim Ward who just happens to...

Maybe you are him.

You can't be him, you asshole.

But are you him?

I don't think so.

I don't think you are.

I don't think you're him.

I think.

I think you are.

I think you are him.

You're him.

TIM. Yes.

CLAIRE. Hi.

TIM. Hi.

*Tim reaches across the table for her hand, but—
Claire pulls her hand away.*

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

CLAIRE. No. Don't. You've got to tell me. Why did you do it? How did it happen?

TIM. Hmm?

CLAIRE. The obit didn't say how you died.

TIM. I didn't—

CLAIRE. Weren't you scared?—

TIM. —no—you're not listening—

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) —I think I'd be too scared, you know? Way too scared to do it.

TIM. Claire, for god's sake—

CLAIRE. You must have found a really good way—maybe pills or something?—is that what you did?—

TIM. —no—no—

CLAIRE. (*Overlapping.*) —because you still look like you and sound like you and we get to sit here together—not *with* each other, but *beside* each other—like nothing ever happened.

TIM. I didn't do anything like that—

CLAIRE. And that's where I want to be. I just this second understood this. I want to be just *beside* my life. Not away from it—not in some completely different life—just *a little to the side of it*. Because maybe *right beside my life* everything makes sense. Maybe there... everything connects. Like you hold down the dead key and you press something...but if you don't want that life, you press something else—you press the key right next to it—*right beside it—and something brand new happens...*

Tim takes Claire's hand and places it against his own chest. Strong. Firm. With intensity.

TIM. Listen to me: You're here. And I'm here. And that's it. That's all that matters. Do you see?

She stares at him—really stares at him—for a long moment.

CLAIRE. Yes.

TIM. Good.

CLAIRE. I miss him so much.

Claire pulls away and starts off, quickly—

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

TIM. Claire, please—

CLAIRE. Don't ever do this again.

—*and she is gone.*

A Hospital Waiting Room / A Taxi.

*Bernadette is on her phone in the waiting room. Her purse/
bag and her coat are nearby.*

Gary is on his phone, riding in a taxi.

BERNADETTE. (*On phone.*) Yes, I understand—but I was told Beth Ward was traveling with you—

GARY. (*On phone.*) She was traveling with me, but—

BERNADETTE. (*Overlapping.*) —and I haven't been able to reach her—

GARY. —okay, I'm sorry, but—

BERNADETTE. (*Overlapping.*) —but when I told the tour agency it was an emergency they gave me your number. It's urgent that I speak to Beth Ward.

GARY. She's not here! We're not together. (*Urgent, to unseen taxi driver.*) No—not Providence—it's the other hospital—the one down near Fifth—

BERNADETTE. What's that?

GARY. Nothing, I'm in a taxi—

BERNADETTE. Do you know when she'll be back?

GARY. No—we're not in Nepal anymore. That trip fell through. I'm home—I'm in a taxi. Beth got a refund—I don't know how she got a refund—but she re-booked for another trip.

BERNADETTE. Do you know where?

GARY. No—she didn't want anyone to know where she was going.

BERNADETTE. Even her family?

GARY. I guess especially her family. Listen, I've got to let you go—

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

As the conversation continues—

Claire appears in the waiting room. Claire is in a hospital gown and socks/slippers. She is pushing a rolling I.V. stand that is attached to a tube in her arm.

Claire is weak and pale...but moving steadily.

BERNADETTE. No—wait—please—I've been leaving messages on her phone, but—

GARY. *(To the unseen taxi driver.) Anywhere near the entrance—doesn't matter—*

BERNADETTE. —but she's not called me back—and it's important—so if you talk to her—

GARY. I won't talk to her! I don't even know her!

BERNADETTE. Yes, but if you hear from her—

GARY. I WON'T HEAR FROM HER. Look—my girlfriend—I just found out my girlfriend is in the hospital—and my phone is about to die—I'm sorry—I wish I could help—

BERNADETTE. No—wait—please—

Gary ends the call. The light on him goes out.

Bernadette continues for another moment, thinking he's still on the line—

(Still on phone.) —if for any reason you hear from her...please have her call me as soon as she can...it's about her mother...her mom...

Bernadette holds the phone another moment or two...and then slowly pushes the button to end the call.

She stands very still. She holds the phone out from her body, as though her hand is not a part of her.

Claire, too, stands nearby, also very still. She has heard the preceding.

CLAIRE. I'm sorry.

Bernadette turns to her.

BERNADETTE. Oh. Thank you.

It's not my mom...but still...

It's a woman I...worked for.

I've been trying to reach her daughter.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

CLAIRE. That's hard.

Pause.

BERNADETTE. She thought she had more time.

I wish her kids could have seen her. She was so peaceful. She told me this was the same hospital she was born in. Can you imagine? I said to her: See, it's true what they say...there are no accidents. And she said: *Don't believe it, Bernadette. There are only accidents.*

Pause.

CLAIRE. Do you want to sit down? I think you should sit down.

*Bernadette slowly places the phone on a side table near one
/ of the chairs.*

Then she sits.

Long silence.

I was just looking for a magazine.

Pause.

There's nothing good at the nurse's station down there.

BERNADETTE. I have a magazine in my bag. I always kept one in there for her.

Every trip we went on...she'd say, "How are the famous people doing, Bernadette?" And I'd hand her a magazine and she'd read it—cover to cover.

*Bernadette gets the magazine from her bag and hands it to
Claire.*

This one's a little old—sorry.

CLAIRE. I love *People* magazine.

Claire pages through it.

I love their troubles. The troubles of magazine people. They have such great troubles. Even when there's a happy story—you know all you have to do is wait a couple issues—and then boom, those same exact people who were so young and beautiful and happy, boom, there's some amazing new trouble that's fantastic and sexy and horrible and complicated and worse than anyone ever thought possible.

My troubles are so dumb.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

BERNADETTE. Were you in for surgery?

CLAIRE. I was in for something dumb. I took a bunch of pills. As many as I had. Which were not enough. I know that now.
I got real sick.

And my neighbor—my neighbor across the hall—I'd never even met him...I guess he heard me getting sick and he called someone. And they helped me. Pumped my stomach. Gave me fluids.
Turns out, I suck at death.

Pause.

BERNADETTE. That stranger...he was your guardian angel.

CLAIRE. Maybe. I guess it depends, right? On how my life goes now. How things turn out.

Maybe a real angel—maybe a *really good angel* would have just walked away.

It must be hard to be an angel.

What a complicated gig.

How do you know when to intervene?

Pause.

BERNADETTE. Maybe you should sit down...

CLAIRE. No—they want me in my room. (*Re: the magazine.*) Can I have this?

BERNADETTE. Of course.

CLAIRE. Thank you.

Claire starts off, walking slowly...and is gone.

Bernadette sits.

She looks off in both directions, waiting.

She looks at her watch.

Waits. Then...

She stands and puts on her coat.

She lifts her bag.

And she leaves.

And she has left her phone behind.

We stare at the empty stage and the abandoned phone for a long moment...and then the scene is joined by—

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

A Light on Beth, at a Pay Phone.

Beth holds the receiver of the pay phone. She has dialed and she is waiting. After a moment...

Bernadette's phone in the waiting room begins to RING.

And RING.

And RING.

And RING.

And meanwhile...Tim enters the waiting room.

Tim looks exhausted and distraught. He just wants to sit down somewhere. He carries a small paper cup of water. He does not drink from it until noted.

He hears—and then sees—the ringing phone.

He looks around. Whose phone is this?

RING.

RING.

Beth is growing impatient...

BETH. *(On phone, excited but impatient.)* C'mon...c'mon...c'mon, Bernie...pick up...

RING.

RING.

RING.

Tim lifts and holds the ringing phone.

He looks around once more.

Bernie...Bernie, c'mon...

RING.

RING.

RING.

And just as Beth hangs up the pay phone—

Tim presses a button and answers the phone.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

TIM. Hello...?

The light on Beth has gone out.

Hello—is anyone...?

Tim slowly sets the phone back down.

Tim looks around.

He sits on the ground.

He sets the cup of water on the ground in front of him—not drinking from it. He closes his eyes, as—

Gary enters—agitated, carrying a shopping bag filled with items.

Gary sees Tim. They do not know each other.

GARY. Oh, hey.

Tim looks up.

Have any of the nurses come by here?

TIM. Hmm?

GARY. They said they were gonna help me—but now I can't find them—so I thought—I don't know—I thought maybe they were—you sure no one's been here?

TIM. Sorry.

GARY. I tried to give this bag—give these things to someone—but one of the nurses told me she had to check first—but that was—argh—it's so—there's not—you know???—god, why is it so hard to *do something for someone?!*

Sorry. I'm so sorry. But, I mean...you know?!...but still: I'm sorry. That your phone?

TIM. No.

It was there.

GARY. Oh. Okay.

Gary sits.

Tim closes his eyes once again.

Sometimes there's a bell. You know—a little bell you can ring.

TIM. Oh, right.

GARY. But there's no bell down there.

TIM. I think the staff is smaller on Sunday.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

GARY. It's Sunday?

TIM. Yeah.

GARY. I had no idea. I was on the other side of the world. I think it was Sunday there too.

Maybe I lost a whole week.

Pause. They sit.

Gary begins looking through his grocery bag.

/ I brought her things she likes. That's all I could think to do. Just... god, I don't know...bring her stuff.

How are you supposed to know what to do?

Do you know what to do?

TIM. When?

GARY. Here. When things happen. When people are here.

TIM. No. I don't know what to do.

GARY. Me neither.

So I just...brought stuff. Red licorice. Carrot cake. Peppermint tea.

Almonds. *People* magazine.

I even brought *Yahtzee*—you know, the game.

TIM. My mom's good at that game.

My mom is really good at that game.

GARY. Oh yeah?

TIM. She and my ex girlfriend used to play for hours. Real cut-throat. It was great.

GARY. Yeah. It's great.

Games of chance.

She won't see me. *She refused to see me.* She gave them—she gave someone my name. She put me on a list. I didn't know you could do that. But she did that.

She put me on a list of people she does not want to see.

So I said to them: Okay...can you just give her this bag? It's all stuff she likes.

What if she doesn't want it?

Or what if they don't ask her?

What if she thinks no one was here?

I want her to know someone was here.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

I would never have known. But I went to her place. To—to apologize, I guess. To...I don't know—not to make up with her—just to—I wanted to...

I wanted to say Something Great.

TIM. I'm sorry.

Pause. They sit.

GARY. Family member?

TIM. Hmm?

GARY. In here?

TIM. Oh. My mom.

GARY. I hear it's good. A good hospital. That's what people say. I hope that's true.

Pause.

TIM. I was too late. I never saw her.

Her aide called me—left messages for me, but...by the time I got here...

They've already moved the body.

It's weird that all of a sudden they call it a body. I would call it...I would call *her*...Mom. Elizabeth.

Elizabeth McHenry Ward.

Someone else already signed the paper. For the body. I guess my mom's aide did that. I can see her—see the body—in the morning.

And why does nothing change?

Why does the vending machine keep working? Why do the phones still ring?

Shouldn't something be different?

A long silence.

Tim finally lifts the cup of water and drinks. As before, he puts his fingers to his neck...feeling his neck swallow the water.

Tim sets the cup slowly back down in front of him.

Pause.

Gary removes something from the bag.

GARY. I have some licorice.

TIM. I need to tell my sister. My sister doesn't know yet. She's overseas—off the grid—on a trip.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

GARY. That's hard.

If it were me—and, whatever, you don't know me from Adam—but if it were me, and I was *really far away*...

I'd rather think everything was fine.

Tim nods. And leaves.

Gary sits. He looks off in the direction of the nurse's station.

He waits. Then...

He opens the pack of red licorice and eats. He does this for a while, and then...

Bernadette arrives. Her coat is on, and she is carrying her bag—as before.

They don't know each other.

BERNADETTE. Excuse me, sir?

Gary turns to her.

Hi—did you see a phone here? I left—

GARY. Yeah. Right there.

Gary points to the phone.

Bernadette picks it up.

BERNADETTE. Oh, that's lucky. Thank you so much.

GARY. No problem.

And Bernadette is gone.

Near the Shimogamo Shrine. Kyoto, Japan. Rain.

A figure stands with their back to us—holding a black umbrella—looking at a small, modest stone shrine amid the forest. The umbrella obscures the figure's face.

After a moment...Rhonda enters, opposite. She wears a backpack. She has been hiking to this spot in the rain. It has not been easy. She is wet and muddy and tired. However...

Upon seeing the shrine, she stops. Almost reflexively, spontaneously, she goes to her knees.

Silence. Stillness. Rain.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Rhonda opens her backpack and takes out something wrapped in cloth. It is the small bronze cup we saw earlier. She holds the cup for a moment. Feeling the weight in her hand. Then she holds the cup out in front of her...and lets it catch the rain water.

She sets the cup on the ground—letting it continue to catch the rain—as she goes in search of a pebble.

Rhonda starts this process on her feet—walking around—picking them up and discarding them...but eventually she is on her knees...crawling all around the area...searching...inspecting...discarding...she has to find the right one. How will she know which is the right one?

The figure with the umbrella turns and begins to watch Rhonda. We now recognize this figure as Beth.

BETH. Did you lose something?

Rhonda does not look up—does not stop searching for the pebble.

Excuse me? Do you need some help?

RHONDA. I need a pebble. She said I'm supposed to find a pebble.

BETH. Who did?

RHONDA. This woman.

BETH. Oh, okay.

Well—there's lots of pebbles.

RHONDA. Yes, I know that.

Rhonda keeps crawling, searching.

BETH. What kind are you looking for?

RHONDA. She said I'd know. That I'd just *know* the right one.

BETH. That was probably not very helpful.

RHONDA. No. It was not.

Rhonda keeps searching.

BETH. Can I help you?

Rhonda stops—looks up at her.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Or would that be weird?

RHONDA. No. Go for it.

Beth sets her umbrella aside.

She joins Rhonda in searching for the pebble.

BETH. So, who is this woman that sent you to find a pebble?

RHONDA. I don't know her well. I met her through my sister. She sent me on this trip.

BETH. Why didn't she come with you?

RHONDA. I can't tell you.

BETH. Oh, okay...

RHONDA. She made me promise not to tell anyone. Even her family.

BETH. Really?—why?

RHONDA. They're not close, I don't think. She and her kids.

BETH. No, I would guess not.

They continue their search for the pebble.

How big should this pebble be?

RHONDA. We will just "know."

BETH. Oh, right.

RHONDA. It has to fit in that cup over there.

Beth is at some distance from the cup. She continues her search for a pebble.

How did you hear about the shrine?

BETH. This is a shrine?!

RHONDA. The Shimogamo shrine. Yes. It's down that path. Through "The Forest Where Lies Are Revealed."

BETH. Wow.

RHONDA. Are you visiting with a group?

BETH. Oh, I'm just lost. And I don't have my phone—which felt so fantastic at first. I was on this other trip that sort of fell through, so I called and got them to book me somewhere else. And I felt so... free. *Untethered*. So, on a whim, I just tossed my phone in a trash can at Narita airport. And I never looked back. It felt great. For about a minute.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Then I panicked—raced back to the trash can—and it was empty.
And they were calling my flight.

There's a lesson there.

And I'm pretty sure I have not learned it.

RHONDA. Why Kyoto?

BETH. Warmer than Nepal.

And my mom. My mom used to talk about it. The temples and shrines. How they'd been spared in the war.

RHONDA. Did she ever come visit?

BETH. No. She doesn't travel. I wish she did.

RHONDA. You'll have to call her—tell her you're here.

BETH. I did. Well—I *tried*—I tried to call her aide. Sometimes that's the best way to reach her. And I had to use a *pay phone*... which made me feel like a *pioneer*, or something.

I didn't get an answer.

I'll try again tomorrow.

Silence. Rain. They search.

RHONDA. My mom never traveled either. We didn't have the money. But the last good conversation I had with her—in the hospital—she went on and on about wanting to see Savannah, Georgia.

She told me that she'd wanted to name my older sister Savannah and name me Georgia. Said that way when she called us down to supper it would sound like she was going on a lovely little trip.

BETH. And did she name you that?

RHONDA. No—my dad didn't like those names. And Mom never saw Savannah.

But she held on to that thought till the end.

Pause.

Do you have a sister?

BETH. No.

RHONDA. Do you want one? I've got one you can have.

BETH. I'll trade you straight-up for my brother.

RHONDA. Is that a good trade for me?

BETH. Not really. I'll throw in some cash.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

RHONDA. Okay. And just to warn you: Your new sister was Mom's favorite.

BETH. Just like my brother is.

RHONDA. Why do parents pretend?!

BETH. Amen!

RHONDA. Just say it! You know you have a favorite—especially when they are grown and moved away. Just say it out loud and be done with it!

Rhonda has found what she thinks might be the right pebble.

Hey!—maybe this!...

Considers it more fully.

...no...sorry. Keep looking.

They do.

BETH. When my mom dies, it is going to devastate my brother. And he has no idea. No idea what it's going to do to him.

RHONDA. What about you?

Pause.

BETH. I keep thinking I will *know*. That—no matter where I am or what I am doing—I will know when it happens. The moment it happens.

People say there's a feeling you get...something...a shiver.

I think that will be me.

I think I'll just know.

Beth picks up a pebble. Certain and simple.

This one.

She shows it to Rhonda.

Don't you think?

Rhonda holds it. Looks at it.

RHONDA. Yes. That's it.

How do we know that?

BETH. We just do.

They stand in the rain, looking at the pebble.

RHONDA. Now we put the pebble in that cup.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

You can do it if you want. You found it.

Rhonda hands the pebble to Beth.

Beth approaches the cup.

Beth kneels beside the cup. This is done simply—without obvious import or reverence.

Before Beth drops the pebble in, she picks up the cup and looks at it.

BETH. I had a cup like this. Mine was bigger, I think. Found it in the field behind our house when I was little. I kept like hair bands and plastic rings and pennies in it, I think.
My mom probably threw it away.

Beth drops the pebble down into the cup.

She hands the cup to Rhonda.

What now?

RHONDA. I'm supposed to put this cup near the shrine.
And then I say her full, entire name.
And then it's done.

BETH. This woman you barely know asked you to come here and do all these things?

RHONDA. Yes.

BETH. Why? What is this supposed to do?

Rhonda doesn't know.

Rhonda walks toward the simple stone shrine.

Beth retrieves her umbrella, nearby. She approaches and stands near Rhonda.

Beth begins to cover them both with the umbrella. But... Rhonda gently takes Beth's arm and lowers it. Saying, in essence: "Let it rain on us."

They stand in the rain...Beth with the open umbrella at her side...Rhonda holding out the cup to catch just a little more rain.

Finally...

Rhonda lifts the cup in the air in front of her and says, slowly and clearly:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

RHONDA. Beatrice Anne Mitchell.

Rhonda carefully sets the cup on or near the shrine.

Silence. Rain.

BETH. That was nice.

There is water on Rhonda's face. She is not moving.

Thank you. For letting me help you.

No response. Rhonda's eyes may be closed.

I should try to find where I'm staying.

Rhonda nods.

Bye, now.

Beth takes her bag...and her umbrella...and leaves.

Silence. Rain. Rhonda alone. Then...

From her pocket, Rhonda removes the small, folded piece of paper we saw earlier.

Rhonda opens the paper. Looks at it. Then she puts the paper away in her pocket.

Rhonda looks around at the ground near her feet. She reaches down and selects another pebble.

Looks at it.

It is the right one. She just knows.

Rhonda carefully drops this pebble into the cup.

Pause. Then...

Once again, she lifts the cup in the air in front of her and says, slowly and clearly:

RHONDA. Elizabeth McHenry Ward.

Rhonda slowly sets the cup on the shrine. Then she lifts her head to the sky...as it continues to rain.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Arbor View Memory Gardens. Morning.

A man is standing with his back to us at the counter we saw earlier. Same computer, tissues and coffee pot. A new wreath of flowers stands nearby.

The man is looking off and around—impatient—wanting someone to help him.

No one comes to help him. After a moment...

Scottie enters. She wears a pastel-colored exercise outfit—pants and jacket—along with brand-new tennis shoes. She moves easily, without a walker. Scottie approaches the counter and the man.

SCOTTIE. Excuse me. Hi. I thought I saw some tissues here.

The man steps away, so Scottie can grab a couple tissues.

Thank you so much. Are you waiting for Rhonda? She was on a trip to Japan. I'm not sure if she's back yet.

MAN. I'm looking for Steve Greene! He told me to come back and see him if something wasn't right.

SCOTTIE. Oh, I'm sure everything will be fine. They had my service just now in the Sequoia room. Everything went perfectly. Although my son looked so sad.

They'll be heading outside for the burial in a few minutes.

MAN. They should have a bell.

SCOTTIE. I'm sure someone will be here soon. There's free coffee.

MAN. I don't drink coffee. Even though—for some reason—my obituary said I loved it! Said I was *never so happy as when I was in a coffee-house, noodling away on my computer, working on all the novels I was never going to write.*

SCOTTIE. Why would they say that if that's not you?

MAN. They also said I was 29. I'm not 29. I'm 67 [*or age of actor*]. And the photo on the Memory Page was of a completely other person!

SCOTTIE. I'm sure they'll correct that.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

Bernadette, dressed in black, walks past them—carrying a black umbrella.

She does not see Scottie or the Man.

Scottie watches her leave...

MAN/ANOTHER TIM WARD. Sorry to go on and on. I'm Tim.

Scottie turns to him.

SCOTTIE. Oh, that's my son's name.

Scottie shakes the Man's hand.

MAN/ANOTHER TIM WARD. I don't mean to complain—I was no great person—I had a decent life—nothing out of the ordinary—but now that I'm gone and people are reading about me, I want them to know who I really was. You know?

Beth and Tim enter, both also dressed in black. Tim carries a black umbrella.

They do not see Scottie or the Man.

SCOTTIE. (To Man, re: Tim.) That's him—right there—that's my son, Tim...he's a writer.

Tim and Beth are gone.

MAN/ANOTHER TIM WARD. (Looking around, impatient.) Steve Greene promised me he'd be here.

SCOTTIE. Oh, I'm sure there's—

Rhonda, dressed in black, walks past—carrying a black umbrella of her own.

She does not see Scottie or the Man.

Here!—this is Rhonda—she'll help you!

(To Rhonda.) Hello, Rhonda—

But Rhonda keeps walking.

—how was the trip?—did you get to the shrine?

Rhonda is gone.

Scottie is calling after her.

Rhonda...?

MAN/ANOTHER TIM WARD. (Looking around.) I can't wait all day, you know. I've got things to do.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

SCOTTIE. What things?—what will you do now?

MAN/ANOTHER TIM WARD. I'm gonna try the offices down the hall.

The Man starts off—

SCOTTIE. *(To the Man, as he goes.)* I had planned to see the sunrise.

—and the Man is gone.

But I missed it.

Sound of rain builds, as—

Beth, Tim, Bernadette, and Rhonda are revealed behind Scottie—at a distance. All but Beth hold black umbrellas.

They stare front, not looking at one another—their faces in shadow.

Rhonda approaches Beth and puts her umbrella over the two of them...

I wonder what else I have missed.

...but Beth takes Rhonda's hand and gently lowers the umbrella (as Rhonda did in Kyoto).

They both lift their faces to the rain. Lights fade.

End of Play

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

NOTES

IN CUE _____

Page _____

Date _____

PROPERTY LIST

(Use this space to create props lists for your production)

the ball.

the man was not --

carriage of the horse I had planned to see the carriage

and the man is gone

but I missed it

Sound of the gun in --

Both the Government and the people are worried because

of the -- at a distance of ten miles from the city

the man is not looking at the machine. The man is

in the

Government representative. Both men have the same idea of the

two of the men

I wonder what the man missed

The man takes the gun in his hand and gently lowers the

machine. He is in the

the man is in the man's hands

(end of play)

SOUND EFFECTS

(Use this space to create sound effects lists for your production)

NOTES

(Use this space to make notes for your production.)

THIS RANDOM WORLD

by Steven Dietz

"I want to be just beside my life. Because maybe right beside my life everything makes sense. Maybe there...everything connects."

2 men, 5 women

We want to believe that serendipity brings us together, but is that just a myth? Mining the comedy of missed connections, THIS RANDOM WORLD asks the serious question of how often we travel parallel paths through the world without noticing. From an ailing woman who plans one final trip, to her daughter planning one great escape and her son falling prey to a prank gone wrong, this funny, intimate, and heartbreaking play explores the lives that may be happening just out of reach of our own.

"...affecting... The characters are drawn with empathy and humor, and the cascading series of coincidences neatly illustrates the idea that, as the title suggests, we are all hostages to chance." —The New York Times

"...succeeds on every level... It's the sort of play you walk away from having fallen completely in love with every person on the stage... The play is also fast and funny, delivering constant comedy that comes from the characters and their foibles, including numerous instances of the laughter that comes from a place of painful self recognition."

—Arts-Louisville.com

"...wistful and often very funny... Dietz's premise holds power and grace. It makes us consider—as we constantly reassure ourselves with what is certain—how much we really do not know in any given situation."

—The Louisville Courier-Journal

Also by Steven Dietz
BECKY'S NEW CAR
LONELY PLANET
YANKEE TAVERN
and others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN 978-0-8222-3584-2

