

The logo for Original Works Publishing features the words "Original" and "Works" in a bold, black, serif font. "Original" is positioned above "Works", and the two words are partially overlaid by a circular, textured grey splash that radiates outwards from behind the text.

www.originalworksonline.com

SCRIPT SAMPLE

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is subject to royalty. It is fully protected by Original Works Publishing, and the copyright laws of the United States. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

The performance rights to this play are controlled by Original Works Publishing and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee. Royalties are payable with negotiation from Original Works Publishing.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

Particular emphasis is laid on the question of amateur or professional readings, permission and terms for which must be secured from Original Works Publishing through direct contact.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Original Works Publishing."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

DISTANCE

A ONE-ACT PLAY

by Dennis Schebetta

TIME: The present.

SETTING: Other than some occasional scenes, the play takes place in three central playing areas of an apartment on the upper west side of Manhattan. The main playing areas are the living room, the bedroom, and the rooftop of the building. It is suggested that the set be as simplistic as possible and that the playing areas bleed into each other to allow for the smooth flowing of the scenes. The living room has a couch, a coffee table, a bookcase on the wall filled with various books, and a stereo with some CDs. On top of the coffee table is Scott's antique Underwood typewriter and various used crumpled papers and pens and coffee cups. The bedroom has a small twin bed. The rooftop is simply an area with a state-of-the art telescope used for astronomy. For the scenes at the Plaza and the office, the simpler the illusion the better. Nothing should distract from what is happening with the characters in the moment.

CHARACTERS:

HUGO	--	observer, ruffled look, quirky introvert
KATE	--	professional woman, strong, organized
JACK	--	tall, handsome, full of confidence and charm
SCOTT	--	an unpublished writer, idealist dreamer
MARJORIE	--	career woman, walking bundle of neurosis

All characters are in their late twenties.

The sky is lit up with stars. LIGHTS UP as HUGO enters, holding a StarFinder star chart, and stands near the telescope in the rooftop area. HE is wearing baggy khakis, rumpled shirt, covered by an old bathrobe.

HUGO

“I like to think that the moon is there even if I am not looking at it.” Einstein said that. Smart guy. Had a few theories about time, space, and gravity—and about life. Mostly that everything is connected. Relatively speaking. Did you know that stars are windows into history? It’s true. Every star is light years away so it takes years for the photons to travel the galaxy and reach our naked eyes, which means we’re looking into the past. Imagine wishing on a star that doesn’t exist because it extinguished its light years ago. Would your wish come true? And if our Sun exploded for some cosmic reason, we wouldn’t even know about it for a whole 8 minutes because of how far away we are. Interesting, huh? Astronomy is the most ancient of the sciences and about the only thing that interests me nowadays. There’s something poetical about it, the movement of stars, galaxies, nebulas—and of course, the constellations. Corona Borealis. The Pleiades. Andromeda. Draco. Each one has its own personality. Like people. That’s another thing that interests me, people. Thing is, I socialize with people about as much as I socialize with Ursa Major.

ENTER KATE wearing an Alice in Wonderland costume.

HUGO

Oh, this is Kate. Don’t be alarmed by the Alice in Wonderland costume. She’s not kinky. It’s Halloween. October 31, 1999. On this night the moon won’t rise till 11:21 but there are some constellations up there right now; Aquarius, Cephus, and Lacerta. That means “lizard.” See, only a poet would put a lizard in the sky.

SOUND of “Monster Mash” music and a large party in the background. JACK enters wearing a Zorro costume. HE watches her standing there, unsure what to say.

JACK

Hello.

KATE

Oh, hello.

JACK

I’ve been looking for you. Is this yours?

HE holds up a gold necklace with a pendant.

HUGO

This is Jack..

KATE

Oh, yes, it must've fallen off.

JACK

I thought I saw you wearing it. It's a beautiful pendant.

KATE

It was a gift. Thanks for picking it up for me.

JACK

No problem.

Beat.

Okay. See ya around.

JACK turns to walk out, then stops, and looks at her. Pause.

JACK

Some party, huh?

KATE

Yeah, a little too ritzy for me. I'm not used to all this caviar and champagne.

JACK

What exactly are you used to?

KATE

You know...beer, chips...lots of hummus and pita bread. That kind of party.

JACK

Doesn't sound too bad. So how'd you end up here?

KATE

Invite from a friend of a friend. Hugo Barnes.

JACK

Hugo? Oh yeah, I knew him before he dropped out of Harvard.

HUGO

To Audience.

He's talking about me. Oh yeah, I forgot to introduce myself. I'm Hugo. So, isn't he charming? Everybody loves Jack. Except for me...I always thought he was insincere.

JACK

We all wished he'd come back after what happened to his father. It'd really be nice to see him.

HUGO

See what I mean.

KATE

He's running around as the Mad Hatter somewhere. This outfit was his idea.

JACK

It's a great idea, I mean, you look incredible—I mean—

KATE

(Nervous laugh)

Oh, God, you're kidding, right? In this?

JACK

No, I don't mean—That didn't come out the way I wanted—I meant...Now you think I have some weird Alice in Wonderland fetish, don't you?

She smiles. Beat.

Look, my name's John, and before I dig myself deeper into a hole of embarrassment, can I ask you to dance?

HUGO

John? His name's Jack. What's he doing, trying to seem more mature?

KATE

Nice to meet you, John. I'm Kate. I think I'd love to dance.

HE extends his arm in a gentleman-like fashion. SHE grabs it and starts to head in to the dance floor. THEY FREEZE.

HUGO

Makes you want to puke, doesn't it? But it gets worse. My friend Scott bumbles into the equation like an asteroid the size of Cuba headed for planet earth. And I'm right behind him trying to stop him from making an ass out of himself.

ENTER SCOTT dressed as the Scarecrow from "The Wizard of Oz" and is slightly inebriated. HUGO puts on a Mad Hatter hat and enters the scene. KATE and JACK unfreeze.

SCOTT

Kate, there you are.

KATE

Scott.

JACK

Hugo! Good to see you! Kate told me you were here.

HUGO

Yeah, long time no see. Nice costume.

JACK

Thanks, you too. How are you? It was a shame you never came back to Harvard.

HUGO

Yeah, well, I didn't miss it much. Uh, Scott, this is Jack. Jack, Scott.

JACK

Hi, how you doing? Hugo and I met at Harvard.

HUGO

To Audience.

How many times do you think he can mention the name Harvard?

SCOTT

Kate, I need to talk to you.

KATE

It can wait. I'm dancing with John.

JACK

Uh, if you'll excuse us, gentlemen. It was a pleasure.

KATE and JACK start to exit.

SCOTT

GODDAMMIT! Don't brush me off! This is important!

HUGO

Uh, Scott, chill out.

KATE

This is not the time or place.

SCOTT

What's the deal here, huh? Yesterday you want to get back together with me and tonight you've got some other guy on your arm?

KATE

You're making a bigger deal out of this than it is.

HUGO

To Audience

I knew I had to defuse the situation somehow. My first idea was to get Jack out of there but I couldn't think of anything to say.

To Jack

Uh, Jack, would you help me go get some...cheese and crackers?

JACK

No, thanks.

SCOTT

Kate and I need to talk, buddy, if you hadn't fucking noticed.

KATE

Scott, what is your problem?

JACK

She doesn't seem to want to talk to you, okay?

SCOTT

How do you know what Kate wants?

KATE

Would you stop acting like an asshole!

HUGO

Scott, let's go, man.

JACK

Just calm down.

SCOTT

You calm down!

SCOTT pushes him away. JACK grabs him by the shirt, practically lifting him up. Its clear they're about to fight.

HUGO

STOP!

THEY ALL FREEZE except HUGO who steps forward.

HUGO

A physicist once said that no entity is independent unto itself, and that every particle in motion affects every other particle in motion. Blows my mind, y'know? See that pulsar up there? That spinning ball of gas is affecting the way you're taking in oxygen into your lungs. It's sending out gravitational waves that travel through space and time and ultimately ripple through your body. Get it? Crazy chaotic theories dreamed up by crazy chaotic men. It happens every day, all the time. The incidents that happened to Kate and Scott affected Jack. Let me explain. See, Kate I like to think of as a fixed star, and Scott is more of a variable star. A fixed star is, well, sorta fixed—but nothing really is fixed in this universe and a variable star

changes brightness. But they used to be like binary stars, constantly in orbit around each other—physicists used to believe these couldn't exist because their gravitational pulls would be too strong and they'd destroy each other—but anyway this was near the end of Spring—April 24, 1999. The summer triangle would soon be visible—that's those three bright stars Deneb, Vega, and Altair—Altair means “Flying Eagle.” See what I mean—poetical. Those three hang up there all summer long, watching the dizzy spinning earth like gods.

Suddenly we're in SCOTT and KATE's living room. MUSIC: “A Summer Song” by Chad & Jeremy. JACK exits as SCOTT moves to the coffee table and starts typing on his old Underwood typewriter. The costume is gone and he is wearing jeans and dirty t-shirt. KATE is now in sleek business attire and crosses to SCOTT.

HUGO

Underneath the blanket of stars Kate and Scott moved to the city together and were ready to conquer the world. I helped them get a cozy apartment in my building on the upper west side. Kate got a job at Viacom as a production assistant and Scott...well, he wrote...

HUGO watches. KATE comes up from behind SCOTT, kisses his neck. When SCOTT finishes his page and goes to set it down, she steals it from him.

SCOTT

HEY! Give that back! I'm not finished.

KATE

“The starkness of—“

SCOTT

It's the first draft. It sucks. Kate—

KATE

“The starkness of the city...seemed—“

SCOTT

If you read that you'll lose respect for me.

They run around in circles as he tries to yank it out of her hands. SHE is standing on the couch to get away from him. HE gives up, and SHE reads loudly with a melodramatic tone.

KATE

“The starkness of the city seemed to chill his bones. He knew trouble lay behind one of those grimy corners of the city. As he walked past the pizza shop, he stopped and looked at his own reflection and felt like a man looking at a hallowed ghost, a shadowy form—“

SCOTT

Are you done mocking me?

KATE

“A hallowed ghost”? This isn’t...bad. It doesn’t stink...a lot.

SCOTT

Y’know, I’d rather you just say you hate it than give me insincere support.

KATE

Here. I hate it.

SCOTT

I hate it, too.

KATE

But I love you.

They kiss.

KATE

You need a break. You should get out of this apartment. Why don’t you call that temp agency, get some jobs? I don’t want to nag but rent is due pretty quick here.

SCOTT

I’ll call them tomorrow morning, see what cushy little jobs they have for me.

KATE

You said that last week.

SCOTT

Kate, please. I have to work through this writer’s block.

KATE

Don’t “Kate, please” me—we need the rent.

SCOTT

Let’s not talk about money. Let’s talk about love, so that tomorrow we can say, “Let’s talk about love like we did the day before.”

They kiss. This time more passionate. They end up on the floor.

KATE

Do you think we should get married?

SCOTT

Can we have sex first?

Beat. He sees her reaction.

Oh. You’re serious.

KATE

Yes. Don't freak. It's not a proposal. I'm just asking.

SCOTT

"Just asking"? Nobody just asks about marriage. "What movie should we see tonight?" is something people just ask about. People don't casually say, "Oh, by the way, you think we should get married?"

KATE

It's a thought. An idea. Us. Married. It's not repulsive.

SCOTT

No, it's fine idea...in theory.

KATE

Don't you ever think about it?

SCOTT

Can we go back to talking about my bad writing?

KATE

What's wrong with this topic?

SCOTT

Kate...I love you. The past months that we've been together have been the best in my life. You're beautiful, intelligent, funny—

KATE

But...

SCOTT

But I think the stress of moving here is going to be enough for us to deal with for now. No need to add to it by being engaged.

KATE

That's a no, right?

SCOTT

Yes. I mean, yes, that's a no.

KATE

How come you're so charming even when you reject me?

SCOTT

Trade secret.

Pause.

I have something for you. I was going to save it for after our little romantic dinner tonight but...

Pulls out a small jewelry box.

Don't get too excited, it's not a wedding ring. Open it.

SHE opens it and inside is a gold-chained pendant.

KATE

Oh, Scott ...

ENTER MARJORIE dressed in a sleek DKNY outfit, armed with office work and files in her hand.

HUGO

To Audience.

This is Marjorie Mason Montgomery. She works with Kate at the office. If you think her name is exhausting, wait till she opens her mouth.

KATE moves herself between the scene with SCOTT and the scene with MARJORIE

MARJORIE

I can't believe you, Kate. This is so unlike the strong woman I've seen in this office. I love your aggressiveness, your "je'ne sais que", your panache. This weepy romantic thing is such a revolting display of spongy sentimentality. Why are you showing me this cheap trinket? It's not like it's a wedding ring.

HUGO

I like to think of her as "The Black Hole of Humanity."