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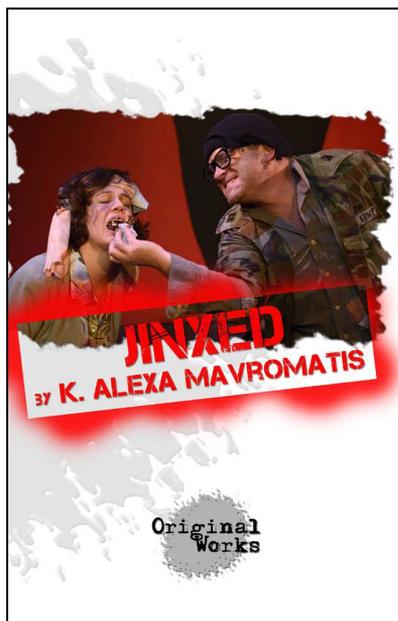
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Distance

© Dennis Schebetta
Trade Edition, 2016
ISBN 978-1-63092-095-1

*Also Available From
Original Works Publishing*



Jinxed by K. Alexa Mavromatis

Synopsis: The apocalypse has hit and no one was prepared. Only Stringbean and Meatloaf remain. With food and companionship in short supply these lone survivors engage in a post-apocalyptic fight over whoopie pies, playground games... and so much more.

Cast Size: 1 Male, 1 Female

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SCOTT -- an unpublished writer, idealist dreamer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.

DISTANCE

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.

HUGO (Cont'd)

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."

KATE

He said it's a French design from the 16th century.

SCOTT

To Kate

I think Queen Antoinette wore it. Just before they chopped off her head. Read the inscription.

KATE

To Marjorie

Read the inscription.

MARJORIE

“To my muse, the lovely and feisty Kate. May our hearts always be entwined, Scott.” That is so fucking corny. I’m sorry, Kate. If that’s any mark of his writing skills then you’re going to be the eternal bread and butter machine in your relationship.

KATE

I know, I know, it’s like a regurgitated Hall-mark greeting, but what a beautiful thought, huh? He just knows how to woo me with romance.

Turns to Scott.

You’re such a poet. I love this. I love you.

SCOTT

I love you, too.

They kiss. HUGO steps forward.

HUGO

Venus is the second planet from the sun and the God of Love. You can see it early in the morning, which is why it’s called the morning star. Even though it’s not a star. People never get anything right.

SCOTT breaks away from KATE and moves over towards the rooftop. KATE moves towards MARJORIE and is “at work”.

MARJORIE

My therapist is crazy. I’m telling you, I think he’s more neurotic than I am. Yesterday I swear he was masturbating during my session, right when I broke into tears over Brian leaving me. I saw him with his hands in his pockets and that foolish grin but when I called him on it, he denied it and said, “lets talk about your paranoid tendencies.” Do you think I have paranoid tendencies?

KATE

Well, the word I would use is—

MARJORIE

Then he pulls out a Snickers bar and starts chewing on it right in front of me—I’m still in tears, mind you—and he knows I’m just getting over the bulimia. That bastard. I don’t even know why I cried over Brian because I’m glad he’s gone. I just wish he hadn’t taken all my Sarah McLachlan CDs. Y’know?

KATE

Yeah. Marjorie, I wanted to ask—

MARJORIE

So the other day I’m talking about my fear of elevators, right? And I started talking about the time I had sex with the mail guy in the elevator and it got stuck—which I think completely scarred

me for life, y'know? So, I'm thinking, either give up sex with the office boys, or just take the stairs.

HUGO

See what I mean? Exhausting.

KATE

What was Brian acting like, before he split on you?

MARJORIE

Well, let me see...aloof, distant, disinterested, never listened, made me pay for everything...but he was always like that.

KATE

Scott and I are having problems. I don't know what's wrong.

MARJORIE

Have you tried giving him a blowjob?

KATE

What?

MARJORIE

It shuts them up. Try it.

KATE

I think the problem runs deeper than that.

MARJORIE

Trust me, with men it's always about sex.

KATE

We've known each other for years. He was my best friend before we started dating, before we moved out here. Before we were having sex. And now we don't talk at all.

MARJORIE

Honey, he's lucky to have you. I keep telling you that there are plenty of fish in the sea—fish with summer homes in the Hamptons. Take James over there...he's cute. So's his BMW.

THEY exit. HUGO steps into the rooftop area.

HUGO

Sagittarius, "The Archer" was shining down on me and Scott that night when the binary stars imploded. Perfect clear night for stargazing, even for New York City rooftop standards. But that night wasn't about stars—the full moon had risen at 7:34 and it was the object of our affection. It was near the beginning of Fall. I knew something foreboding was coming on when he started waxing philosophic. Especially since I was the one getting stoned.

HUGO starts to adjust the telescope to focus on the moon. Every few moments HUGO takes a hit of off a joint.

SCOTT

I went walking today. I walked from Chelsea all the way up through midtown to the upper west side. I walked till my legs were aching. Past all

the people, past all the little shops and restaurants. I saw all these empty taxis zipping by me and I thought about climbing into one, really wanted to, but I refused myself. I was torturing myself. It was some form of penance. But I haven't figured out what sin I've committed. Do you understand that feeling? It's like loneliness. I don't want to feel alone ...not with this thing, this burning thing inside me...alone in this feeling...I'm not making sense.

HUGO

No.

To Audience.

Hey, I wanted to be the supportive friend, but c'mon...I never say anything that senseless even when I'm high.

To Scott

I thought we were talking about you and Kate?

Pause. SCOTT looks at HUGO.

SCOTT

I don't love her anymore.

HUGO

To Audience.

I was stumped. I've never been in love with anyone so it was hard for me to relate to falling out of love.

To Scott

Cigarette?

SCOTT

Why do you do that? You know I quit.

Pause.

Shit. Give me a cigarette.

HUGO gives him a cigarette. He lights it. Pause.

SCOTT

I think I'm going to break up with her.

Enter KATE.

KATE

Hey guys. How's the stargazing?

HUGO

Ah, Katerina, my lovely dewdrop, how are you? Working late again?

KATE

Yeah, never a dull moment in the office. Scott, are you smoking again?

SCOTT

Don't start.

HUGO

It's all my fault, Kate. Hugo is evil influence in his life.

KATE

Yeah, right.

HUGO

In fake Russian accent.

Da. Iz true. I do it because I am hopelessly in love with you, you beautiful American woman. Katerina, come dance with me under the ...how you say...starlight.

KATE

Would you knock it off?

HUGO

Hugo like the American woman

KATE

Stop it, Hugo. You'll make Scott jealous.

KATE and SCOTT freeze in time.

HUGO

To Audience.

You ever have one of those weird moments, when you know something another person doesn't know, but you can't tell them. So everything stops and there's that thick awkwardness in the air? That was the moment.

THEY unfreeze. To Scott

Uh, Scott, I'm going down to grab a jug of milk. Want anything?

SCOTT

Nah, I'm fine, thanks.

HUGO

To Audience

And I knew when I left that "it" would happen.

HUGO exits. HE enters a few moments later drinking from a carton of milk, watching in the shadows.

KATE

The moon looks so beautiful up there, doesn't it?

Pause. No response.

Hello, I'm trying to talk to you. Once upon a time it was something we did.

SCOTT

I know.

KATE

Are you smoking to spite me or do you really enjoy it?

SCOTT

That is so egotistical to think that the only reason I pick up a cigarette is simply to spite you.

KATE

It's typical of what you'd do. Have you got enough money for rent this month? I can't cover for you again.

SCOTT

I'll get it.

KATE

From Hugo? What's this, the third time? Don't you have any dignity?

SCOTT

You get coffee and pick up dry cleaning—
don't talk to me about dignity.

KATE

You asshole.

Pause.

SCOTT

Shit. I'm sorry.

KATE

No, you're not. What the hell is going on with
you, Scott? And don't tell me it's nothing. I'm
tired of being ignored.

SCOTT

Kate, it's just...God, after all these months,
living together...and we...we don't connect any-
more.

KATE

No. Not like we used to.

SCOTT

And we've been trying. I've been trying.

KATE

I know. We can try harder.

SCOTT

Kate, I ...I don't love you anymore.

Pause.

I think we should break up. There. I said it.

It's what we've both been thinking about for the past two months.

KATE

Trying to remain calm

Fine. I'll move out...I'll look for another place...

SCOTT

No, don't. I've already started looking for an apartment.

KATE

You can't afford to look for a—wait, what the fuck—was this planned out?

SCOTT

It's been itching inside of me a long time now.

KATE

Well, that's comforting! Was this day marked on your calendar? “Hmm, let me see—August 22—oh, I'm scheduled to break up with my girlfriend today!”

SCOTT

I don't mean that I—

KATE

WELL, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR RUINING MY PERFECT DAY! YOU ASSHOLE!

SCOTT

Oh, please...Kate!

KATE exits rooftop area and crosses to the living room area as SCOTT exits. SHE starts tearing up pages of his work, some letters, etc. HUGO enters with carton of milk.

HUGO

I think it's safe to say she handled it with strength and courage.

KATE

Screams

ASSHOLE!

HUGO

Kate?

KATE

What do you want?

HUGO

Holding up the carton.

Got milk?

No response.

Uh, I'm looking for Scott. Where'd he go?

KATE

I have no idea where that fucking asshole went.

HUGO

Okay. Huh. Hugo is going to go out on a limb here, but...did you two guys have a fight?

KATE

I'm sure Scott will fill you in on the details.

Go back to your apartment and smoke a bowl.
Live off your trust fund. Read your magazines.
Do whatever it is you do.

HUGO

Shit, Kate, that's cold. Hugo just wants to
know what happened.

KATE

I think Hugo should leave before Hugo gets
hurt.

HUGO

What are you going to do, throw your confetti
at me?

KATE

This confetti is the remains of Scott's personal
letters to me, his lies, his bullshit! Our love life
was a fictional fairy tale he invented. See these
words of caring and love? Bullshit! Like this one!
And this one!

*Grabbing different letters and ripping
them.*

And this one...and...

*One of the letters grabs her attention and SHE
starts to read it, then is unable to contain her
tears.*

HUGO

To Audience

I'm no Einstein, but I figured it out.

To Kate.

You two split up, didn't you?

No response.

Kate, I'm sorry. But I'm not Scott. I just want to help.

Pause.

You need anything?

KATE rips up the letter in her hand.

I could buy you a deluxe super shredder. Do that job in five minutes. ZIP!

SHE chuckles a bit, through her tears.

You want some of my milk? How about a glass of water?

SHE nods. HE exits. SHE picks up a photo by the couch, stares at it. HUGO returns with a glass of water and sits.

HUGO

Nice picture of you two at the top of the Empire State Building. Beautiful sunrise. Wonderful view of Jersey. Nice frame, too.

KATE

He's not getting that damn frame. I got that frame on sale at Crate & Barrel. It's my frame.

HUGO

Uh, Kate I don't think he's going to fight you for the frame.

KATE

I'm just saying he better not try to take it from me.

HUGO

Okay. So, wanna tell Uncle Hugo what happened?

KATE

I don't want to talk about it, okay?

HUGO

If you say so.

Pause.

KATE

Did you know that for a whole month last year I supported him while he stayed home and wrote? That's a lot of bills. Rent, groceries. I work for a living and I'm proud of what I do. He stayed home and wrote. Didn't even sell one story. Him and his fucking bohemian lifestyle. I feel like he just took me for granted. That he never even loved me.

Pause.

Oh God, I'm sorry I'm unloading on you. It's just that...

HUGO

No, it's okay. I'm attracted to girls who cry on my shoulder. It's good to let it out, y'know? A therapist once told me—not that I believe in therapists—that sometimes it feels good to share your pain.

To Audience

As soon as I said that—about the therapist—well, I couldn't help but think about my father. I

think she sensed that because—

KATE

Interrupts

I should go to a therapist. I think I'm too passive-aggressive. When did you ever see one?

HUGO

I went once or twice after my father...died.

KATE

Is that how you got that scar on your hand?

HUGO

Yeah.

KATE

What happened?

HUGO

I don't think you really want to hear about it.

KATE

It might take my mind off things.

HUGO

To Audience

I felt like telling her about it, hoping it would help her put things in perspective. Y'know? I knew it would, but there was only so much I could tell her...

To Kate

Well, my mom died a year after my younger brother Mike was born. So it was just me, my

brother and my Dad. Scott and I knew each other all through high school and I then I went off to Harvard. Not because of my grades, but because my Dad pulled some strings. I had just gotten back home for Christmas from that first semester. My father didn't work anymore, retired—sold his casino for all his millions. The night before Christmas he was stabbed to death by some teenage burglars. They snuck in through the basement window in the middle of the night, looking for money. My dad woke up and there was a fight... and they stabbed him.

KATE

Oh my God...that's so...God, I'm sorry.

HUGO

Yeah. I got this scar on my hand from waking up and hearing the struggle and getting my gun... but before I could do anything one of the punks stabbed me in my hand and I dropped it. There's more to it than that, but...well...heavy, huh?

KATE

Did you...who found him...the body, I mean?

HUGO

I did.

To Audience

I couldn't tell her about the images that still haunt me...I wanted to but...

To Kate

These kids were from high school. Knew my family was rich and they were looking for money

to buy drugs. My brother had seen one of them before at the arcade.

KATE

What happened to them?

HUGO

We fought for those bastards to get the death penalty. They got life without parole. And that's what I ...deal with, I guess. It's...It's not easy to talk about. Some days I really miss him. We used to go out trap shooting.

KATE

I'm sorry, Hugo, I thought you were just...

HUGO

That I was just some pot-head loser next door? I know. It's okay. Now you know my scars.

Pause.

So, now that I've really depressed you...uh, do you want me to talk to Scott?

KATE

No.

Pause.

If you do, though...try to figure him out. He always makes things so complex.

HUGO

To Audience.

I found Scott on the roof. In high spirits. Alcohol, that is. I don't drink anymore. Never liked having a hangover. That's why I smoke pot. And partly because I don't like acting like this...

KATE exits as LIGHTS rise on SCOTT standing on the ledge of the roof screaming at the top of his lungs.

SCOTT

I'M FREE! YOU HEAR THAT NEW YORK CITY! I AM A FREE MAN HERE. I CAN SMOKE, DRINK, STAY OUT LATE, GO TO TAHITI, HITCHHIKE TO DENVER, WHATEVER FUCKING THING I WANT! ANYTIME I WANT! I'M FREE!

HUGO crosses to the roof area, holding the cartoon of milk, watching briefly. SCOTT looks like he's about to fall

HUGO

Scott, sit your ass down before you fall!

SCOTT

HUGO! My old, good...dear friend...you are...How are you?

HUGO

Sober. You?

SCOTT

I'm fucking drunk.

HUGO

Hugo is getting the impression that it's over between you and Kate.

SCOTT

Over! Finito! All done! I've done the deed.
Ended it. Sayonara.

Pause. SCOTT sits.

HUGO

She loves you a lot, you know. Maybe if
you—

SCOTT

Oh God, you talked to her. You evil rat bas-
tard. You fucking traitor.

HUGO

No, she just told me you had—

SCOTT

Don't try to dig your way out of this, you rat
bastard.

HUGO

All right. She sent Hugo to "try to figure you
out".

SCOTT

Try to—what the hell is that all about?

HUGO

This Hugo does not know. She says she can't
get inside your head.

HUGO pulls out a joint. Lights it and takes a hit.

SCOTT

Why the fuck do you always refer to yourself in the third person? That is so annoying.

HUGO

Hugo not know. Hugo just does that. So what are you going to do now?

SCOTT

Scott not know. Scott need move out.

HUGO

Smart ass.

HUGO takes a hit.

SCOTT

You smoke that shit too much.

HUGO

Thanks for your concern, Mr. Jim Beam. I smoke for the same reason you drink. It helps me to forget.

Pause.

So how you feeling?

SCOTT

Honestly? I feel a little queasy. Oh, you mean, about the breakup? I don't know. I feel this enormous sense of freedom and enormous guilt at the same time.

HUGO

Y'know, if you need a place to stay, you can always move in with me.

SCOTT

Are you serious? I mean, I appreciate that and all but your place smells like a huge hash bar.

HUGO

Wow, I never noticed. So, what are you gonna do, sleep out here?

SCOTT

It's a beautiful night tonight.

SOUND of THUNDER. LIGHTNING flashes.

SCOTT

Or not. Well, if it rains I won't have to take a shower tomorrow morning.

THUNDER and sound of RAIN as storm brews. HUGO moves down towards audience as SCOTT crosses to apartment area.

HUGO

I convinced Scott to spend that night in my hash-smelling place, but now he had to look for an apartment while still living with Kate. This is not an unusual situation for couples who split up in Manhattan because, let's face it—the hardest part of breaking up is trying to find a decent apartment. But Scott and Kate dealt with each other fine—he slept on the couch and they kept their distance, trying to remain friends. Marjorie Mason Montgomery was supportive of Kate in her own special way. The Summer Triangle was disappearing and Lacerta—that good old Lizard—was coming out to play.

MARJORIE enters into office area. HUGO crosses to SCOTT.

MARJORIE

Get your purse. You're going out with me tonight.

KATE

You know I hate those chic yuppie bars—all those slimy leeches hitting on me.

HUGO

To Scott

So how you two doing?

SCOTT

Who? Me and Kate?

HUGO

No, you and King Kong. It must be pure hell living with her now.

MARJORIE

I'm worried about you. If you stay home you'll be around HIM.

SCOTT

No, it's nice. Suddenly we talk to each other like human beings. It's bizarre.

KATE

There's nothing to worry about. I'm actually happy about the break up. Suddenly there's this

load of pressure off of us, this stupid need to live up to any ridiculous expectations. Now we're back to being friends.

MARJORIE

Dear Lord, it's more serious than I thought. We may need to do tequila shots.

KATE

Marjorie, knock it off!

KATE moves toward the couch as MARJORIE exits.

HUGO

Then came that fateful day when what you're all thinking would happen...happened.

KATE begins reading a book. SCOTT turns on the stereo. Dave Matthews song "Say Goodbye" plays. HE starts to dance to the music. KATE puts the book down crosses to him.

KATE

Can you turn that down? I'm trying to read.

SCOTT

Dance with me. C'mon...

HE grabs her and SHE reluctantly dances.

KATE

I don't want to dance, Scott—

SCOTT

There. That doesn't hurt, does it?

Pause. They dance

KATE

Scott, what are you doing?

They break away.

SCOTT

What?

KATE

I'm an emotional wreck right now and I don't need this. The fact that you're still living in the same apartment with me is agonizing. I'm very moody right now and I don't need you fighting with me one day then flirting with me the next.

SCOTT

Flirting? God, are you vain. I'm just in a good mood because I sold a short story today.

KATE

You did? That's great.

SCOTT

Yeah, the Utne Reader. Very high-brow, but good exposure. Comes out in a few months. So come on, lets dance!

HE grabs her again to dance with her. After a moment SHE breaks away.

KATE

I can't do this! Don't you get it? You sleep ten feet away from me in the next room. Some nights I hear you breathing, snoring. I can still smell your scent everywhere because you're still here. And I'm glad you're still here, but I want you to leave. I know that sounds silly. I love you and I still want to be your friend but I don't know if that's possible. I want you out of my system but I don't want you out of my life.

SCOTT

Okay, I know.

Pause.

We'll just dance, okay? We're still friends like we were before, right? I mean, I sold a story today and there's no one else I want to share that glory with but you. Hugo wouldn't understand it. I— please, let's just dance.

HUGO

To Audience. Whispering.

The sad thing is, he's right. Me and Scott don't have that kind of connection.

KATE

Okay, we'll dance.

SHE takes his hand and they dance.

KATE

You're such a good friend to me. I still wish...

SCOTT

What?

KATE

Nothing.

Pause.

You know you never tell me your thoughts, your feelings—you keep them locked up inside.

SCOTT

They come out through my hands when I'm typing.

KATE

It was hard to find you in some of them. You could be even better if you let yourself be vulnerable. Show your raw insides.

SCOTT

It's painful.

KATE

We all have pain that we carry with us.

SCOTT

I'm afraid.

KATE

I know. We're all afraid.

Pause. THEY gaze at each other, SCOTT playing with her hair.

KATE

That feels good.

THEY kiss. The kissing becomes more passionate.

KATE

Wait, what are we doing?

SCOTT

What we shouldn't be doing.

THEY kiss again.

KATE

Scott, I miss you so much, I miss holding you close to me...

LIGHTS fade down slightly as they kiss and fall down on the floor. HUGO steps forward.

HUGO

I can see a hint of recognition in some of your faces. You've been in this situation before. So you may know what it's like. Friendship after a breakup is tough enough as it is without complicating it with sex.

HUGO steps aside as LIGHTS come up on MARJORIE and KATE at work.

MARJORIE

You slept with him didn't you? I knew it would happen. The other day I told my therapist, "I think she's going to sleep with him," and look

what happens. Where's the will power? Where's the strength? Where's the independent woman of the 90s? Was the whole feminist movement a cartoon for you?

KATE

What are you getting so worked up about? Who says we had sex?

MARJORIE

My feminine instincts. Did you? No, never mind—I'm sorry, I'm prying. I'm just moody. There were no worthwhile prospects at the club last night so I went home alone—AGAIN! And this morning they didn't have my carrot juice cappuccino at the organic café so now I'm completely thrown off balance. My allergies are acting up and my therapist is taking a vacation this week so I don't know who I'll talk to for help. My life's a mess. So what's new with you?

KATE

Scott and I had sex.

MARJORIE

I knew it! So what now? Don't tell me you two are back together? You know how big a mistake that would be, right?

KATE

No, we're not back together. We're still just friends.

MARJORIE

Oh, “friends”. Okay. Friends who have sex. I need more friends like that.

SCOTT approaches KATE with a notebook in his hand.

SCOTT

Kate, I’ve got something for you. Hi, Marjorie.

MARJORIE

Hello...Bill?

SCOTT

Scott. You met me a few months ago at the company party.

MARJORIE

Right. Right. Are we friends? Did we have sex?

SCOTT

What?

KATE

Marjorie! Out!

MARJORIE

I’m just checking. I lose track of who my friends are from time to time.

SHE exits. AS KATE and SCOTT talk they move from the “work” area to the living room area.

SCOTT

Here. It's my journal for you to read.

KATE

Scott, why are you giving me this?

SCOTT

You said you wanted to know my thoughts, my feelings. It's all here in black and white.

KATE

I want you to talk to me about your feelings, Scott, not write about them.

SCOTT

I thought this is what you wanted. Aren't we still friends?

KATE

Friendship doesn't mean sharing everything. I don't want to read your completely private thoughts that you recorded in your journal.

SCOTT

Fine. I just thought—never mind what I thought.

KATE

What?

SCOTT

I've been blocked for so long and I know what it is—it's just fear. That story I told you about, the one that got sold to Utne? I made it up.

KATE

You what?

SCOTT

You're doing so well at your job and I'm failing...and I'm afraid. But I've decided to write a book. Y'know, a real novel. This journal was going to be my starting point. There are a lot of good stories in here. Most of them are about you, about us moving here to this city and I wanted to share that with you. Maybe get some feedback.

KATE

It's a sweet offer. It really is. But I can't—I just can't.

SCOTT

I understand. The offer is there if you want it.

HE goes to kiss her. There's an awkward moment. SHE stops him.

KATE

Scott, this is getting weird now. Don't you think?

SCOTT

This? You mean the—uh—

KATE

Yes. It's confusing. I don't know how you feel about anything. We're not dating anymore. We're "friends". Who have sex. It would be fine if it was just a one night, "oops, sorry" kind of thing, but it's becoming a habit.