

Thank you, Aislinn Frantz, for all the time and care you take.

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Please  
Note:

### On punctuation:

*Almost, Maine* employs a lot of very specific overlapping dialogue. You'll often see this symbol: //. It will appear in the middle of lines or words, and it simply means that the next character to speak should begin their line where the // appears (and thereby interrupt the character who is currently speaking).

You'll also see this symbol: >. It simply means that the character who is speaking should keep talking and drive through to the end of their thought or point or sentence and not wait for the other character to speak.

Sometimes you'll see dialogue in brackets like these: [ ]. These words are not spoken. They're simply a guide to what a character leaves unsaid.

Please don't completely dismiss the stage directions. Many are actions—actions that are of equal importance to what is spoken.

### On the people:

The people of *Almost, Maine*, are rural Americans. They're not hicks. They're not quaint, quirky eccentrics. They don't wear funny clothes and funny hats. They don't have funny Maine accents. They are not "Downeasters." They are not fishermen or lobster men. They don't wear galoshes and rain hats. They don't say, "Ayuh."

The people of *Almost, Maine*, are not cuddly and cute. They're hard-working, ordinary people. They're dignified. They're honest and true. They're not cynical. They're not sarcastic. They're not glib. But this does not mean that they're dumb. They're very smart. They just take time to wonder about things. They speak simply, honestly, truly, and from the heart. They are not precious about what they say or do.

The people of *Almost, Maine*, are dealing with a lot of the things that people who live in rural America deal with: poverty, unemployment, limited opportunity, addiction. So, there's a distinct sadness underlying the hope and joy in this play.

“...the sentimental person thinks things will last—the romantic person has a desperate confidence that they won't.”

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

Almost, Maine is for romantics—not sentimentalists.

# ALMOST, MAINE

## PROLOGUE

*Music. It is a cold, clear Friday night in the middle of winter in Almost, Maine. Lights up on Pete and Ginette sitting on a bench in Pete's yard, looking at the stars. They are not sitting close to each other at all. Pete is sitting on the stage right end of the bench; Ginette, on the stage left end of the bench. Music fades. Long, long, long beat of Pete and Ginette looking at the stars, occasionally looking at each other, and, often, of Ginette looking at Pete looking at the stars. Finally:*

GINETTE. Pete, I—...

*Beat. She wants to tell Pete she loves him, but can't quite do it.*

PETE. What?

GINETTE. I just—am having a nice time, Pete.

PETE. I'm glad, Ginette.

GINETTE. I always do with you.

PETE. I'm glad.

*Pete and Ginette enjoy this moment together. There's nothing else to say, so...they look back up at the sky.*

GINETTE. (*Still can't say what she really wants to say.*) And the stars are just [awesome]—...! I didn't know you knew all that stuff! //

After all this time, I didn't know you knew all that!

PETE. Well, it's not [like I know that much about 'em]—... It's just some stuff my dad taught me...

*Beat. There's nothing else to say, so...they look back up at the sky.*

*Beat.*

GINETTE. (*Turning to Pete.*) Pete—...

PETE. (*Turning to Ginette, waiting for her to say what she has to say.*) Yeah?

GINETTE. I love you.

*Beat. Pete just stares at Ginette. Beat. He looks away from Ginette. Beat. And does not respond to Ginette. Beat. Ginette takes in Pete's non-response, deflates, and then looks away from him, trying to figure out what has happened. We now have two very uncomfortable people. Pete is dealing with what Ginette has just said to him; Ginette is dealing with Pete's response—or lack thereof—to what she has just said to him. Big...long...awful...silence. Finally, Pete breaks the silence with the truth.*

PETE. Well, I...love you, too.

GINETTE. Oh!!

*Huge relief. Pete and Ginette feel JOY. Ginette shivers a happy shiver.*

PETE. Oh, are you cold? // Wanna go inside?

GINETTE. No, no! No! I just wanna sit. Like this. Close.

*Pete and Ginette aren't close to each other at all—but maybe for them, it's close.*

I feel so close to you tonight.

*Little beat.*

It's nice to be close to you, Pete.

*She slides a little closer to him.*

It's safe.

*She slides a little closer to him.*

I like being close. Like this.

*Little beat.*

*I mean, I can think of other...ways...of being close to you (They enjoy this innuendo sweetly, truly.), but that's not—that's not [the kind of close I'm talking about right now]—... I like this right now. This kind of close. Right next to you.*

*Ginette gets even closer to him and leans right up against him, resting her head on his shoulder. Beat.*

You know, right now, I think I'm about as close to you as I can possibly be.

*Ginette is truly content. Beat.*

PETE. (Honestly discovering.) Well...not really.

GINETTE. What?

PETE. (Simply and truly figuring this out.) Not really. I mean, if you think about it in a different way, you're not really close to me at all. You're really actually about as far away from me as you can possibly be. I mean, if you think about it, technically—if you're assuming the world is round, like a ball—

*He gathers snow to make a snowball for a visual.*

—like a snowball—the farthest away you can be from somebody is if you're sitting right next to them. See, if I'm here

*Points out a place on the snowball facing them that represents him.*

and you're here

*Points out a place on the snowball facing them that represents her, and it's right next to him—practically the same place he just pointed to.*

then...

*Pete now demonstrates that if you go all the way around the world EQUATORIALITY [not pole to pole], that he and Ginette are actually as far away from each other as they can possibly be. Little beat.*

That's far.

*Ginette takes this in. And tries to figure out what Pete is saying.*

GINETTE. Yeah.

*Beat. Disheartened, Ginette moves away from Pete, sliding all the way back to the other end of the bench. She doesn't feel like being "close" anymore.*

*Pete realizes his musings on what it means to be close have not had the intended effect. In fact—they've had quite the opposite effect. So he tries to save the evening.*

PETE. But...now you're closer.

*This is true. Because Ginette actually is closer, according to Pete's explanation.*

GINETTE. (Puzzled.) Yeah.

*Ginette thinks, and then gets up and starts to leave. After she takes barely a step or two, Pete stops her with:*

PETE. And closer...

*Ginette stops. She turns and looks at Pete, then turns back and starts to leave, but, as she takes a couple steps away from him, Pete interrupts her with:*

And closer and closer...

*Ginette stops again. She turns and looks at Pete, then turns back, and starts to leave again, but, as she takes a few steps away from him, Pete again interrupts her with:*

And closer and closer and closer...

*Ginette stops. She turns and looks at Pete again. She is trying to figure out what's going on, what Pete is saying. She looks at Pete; she looks off left; she looks at Pete again; she looks off left again. And then... Ginette leaves, taking step after step. With every single step she takes, Pete calls to her, with great hope.*

...and closer and closer and closer...

*Eventually, Ginette is gone, exiting stage left, with Pete still calling "...and closer," with every single step she takes. Unforti- nately, with every step she takes, Ginette is getting farther and farther away from Pete. This is not quite what Pete intended, and his "closer's" trail off. Beat. Pete looks at his snowball. He looks back to where Ginette has exited. What has he done?*

*Transition:*

*Option 1: Lights fade on Pete sitting on the bench.*

*Option 2: Pete rises and takes a few uncertain steps towards where Ginette is headed, looking to see where she went. He stops. He looks at his snowball.*

*Music. Lights fade. And we begin.*

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1: Her Heart

*A woman is standing in an open field in Almost, Maine, looking up at the sky. Music fades. The woman is clutching a small brown paper bag to her chest. From quite a distance, we hear a door open and close. Long, long beat. A man enters from where we think we heard the door open and close. He is wearing a big warm coat over plaid pajamas and untied boots. He watches the woman for a good long while as he tries to figure out what she's doing and how he might engage with her.*

MAN. Hello.

WOMAN. (Turns to the man.) Hello.

*She resumes looking up at the sky. Little beat.*

MAN. I thought I saw someone.

*Little beat.*

I was about to go to bed. I saw you from my window...

*Little beat.*

Can I [help you]—? ...Is there somethin' I can do for you?

WOMAN. (Turns to the man.) Oh, no. I'm just here to see the northern lights.

*She resumes looking up at the sky.*

MAN. (Takes this in.) Okay. Okay. It's just—it's awful late and you're in my yard.

WOMAN. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know I was in anybody's yard. >

MAN. Well, [you are, but it's okay]—

WOMAN. I thought I was just in a random field.

MAN. Well, it used to be a potato field, but now it's my yard.

WOMAN. Oh, well, you have a really big yard.

MAN. I guess.

*Little bear.*

WOMAN. Well, I hope you don't mind that I'm here. I'll only be here tonight. I'll see them tonight—the northern lights—and then I'll be gone. I hope you don't m/!nd!

MAN. (*Looking out.*) Is that your tent?

*The tent is somewhere out in front of the man and the woman and not onstage.*

WOMAN. Yes.

MAN. You've pitched a tent... >

WOMAN. So I have a place to sleep >

MAN. in my yard...

WOMAN. after I see them—I didn't know I was in somebody's yard—I hope you don't mind.

MAN. Well, it's not that I [mind]—

WOMAN. Do you mind?

MAN. Well, I don't know if [I mind, exactly]—

WOMAN. Oh, no, I think you mind!

MAN. No, it's not that I mind—

WOMAN. No, you do! Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't think you would! I didn't think—. You see, it says in your brochure >

MAN. My brochure?

WOMAN. that people from Maine wouldn't mind. It says (*Producing a brochure about Maine tourism.*) that people from Maine are different, that they live life "the way life should be."<sup>1</sup> And that, "in the tradition of their brethren in rural northern climes, like Scandinavia," they'll let people who are complete strangers—like cross-country skiers and bikers and hikers—camp out in their yard, if they need to, for nothing. They'll just let you, I'm a hiker. Is it true? >

MAN. Well, [I guess, but]—

WOMAN. That they'll just let you stay in their yards if you need to? Cause I need to. Camp out. Cause I'm where I need to be. This is

<sup>1</sup> If you ever travel to Maine by car on Interstate 95, you will be greeted by a sign erected by the Maine Office of Tourism that reads, "Maine: The Way Life Should Be."

the farthest I've ever traveled: I'm from a part of the country that's a little closer to things—[I've] never been this far north before, or east, and did you know that Maine is the only state in the country that's attached to only one other state?!

MAN. Um—

WOMAN. It is! (*Taking in the big sky and all the wide open space.*) Feels like the end of the world, and here I am at the end of the world, and I have nowhere to go, so I was counting on staying here—unless it's not true, I mean, is it true? >

MAN. Well [I don't know]—

WOMAN. Would you let a hiker who was where she needed to be just camp out in your yard for free? >

MAN. Well [I don't know]—

WOMAN. I mean, if a person really needed to? >

MAN. Well [I don't know]—

WOMAN. Really really needed to?

MAN. Well, if a person really needed to, sure, // but—

WOMAN. (*Rushing and hugging the man.*) Oh, I'm so glad, then!! Thank you!!

*As the woman hugs the man, the brown paper bag she has been holding gets squished between their bodies. The woman is surprised by all of the feelings she is suddenly feeling for the man. The man doesn't quite participate in the hug, but is surprised by all the feelings he is suddenly feeling for the woman. The woman realizes that she doesn't know the man well enough to be hugging him. Or to be feeling so many feelings for him. Overwhelmed, she releases the man from the hug.*

Oh—sorry about that.

*She faces the man, who is now holding the woman's bag. The exchange of the bag should be almost imperceptible to both the woman and the man—and to the audience. The woman doesn't know that the man now has the bag. The man doesn't really know he has it either.*

Sorry.

MAN. It's okay.

Hello...East.

*Music resumes. East looks at Glory...and then he takes out more pieces of her heart so he can begin repairing it. More northern lights. Transition into Scene 2...*

### Scene 2: Sad and Glad

*A man sits alone at a table in a back corner of Almost, Maine's local hangout, the Moose Paddy. He is nursing a couple of Buds. Music fades. Sandrine enters. She is coming from the ladies' room, cheerily heading back to her friends who are up front. She passes Jimmy. Jimmy sees Sandrine and calls to her, stopping her.*

JIMMY. Sandrine!

SANDRINE. Hm?

*Beat. This is a bit awkward—awful, actually. Sandrine suddenly smiles and tries to make the best of the awfulness.*

Jimmy!

JIMMY. (A little too excited.) Hey!

SANDRINE. Hey!

JIMMY. Hey!!

SANDRINE. Hey!!

*Jimmy bear hugs Sandrine. Sandrine doesn't really take the hug or hug him back.*

JIMMY and SANDRINE. Heyyyyy!!!

JIMMY. How you doin'??

SANDRINE. Doin' pretty good! How are you doin'??

JIMMY. I'm doin' good, doin' good! How are you doin'??

SANDRINE. I'm good, doin' good, great! How are you?

JIMMY. Great, great! How are ya?

SANDRINE. Great, // great!

JIMMY. Oh, that's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. You look great!

SANDRINE. Oh, no—

JIMMY. You look great.

SANDRINE. Than//ks.

JIMMY. You do. You look so great.

SANDRINE. Thanks, // Jimmy.

JIMMY. So pretty. So pretty.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

*Awful, uncomfortable beat. Then, a little too cheerfully:*

JIMMY. Here, have a seat!

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy, I can't—

JIMMY. Aw, come on, I haven't seen you in...well, *months*.

SANDRINE. Yeah—

JIMMY. And months and months and months and months and months and months and *months*, how does that happen? Live in the same town as someone and never see 'em?

SANDRINE. I don't know.

JIMMY. I mean, I haven't seen you since that night before that morning when I woke up and you were just gone.

SANDRINE. Yeah, I, uh...—

WAITRESS. (*Blasting in. The waitress is in constant motion and disappears as quickly as she appears.*) Look at you two, tucked away in the corner over here! Lucky I found ya! (*Referring to Jimmy's couple of Buds.*) Is the man and his lovely lady ready for another round?

JIMMY. Sure, we'll [have a coupla beers]—

SANDRINE. No! We're not together.

JIMMY. Well [we used to be]—

SANDRINE. We're all set, thanks.

JIMMY. Well [don't you want a drink?]—

SANDRINE. All set!

JIMMY. Okay—yeah, we're good.

WAITRESS. Okay.

*She takes in the weird dynamic, then starts to go.*

Well, holler if you need anything.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

WAITRESS. (Stopping.) No really—you gotta holler. It's busy up front!

*And she's leaving.*

SANDRINE. (To the waitress.) Okay.

JIMMY. (To the waitress.) Okay.

WAITRESS. (On her way out.) Okay!

*Beat.*

JIMMY. (Fishing.) So, um...ya here with anybody, or—?

SANDRINE. Yeah—um...the girls.

JIMMY. Oh.

SANDRINE. We're, uh—... (Covering.) Girls' night! We're in the front.

*She starts to go.*

Actually, I just had to use the ladies' room, so I should get back to // them.

JIMMY. (Stopping her.) Aw, but I haven't seen ya! They'll survive without ya for a minute or two! So, what's been—here— (Offering her a seat.)—what's been goin' on, whatcha been up to?

SANDRINE. (Giving in, sitting.) Well—

JIMMY. Did you know that I took over my dad's business?

SANDRINE. Yeah, that's great!

JIMMY. I run it now! >

SANDRINE. I heard that.

JIMMY. I'm rummin' it! >

SANDRINE. Heard that.

JIMMY. Rummin' the business! >

SANDRINE. Congratula >

JIMMY. Rummin' the whole show, >

SANDRINE. tions!, Good for you!, Good for you.

JIMMY. the whole shebang—thanks—yeah. We still do heating and cooling, >

SANDRINE. Yeah?

JIMMY. and we've expanded, too: We do rugs now. We shampoo 'em.

SANDRINE. Oh.

JIMMY. It's a lotta work. A lotta work. I'm on call a lot: weekends, holidays, you name it, 'cause, you know, your heat goes, people die, it's serious.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Yeah. Like, I do Thanksgiving, Christmas, 'cause I let the guys who work for me, like, East helps with repairs sometimes, I let 'em have the day off so they can be with their families since I'm all alone this year.

SANDRINE. Oh.

JIMMY. Yeah. (Driving the point home.) I really don't have anybody anymore, really. My brother and sister got canned, so they left town. >

SANDRINE. Right...

JIMMY. And Mom and Dad retired, headed south.

SANDRINE. Yeah, I heard that.

JIMMY. Vermont.

SANDRINE. Oh.

JIMMY. Yeah, winters there are a lot easier. And then—I don't know if you heard, but...then Spot went and died on me.

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy, I didn't know that!

JIMMY. Yeah. He was old, it was his time. He was a good fish, though. (Seriously sad about Spot, trying to recover.) But, so, like I said, I really don't have anybody anymore, really...but, so, um, I was wonderin'—would you like to come over? It'd be fun! Catch up, hang out...?

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy [I really can't]—

WAITRESS. (Blasting in.) And I forgot to tell ya—don't forget: Friday

night special at the Moose Paddy: Drink free if you're sad. So, if you're sad, or if you two little lovebirds are ready for another coupla Buds or somethin', you just let me know, all right?

SANDRINE. No, we're [not together]—

JIMMY. Okay!

WAITRESS. Okay!

*And she's gone*

SANDRINE. (Helplessly.) Okay...

JIMMY. So whatta you say? Wanna come on over for fun?

SANDRINE. No, Jimmy. I can't. I can't. (Getting up to leave.) I really gotta get back with the girls.

JIMMY. Naw—

SANDRINE. (Forceful but kind.) Yeah, Jimmy, yeah. I gotta. Cause, see...oh, gosh, I've been meanin' to tell you this for a while: There's a guy, Jimmy. I've got a guy.

JIMMY. (Huge blow. But he's tough.) Oh.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Well...good for you. Gettin' yourself out there again.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Movin' on.

SANDRINE. Yeah, well, actually, Jimmy, it's more than me just gettin' myself out there and movin' on. Um...this is my...bachelorette party.

*Beat. Then, off his blank look:*

I'm gettin' married.

JIMMY. (Huger blow.) Oh.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

END

JIMMY. Wow, that's—...

*He's devastated.*

I thought you said you weren't gonna do that. Get married. Thought it wasn't for you, you told me.

*Little beat.*

Guess it just wasn't for you with me.

*Beat.*

So, who's...who's the lucky guy?

SANDRINE. Martin Laferriere? You know him? The // [forest ranger]—

JIMMY. Yeah, the ranger guy, over in Ashland!

SANDRINE. Yeah!

JIMMY. Wow!

SANDRINE. Yeah!

JIMMY. He's a legend! Legendary. I mean, if you're lost on a mountain in Maine, he's the guy you want lookin' for ya!

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. I mean, if you're lost out there in this big bad northern world, Martin Laferriere's the guy you want to have go out there and find ya!

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. And he...found you.

SANDRINE. Yeah. I'm sorry I never told you—I actually thought you woulda known, I thought you woulda heard.

JIMMY. How would I have heard?

SANDRINE. Well, you know...people talk.

JIMMY. Not about things they know you don't wanna hear, they don't. And I gotta be honest with you: That's not somethin' I woulda wanted to hear.

*Beat.*

So...when's the big event?

SANDRINE. Um...tomorrow!

JIMMY. Really.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced "la-FAIR-ee-AIR."



WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See?

*He hits his head again.*

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. Go ahead.

*He offers her the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book so she can hit him with it.*

WOMAN. No!

MAN. Come on!

WOMAN. No!!

MAN. Come on!!

WOMAN. NO!!!

MAN. Okay. You don't have to. Most people don't. Hit me. Most people just go away. You can go away, too, if you want to. That's what most people do when I tell them about myself. My brother Rob says I just shouldn't tell people about myself, because I scare them, so I've actually recently put "myself" on my list of things to be afraid of, see?

*He looks for "myself" in his THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF book.*

But [I'm not sure he knows I did that]—

*Her curiosity getting the better of her, the woman has come up from behind the man and suddenly wallops him on the back of the head with the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book.*

WOMAN. Oh, my gosh! I'm sorry! // Oh, my gosh! I just clocked you! >

MAN. You hit me! Most people go away, but you hit me!

WOMAN. I had to see [if it really would hurt you]! But—are you okay?

MAN. Yeah, I don't feel // pain!

WOMAN. ... Don't feel pain, right, of course you're okay! But—are you sure?

MAN. Well, is there any blood?

# Things That Can Hurt

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

WOMAN. Well, buddy, you can be hurt and not even look like it.

MAN. But—

WOMAN. Trust me. There are things that hurt you that make you bruised and bloody, and there are things that hurt you that don't make you bruised and bloody and... they all hurt.

*Beat. She gives the man back the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book.*

I'm—my name's Marvalyn.

MAN. Hi, Marvalyn. I'm Steve.

MARVALYN. Hi, Steve. I just moved in, so I don't know many people here. What room are you [in]?

STEVE. Room 3, second floor.

MARVALYN. Oh. We're on the third floor. Room 7.

STEVE. Yeah, right above us. We saw you and your husband move in.

MARVALYN. Oh, he's not my husband. He's just my boyfriend. Eric.

STEVE. Oh.

MARVALYN. Yeah, our roof collapsed from all the snow in December. We're just here till we can get our feet back on the ground.

STEVE. Oh. Well, that's good, 'cause that's what Ma Dudley says her boarding house is. A place where people can live until they get their feet back on the ground. My brother Rob says we've been trying to get our feet back on the ground our whole lives.

MARVALYN. Oh.

STEVE. Yeah, it takes some people longer to do that than others.

MARVALYN. Yeah.

*Beat. Marvalyn goes to get her stuff together so she can go.*

STEVE. You guys are loud.

MARVALYN. Huh?

STEVE. You and Eric. You yell and bang. We're right below you.

MARVALYN. Oh. Sorry about that. We're goin' through a rough patch. Happens. Sorry.

*Beat. Marvalyn starts to gather her stuff to go, but then stops.*

What's it like?

STEVE. What's what like?

MARVALYN. To not feel pain.

STEVE. I don't know. I don't know what it's like to hurt, so... I don't know.

MARVALYN. Is this... how you were born?

STEVE. Yeah. I don't have fully developed pain sensors. They're immature, my brother Rob says //, and because they're immature—

MARVALYN. How does he know that?

STEVE. Oh, he *reads*, >

MARVALYN. But—

STEVE. and because they're immature, my development as a human being has been retarded, he says, >

MARVALYN. But—

STEVE. but he teaches me what hurts, though.

MARVALYN. Why??

STEVE. So I won't ruin myself. I have to know what hurts, so I know when to be afraid. See, my mind can't tell me when to be afraid, 'cause my body doesn't know what being hurt is, so I have to memorize what might hurt.

MARVALYN. Okay. [Makes sense.]

STEVE. And I have to memorize what to be afraid of.

*Steve shows Marvalyn items in his THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF book.*

Things like bears. And... guns and knives. And fire. And fear—I should fear fear itself. And pretty girls.

MARVALYN. Pretty girls?

STEVE. *(Realizes Marvalyn is pretty.)* Yeah.

MARVALYN. Why should you be afraid of pretty girls?

STEVE. Well, 'cause my brother Rob says they can hurt you, 'cause

they make you love them. >

MARVALYN. What?!

STEVE. And that's something I'm supposed to be afraid of, too—love—but Rob says that I'm really lucky, 'cause I'll probably never have to deal with love, because I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities as a result of the congenital analgesia.

MARVALYN. Wait, what do you mean you're never gonna have to deal with love //, why—

STEVE. 'Cause I'm never gonna know what it feels like. Rob says.

MARVALYN. Well, how does he know that?

STEVE. 'Cause it hurts.

MARVALYN. It shouldn't.

STEVE. And, plus, I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities.

MARVALYN. You know what, a lot of people do.

*And suddenly Marvalyn is kissing Steve. At first it's just her kissing him, but, eventually, Steve participates. When he does, Marvalyn breaks away.*

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Are you all right? Are you okay?

*Steve doesn't quite know how to respond. He hasn't learned about this. Then, maybe feeling his lips, and resorting to his usual way of answering this question:*

STEVE. Well... is there any blood?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Any discoloration?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Then I'm all right. [I think.]

MARVALYN. Yeah. You are.

*Little beat.*

I'm so sorry I did that. It's just—... You're just... very sweet.

STEVE. *(Trying to make sense of what just happened.)* But... you have a boyfriend.

MARVALYN. *(Begins gathering her stuff.)* Yes, I // do.

Scene 4: Getting It Back

*Music fades. We are in the living room of a small home in Almost, Maine. A man, Lendall, is asleep in his chair. Before he fell asleep, he was watching the Boston Bruins play the Montreal Canadiens on Hockey Night in Canada on the Canadian Broadcasting Company. We hear someone—Gayle—pounding on a door.*

**Stop**

GAYLE. (From off.) Lendall!

*We hear the door Gayle has been pounding on open and slam shut.*

Lendall! >

*Gayle barges in. Lendall is startled awake, but he's groggy.*

LENDALL. Huh?

GAYLE. Lendall!!!

*Gayle grabs the remote, turns off the TV, and chucks the remote at Lendall to help him wake up.*

Hey! I need to talk to you!

LENDALL. Okay. (Trying to be alert.) What's up? You okay? I thought you weren't comin' over tonight 'cause of Sandrine's bachelorette // party thing.

GAYLE. Lendall:

*Gayle paces and seethes. It's clear she has something to say. But she can't quite say it yet.*

*Lendall is now up and out of the chair, concerned. He goes to Gayle.*

LENDALL. Hey—you okay?

GAYLE. (Shutting Lendall up and stopping him from approaching.)

Shhh!

*She stills herself.*

Lendall:

*She steels herself.*

I want it back.

LENDALL. [What are you talking about?] Huh?  
GAYLE. I want it back.

LENDALL. What [do you want back]?

GAYLE. All the love I gave to you?, I want it back.

LENDALL. (Trying to understand what Gayle is talking about.) What???

GAYLE. Now.

LENDALL. I [don't understand]—... I don't under//stand—

GAYLE. I've got yours in the car.

LENDALL. (Completely confused.) What???

GAYLE. All the love you gave to me?, I've got it in the car.

LENDALL. What are you talkin' about?

GAYLE. I don't want it anymore.

LENDALL. What [do you mean you don't want it anymore]?

GAYLE. I've made a decision: We're done.

LENDALL. What?!!

GAYLE. We're done. I've decided. And, so, I've brought all the love you gave to me back to you. It's the right thing to do.

LENDALL. (Completely bewildered.) Um, I [really don't understand what you're talkin' about]—

GAYLE. It's in the car.

LENDALL. You said.

*Beat. Lendall is completely baffled.*

GAYLE. (Frustrated that Lendall is not doing what she's asked him to do.) I can get it for you, or...you can get it.

LENDALL. Well, I don't want it back.

GAYLE. Well, I don't want it! What am I supposed to do with all of it, now that I don't want it?

LENDALL. Well, I don't know!

GAYLE. Well, under the circumstances, // it doesn't seem right for me to keep it, so I'm gonna give it back.

*She leaves.*

LENDALL. Under what circumstances? (Calling to her.) Gayle, what

are [you talking about]—? I don't understand what [you're talking about]—... What are you doing?

GAYLE. (*From off.*) I told you. I'm getting all the love you gave to me, and I'm giving it back to you.

LENDALL. (*Calling to her.*) Well, I'm not sure I want it—whoa! Need help?

GAYLE. Nope. I got it. It's not heavy.

*She returns with an enormous bunch of HUGE bags full of love. The bags should be filled with quilt batting and/or foam or pillow stuffing. She dumps the bags on the floor.*

Here you go.

LENDALL. (*Truly puzzled, referring to the bags of love.*) And this is...?

GAYLE. (*Exiting.*) All the love you gave me, yeah.

LENDALL. Wow.

*Beat.*

That's a lot.

GAYLE. (*Returning with more bags of love.*) Yeah. (*Exiting to get more love.*)

LENDALL. Whole lot.

GAYLE. (*From off.*) Yeah.

*She returns with even more bags of love. There is now an ENORMOUS pile of love in Lendall's living room.*

LENDALL. Wow. What the heck am I gonna do with all this? I mean...I don't know if I have room.

GAYLE. (*Upset.*) Well, I guess you'll have to find a place for it, won't you?

*They look at all the love. Gayle collects herself.*

And now, I think it's only fair for you to give me mine back because... I want it back.

*Little beat.*

All the love I gave to you?

LENDALL. Yeah?

GAYLE. I want it back.

*Little beat.*

So go get it.

*Little beat. Lendall doesn't move, because he's trying to figure out what is happening and why it's happening.*

Lendall, go get it.

*Lendall still doesn't move.*

Please.

*Lendall still doesn't move.*

Now!!!

LENDALL. (*Shaken and completely at a loss as to what to do.*) Okay.

*Lendall exits. Gayle sits in the chair and waits. She's upset. Long beat. Eventually, Lendall returns... with a teeny-tiny little bag—a little red pouch—and places it on an end table next to the chair. They look at the little bag, which should be between Lendall and Gayle. And Gayle should be between the many bags of love and the little bag of love.*

GAYLE. What is that?

*It's obvious to Lendall—it's exactly what she asked for.*

LENDALL. It's all the love you gave me.

GAYLE. That's [not all the love I gave you]—...? That is not [all the love I gave you]—. There is no way [that is all the love I gave you]—... That is not [the love I gave you]—. (*Mortified.*) Is that all I gave you?

LENDALL. Yeah.

GAYLE. Oh. (*Taking in the little bag...and then all the big bags.*) Okay.

LENDALL. Why don't you open it, and [see what's inside]—?

*Gayle starts crying. Lendall goes to comfort her.*

Hey, hey—what's goin' on?

GAYLE. (*Resisting and rejecting Lendall's comfort.*) I told you: We're done.

LENDALL. Why do you keep sayin' that?

GAYLE. Because— (*This is hard to say, but it has to be said.*) Because when I asked you if you ever thought we were gonna get married—

When the intermission is over, the Interlogue continues. Pete sits in silence, looking off to where Ginette exited, occasionally looking at his snowball, and always pondering the consequences of sharing his theory of what it means to be “close” with Ginette.

After some time, he gets up and slowly moves toward where Ginette exited in the Prologue.

Music. Transition. Pete fades from view, and we begin...

## ACT TWO

### Scene 5: They Fell (Male Version)<sup>6</sup>

*Randy and Chad—two “County Boys”—appear. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. These guys are one hundred percent “guy.” They’re probably drinkin’ some beers—Natural Light if you can find it. Music fades. They’re in mid-conversation.*

CHAD. I believe you, I’m just sayin’—

RANDY. It was bad, Chad. Bad!

CHAD. I hear ya, b//ut—

RANDY. But you’re not listenin’, // Chad: It was bad! >

CHAD. No, you’re not listenin’, ‘cause >

RANDY. Real bad!

CHAD. (Topping Randy.) I’m tryin’ to tell you that I had a pretty bad time myself!!!

RANDY. (Taking this in; then.) No. There’s no way it was // worse than mine!

CHAD. (Topping Randy again.) It was pretty bad, Randy.

RANDY. Really.

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Okay: Go. [Let’s hear it.]

CHAD. (This is a little painful.) She—... She said she didn’t like the way I smelled.

6 In the original published version of *Almost, Maine*, “They Fell” is a scene for two men. Transport Group’s 2014 revival of *Almost, Maine* was the first to present the male and female versions of “They Fell” in rotating rep. The female version of “They Fell” immediately follows the male version, and should be presented in rotating rep with the male version of the scene.

7 A “County Boy” is a man who grew up in Aroostook (uh-ROO-stick) County, the northernmost county in Maine and the largest county east of the Rocky Mountains. To be a County Boy is a source of pride.

RANDY. What?

CHAD. Sally told me she didn't like the way I smelled. Never has.

RANDY. (*Taking this in.*) Sally Dunleavy<sup>8</sup> told you that she didn't // like the way [you smelled]—...?

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. When?

CHAD. When I picked her up. She got in the truck, we're backin' outta her driveway, and all of a sudden, she starts breathin' hard and asks me to stop, and she got outta the truck and said she was sorry, but she couldn't go out with me, because she didn't like the way I smelled, never had! >

RANDY. What?!

CHAD. Said she thought she was gonna be able to overlook it—the way that I smelled—but that that wasn't gonna be possible after all, and she slammed the door on me and left me sittin' right there in her driveway.

RANDY. (*Taking this in.*) 'Cause she didn't like the way you smelled?

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Well what kinda—...?

*Little beat.*

I don't mind the way you smell.

CHAD. Thanks.

RANDY. Jeez.

CHAD. Yeah...

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

RANDY. More than bad, Chad. That's sad.

CHAD. Yeah.

*Little beat.*

So, I'm guessin' I'm the big winner tonight, huh? So... I get to pick tomorrow, and I pick bowlin'. We'll go bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, and just hang out.

<sup>8</sup> Pronounced, "DUN-luv-ee."

*Little beat.*

RANDY. I didn't say you're the big winner.

CHAD. What?

RANDY. Did I say you're the big winner?

CHAD. No, but [there's no way you can beat bein' told you smell bad]—

RANDY. No. All that's pretty sad, Chad, and bad, but you didn't win.

CHAD. What do you mean?

RANDY. You didn't win.

CHAD. You can beat bein' told you smelled bad?

RANDY. Yeah.

CHAD. Well, then... [Let's hear it.]

RANDY. (*This is tough to share.*) Mine's face broke.

CHAD. What?

RANDY. Her face broke.

CHAD. (*Trying to comprehend.*) Her [face broke]—...?

RANDY. Yeah. Only get one chance with a girl like Yvonne LaFrance,<sup>9</sup> and her face broke.

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

*Little beat.*

CHAD. How did her face break?

RANDY. When we were dancin'.

CHAD. *Dancin'?*

*These guys don't dance.*

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. (*Mocking Randy.*) Why were you *dancin'*?!

RANDY. (*Quashing the mockery.*) 'Cause that's what she wanted to do! On our date. So I took her. Took her dancin' down to the Rec Center. You pay, then you get a lesson, then you dance all night. They teach "together dancing"—how to dance together—and we learned

<sup>9</sup> Pronounced, "ee-VON-la-FRANTZ." LaFrance rhymes with "ants."

that thing where you throw the girl up and over and, Yvonne—well, she's pretty small... and I'm pretty strong. And I threw her up and over and, well... I threw her...over...over.

*Little beat.*

And she landed on her face.

*Little beat.*

And it broke.

*Beat.*

Had to take her to the emergency room.

*Long beat. Then, finally:*

CHAD. That's a drive.

RANDY. Thirty-eight miles.

CHAD. Yup.

RANDY. (*Disgusted.*) And she cried!

CHAD. (*Also disgusted.*) [I] hate that.

RANDY. [The] whole way!

*Little beat.*

*Then* asked me to call her old boyfriend to come get her!

CHAD. Oh, no.

RANDY. He did! Asked me to "please leave."

*Little beat.*

He's [as] small as she is.

*They laugh. Beat. Chad laughs.*

What?

CHAD. That's just—pretty bad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. And sad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. So... I guess you win.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. That right there might make you the big winner of all time!

RANDY. Yup!

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CHAD. "Baddest-date-guy" of all time!

RANDY. Yup!

CHAD. Congratulations!

RANDY. Thank you!

*Little beat.*

CHAD. So what do you pick tomorrow?

RANDY. Bowling; supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

CHAD. Good.

*They drink their beers simultaneously. Little beat. Chad laughs.*

RANDY. What?

CHAD. I don't know. Just sometimes... I don't know why I bother goin' "out." I don't like it, Randy. I hate it. I hate goin' out on these dates. I mean, why do I wanna spend my Friday night with some girl I might *maybe* like, when I could be spendin' it hangin' out with someone I *know* I like, like you, you know?

RANDY. Yeah.

CHAD. I mean... that was rough tonight. In the middle of Sally tellin' me how she didn't like the way I smelled... I got real sad, >

RANDY. Aw, buddy...

CHAD. and all I could think about was how not much in this world makes me feel good or makes much sense anymore, and I got really scared, 'cause there's gotta be something that makes you feel good or at least makes sense in this world, or what's the point, right? >

RANDY. Yeah.

CHAD. But then I kinda came out of bein' sad and actually felt okay, 'cause I realized that there is one thing in this world that makes me feel really good and that *does* make sense, and it's you.

*Chad is surprised—and mortified—by the string of words that just came tumbling out of his mouth. Everything stops. Chad isn't quite sure what he has just said. Randy isn't quite sure what he has just heard. Long, long beat of these guys sorting out what Chad just said and what Randy just heard.*

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messed with it! And you don't do that!

*He starts to go but stops—he's not done yet.*

'Cause, you know somethin'? You're about the only thing that feels really good and makes sense in this world to me, too, and then you go and foul it up, by doin' this [falling down] and tellin' me that [that you've fallen in love with me], and now it just doesn't make any sense at all! And it doesn't feel good!

*He starts to go again but stops—he's still not done yet.*

You've done a real number on a good thing, here, buddy, 'cause we're friends, and there's a line when you're friends that you can't cross! And you crossed it!

*And then, Randy, who should be on the opposite side of the stage from Chad—far away from him—meets Chad's eyes and falls down, crumpling to the ground.*

*Beat. Randy and Chad look at each other from the ground. A moment of realization. This is about as scary—and wonderful—as it gets.*

*Problem: The guys are far away from each other, and all they want to do is get TO each other, so they stand up so they can make their way to one another. When they are upright, they look to each other, but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again. After a little beat of utter confusion, they scramble to get up again and look to each other again, but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again.*

*They desperately want to get to each other, so—in a bit of a frenzy, to try to "beat" the falls—they get up, but as soon as their eyes meet, they fall down. After a little beat, they get up again, their eyes meet again, and they fall down again. Frustrated and bewildered, they get up, and their eyes meet, and they fall down; they get up/their eyes meet/they fall down; they get up/their eyes meet/they fall down; they meet/they fall down; they get up/their eyes meet/they fall down; they get up/their eyes meet/they fall down.*

*Finally, the falling frenzy settles... and Randy and Chad are no closer to one another than they were when they started. They just look at each other. It's all scary and thrilling and unknown.*

*Music: The northern lights appear. Transition into Scene 6...*

**Scene 5: They Fell (Female Version)**

*Shelly*

*Deena and Shelly—two "County Girls"<sup>10</sup>—appear. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. They're probably drinkin' some beers—Natural Light if you can find it. Music fades. They're in mid-conversation.*

*Possible scene change*

SHELLY. I believe you, Deen, I'm just sayin'—

DEENA. It was bad, Shell. Bad.

SHELLY. I hear ya, b//ut—

DEENA. But you're not listenin', // Shelly: It was bad! >

SHELLY. No, you're not listenin', 'cause >

DEENA. Real bad, historical-bad!

SHELLY. (Topping Deena.) I'm tryin' to tell you that I had a pretty bad time myself!!!

DEENA. (Taking this in; then.) No. There's no way!—

SHELLY. It was pretty bad, Deena.

DEENA. Really.

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. Okay: Go. [Let's hear it.]

SHELLY. (This is a little painful.) He—... He said he didn't like the way I smelled.

DEENA. What?!

SHELLY. Todd told me he didn't like the way I smelled. Never has.

DEENA. (Takes this in.) Todd Dunleavy<sup>11</sup> told you that he didn't // like the way [you smelled]—...?

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. When?

SHELLY. When he picked me up. I got in his truck—we were backin'

<sup>10</sup> A "County Girl" is a woman who grew up in Aroostook (uh-ROO-stick) County. To be a County Girl is a source of pride.

<sup>11</sup> Pronounced, "DUN-liv-ee."



outta my driveway—and all of a sudden, he starts breathin' hard—hyper-hyper—(Searches for but can't find "ventilating?") // breathin'—

DEENA. (Finds the word *Shelly can't*.) -ventilating.

SHELLY. -ventilating, yeah, and he stops and he gets outta the truck and says he's sorry, but he can't go out with me 'cause he doesn't like the way I smell, never has!

DEENA. What, never has? When has he smelled you before?

SHELLY. I don't know, *around* [town or whatever]?

DEENA. Well, jeez!

SHELLY. Anyway, he said he thought he was gonna be able to overlook it—the way that I smelled—but that that wasn't gonna be possible after all, because he couldn't breathe, somethin' about allergic, >

DEENA. Allergic?

SHELLY. and he said it wasn't *me*—it wasn't *me!*—it was somethin' about "the women" and "the // lengths" we go to—

DEENA. What?, "The women"?!?

SHELLY. Yeah, and "the lengths" we go to to // smell nice, >

DEENA. "The lengths" we [go to to smell nice]—?!?

SHELLY. and he said that whatever it is I use to smell nice // just doesn't smell nice [to him]—

DEENA. Oh!, Like, *perfume!*

SHELLY. Yeah—just doesn't smell very nice to him, no offense, and he slammed the door on me and left me sittin' right there in my driveway. In his truck.

DEENA. (Taking this in.) 'Cause he didn't like the way you smelled?!?

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. Wait, you don't even use any kind of perfume, do you?

SHELLY. No! // No!

DEENA. Well, what the—?

*Little beat.*

I don't mind the way you smell. >

SHELLY. Thanks.

DEENA. Matter of fact, I think you smell great.

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SHELLY. Thanks.

*Little beat.*

Anyway, he said he'd come back and pick his truck up tomorrow and would I mind please rollin' down the windows for him to air it out overnight.

DEENA. What? There's nothin' to air out! >

SHELLY. I know!

DEENA. Todd has issues!

SHELLY. Yeah.

*Little beat. Suddenly Deena starts to leave, with purpose.*

What are you doin'?

DEENA. Doin' somethin' to his truck.

SHELLY. Deen!

DEENA. (Grabbing Shelly.) We're doin' somethin' to his truck. >

SHELLY. Deen—

DEENA. You're too nice! Time to get mean! We're doin' somethin' to his truck!

SHELLY. Deen! >

DEENA. We are!

SHELLY. We're not doin' nothin' to his truck! Relax!

DEENA. Jerk. He should be so lucky, gettin' to go out with you.

SHELLY. Nah.

DEENA. Yeah!

SHELLY. Anyway: Pretty bad, huh?

DEENA. Yeah. And a little sad, too.

SHELLY. Yeah.

*Little beat.*

So, I'm guessin' that I'm the big winner tonight, huh? And so I get to pick tomorrow, and I pick bowlin'. We'll go bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, couple of beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

*Little beat.*

DEENA. I didn't say you're the big winner.

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SHELLY. What?

DEENA. Did I say you're the big winner?

SHELLY. No, but [there's no way you can beat bein' told you smell bad]—

DEENA. No. All that's pretty sad, Shell, and bad, but you didn't win.

SHELLY. What do you mean?

DEENA. You didn't win.

SHELLY. You can beat being told that you smelled bad?

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Really.

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Well, then: [Let's hear it.]  
*She gives Deena the floor.*

DEENA. Mine's face broke.

SHELLY. (Takes this in.) What?

DEENA. His face broke.

SHELLY. (Trying to comprehend.) His [face broke]—...?

DEENA. Face broke, yeah.

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

*Beat.*

SHELLY. How did his...face break?

DEENA. When we were dancin'.

SHELLY. Dancin'? Darren LeMans<sup>12</sup> took you dancin'?!?

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Down to the Rec Center?!

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Oh, that's nice! // That's nice! >

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. What a good guy! >

12. Pronounced, "uh-MANZ." LeMans rhymes with the word "fans."

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. I wouldn't have expected that from him! Wish someone'd take me dancin', Musta been so fun!

DEENA. Yeah, [it] was. Till his face broke.

SHELLY. What happened?

DEENA. Well, we did that thing they have where you pay, you get a lesson, and then you dance all night. They teach "together dancing," how to dance together.

SHELLY. Aww, that's nice!, That's fun!

DEENA. Yeah, and we learned that thing where you throw the girl up and over and...well, Darren was havin' a hard time figuring out the move—how to do it—and it's so *easy*—and so I thought maybe it'd help him get his part if—once through—we switched, and I did his part, and he did mine...and, well, Darren's not a very big guy. I mean, he's little. Little, little man.

SHELLY. He is, isn't he?

DEENA. Yeah. Never realized it before. He sounds taller on the phone

SHELLY. He does!

DEENA. Yeah, so—anyway—we *switched* so I could show him how to do his part...and, well, I'm pretty strong, and...he's just *small*—

SHELLY. He really is, isn't he?

DEENA. Yeah—and I threw him up and over...and, well, I threw him *over*...over. And...he landed on his face.

*Little beat.*

And it broke.

*Little beat.*

Ocular—orbital—bone fracture.

SHELLY. Oh.

*Beat.*

DEENA. Had to take him to the emergency room.

*Long beat. Then, finally:*

SHELLY. That's a drive.

Scene 6: Where It Went

Start

*Phil and Marci appear as the music fades. They have just been ice skating on Echo Pond in Almost, Maine, and are in the process of taking their skates off and putting their boots/shoes back on. Phil has hockey skates; Marci has hockey skates or figure skates. When the dialogue begins, Marci has one shoe on and one skate on. Marci's shoe should be a winter shoe, not a boot. Beat.*

PHIL. It still feels like you're mad.

MARCI. (*Undoing her skate.*) I'm not mad, // I just said I wish >

PHIL. But you were, You are: >

MARCI. You'd pay more attention lately.

PHIL. You're mad.

MARCI. I'm not mad! I was having fun, I thought. I had fun tonight. Did you?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Good.

*She smiles at Phil as Phil undoes his skates and gets his boots on. Marci resumes undoing her skate but is puzzled by something. Beat.*

PHIL. (*Continuing his defense.*) I mean, I was late because Chad/Shelly<sup>13</sup> called me in to the mill. I had to work. I need the hours.

MARCI. (*Looking for something.*) I'm not mad at you, Phil, you had to work, // I get it.

PHIL. I did [have to work]!

MARCI. (*More actively looking for something.*) Phil, where's my shoe?

PHIL. What?

MARCI. Where's my shoe?, I can't find it.

PHIL. Well [where'd you put it when you took it off?]....

*Phil starts looking for Marci's shoe.*

It's gotta be here.

MARCI. Where is it?!

*They look for Marci's shoe. Marci stops looking and turns to Phil.*

Is this you being funny?

PHIL. N//o.

MARCI. 'Cause it's not funny. >

PHIL. I [never said it was]—

MARCI. It's cold out here!

PHIL. Well, you're the one that wanted to go skating!

MARCI. Phil!

PHIL. (*Frustrated and getting angry.*) We'll find it! It's gotta be here!  
*Little beat.*

MARCI. I'm not mad. I was never mad.

*Little beat.*

I was disappointed. But now I'm // done.

PHIL. Marce. [Let it go.]

MARCI. I had fun tonight! Skating! I thought it would be fun! >

PHIL. (*Lying.*) It was.

MARCI. Forget all the...stuff. Get us away from the kids, get us back to where we used to be. We went skating, first time you kissed me, you know, on a Friday night just like this one. 'Member? Right here...

*She touches Phil in some way—maybe rubs his back.*

Echo Pond.

PHIL. (*Struggling off Marci's touch.*) I know where we are, Where the heck is your shoe? Maybe it's [in the car]—. (*Going off to look for it.*) Maybe it's in the car. (*From off.*) Did you [put your skates on out here or in the car]—? Where'd you put your skates on, out here or in the car?

*We hear him open and close the doors of a minivan.*

MARCI. (*Sad that her husband just shrugged her off.*) I put them on with you. Right here.

*Beat. She looks to the sky for answers.*

PHIL. (*Returning.*) Well, it's // not in the car—

<sup>13</sup> Insert the appropriate name depending on which version of Scene 5 ("They Fall") was performed.

MARCI. (Sees a shooting star.) Oh-oh-oh!!! Sh-sh-sh! Shooting star!  
Shooting star!

*She closes her eyes and makes a wish.*

PHIL. (Looking for the shooting star.) What? Where?!, // Where?!

MARCI. (Eyes closed.) Shh!! I'm wishing, I'm wishing!

PHIL. (Searches the sky but sees nothing.) I missed it.

*Phil keeps searching the sky.*

MARCI. (Watches Phil search the sky.) Yeah, you did.

PHIL. What's that supposed to mean?

MARCI. (Resumes looking for her shoe.) Nohin'. It's just... not really all that surprising >

PHIL. What?

MARCI. that you didn't see it.

PHIL. What?

MARCI. The shooting star.

PHIL. Why?

MARCI. You don't pay attention, Phil.

*Little beat.*

PHIL. See, when you say things like that, I feel like you're still mad.

MARCI. I'm not.

PHIL. Marce [what's goin' on?]-

MARCI. I wasn't mad, (Frustrated about a lot more than her missing shoe.) WHERE is my shoe?!? Gosh, maybe it is in the car. (Going off to the car to look for her other shoe.) I mean, >

PHIL. It's not in the car.

MARCI. I have one shoe on already. (From off.) I know I didn't put my skates on in the car, 'cause the shoe I have on was out there. I changed out there, didn't I? With you? Phil?

*Phil doesn't answer. He's sad, trying to sort out what's going on with him and with his wife.*

(From off.) Phil? I put my shoes right next to yours after we put our skates on, but it's not...there... This is the weirdest thing. (Returning.) It's not in the car, I mean, I'm not gonna put one skate on in the car,

the other one on out here.

*She senses Phil's sadness.*

What's wrong?

PHIL. Huh? Oh. (Covering his sadness and lying a good lie.) I'm just...makin' a wish of my own. On a regular one.

MARCI. Oh.

PHIL. (A peace offering.) Wanna wish on it with me?

MARCI. Yeah. Yeah, that'd be nice. Which one?

PHIL. Umm... (Pointing.) ...see Hedgehog Mountain?

MARCI. Uh-huh.

PHIL. (Pointing to a star.) Straight up. Right above it.

MARCI. The bright one?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. (Pointing.) That one?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Right there?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Phil:

PHIL. Yeah?

MARCI. That's a planet.

PHIL. What?

MARCI. That's a planet. You're wishing on a planet.

PHIL. That's a [planet]-?

MARCI. Yeah

PHIL. Well, how do you know?

MARCI. and it's (Sings.) "...when you wish upon a star," not "...when you wish upon a planet // or Saturn—"

PHIL. I know, I know! How do you know?

MARCI. Said on the weather, Phil. Saturn's the brightest object in the sky this month. It'll be sitting right above Hedgehog Mountain over the next bunch of weeks. They've been sayin' it on the weather all week. And your wish is never gonna come true if you're wishing on a planet.

strong guy. Wrestled? Heavyweight? All-Eastern Maine? Strong? Do you know him? Played hockey, too?

*If the actor playing the man is not short or thin, but has lost his hair, try this: Do you know him? He played soccer—All-Eastern Maine—and he wrestled. Lotsa [crazy] hair. Fun guy! Do you know him?*

*If the actor playing the man is overweight, try these lines: Do you know him? He played soccer—All-Eastern Maine—and he ran cross country. Super fun guy, Do you know him?*

MAN. Well [as a matter of fact, I do]...

WOMAN. Oh, don't even answer that. That was [a horrible thing to ask]—. I know that's a horrible question to ask a person who lives in a small town, as if everybody in small towns knows everybody else. Argh! I can't believe I asked that. I don't live here anymore, but when I did, I hated it when people assumed I knew everybody in town just because it was small. It was worse than when they'd ask if we had "...plumbing way up there?"<sup>15</sup> cause, you know, people in small towns really don't know each other any better than they do in big towns, you know that? I mean, you know who you know, and you don't know who you don't know, just like anywhere else.

*Little beat.*

I'm so sorry to have bothered you. I was just so sure [I'd find him here]—. When his parents passed away, he kept the house, I heard. He lived here. He stayed here, I thought. He was one of the ones who stayed.

*Little beat.*

I didn't stay. I went away.

MAN. Most people do.

WOMAN. Yeah. And I guess he did too. I never thought he would. I guess I lost track. You gotta hold on to people or you lose 'em. Wish there was something you could keep 'em in for when you need 'em...

*Trying to make light, she "looks for Daniel Harding" and "finds him" in her purse.*

Oh, there he is, perfect!

# Stories of Hope

*She laughs. The man does not respond. Beat. She starts to go; stops.*

Boy it's cold. I forgot.

MAN. Yeah.

*Beat. The woman starts to go again.*

WOMAN. (Stopping.) I can't believe—... I took a taxi here. From Bangor.<sup>15</sup> To see him.

*Beat. This woman took a taxi one hundred and sixty-three miles.*

MAN. (Wryly understating.) That's far.

WOMAN. Yeah.

MAN. That's a hundred and sixty-three miles.

WOMAN. Yeah. This place is a little farther away from things than I remember.

MAN. Why did you do that?

WOMAN. Because I could only fly as close as Bangor, and I needed to get to him as fast as I could.

MAN. Why?

WOMAN. Because I want to answer a question he asked me.

MAN. Oh?

WOMAN. The last time I saw him, he asked me a very important question, and I didn't answer it, and that's just not a very nice thing to do to a person.

MAN. Well, that's bein' a little hard on yourself, don't you th//ink?

WOMAN. He asked me to marry him.

MAN. Oh.

*Little beat.*

And you...

WOMAN. Didn't answer him. No.

*The man whistles.*

Yeah. And that's why I'm here. To answer him.

<sup>15</sup> Pronounced "BANG-gore." Bangor is Maine's third-largest city; pop. 33,000.

*Beat. Then, realizing she probably ought to defend herself:*

I mean, I didn't answer him in the first place because I didn't *have* an answer at the time. I mean, I was going to *college*, and then... the *night* before I'm about to go off into the world to do what I hope and dream, he asks me, "Will you marry me?" I mean, come on! I was leaving in the morning! What was I supposed to do?

MAN. I don't know.

WOMAN. (*Defending herself.*) I mean, I told him I'd have to think about it, that I'd think it over overnight and that I'd be back before the sun came up with an answer. And then I...left. Left him standing right...there [where you're standing]...and then...I didn't make it back with an answer before the sun came up or...at all.

MAN. That sounds like an answer to me.

WOMAN. No! That wasn't my answer! I just...went off into the world, and that's not an answer, and I think—...

*Little beat.*

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I think he thought I'd say, "Yes."

MAN. Well, a guy's probably not gonna ask a girl that question unless he thinks she's gonna say, "Yes."

WOMAN. I know, and...I'm afraid he probably waited up all night, hoping for me to come by, and I just want to tell him that I know now that you just can't do a thing like not answer a question like the one he asked me, you can't do that to a person. Especially to someone you love.

MAN. (*Taking this confession in.*) You loved him?

WOMAN. (*Backpedaling.*) Well [I don't know if I loved him]—I don't know if [I loved him]—. I mean, we were kids.

*She considers. Then, honest and true:*

Yes. I did.

*Little beat.*

I do.

*Little beat.*

I feel like I dashed his hopes and dreams.

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MAN. Oh, come on.

*This speech is not a blatant attack. It's more of a rumination—one that doesn't do much to make the woman feel better.*

You give yourself too much credit. He was young. That's all you need to get your hopes dashed: Be young. And everybody starts out young, so...everybody gets their hopes dashed. And, besides, I don't think you really *dashed* his hopes. 'Cause if you *dash* somebody's hopes—well that's...kind of a nice way to let 'em down, 'cause it *hurts*...but it's quick. If you'd have said, "No," that woulda been "dashing his hopes."

*Beat. What follows is more pointed.*

But you didn't say, "No." You said nothin'. You just didn't answer him. At all. And that's...killin' hope the long, slow, painful way, 'cause it's still there, just hangin' on, never really goes away. And that's...kinda like givin' somebody a little less air to breathe every day. Till they die.

WOMAN. (*Taking in this very unhelpful information.*) Yeah...

*Beat. Then, at a loss:*

Okay. Well...thank you.

MAN. For what?

WOMAN. (*Considers; then, honestly.*) I don't know.

*She starts to leave. The man watches her for a beat.*

MAN. Goodbye, Hope.

HOPE. Goodbye. (*Stopping.*) Argh!, I'm so...sorry to have bothered you... It's just, I was all alone out there in the world with no place in it, and I realized what I'd done—... Wait—... You called me Hope. How did you know my name?

*The man just stands there, and Hope finally recognizes him: He's Daniel Harding.*

Danny?!?

DANIEL. Hello, Hope.

HOPE. (*In a bit of a spin.*) Danny...I didn't // rec[ognize you]—>

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. I didn't // rec[ognize you]—>

END

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## Scene 8: Seeing the Thing

*Dave and Rhonda appear. They have been snowmobiling and are wearing full snowmobile regalia, reptile with helmets, gloves, and snowmobile suits. Dave carries a present—a wrapped painting. Music fades.*

*Dave and Rhonda kick the snow off their boots before entering the winterized porch of Rhonda's small home, a cabin in the woods in Almost, Maine. This is the first time Dave has ever been inside Rhonda's house. Rhonda is not particularly comfortable with this.*

RHONDA. Okay. This is it. You're in. You're inside.  
DAVE. This is the porch.

*Held like to go further inside.*

RHONDA. It's winterized.

*This is as far as Dave's getting. Beat.*

So, Dave: *What?!* What do you gotta do in here that you couldn't do outside?

DAVE. Well, I got somethin', here, for ya, here.

*He presents his wrapped gift. This is Awkward Present Moment #1.*

RHONDA. What's this?

DAVE. It's—. It's—. (*Changing the subject explosively to dispel the awkwardness.*) Boy, that was fun tonight, Rhonda! >

RHONDA. Yeah!, [It] Was!

DAVE. I mean, twenty miles out there, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. beans and franks at the Snowmobile Club, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. twenty miles back, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy!

RHONDA. Awesome!

DAVE. Yeah!, And, boy, you flew on your new sled, // man!

RHONDA. It's a Polaris,<sup>16</sup> man!

DAVE. I know, and you whupped my butt!

RHONDA. Yeah! That's what you get for ridin' an Arctic Cat!<sup>17</sup> Ya get yer butt whupped! And I whupped it!

*She smacks Dave around as she teases him.*

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped your butt! >

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped it! >

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped your butt, Arctic-Cat-Man!

DAVE. I know!, I know!, I'm not // sayin' ya didn't!

RHONDA. You're not ever beatin' the Snowmobile Association's Snowmobler of the Year, you know!

DAVE. I know!

*Rhonda finishes up with smacking Dave around—it's all good fun. Everything settles.*

RHONDA. That was fun.

*Beat. They look at the wrapped gift. This is Awkward Present Moment #2.*

DAVE. So, this [the present I have for you] is, um... Well, we been... together now [for a good long time now]—

RHONDA. (*Scoffing.*) Together?!

DAVE. Well—

RHONDA. Together?!? What are you talkin' about, "together"???

DAVE. Well, we been friends for quite a few years now...

RHONDA. Yeah, so?

DAVE. And, well—...

*Dave searches for but can't find the words to convey what he wants to say.*

<sup>16</sup> Pronounced, "pull-AR-iss." Polaris is a popular brand of snowmobile.

<sup>17</sup> Arctic Cat is a popular brand of snowmobile, and competitor of Polaris.

RHONDA. Well what?!

DAVE. *Shh!*—and—and—... And, here.

*He shows the present on Rhonda. Rhonda doesn't know what to do with it, because these two don't give each other presents.*

RHONDA. What are you doin' here, bud?

DAVE. Open it.

RHONDA. "Together?" Him. I don't know about this...

DAVE. Just open it.

*Rhonda opens the present so the audience can't see it. It's a painting on canvas. Rhonda stares at the painting for a long time. Dave is hoping that, when Rhonda sees what he has painted for her, she will want to be "together" with Dave and they will live happily ever after. But that's not what happens.*

RHONDA. What is it?

DAVE. (*Stunned by the question.*) What do you mean, what is it? Can't you...see what // it is?

RHONDA. It's a picture.

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. A paintin'?

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. Where'd you get this? It looks homemade.

DAVE. What do you mean it looks homemade?

RHONDA. [It] looks like someone really painted it.

DAVE. Well, someone really *did* paint it. [Like...someone like me!]

RHONDA. (*Realizing that Dave painted this painting for her.*) Did you paint this?

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. For me?

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. Oh...

*She doesn't quite know what to make of the fact that Dave painted a picture for her. Then, coarsely:*

Why?!

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DAVE. Well—...

*He painted it because he thinks the whole world of Rhonda, but he's not quite ready to tell her yet.*

RHONDA. I mean...thank you! // thank you., Thanks., Thanks.

DAVE. There you go!, That's what people say!, There you go! You're welcome...

*She props the painting up against a crate—still so the audience can't see it. She sits in a chair, center, and stares at Dave's artwork.*

RHONDA. So, Dave...I didn't know you painted.

DAVE. Yeah. This is—...

*He turns his painting right side up—Rhonda propped it up wrong.*

I'm takin' adult ed art. At nights. Merle Haslem,<sup>18</sup> over at the high school's teachin' it—it's real good—and this is my version of one of those stare-at-it-until-you-see-the-thing-things. Ever seen one of these? Some of the old painters did it with dots. They called it—... (*Searches for—but can't quite come up with—"pointillism."*) ... something... but I did it with a buncha little blocks of colors, see, and if you just look at the little blocks of colors, it's just a buncha little blocks of colors, but if you step back and look at the whole thing, it's not just a buncha little blocks of colors: It's a picture of something.

RHONDA. Picture of what?

DAVE. I'm not gonna tell you, you have to figure it out.

RHONDA. Oh, come on, Dave!

DAVE. No, it takes a little time., It can be a little frustrating.

RHONDA. Well, why would you give me somethin' that's gonna frustrate?!

DAVE. No-no-no, I just mean you gotta not *try* to look for anything, that's what'll frustrate you. You gotta just *kinda* look at it, so it doesn't know you're lookin' at it.

RHONDA. What're you talkin' about?

DAVE. Well...you gotta trick it! >

END

<sup>18</sup> Pronounced, "HAZ-lum."

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