

First Light - A Play (Generic Version)

written by

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(Adapted from the Spencer Creek Trilogy, by Brian Wilson Baetz)

## **SCENE LISTING**

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Scene 2: Venus Rising

Scene 3: Hidden Shadows

Scene 4: Stirring the Pot

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First Interlude

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Scene 2 Perfect In Every Way

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Scene 5 All Together Now

Postlude

## **Cast of Characters**

### **Major Characters**

Gabriel Dunlop is a man of substance, a committed church deacon but no moralistic prude. Salt of the earth, dedicated community builder and one who has a defined fondness for homemade pies. Married to the same woman for 37 years, affluent in an understated way and with the frugal tendencies of a person with Depression-era parents. Happily Canadian after so many years north of the border, but still showing flashes of his mid-Atlantic States accent and his deep love of collegiate sports.

Mina Patel spends her days in a quiet way, the sounds of CBC One interlaced with the clatter emanating from the tearoom kitchen across the alley from her small flat. Still showing evidence of the beauty that would slow traffic in earlier days, she takes long walks around the <name of a well-used local park> in all manner of weather, and never fully admits how much she misses her dear husband these past seven years.

Kurt Winslow is a <teacher or professor> at the local <high school or university>, balancing large classes of bright-eyed young folk with the constantly present task of writing a manuscript that will ultimately lead to some form of modest acclaim. He holds snug to his blue collar roots, and to a deep rationalist base to maintain his academic credibility.

Magdalena McDermott breathes life into everything she touches, and is the quintessential old soul in a young-looking, thirty-something body. Bikram yoga and long-distance running, along with collage art and web graphics, fill her days perhaps a bit too fully. With no shortage of potential suitors, she is increasingly choosy, much to the dismay of a tradition-bound mother and a bevy of well-meaning aunties.

Henri LaMontagne is a somewhat abrasive neighbour, with a flat stomach and equally chiseled chin. He is the most competitive member of a lackluster slow-pitch team, and writes many letters to the editor in a combative but common sense tone.

Arabella Duke is quick to smile, and is arguably the most connected of the town's citizenry. Arabella comes from old money and has stayed single after a mists-of-time failed first marriage.

Stephen Tucker is a family man who puts first things first.

He runs a building restoration business that takes on neglected homes and abandoned factories and breathes new life into them. Stephen wears the same suit each week to his Tuesday evening Freemasons meeting, situated on the second floor of a former brewery that he helped restore into a collection of artist lofts. A spiritual sense largely guides his path, but he never darkens the door of any of the town's churches.

Amy Wu is seventeen and wants the world to change. She doesn't smoke or drink or do drugs, but she is a nihilistic rebel in her own mind. Amy does a hundred pushups every morning, does just enough homework to get the high grades her expectant parents demand, and consumes a near-total carnivore diet while agonizing over its substantial carbon footprint.

Rick Denton has an easy way with people, and never seems in a hurry. He doesn't have any close friends, yet pretty much everyone in town feels they know him. Rick likes to live life in the shadows, nuzzling at the underbelly of a town that looks on the surface to be pretty squeaky-clean.

### **Minor Characters**

Mary Dunlop is the wife of Gabriel, has a thriving practice as a psychotherapist, and has quietly remained open to the mysteries of Life.

Jody Denton is the sister of the elusive Rick, a party girl who works equally hard to stay below the radar.

A few student types stand in line at the campus coffee joint.

One or two wait staff flit in and out at the cafe patio, with a hipster vibe oozing out of their pores.

Numerous townsfolk join the procession to <significant nearby natural area> for the climatic sequence, and provide an audience for Stephen's <local gallery or museum> talk.

### **Time**

Five years from the present time.

### **Basic Set**

The stage will be optimally left open, with various sub-areas being used in turn to represent the following spatial elements:

*Gabriel's home;*

*Coffee counter at the nearby campus;*

*<Main Street name>, <Street name parallel to Main Street>;*

*Mina's flat;*

*Magdalena's flat;*

*Arabella's home;*

*<name of local library or community centre>*

*<name of local Gallery or Museum> Auditorium;*

*Cafe Patio;*

*Edge of <name of local river or creek>*

*Loft Space in <local gallery or school>*

*Edge of <significant nearby natural area>*

*Lighting will be very important, particularly the lighting of individuals who have become immersed in The Light. There may be a number of ways of doing this, with wearable, LED light necklaces, or carefully trained stage lights.*

**PRELUDE**

<individuals are lit in turn, in their described domains>:

*<Gabriel Dunlop stands in the front doorway of his home, leaning against its frame while waiting for his dog, Strider, to do his business in the unrelenting precipitation of a mid-Spring day>*

GABRIEL:

C'mon, Strider, move along now! You can poke around a bit later, that drizzle has suddenly picked up its pace!

*<summons in an imaginary best friend, and then collapses into an easy chair by a reading lamp>*

GABRIEL: (CONT'D)

Right...do I re-read the letters to the editor, or take a stab at the Sudoku?

*<picks up a newspaper, then scrunches it at his lap>*

Why do I feel like I'm just waiting around for something to happen? Eh, Strider? Does that resonate with you?

*<Gabriel goes dark, with Mina being lit, sitting in her apartment on her meditation chair, looking impassively out to the audience>*

MINA:

I had a dream last night, a truly vivid dream.

I was a bird, flying high above the Earth. And as I looked down, I could see a large number of birds flying below and behind me. And we kept climbing, climbing, towards a warming Sun.

And then I woke up, and I saw the streetlight from Cross Street, spilling across the width of my apartment. And I could sense my body, lying flat on my cot, my chest going up and down as my breath went in and out.

And then I thought to myself, am I in fact a bird, a bird flying high? And when I nuzzle into my nest and go to sleep at night, do I dream, a dream of my life as a human?

*<Mina goes dark, with Kurt being lit as he stands in a coffee kiosk lineup, waiting impatiently>*

KURT:

God, I really need a coffee!

*<the person ahead of him in line looks back over their shoulder>*

Okay, okay, okay, a five minute wait is nothing in the big scheme of things...I am going to finish this chapter today...

*<Kurt turns and says this in the direction of the person behind him, who turns and looks behind them>*

Think, man, goddamn it, think! There's a flaw in your logic, that's why you're getting so stuck...

*<the person ahead of him cinches ahead a bit, nervously>*

I've got to start shutting off my laptop at least an hour before hitting the sack!

*<flails his arms excitedly, then devolves into a quieter tone>*

Could all of this rumination, contemplation, mental gymnastics, neuro-circuitry...could it all be happening simply because I'm sleep deprived?

**ACT 1: HOLDING TWO SOLITUDES****SCENE 1: A MEETING OF THE MINDS**

*<Spotlight on Gabriel, departing from home wearing a corduroy windbreaker, strolling down the street and talking to himself, somewhat under his breath>*

GABRIEL:

Well, now look at that, the Joneses have installed solar panels and a micro wind turbine! Ever since the start of The Changes, I've noticed more and more of this kind of thing..

*<Waves out to someone in the mid-distance, and calls out a jaunty hello>*

I've always liked Eric, ever since he was a little sprout in my Cub Pack. Haven't seen him since high school, but I suppose he's moved back home. A bit of space to call his own up in the attic or down in the basement, with free rent and three squares a day, without being totally underfoot of his Mom and Dad...

*<Spotlight on Kurt on the other side of the stage, animatedly leaving his residence and jumping on his bicycle, riding it willy-nilly (or some simulation thereof) around the stage>*

*<Spotlight on Mina, taking her leave from her flat>*

*<Spotlight back on Kurt, who rides his bike right up to the back of Mina, who is virtually abreast of Gabriel. At this point all lights go out for a count of three, followed by a light bang and an anguished groan. When the lights come back on, Gabriel is sitting on the ground and Kurt is sitting face to face in his lap. They both look mortified, and Mina looks at the two of them benevolently>*

KURT:

I'm dreadfully sorry...

*<sputtering, and getting up gingerly to his feet>*

my mind was adrift, and I...I realized at just the last second that I was about to plough into this woman.

GABRIEL:

Quite alright, young fella, I've played enough sports in my day to have taken considerably worse! Although at my age, I'm certainly glad you weren't going any faster!



MINA:

*<glides over and puts a hand on each of their shoulders>*

Are you two gentlemen alright? I hope I didn't cause this mishap...

KURT:

Not in the least...uh, I was in a bit of a rush, doing a few errands before work, and I must admit my mind was elsewhere.

MINA:

Your mind was elsewhere...so then...where was it?

KURT:

Listen, ma'am, I'm dreadfully sorry, I really am...

GABRIEL:

Well, not to scold, but one really shouldn't be riding a bicycle on the sidewalk. Especially here on *<name of Main Street>* Street...

MINA:

But if you had been mindful, we surely could have all shared the sidewalk without incident, no?

KURT:

I have a class soon, felt that I needed a coffee ahead of time...had to stop off at the library, and something outside one of the shop windows caught my attention...

MINA:

All well and good, but I might humbly suggest that if you had been mindful, all of this could have been avoided...do you actually know what being mindful is?

KURT:

Yes, yes, I do, at least....well, in philosophical terms.

*<pauses>*

Errh, not really.

MINA:

I mean in practical terms. Mindful while walking, mindful while cooking, mindful while doing the dishes. Mindfulness suggests a focus, a complete absorption in the task at hand, enjoying the journey while not anticipating the destination.

KURT:

Listen, lady, when you break it all down like that, you're right. I was not being mindful. Guilty as charged.

MINA:

Oh, I just realized that I know you. You're Amanda's husband! I play Scrabble with her at the <name of local library or community centre>, and we all met a year back in the <name of a well-used local park>. My name is Mina.

*<shakes hands formally with both men>*

Okay, Dr. Kurt, mindfulness is not just an abstract concept. It has to be learned, and then put into practice.

I will teach you what I know, and we will start this Saturday afternoon. Come to my flat, at 3 o'clock, just opposite the rear delivery door of the little tearoom. I will be there with one of my dear young friends, who I get together with on Saturdays.

KURT:

Uh, we do our shopping on Saturday afternoons, followed by play-time in the kids' section of the Library. I don't think...

MINA:

Splendid, 3:00 sharp it is!

*<turning to Gabriel>*

And since the universe has involved you, Sir, in this little drama, it seems to me that you should also come along. Any objections?

GABRIEL:

I'll certainly be there, Madam...three o'clock sharp!

## **SCENE 2: VENUS RISING**

*<Kurt and Gabriel approach each other from opposite directions, greet one another in a warm but embarrassed manner and stroll together down the alleyway to Mina's stairway, consulting their watches on the way. Gabriel knocks, and Mina opens the door slowly, unveiling a tidy space with minimalist furniture. Four wooden chairs are set up in a quadrant fashion on a lovely Oriental rug, and sitting on one of the chairs is Magdalena McDermott>*

MINA:

I would like you to meet my friend, Magdalena...

MAGDALENA:

Magdalena McDermott.

*<Kurt and Gabriel mutter hellos and offer up awkward handshakes>*

Gentlemen, pleasure to meet you...

MINA:

I have told Magdalena the story of our little encounter the other day outside of the coffee shop. She and I get together every Saturday afternoon, to sit and meditate, and then to share some tea. Occasionally we ask other people to join us, those who may wish to learn how to meditate or those who may be in need of more mindfulness in their lives.

MAGDALENA:

I don't know which camp you fellows fall into, but I can certainly attest to the power of Mina's teachings. Have either of you ever learned to meditate?

KURT:

Tried it once, back when I was in grad school. Yep, but I think I fell asleep. A bit of a snorefest, y'know?!

GABRIEL:

I've always thought of it as an Eastern practice, and perhaps a tad inconsistent with what we do in church...

MAGDALENA:

Fair enough...we're going to set that all aside and get down to the basics, the fundamentals, of meditation practice.

KURT:

Oh boy, nothing like a lecture on a Saturday afternoon!

MAGDALENA:

It is certainly from the East, Gabriel, being brought over to the States by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the TM craze of the 70s. And now we regularly see newspaper articles extolling the health and relaxation benefits of meditation.

KURT:

Ha, I remember that wild guru dude from when I was a little kid. He was right out of Central Casting, like, hilariously unbelievable!

MINA:

I meditate twice a day, every day...in fact, I eat only two meals a day, and consider meditation as important as the taking of food.

*<pauses for effect>*

In essence, food for the body through eating, food for the soul through meditation. Kurt, do you ever go a day without eating?

KURT:

No way, three squares a day for this guy, and hearty snacks on top!

MINA:

Makes sense for a healthy young man. Equally, you should never go a day without meditation.

GABRIEL:

I do pray...but perhaps less than I should. Now wouldn't that have the same effect?

MINA:

Gabriel, prayer is a beautiful thing. But think of all of this as a conversation with the Divine. Prayer is you talking to the Divine. Meditation is the Divine talking to you.

KURT:

Yikes, the water's getting kinda deep here, folks. Call me a materialist, or a rationalist, but I like things I can measure. Helps with my credibility at work. A conversation with the Divine? I'm an agnostic at best, so I'm afraid it wouldn't be much of a chinwag, y'know what I'm saying?

MAGDALENA:

Listen, if this was a physics colloquium, dear Mina here would be an urbane theorist and I would be a sweaty lab technician! Meditation is a practice! So please, why don't we just sit down and give it a try?

*<motions for the others to sit>*

Sit quietly with your eyes closed, with your hands in your laps. Now take a few deep breaths and slowly scan your body from head to toe. Wherever you feel tension, consciously relax that area, and then move on.

*<pauses for effect>*

Your eyes are closed, but use your internal vision to focus on the point between your eyebrows. When you see the Bollywood starlets with jewelry or makeup adorning this area, with what they call a tili, it's a symbol of our third eye.

KURT:

Ohhh, I just know I'm going to be hounded by thoughts of Bollywood starlets in the middle of all of this!

MAGDALENA:

After focusing on this area, we will then mentally focus on our breath going in and our breath going out. There's really not that much else to it, we just stay relaxed and focus on the breath in, and the breath out. Any questions from the class?

KURT:

Gabriel, if I stop breathing, call somebody, will `ya?

MAGDALENA:

For meditation novices like Kurt here, this might seem almost too simple, but honestly that's all we have to do.

GABRIEL:

I find my mind becomes very active, a touch frothy, when I sit still...

MINA:

But the matter at hand is your meditation. So when a thought comes up, and it inevitably will, you simply excuse yourself from that thought and go back to your breath.

MAGDALENA:

So to recap before we plunge in, everyone, and I mean EVERYONE...you didn't really think that you were going to just sit there and passively observe, did you?

*<looks to the audience, and draws them in with her hand, breaking the fourth wall>*

Relax, close your eyes, softly focus on your third eye, focus on your breath going in and out, and gently excuse any thoughts or noises that come up. And with that, we will now go on our inward journey...

*<the lights dim, there is a sound of a grandfather clock ticking, with bits of intermittent birdsong and traffic noise>*

*<Kurt noticeably slumps backwards in his chair, his head lolling this way and that, making a range of intermittent crude noises>*

MAGDALENA: (CONT'D)

Breathe, Kurt, breathe. Come back to your breath.

KURT:

Breathe, right...breathe.

*<even more noises are emitted sporadically>*

GABRIEL:

Mmmmmsttttmmppphhmmrrrrttt...

*<Gabriel slumps his head forward, and begins to make a sonorous snoring sound>*

MINA:

Gabriel, my dear, sit up straight. It's important to align your chakras.

GABRIEL:

Sorry...very sorry...so very sorry...

*<Gabriel makes an even louder sound, and slumps completely forward, his head resting on his knees>*

*<After thirty more seconds of the two men wobbling their way through the sitting practice, and being tersely nudged back in line by the two women, the lights come back to normal and the two women stir. Mina slowly looks from person to person, with a quietly incredulous look on her face>*

MAGDALENA:

OK, stretch your bodies, come back fully to the physical realm... Mina made some tea ahead of time, so pour yourself a cup and return to your seat for a reflection on what the heck just went on there.

*<The tea is poured into a collection of one-of-a-kind mugs, and everyone returns quietly to their chairs.>*

MINA:

Kurt, you were the one that seemed to be most in need of mindfulness. Share your thoughts on what you experienced...

KURT:

Well, I started thinking about work, then came back to my breath, and then I heard some street noise, but then came back to my breath. Uh, then a few Bollywood dance routines, then back to my breath, and from there I must have slipped into some kind of altered state.

GABRIEL:

Exactly...

KURT:

My neck started to feel kind of rubbery, and I could hear a bunch of loud noises. Thought it might be coming from me, but then after a point I seemed to slip away into a very deep sleep.

I heard Magdalena calling us back, and I resisted a bit, like a kid falling asleep on the sofa watching late night television. I just loved to go to sleep during reruns of The Twilight Zone!

But overall, I suppose I kind of suck at meditation. I haven't improved much since that first time in grad school.

MINA:

That's honest, Kurt. More practice and we'll hopefully see some improvement. How about you, Gabriel?

GABRIEL:

Well, I too got settled in, and I thought a lot about my dog and a little bit about how much I miss my work, but then it became quite quiet and almost dream-like. My head felt super heavy, and a couple of times I heard Mina speaking to me as if through a tunnel. Some thoughts came and nudged me, but they didn't seem like my thoughts, almost more like collective thoughts. And then I heard Magdalena's voice.

MINA:

How do you gentlemen feel?

KURT:

Umm, a little spacey...maybe a bit like I might feel after a two hour Sunday afternoon nap? Or like when I would get hauled off that late night sofa and put to bed...

GABRIEL:

Kinda strange, I suppose. Rested, in a hard-to-explain way. Gosh, maybe I'm not the ideal meditation student after all? But certainly something I will definitely try on my own...and perhaps together, if that would be possible?

MINA:

Most definitely...let's plan another session not too far down the road.

KURT:

Uh, y'know, this was wonderful, it really was. Thank you all, truly-ooly. But it might just be a one-of for me. I'm a little busy with work, and weekend afternoons are my family time.

MINA:

I'll be in touch, Kurt. We'll talk about the next time. Now enjoy your tea.

**SCENE 3: HIDDEN SHADOWS**

*<Stage lights are dark for a count of ten seconds. Muted spotlights are then focused on the two parties engaged in a phone conversation, as they sit comfortably in their home environment. Their relative positioning on the stage will allow for an intriguing ping-ponging of directed lights, as one conversation ends and the next starts up>*

HENRI:

Allo?

ARABELLA:

Good evening, fine sir.

HENRI:

*Ma cherie*, how did I know that it was you?

ARABELLA:

I suspect you have many private callers, but some are hopefully more special than others.

HENRI:

It's true, *mademoiselle*. I am very fortunate to count you as a friend, a neighbour and a client.

ARABELLA:

I know this is all very pleasant, but I do have some business to conduct. A doubling of my normal order, sir, and don't be a day late like you were last week!

HENRI:

These things have their supply chain hiccups, and I am the last of many middle-men from their source to the final user, uh, consumer. But I will do my best to meet your demands, *Arabella*.

ARABELLA:

Perhaps I'm sounding a bit precious, but these things help me get through so many lonely nights. Now if you might come by every so often for a wee nightcap, I perhaps wouldn't feel quite so lonely?

HENRI:

An appealing invitation, to be sure. But I think it's better if we kept our relationship strictly professional. I don't mind supplying one form of magic, *cherie*, but I wouldn't want to over-complicate things.

ARABELLA:

OK, OK! But you can't blame a girl for trying! I'll expect a double quantity through my front door mail slot by tomorrow evening?



And any chance of the payment for this package coming off the IOU on that sizable loan I extended to you last month?

HENRI:

I'm afraid that might be challenging...

ARABELLA:

Why?

HENRI:

Things are a bit complicated in my life at present, as I work on turning the tide on many fronts. When one hits their forties, it's a constant struggle to knock down the nagging feelings of despair. Nonetheless, your loan will be paid back fully, mademoiselle, for that I give you my word. It's not a question of if, just when.

ARABELLA:

Fine, fine, I suppose we all have stresses in our lives, and different ways of coping with them.

HENRI:

Keep an eye out for your package...

ARABELLA:

*Bonne soiree, ma cherie...*

*<The muted spotlight on Arabella goes to darkness. Henri fumbles with a note and dials a number while squinting heavily. Stephen Tucker becomes lit by a muted spotlight as he picks up the phone>*

STEPHEN:

Hello?

HENRI:

Good evening, Mr. Tucker.

STEPHEN:

Yes, who's this?

HENRI:

A friend, sir. A friend with instructions.

STEPHEN:

Instructions for what?

HENRI:

On where and when to pick up your package, sir.

STEPHEN:

My package? My package of what?

HENRI:

Money. An envelope of unmarked bills. That you can use to pay your workers. Your company's a bit short these days, isn't it?

STEPHEN:

Now hold on a second! Who are you?!

HENRI:

A friend, Mr. Tucker. A friend who works for a man who knows you're a bit short on cash. My boss is close to one of your family members. So he wants to help you solve your little problem.

STEPHEN:

Hold on...who in my family does he know?

HENRI:

That doesn't matter, sir. Just listen to me closely. There's an alleyway a half block west of the **<name of a well-used local park>**. Three garages up on the right there's a tall hedge. By 8:00 tomorrow morning there will be an envelope stuffed inside the hedge, about knee height. Pluck it out and just keep on walking up the alley. Simple, no?

STEPHEN:

This sounds a bit dubious! Shady, even...

HENRI:

Consider it a loan, but one that doesn't need to be repaid. Don't even think twice about accepting it.

STEPHEN:

What was your name again?

HENRI:

I never told you my name. Good evening, sir.

*<The muted spotlight on Henri goes black. Stephen sits dumbfounded with the phone in his hand, and then dials Gabriel who is under a muted spotlight as his phone rings>*

GABRIEL:

Hello?

STEPHEN:

Mr. Dunlop, your old buddy Tucker on the line...

GABRIEL:

Stephen, now isn't this a nice surprise!

STEPHEN:

Gabriel, I just needed to hear a friend's voice.

GABRIEL:

How are you and the family?

STEPHEN:

Hmmm, fine enough, I guess. My wife's gone out to a meeting, and my daughter's out...somewhere.

GABRIEL:

I'm sitting here alone as well. But it gives me time to contemplate, mull things over a bit.

STEPHEN:

I almost don't want to be alone with my thoughts these days.

GABRIEL:

Anything you need to share, friend?

STEPHEN:

No, well, nothing glaring. Things are a little tough at work. Managing cash flow since The Changes has been a bit of a challenge. Life just seems murky and uncertain.

GABRIEL:

Yep, I certainly know what you're saying. But I don't have a dozen young employees, with rent to pay and babies to feed.

STEPHEN:

Oh, to be young again, Gabriel!

GABRIEL:

Mmmm...the things we would do differently!

STEPHEN:

Have you noticed how many people have been slipping away lately? Family, friends, colleagues?

GABRIEL:

Oh, for sure, amigo. Kind of makes you contemplate your own mortality, no?

STEPHEN:

Oh my, yes...time does feel short. It's later than we think, as they say. And things just seem a bit tougher than normal these days.

GABRIEL:

I bet we'll both find our way, Stephen.

STEPHEN:

I wasn't so sure a few moments ago, but I am feeling better, much better having heard your voice, Gabriel. Thank you for being a friend who's always got my back.

GABRIEL:

Copy that, Mr. Tucker. Now let's just hope our lovely wives will come home soon!

*<Lights go to black>*

**SCENE 4: STIRRING THE POT**

*<The action shifts to the exterior of Magdalena's flat. Mina, Gabriel and Kurt wait patiently for her with their potluck dishes in hand. Magdalena comes out onto her patio carrying an open pot of steaming chili, with a wooden serving spoon twisting from side to side as she skips along.>*

MAGDALENA:

Good afternoon, dear friends!

KURT:

The lengths some people will go, to avoid using a piece of aluminum foil...

MAGDALENA:

What's that, Kurt? Haven't heard of that stuff in years, but I can always count on you to wax nostalgically over 20th century technology! And here we are in (current calendar year plus five years)! Just for your information, I couldn't find the right lid anywhere, but I'm counting on Arabella's expansive kitchen to furnish just the right diameter.

*<Magdalena, Kurt, Mina and Gabriel walk along to Arabella's home, chattering away and looking like two couples. Arabella opens the door before they can knock, and gives her neighbor Magdalena a warm and hearty hug, chili pot and all. While all of this commotion is going on, a slightly disheveled Rick Denton emerges from the side of Arabella's house, clutching a worn gym bag. He looks furtively over at the visiting assemblage, and quickly steps off-stage>*

ARABELLA:

Gabriel, so very nice to cross paths again, it's been far too long since we last had a wee chat ! And Mina, I am tickled pink to have the considerable honour to formally meet you, Magdalena has spoken so very highly of you and your endearing exploits. And as for you young man, we have not had the distinct pleasure to meet until just now!

KURT:

Hey, Kurt's the name... but I can't quite believe you talk like you're in Romeo and Juliet! It's cute in a way, but kinda ridiculous!

ARABELLA:

Your drollness is highly captivating, Kurt...but please come in, come in all, welcome to my humble abode. It's much too big for me, but I just can't bear the thought of downsizing. Come to the kitchen with your pots, we'll set up the feast on the table, and we will eat en terrasse. I will introduce you to Henri, my hunky neighbour...oops, I meant hospitable neighbour, who kindly offered to prop up my downspout after last night's heavy winds.

*<She puts her hand to her mouth and audibly whispers to Magdalena>*

If I was twenty years younger and forty pounds lighter I might have a more-than-neighbourly interest in cher Henri, but I won't stand in your way, sweet Maggie!

*<Magdalena rolls her eyes and in lieu of a response admires Arabella's artwork>*

Place your dishes wherever you think is best, assuming we will start at the left and finish with my apple crisp dish on the right. I just love potlucks!

*<There is the sound of a patio door opening and closing and in strides a youngish middle-aged man. He doesn't smile, and greets everyone with the same grunt of his name: "Henri." His bordering-on-menacing demeanour varies only for Magdalena, as he holds her hand for an extra few seconds to allow himself a nod of his head and a curling arch of his right eyebrow.>*

ARABELLA: (CONT'D)

All right folks, the table outdoors is set for six with cutlery and glasses. Wine and water are out there in carafes. Grab a plate and before that, perhaps describe your collective contributions.

HENRI:

A slab of goat cheese with truffles to start us off.

MINA:

Aloo bhaji, my grandmother's recipe.

GABRIEL:

I'm a bit predictable, so I brought a roast chicken and yams dish, that will stick to your ribs.

MAGDALENA:

To counterbalance Gabriel's offering, I've whipped up a vegan chili that has some heat to it!

KURT:

Kraft Dinner...but I scrounged around in the back of my fridge and found some dried cranberries to stir through the noodles, so that'll give it some pop!

ARABELLA:

My, my, why thank you Kurt...and from my grandmother's recipe book, an apple crisp with a touch of rhubarb from the garden. Let's load up while everything is at its perfect temperature, and we can converse at the table.

*<The next few minutes go by with good-natured banter, some clucking over the fineness of the various dishes, and Henri's subtle ogling of Magdalena. She sits as far away from him as possible when they all take their seats>*

ARABELLA: (CONT'D)

Good folks, since we are a cozy group of six, I suggest we direct and shape our conversation as one unified group. I'm going to ask you to think of a starting point for the conversation, or a transition topic for later on, and we can go from one topic to another. So, what's at the top of your minds, anyone?

KURT:

What? In my house, we just....like, y'know, talk?

HENRI:

There are too many old people in this town, and they want folks like me to subsidize their care and all the other services they demand.

*<He takes a large dollop of food in his mouth and looks defiantly at the rest of the group, chewing slowly>*

GABRIEL:

*<clears his throat>*

My mother-in-law is in her mid-90s and she's living in a retirement home here in town. I think society owes it to her to make her last years comfortable.

HENRI:

Dated thinking. There's a huge number of people now in their 70s and 80s, who were raised in the expansionist 1950s, got low cost university degrees in the 60s and 70s, and have had their choice of well-paying jobs throughout.

MAGDALENA:

Sounds like a whole bunch of my older neighbours? And they're all really nice people...

HENRI:

Yes, and these really nice people bought really nice houses at really low prices, got high interest rates for their investing years, and now they want all kinds of fancy medical care and assisted living on the public purse?

GABRIEL:

Yeah, but jeepers-creepers, man, this is the land of socialized medicine! I know I'm a transplant, but even I've figured out what's untouchable north of the 49th! Tommy Douglas would be rolling over in his grave right about now!

HENRI:

And to make matters worse, many of them haven't taken such great care of themselves, so the support costs are considerable. Throw in the fact that the demographics are all wrong, that there are way too many seniors and not enough younger wage earners, and the situation becomes bleaker and bleaker.

MINA:

Henri, I am in the age bracket that you speak of...

And while I may wince at your brusqueness, I do largely agree with you. I live by myself, I walk every day, meditate and do yoga. I don't take pills of any kind. But not all people are as fortunate.

ARABELLA:

This stage of life is still hopefully on the distant horizon for me... But when and if I need care I would want to fully pay for it, and probably could. But others may not have the means to do so. Henri, if we had a system where those who could would pay more fully, and those who could not would get subsidized, might that be more palatable?

HENRI:

Sure, but a lot of sacred cows would have to get slaughtered. Like seniors' discounts...we should have discounts for people under 40, given their debt loads and their low population numbers!

GABRIEL:

Keep your hands off my senior's discount, mister! I've only had it for a year or two, and now you're going to pry it from my cold, dead hands?!

HENRI:

There you go, proof positive that none of this would ever fly politically! Seniors get out to vote and any candidate pitching this would be dead on arrival!

KURT:

Okay, okay, but let's talk about the senior housing piece of the puzzle. Certainly one thing we all learned from the pandemic is that we have to take better care of vulnerable seniors?

MINA:

We certainly know we have to stop warehousing them in poorly resourced long-term care facilities!

HENRI:

I'm not heartless, people. Protect the most vulnerable, yes. But the vast majority of us have to start living our lives so that we will probably not need that level of care, and start saving more money so that we can pay our fair share of the burden. Money doesn't grow on trees, people, and public piggy banks can get shattered!

*<Orders for decaffeinated coffee and herbal tea are taken, and conversation inevitably wraps itself up>*

## **SCENE 5: THE PASSING PARADE**

*<Rick Denton sits by himself in the middle of a street bench on <name of Main Street> Street near the bridal shoppe, arms riding back along the bench's upper ledge, mansplayed. He looks to and fro, up at the sky, adjusts his cap, and then breaks the fourth wall with the audience>*

RICK:

A perfect day, just couldn't be better...

*<looks up again at the sky>*

I spend a good chunk of each day riding the pine, outside of the old furniture store. No more chesterfields and La-Z-Boys rolling out of here anymore, just high-end wedding gowns.

Yep, here we are on <name of Main Street> Street, watching the passing parade of humanity. Now some of you may judge me...why doesn't this guy just go get a job?



Surely there are some openings in the factories over on *<name of street housing local industry>* Street, or jockeying food out to patio tables at the *<name of local pub/restaurant>*? Nooooo, not for this caballero! Why would I work for The Man? The Man works for me...yep, I am on the dole. It's not a lot, but when your needs are modest, it stretches nicely to make ends meet. And I have the luxury of time, time to do whatever the heck I want.

And I'm the CEO of this little micro-loan enterprise I've got going on here in my outside office. So don't judge me, and I won't judge you.

Wage slave, house poor, working for the weekend? People, for me, every day's a Saturday!

I just have to keep my eyes peeled for any coppers, rolling by in their jacked-up SUVs! The boys in blue don't seem to like my little schtick. And if truth be told, I'm not too keen on their thin blue line nonsense!

Pardon me for a moment, here comes a potential benefactor...

*<Mina floats by, and stops directly in front of Rick>*

Ma'am, could I ask you for some spare change on such a fine day?

MINA:

Indeed, it is a fine day, sir. But I have no money on my person. However, I will envision you experiencing an abundant future...

*<Mina walks on, graciously>*

RICK:

*<projects in the direction of a retreating Mina>*  
Can't argue with that, lady...

*<addresses the audience>*

Sometimes you just feel the Light inside a person, y'know, and it warms you right down to your toes!

Hey there, man, can you spare a 'toon?

*<Henri walks brusquely down the street, stops on a dime, and turns confrontationally towards Rick>*

HENRI:

I'm on my way to some gainful employment, so *je suis presse*. But shouldn't you be at work, sir?

RICK:

Hey, maestro, this is my work!

HENRI:

Lollygagging here on *<name of Main Street>* Street, harassing passersby?

RICK:

I'll have you know I've also done plenty of hours up at *<name of local shopping area, plaza, or strip mall>* or just up the street outside the doors of the *<name of local pharmacy>*. But right here in the heart of *<name of Main Street>* Street, with the cafe hipsters and the anxious brides, I've found my peeps! People love me, man, they tell me I've just made their day.

HENRI:

*<walks onward, haughtily>*  
Panhandlers disgust me...

RICK:

*<to audience>*  
What can one say to such rudeness!

*<yelled down the street in the direction of Henri>*  
And I'm in the goddamn micro-loan business, monsieur, not a bloody panhandler! Jeez!

*<Arabella walks by, decked out in haute couture and matching footwear, and looks disdainfully away from Rick as if he were emitting an unpleasant odour>*

RICK: (CONT'D)

My, my, the quality of life has just picked up around here! Madame, would you be interested in a micro-loan investment opportunity?

ARABELLA:

Pardon me?

RICK:

Would you consider helping a fellow out?

ARABELLA:

*<fishes a coin out of her purse and elegantly offers it to Rick>*  
 Mmmm...happy to oblige...here you are...

RICK:  
 I'm afraid I don't take coins, only materials that fold...

ARABELLA:  
*<proffers a five dollar bill from her purse>*  
 Oh, well then...

RICK:  
*<tucks away the bill into a vest pocket>*  
 Much obliged, signorina. And has anyone told you lately?

ARABELLA:  
 Told me what?

RICK:  
*<extends his hand subtly>*  
 Of how your great beauty wondrously enlivens this drab streetscape?

ARABELLA:  
*<hesitates, then reaches again into her purse to extract a ten dollar bill, and hands it over with just the slightest hint of reluctance>*  
 Oh, here's something for a bit of lunch...

RICK:  
*<extends his hand again, not so subtly>*  
 Molto grazie, contessa...yessir, Sophia Loren in her prime would have had to run hard to catch up with you! But you know, it is mid-afternoon, well past lunch time...

ARABELLA:  
*<yanks a twenty out of her purse, and flips it in Rick's direction as she floats away down the street>*  
 Uh, fine, here's something for a proper dinner...

RICK:  
*<itches this to the audience, then casts a lingering glance in the direction of a retreating Arabella>*  
 Scenery, this town is definitely known for its scenery...

*<Gabriel comes in hard and fast, as if he is purposefully following Arabella. Rick stops him in his tracks>*

RICK: (CONT'D)

Any loose change weighing you down, cowpoke?

GABRIEL:

No, I'm afraid I only have my cards on me today. But could I step into the cafe and perhaps buy you a sandwich?

RICK:

Nah, man. When I eat a sandwich, I want a real sandwich. Wonder Bread, heavy mayo, Velveeta cheese slices, lots of marbled salami, thick layer of bright yellow mustard...the works! None of this organic, gluten-free, vegan, harvested by well-intentioned small-scale local agro-entrepreneur nonsense they have in every joint in this burgh!

It may seem a bit ungracious, but just toodle on and catch up with that fine specimen of female beauty, who's now a full block ahead of you! Go!

GABRIEL:

Right you are, bud! Next time for sure...

*<a smiling Magdalena sidles up, hands in her pockets>*

RICK:

Well, missy, you look like the cat who ate the canary!

MAGDALENA:

Haven't seen you for weeks, Rick, thought you had shifted your beat?

RICK:

Nah, not really, just busy following, uh, other pursuits...

MAGDALENA:

Any chance of breaking up your leisure time and coming along with me to my class down in the basement of **<name of local library or community centre>**?

RICK:

What's on the agenda for today?

MAGDALENA:

Laughter yoga, mister, it's the latest hot thing...

RICK:

Laughter yoga?

MAGDALENA:

*<models a laughing lion, and an ear-wiggler laugher,  
and both parties erupt in laughter>*

We just do goofy, somewhat contrived things, that make everyone laugh. Keep it going for an hour, and you end up feeling like a million bucks!

RICK:

OK, OK, on you go, I have to maintain my professional demeanour while I conduct my micro-loan business! But you have definitely made my day, Magdalena!

*<Stephen comes along, wearing a heavy trench coat and walking laboriously>*

STEPHEN:

Good afternoon, sir...

*<keeps on trudging, slowly, but then holds up as Rick waxes on>*

RICK:

Indeed, it is a fine afternoon, squire. I might rather be out in a sunny glade in *<name of local natural area>*, or perched up on *<name of area that overlooks the town>*, looking down at our fine town. But I find myself here in the centre of this commercial buzz and mercantile froth. For I await a bus, a bus that will take me to *<name of some community at least 45 minutes drive away, with a transit connection to the town>*, where I will tend to the considerable care of an elderly spinster auntie. But sir, I have just realized that I am devoid of the bus fare that I will need to make this humanitarian journey. Might you find the necessary sum of charity in your heart to allow me to foray forth to help out my dear loved one?

STEPHEN:

Well, it's not my general practice to...N

RICK:

I understand completely, sir. But a man of your considerable station will well understand that we are all our brother's keeper. Or sister's keeper, in the case of my patiently waiting Aunt Esmerelda.

STEPHEN:

Well, if you put it that way...

*<reaches into a vest pocket to extract a five dollar bill, but in the process accidentally unfurls a sheaf of larger bills that spill toward the feet of Rick>*

Oh, my goodness...

*<Stephen scrambles to pick up the loose cash, only modestly successfully>*

RICK:

*<to audience, wryly>*  
 Y'know, that's a lot of cash to carry under a trenchcoat, on a pretty warm afternoon to boot. If you keep your eyes open in a small town, things can get quite interesting...

*<to Stephen>*  
 Just the five will do nicely...

*<lights dim to BLACK, THEN RISE TO half intensity>*

### **FIRST INTERLUDE**

MINA:

*<sits quietly on her meditation chair, looking impassively out to the audience. After a count of seven, she begins glowing with a special light. There is a projection of Earth from space, on a background elevated screen. The projection is accompanied by low but persistent drumbeats>*  
 Percussion is the backbone of all music. Can you feel your own heartbeat? Percussive, no? Can you hear the heartbeat of the Earth? I hear her...I feel her. Can you feel the heartbeat of the Universe? There are days that I can both feel and hear this. And I can also feel some significant change coming.

Uni...one. Verse...a poem, or perhaps a song? Uni-verse... what if everyone in the universe all started to sing the same song?

*<hums a few bars of What a Wonderful World>*

Now what might that one song be?

<LIGHTS DIM TO BLACK>



MAGDALENA:

Never mind, I had drifted off in the tub. What's going on?

HENRI:

It's Arabella. She just called and asked me to run and get you, since you don't have a phone. It appears that she has fallen in her garden.

MAGDALENA:

Oh no, let's go to her straight away...

*<Lighting upon Arabella, lying on a divan in her solarium, with one leg propped up on a silk pillow, looking distressed until she sees the arrival of her two friends>*

ARABELLA:

Oh, I'm so dreadfully sorry about disturbing you both! I was out in the garden watering, and was walking back to the house when I slipped on the wet stone walkway. In a flash I was derriere over teakettle and I twisted my leg horribly as I went down. Virtually like a pretzel! And all of this with sensible shoes on! So I dragged myself, nobly I might add, hand over hand back into the kitchen and called Henri, asking him to find you, dear Maggie.

MAGDALENA:

OK, OK, OK...why don't we immediately get some Arnica into you and we'll go from there. Henri, boil a kettle of water for any kind of herbal tea you can find, and I'll start giving Arabella some Reiki.

HENRI:

Homeopathy for something this serious? And Reiki at a time when she probably needs surgery?!

MAGDALENA:

These modalities are powerful, mister! But they don't vibe well with nay-sayers on deck!

ARABELLA:

Friends, now maybe I overstated things a little bit in the blow-by-blow description of my fall! Let's start with a holistic approach and see where it goes. Magdalena, you know how much I love to receive Reiki, and if you don't mind I will also ask Henri to rummage around in the top right-hand drawer of my scroll-top desk and find that pure silver mandala I picked up in Mexico ten years back? It's quite heavy, and is purported to have healing properties when placed on one's body.



*<Henri takes himself away grumpily, the two women tut-tut to each other, and Henri returns momentarily with a perplexed look on his face>*

HENRI:

I know exactly what the mandala looks like, but I just can't find the damn thing...I went through every drawer in the desk.

ARABELLA:

Upper right...I always return things to their proper place. Now be a dear and go look again. Not to be sexist, but men often miss things when they are simply right under their noses!

*<Henri retreats once more, but soon returns, nonplussed>*

HENRI:

I regret to report, the mandala is definitely not there...

ARABELLA:

Oh dear, that's the second thing in a week that I can't seem to find... <moans> I hope I'm not starting to slip memory-wise. And now this terrible fall!

MAGDALENA:

Just accept the Reiki, my dear, we can find the mandala later...

HENRI:

Magdalena, be practical, don't you think we should just bundle Arabella up in her car and get her over to emerg?

MAGDALENA:

To sit for hours and then get poked and prodded by some young kid in a white coat who's sleep deprived?

HENRI:

But what if she's broken something? She might be in need of some real care!

ARABELLA:

Relax, darling, Magdalena will take good care of me right here. And if in the end she thinks it's something more serious, we can always dash over to the walk-in clinic.

*<Lights dim to half-intensity and an intended half hour rolls by in an actual thirty seconds or so, with the projected sound of a grandfather clock. Arabella seems to fall asleep, but her body twitches and roils at intermittent intervals. Henri sits in a soft upholstered chair, alternating between sips of his tea and emitting loud and impatient sighs.>*

*Magdalena studiously ignores Henri, and keeps her hands on Arabella>*

MAGDALENA:

Arabella, I also want to augment the healing of your leg, with what I call an intentional prayer.

HENRI:

Oh my God...

ARABELLA:

Exactly, Henri, exactly. By all means, honey, pray away...

MAGDALENA:

I ask the Divine, if it be for the highest good, to bring complete healing to dear Arabella's left leg. And we offer our deepest thanks for helping this healing to occur.

HENRI:

Shouldn't you be asking Mister Big Guy to heal her leg first, and then thank Him after he's actually done something about it?

MAGDALENA:

No, the Big Guy, or the Big Gal, doesn't work in a time-based environment like we do...so the most effective approach is to thank the Divine as if it has already happened...

*<smiles softly and gives Arabella a gentle sideways hug>*

ARABELLA:

*<tests the leg and is able to move with some ease to the other side of the solarium>*

Oh my goodness, my leg can actually bear weight without pain! A bit surprising I must admit, but why does a miracle shock me when Magdalena is in the house! Perhaps some lingering stiffness, but nothing a good night's sleep won't put right. Oh my, I can't thank you both enough!

*<Arabella hugs her two neighbours, and retreats with ease to her divan. Henri walks Magdalena back to the foot of her stairs, under a directed spotlight>*

HENRI:

Magdalena...um, was wondering if... uh, sorry, awkward start. Okay, I'm just trying to find my nerve here, as we've been bumping into each other a lot lately, and I was wondering if we might be able to have coffee together sometime?

MAGDALENA:

Oh...coffee? I'm not so sure.

HENRI:

I'm sorry, you have a boyfriend?

MAGDALENA:

No, not at present. No one steady...

*<looks a bit wistful, before issuing a wry but not unappealing smile>*

But I'm just not sure that we're compatible.

HENRI:

Isn't that the whole point of sharing some coffee and conversation, to see if we might be compatible?

MAGDALENA:

*<said in an unconvincing manner, while smoothing down her hair in a fetching way>*

I find I'm pretty busy...

HENRI:

Too busy for a coffee? Come on, no strings, let's have a coffee and a chat. And if that's that, then that's that.

MAGDALENA:

*<flashes a ravishing smile>*

You don't take a shrug-off easily, eh? Well, you are a neighbour, and you were helpful to Arabella...

HENRI:

Monday afternoon?

MAGDALENA:

*<waggles her index finger playfully>*

No strings...

## **SCENE 2: DREAMING OF SCARAB BEETLES**

*<The power goes out, with a clock on the wall frozen at four in the afternoon, and a background AM radio feed going abruptly silent>*

*<Stage lighting goes to half of normal intensity>*

*<For all of the following individuals, they will appear sequentially as described, lit by a spotlight in turn and then going dark as the next person is lit>*

*<Gabriel is reading a book on his deck, his favourite Summer past-time. He looks up to savour some ambient birdsong>*

*<Mina sits in her flat, immersed in an hour-long meditation>*

*<Kurt sits in his compact office, working on his book>*

*<Magdalena and Henri are doing yoga on mats on Magdalena's deck. They have the air of two people who are both starting to realize that they might actually enjoy each other's company>*

*<Across town, Mr. Stephen Tucker is consulting blueprints on a dusty sawhorse and lets out a big sigh before picking up his phone and calling an unseen Gabriel>*

STEPHEN:

Gabriel? It's Stephen...listen, the goddamn power's just gone out. If it stays off for more than a few hours I think we should get ahead of things and make plans for handing out those half-cube blocks of ice. Yep, from the back door of the *<local church denomination>* church. Uh-huh...yep...so fridges can stay cool until most of their contents are consumed...Yep, yep, we certainly learned a few things from that big outage four years ago. God! I've heard nothing about a big solar flare rolling through, beyond that aurora borealis stuff of a few months back. I don't think I can stand another long grid outage like last time. Five months! I just shudder thinking about it...okay, okay, see you at 6:00, out front on *<street name which houses the above local church>*. And bring your insulated gloves!

*<lighting on Stephen goes dark>*

*<The stage action now shifts to Arabella's home, where Arabella had invited a number of her friends over for an after-dinner gathering. A knock at the door brings Mina and Kurt into a warmish foyer, followed a moment later by Henri and Magdalena>*

ARABELLA:

Dear friends, so glad you could come by for dessert. Take a seat, please, and don't mind the mugginess of the room...

*<mopping her brow with a cloth napkin>*

MAGDALENA:

Not to worry, Arabella, this is what houses should feel like in the Summer...

ARABELLA:

Take a glass of lemon water, at least the taps are running freely...

HENRI:

Thank God for the backup generators down at the treatment plant! You lose your pressure, only a dribble will come out of a kitchen tap or a fire hydrant!

MINA:

This is what the big cities in India have been facing for years, with water available for only four hours a day.

KURT:

Crikes, you guys are champions of the buzz kill! I thought we were getting together to eat some dessert!

ARABELLA:

Kurt's right...enough grimness! I know we're all a bit on edge since we don't know how long this disruption will last, but let's lighten up and have some fun. Life is short, and it's later than we think.

MAGDALENA:

But what is life about?

ARABELLA:

Good food, community, and enlarging our hearts with Love?

MINA:

Observing beauty in everything we see...

KURT:

Sharpening your mind?...and beer?...and pizza?!

MAGDALENA:

Hey, I'll take a big heart over a sculpted mind, any day!

HENRI:

They might just come in the same package, with a bit of luck...

ARABELLA:

*<not so blithely ignoring Henri's inference>*

Maybe we're all correct? Might all of these things simply be dimensions of a life well lived?

MAGDALENA:

I often wonder...are we trapped, trapped in our past, trapped by our minds? Like now, we just wait for the power to come back on. But what if it never returns, ever? What would life be like then? Do we simply just need to let go of the past?

ARABELLA:

If we do let go of what we currently hold, we'll need to grab onto something else.

HENRI:

Which something else? There are a lot of options. And sometimes I don't seem to make the best choices...

MINA:

We all have an ideal path, and directional clues are being given to us all the time.

KURT:

Clues? OK, Sherlock, fill that in a bit for a dude who's sitting here hoping his slice of cheesecake isn't going to melt into a puddle...

MINA:

Yes, Dr. Kurt, clues. So let me give you an example. Let's say you dream of being in a big, Gotham-like metropolis. And the next day at breakfast you see a travel ad, touting seat sales to New York City. Someone at work then tells you of the great long weekend they just had in Greenwich Village. You could ignore all of this, but if you are observant, you might take the hint and reserve a spot on one of those seat sale flights. And in New York there will be a person or event or experience that will change your life immensely.

HENRI:

What if these are all mere coincidences? Surely random things just...happen?

MINA:

Carl Jung used the term meaningful coincidences, or synchronicities. Jung once had a client who dreamt of golden scarab beetles, and during one of her sessions, a large scarab beetle beat its wings against the window of the therapy room. It was a species of beetle never seen in Zurich, hundreds of miles outside its normal habitation zone.

KURT:

I was in Zurich once at a conference. Paid close to twenty bucks for a beer at a cafe in the central station...

MINA:

*(continuing):*

The scarab beetle was symbolically significant for her psychological healing, so some influence brought it up from Italy to central Switzerland. What seems unconnected to our rational eye is all meshed and linked together in some unseen fabric.

As the fabric of the universe unfolds, seemingly disparate things are brought together to give us the messages we need to live life more fully.

HENRI:

Oy! Mina, Mina, Mina...this is bordering on being ridiculous!

MAGDALENA:

Henri? Politeness, remember? Basic courtesy at all times?

KURT:

Nah, I'm with Henri on this. Life is random...we're just dust particles swirling around in a vast universe! There's no order to it all, just a pantload of disorder! So just please point me towards the dessert table!

MAGDALENA:

Gentlemen, calm down, please! Some of us might suggest that this evening's gathering is synchronous, either mildly or strongly. And it's up to us to make sense of what we have learned. Or not?

ARABELLA:

Friends, let's keep our priorities in order. I've been abdicating my duties as a good hostess. Dessert is on the counter!

*<Chuckles ensue, and the group moves toward the kitchen>*

*<lights dimming to black>*

#### **SCENE 4: OWNING THE DARKNESS**

*<Stage lights are dark for a count of ten seconds. Muted spotlights are then focused on the two parties engaged in a phone conversation, as they sit comfortably in their home or car environment>*

HENRI:

Allo?

JODY:

Hey Schnoogums, it's your gal pal...

HENRI:

Jody, to what do I owe the pleasure?

JODY:

Listen baby, I'll take my pleasure any way I can! Which brings me to the point of my call...will you be home in an hour or so?

HENRI:

I'm halfway through a longish ashtanga yoga YouTube, so yes, I'll be around...where are you now?

JODY:

I'm just outside <name of community at least 45 minutes away>, heading <direction back to town>. I had to run my deadbeat brother down to <name of a larger community at least 90 minutes away> for some business, and we're gunning it back home now.

HENRI:

Any problems <at the border/with the cops>?

JODY:

Ha, I get the same <customs/police> officer every time, and he's more intent on peeking down my blouse than looking in my trunk!

HENRI:

This is why the boss loves you so, Jody.

JODY:

Okay, I'll roll by with the packages and stay just long enough for a spirited roll in the hay, alright?!

HENRI:

Uh, I've been meaning to let you know that I've met someone. Une petite amie. So the benefits plan of our friendship is now going to have to come to an end. All good things have a season, and seasons change.

JODY:

Oh, how boring! Uhhh, we'll talk about it when I get there. But I bet we'll end up doing more than just talking! Toodles!

*<lighting disappears from Jody, and Henri dials a number, with Arabella becoming lit as she picks up her phone>*

ARABELLA:

Hello, Arabella here.

HENRI:

Miss Duke, just a quick call to let you know that your package will arrive soon.

ARABELLA:

I'm starting to worry about my little habit--might it have become more than just a pleasant diversion?

HENRI:

We all have habits tending towards addictions. Isn't that merely part of a complex life in our uncertain times?



ARABELLA:

What if we just simply terminated our business dealings?

HENRI:

As you wish, Arabella, but I certainly count on the revenue. You'll have to forgive your loan to me as balancing compensation.

ARABELLA:

Hardly fair at all! I'm starting to have my own cash flow problems, appearances notwithstanding. But perhaps you could come over to take care of other, uh, business, to whittle away at your debt?

HENRI:

I am many unenviable things, madame, but being a gigolo is not one of them! I think we'll just call things even. And if that doesn't sound quite right to your delicate ears, then consider how your reputation might suffer if I let a few people in the neighborhood know that you have quite the appetite for illegal fungi!

ARABELLA:

You wouldn't dare! What if I let a few well-placed friends in law enforcement know that my brooding neighbour peddles illicit substances and can't stay away from unlicensed gambling joints?

HENRI:

A lovely songbird can have a very high fall from her elevated perch. A lowly weasel might get wounded, but can hunker down in the underbrush, licking his wounds. I think we're even. And I will now bid you a good night.

*<The lighting goes off Henri. Arabella splutters, phone in hand, then dials a number. Gabriel is lit as he picks up the phone.>*

ARABELLA:

Gabriel?

GABRIEL:

Arabella?

ARABELLA:

How sweet, you recognized me immediately.

GABRIEL:

You have a very distinctive voice, dear friend.

ARABELLA:

Do you really think so? Mmmmmmm... might there be other things you find distinctive about me, Gabriel?

GABRIEL:

Well, I, uh...I'm not really sure what to say?

ARABELLA:

My hourglass figure? My lustrous hair? My exquisite fashion sense? Are these all appealing to you in some way?

GABRIEL:

Well, uh, yes, I suppose. But...this conversation is making me feel more than just a little uncomfortable.

ARABELLA:

Are you alone?

GABRIEL:

Yes, Mary's out tonight at her book club.

ARABELLA:

I just had the most unsettling phone conversation. A certain neighbour threatened to besmirch my reputation.

GABRIEL:

That sounds preposterous!

ARABELLA:

It is a pity that it's come to this, as he really is a fine looking young man, and his close proximity could have been quite convenient for certain endeavours. Do you see what I'm hinting at, Gabriel?

GABRIEL:

Well, no...I mean yes, I catch your drift. But, again, this line of conversation is leaving me in some discomfort.

ARABELLA:

A woman of my age and station has to be prudent, Gabriel, no matter how appealing a boy-toy may seem. But if I had regular meetings at my residence with a respectable gentleman like you, sir, we could explore themes of mutual interest. I'm speaking a bit discreetly here, but I think you can well interpret what I'm saying?

GABRIEL:

Arabella, for goodness sake...

ARABELLA:

I do have my shadow side, Gabriel, and I'm not afraid to explore it in a tangible way, despite my elevated reputation in this fine town. But what better way to navigate the depths of my shadow, than with someone who has an equally high reputation to protect?!

GABRIEL:

Goddamn it, Arabella, I'm a happily married man!!

MARY:

Gabesy, I'm home!

*<from off-stage>*

ARABELLA:

Your circumstances have shifted, sir. But just give my proposal some thought.

GABRIEL:

Hmmmpmph...ringing off now...

MARY:

Who was that dear?

*<Closer, but still off-stage>*

GABRIEL:

Oh, uh, duct cleaners...and here I thought they only called at supper time.

*<Lighting goes off Arabella, Gabriel sits there red-faced, while Mary putters away in the kitchen off-stage. Gabriel's phone rings, and Stephen becomes lit as his phone engages.>*

GABRIEL: (CONT'D)

What!?

STEPHEN:

Gabriel, oh my, you don't quite sound your normal self?

GABRIEL:

Stephen, oh terribly sorry, I thought it was someone else.

STEPHEN:

I won't take a lot of your time, but I really need a sounding board.

GABRIEL:

I'm all ears, my friend.

STEPHEN:

Right, where do I start? Perhaps with the most ridiculous. I've hinted in the past that my company has had some financial challenges, but these seem to have been mysteriously solved by an anonymous benefactor.

GABRIEL:

An angel investor?

STEPHEN:

Perhaps, but I simply don't know. I get these strange calls late at night, where I am directed to a hedge in a laneway that contains an envelope stuffed with cash. More than enough to pay my folks for a week.

GABRIEL:

That does sound strange! And you have no idea who's helping you?

STEPHEN:

None whatsoever. But it's been hinted that they know someone in my family.

GABRIEL:

So have you asked your wife, or your daughter?

STEPHEN:

I can't seem to muster up the courage to broach the subject. And what's more, they're rarely at home these days. My wife stumbles in well after I've gone to bed, and has usually gone out before I come back from work. And our girl is just never around, Gabriel. She texts me 'Out with friends', but never provides any details.

GABRIEL:

'Tis strange indeed. How might I help?

STEPHEN:

Just getting this off my chest has helped immensely, old boy. I've been doing lots of clearing and throwing things out lately, and this kind of mental decluttering is probably even more valuable. I'm simply going to let the mysteries of life unravel themselves. And how are things for you?

GABRIEL:

Fine, Stephen, fine. I know I have my own mysteries to unravel. You see, I've been thinking about what dreams I want to fulfill while I still have time. And I'm also bringing a bit more attention to my body, as I'm getting more and more messages that this ol' rental car has put on considerable mileage!

STEPHEN:

Things have a way of working out, Gabriel, as long as one stays true to what's important. Still though, it's a crazy world, isn't it?

## SCENE 5 SEEKING A NEW PATH

*<Corner of <name of street parallel to Main Street> and <cross street in residential neighbourhood>, in near-darkness conditions>*

GABRIEL:

*<breaks fourth wall, and speaks to audience>*

Ah, the best part of the evening is just after 10:00. Most people are either tucked in their beds, or heading that way. You pretty much have the street to yourself in this little town. I often step out and do a few blocks around the neighbourhood, as it puts me in a good frame of mind for nodding off. Particularly with no power, no streetlights. Simply magical, reminds me of the Great Blackout of '03...

KURT:

*<comes in quickly from the left side>*

Gabriel? It's so dark and shadowy, I could have almost knocked you down!

GABRIEL:

Ha, wouldn't be the first time! Remember that day we met?

KURT:

Oh man, that was a rough start! I have become a lot more careful when riding my bike...

GABRIEL:

So no bicycle tonight?

KURT:

Nah, way too dark. And sometimes I just like to amble. Best way to think...

GABRIEL:

Whatcha thinking about?

KURT:

Well, my book...uh, that sounds a bit too hopeful. Okay, some chapters that I think might lead to a book.

GABRIEL:

Dare I ask? What's your book about?

KURT:

That's the problem, man. I'm bouncing all over the place. My **<appointment's/position's>** in the Cultural Studies department, but what in the heck does that really mean?

GABRIEL:

Cultural stuff, I guess? Museums, art galleries?

KURT:

No, more like people and their cultures. What makes them and their tribe tick.

GABRIEL:

OK, more like anthropology? Sociology?

KURT:

Yeah, I guess. Somewhere in the space between those two fields and the 6:00 news. Woke culture, y'know?

GABRIEL:

Hmmm, I'm a bit old school, but I think I catch your drift...

KURT:

BLM, BIPOC, 2SLGBTG+, all of that rolled up in a big untidy ball. So that's what I'm writing about, but it seems like a moving target.

GABRIEL:

I grew up near DC in the 60s, with lots of bad stuff around that needed to be corrected. My Dad was a preacher man, and ran an inner city support centre cum food bank.

KURT:

Wow, you must have had your eyes opened up at an early age?

GABRIEL:

Oh yeah, big time. Saw my Dad help so many people, who were down and out because of the system. He was white, but he felt he was just helping out his black brothers and sisters. Everyone bleeds red, he would say. And the streets weren't safe, so we saw a lot of bloodshed.

KURT:

Wow, that's service...

GABRIEL:

But it didn't seem to change a thing. Here we are fifty years later, where racism is still so prevalent, and everything has become so racialized.

KURT:

Maybe things are a bit better up here in Canada?

GABRIEL:

I thought so at one time. That's why I came up here for university and then I met Mary, and we stayed here because we thought the frozen North was better. But now I'm not so sure...

KURT:

Aw, c'mon man, you're making this proud Canuck squirm!

GABRIEL:

But look at how we have treated our Indigenous folks, any better than the Yanks have treated their black people?

KURT:

We certainly didn't have slavery on a massive scale!

GABRIEL:

Yeah, but we rolled in, stole their land, stole their kids, and snuffed out their languages? Packed them into sub-standard housing, with poisoned water? We're just as bad or perhaps even worse!

KURT:

Okay, okay, let me absorb that gut punch...so how do we move forward?

GABRIEL:

Easy, in some ways. Just recognize the inherent worth of everyone you meet. Equals, brothers and sisters all.

KURT:

That's it?!

GABRIEL:

Yep, it's pretty much that simple. I'm not saying it's that easy to expedite, but we have plenty of smart folks like you to work out the details. Sometimes a brother just needs a helping hand. And we have plenty of brothers who have the capacity to help.

KURT:

A ton of people are going to howl, 'How do we pay for it?!'

GABRIEL:

Even that's simple, with principled leadership and gutsy tax reform. But we've got to do it soon before we slip into an abyss!

KURT:

OK, OK, I'm sold! I think I've just figured out how to wrap up my book...let go of the old ways of doing things and embrace the new!

GABRIEL:

You could slap that up on a billboard! Just make sure to write it from your heart, bro!

*<the two men lock in a tight bear hug, before stepping off in separate directions>*

## **SECOND INTERLUDE**

MINA:

*<sits quietly on her meditation chair, glowing with her special light.>*

*There is a projection of dogs, cats, coyotes, deer, wild turkey and other local fauna on a background elevated screen>*

Our domesticated animals are awakening. They are being moved by subtle siren songs from their wilder kin. Their role as teachers and healers of their human keepers will now take on an even greater prominence. Who knows what might be just around the corner?

<LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK, THEN COME ON TO INTERMISSION INTENSITY>



**INTERMISSION (15 MINUTES)**

**ACT III: GRASPING A NEW REALITY****SCENE 3: TURNING THE CALENDAR**

*<Two evenings later, at the <name of local gallery or museum>, a candlelit presentation by Mr. Stephen Tucker of the local Masonic Lodge is just wrapping up>*

STEPHEN:

The ancient Mayan astronomers and mystics could see forward to a time when things would change drastically. Perhaps not in the outside world, but inside of us, in how we perceive each other and ourselves. We all know many things have changed since the turbulent events of the past few years, and many of us lead very different lives than we used to. Some of us may have already let go of the old ways, others will take a bit longer. But if the Maya were right, the die is cast, and we will all ultimately let go. Let's at least stay open to the possibility....you've been a great audience...

*<lights dim and the crowd disperses...>*

*<Magdalena and Henri stand outside on the steps of the Museum, taking in the gentle night air and murmuring pleasantries to one another>*

MAGDALENA:

So now we're at two days and counting. Do you think this could be another long one?

HENRI:

Hard to say, Magdalena. It flickered on twelve hours back, and I momentarily felt hopeful. But then it thudded back off. Although with nightfall approaching, it's kind of romantic, no?

MAGDALENA:

You've got a one-track mind, Lothario! At least it's not holding us back from enjoying life. What a great talk we just heard, and this afternoon I took in a hilarious Punch-and-Judy puppet show in the <name of local well-used park>!

*<They both light up when they see Arabella, who comes out in a vivacious and perspiring manner, with Stephen Tucker in tow>*

ARABELLA:

C'mon you two, join us for a beverage at the coffee shop. I believe they've extended their summer closing hours due to the grid stoppage, as people just need to get out of the house.

MAGDALENA:

Sounds good, we had no real plans beyond walking you home, Arabella. And this will allow us to ask the questions that we were just too timid to pose at the end of Stephen's talk.

HENRI:

*<They walk along and physically gesture at throngs of people out on the sidewalks>*

Hey, we need the grid to fall silent more often, if we want to see more life on the street! People love to hide at home when the juice is flowing.

*<They enter the patio of the cafe and order local cherry juice. They sit at a table, wedged beside another table where a young woman sits. She nurses her glass of juice and stares down at her book, trying to avoid eye contact. She is reading a copy of Eckhart Tolle's The Power of Now>*

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Hey, what up? We've just come from a stimulating talk on the Mayan Calendar, delivered by our friend Stephen here, and now we find ourselves plunked down beside you, mademoiselle! Might you join us at our table?

AMY:

Nah...I'm busy reading.

HENRI:

I see that, and it's super rad to actually see a zoomer reading!

AMY:

I read all the time, dude. Like books, and on my phone. I've got no time to sit and survey the mental landscape of middle-aged entitlements!

HENRI:

Hey, we were just talking the other day about the growing generational divide, so we'd be honoured if you'd share your hard-earned youthful wisdom with us old farts! C'mon, pretty please? Join us for just a little bit...

AMY:

Uh...well...okay...I guess, but I do need to go soon.

*<Introductions are made all around, awkwardly>*

MAGDALENA:

So what's so intriguing about what you're reading?

AMY:

Well, I watch the author on YouTube, and he's hilarious, without trying to be hilarious. He's got this neat voice, with a cool old-fashioned Germanic accent, and whatever he says seems to make so much sense to me...

ARABELLA:

I must say I'm a bit envious, as most of what I see on YouTube seems to make absolutely no sense at all...

STEPHEN:

Same for me...it must be generational...

MAGDALENA:

So, what makes so much sense?

AMY:

Well, for one thing, that we think too much. Life's messed up, right? And we have pretty much created all of this chaos with our thinking. So we need to watch our thoughts, which always seem to dwell on either the past or the future. Instead, we need to come back to the Now, and just be. Try it for a moment, and when you do, you start seeing things differently and you start noticing the beauty around you. I used to be totally pessimistic, like rampant nihilistic. Disillusioned, teenage torments...it drove my Mom and Dad crazy. But now things don't drag me down as much as they used to...

*<halfway through Amy's monologue, Rick Denton hovers at the alleyway to the side of the cafe, in partial light. He is joined by a shadowy unkempt figure. Rick looks over at the party on the cafe patio, and deftly slides an envelope to the shadowy figure, and they both step away quickly in opposite directions>*

AMY: (CONT'D)

*<continues on, as the furtive interaction is concluded>*

And another cool thing, is how we relate to the concept of time. In this dude's world there is no past, there is no future, there is only the Now. What time is it? Now. Wait a few heartbeats. What time is it? Still Now.

HENRI:

A lot of my early jobs were in factories, punching a time clock! I used to have dreams, big dreams, about what I was going to accomplish over time. But as more of my life has gone by, I can kinda start to see what you're saying, if only imperfectly. Perhaps within all of the imperfection, I need to imagine a new set of dreams?

ARABELLA:

So this is why it seems like I get nothing done in a day! I'm always just resting in the Now...

HENRI:

Even moreso during the evenings, 'Bella...

ARABELLA:

Not fair, mister, and you are certainly one to talk...

*<Magdalena cocks her head suspiciously in the direction of Henri>*

HENRI:

OK, sorry, sorry, sorry...the mouth is such a moist place, it's so easy for the tongue to slip!

*<Both Magdalena and Arabella frown and purse their lips in the direction of Henri>*

AMY:

Always fun to hang around adults, if only for the inherent awkwardness...

STEPHEN:

Now that we have concluded that there really is no such thing such as time, I am loathe to suggest that the hour is late and I must get home to my wife! But I have certainly enjoyed this post-presentation chat, and wish you all a very pleasant evening.

*<The three neighbours walk with Amy a bit before she splits off to her condo building. Arabella and Henri on the outsides, with Magdalena in the middle, the three laughing at witty nothings and linking arms. At one point, Arabella turns to Magdalena and finds her younger friend glowing. A bit later, Henri leans toward his new petite amie and is startled to see light emanating from her profile. He blinks twice, but the effect holds steady. Henri cranes his neck to look at Arabella, who appears normal in the twilight. When he returns his gaze to Magdalena and leans heavily into her, she is now back to normal, and saucily digs an elbow into his ribs>*

MAGDALENA:

Keep your distance, Romeo.

*<lights jump to black>*

**SCENE 1: A RISING TIDE MOVES ALL BOATS UPWARDS**

*<Stage lighting returns to normal, Pre-Grid Failure, intensity>*

KURT:

Cripes, that was a long five days! Hotter than hell, and with no chance of any A/C!

GABRIEL:

Challenging for sure, but tempers generally stayed in check and everyone helped one another in a whole bunch of ways. Like this old-fashioned wood-fired barbecue we're going to put on for the good folks who live here in **<local affordable housing>**.

*<Gabriel and Kurt start setting up shop for the barbecue, waiting for the butcher's van to roll in>*

*<Across the lawn, Magdalena and Amy sit quietly together very comfortably and spend most of the time in silence, with their eyes closed>*

MAGDALENA:

Let the sounds of the creek come into your consciousness, as if you are hearing a language being spoken that you have not yet learned.

AMY:

Yep, ahhh...that beautiful burbling sound is percolating through...and to think that when I first met you I just wanted to hang by myself and read a book!

MAGDALENA:

We've all been young and shy, Amy. People come across your path for a reason. Now, just close your eyes, and see what comes to you in your mind's eye...

AMY:

I think I'm getting the hang of this, and it's pretty cool...

MAGDALENA:

*<Amy opens her eyes and looks at Magdalena, who keeps her eyes closed>*

Keep your eyes closed, Amy. Focus, focus, focus.

*<Amy closes her eyes and scrunches her cheeks>*

Focus and relax, relax, relax.

*<Amy's face takes on an impassive angelic cast>*

I think you've got it now...

*<Kurt and Gabriel saunter over after completing their setup, but then awkwardly loiter a few metres away from the two women, listening in while giving off an air of false nonchalance>*

AMY:

What are you experiencing?

MAGDALENA:

I had a vision of me lying down on the grass here, then I went a bit higher and could see both of us lying by the creek, and then I went even higher and could see the creek and its ribbon of greenspace amidst the rooftops of the homes in the neighbourhood.

KURT:

Hold on, there Mags...I was just standing here, minding my own business, waiting to slap some burgers on the 'cue, y'know? But then I overheard you, and I went like, what the heck? You mean you were seeing these things in your imagination, right, since your eyes were closed?

MAGDALENA:

No, Kurt. I know it's subtle and a bit nuanced, but I saw them with my consciousness. You don't need your physical vision to see.

GABRIEL:

No?

MAGDALENA:

No, definitely not. To illustrate, let's all try an experiment.

*<addresses her fellow players, but also breaks the Fourth Wall and addresses the audience>*

Everyone close your eyes. Now think of your Mom. Can you see her? Can you see minute details of her face? Her hair? Her nose? Of course you can, we all can. But your eyes are closed, so you all have the capacity to see without your physical vision.

*<addresses the audience again>*

OK, peepers wide open, folks!

KURT:

But I see good ol' Mom in my imagination! I have a strong mental image of her, so I see that, no?

GABRIEL:

Ahhh, now hold on a second, this is reminding me of a Fringe Festival performance I saw a number of years back. The performer did a rendition of a century-past exhibition by a mysterious Signor Falconi. Falconi used to tape coins over his eyes and blindfold himself, and `saw' all manner of things through the fingertips of his right hand. He was quite the sensation in Europe in his day, and the Fringe chap proved to be pretty flawless himself. I didn't know what to make of it at the time, but now you've really got me thinking.

MAGDALENA:

What Falconi did, and thousands before and after him, was hone his ability to do what is called remote viewing. In essence, we all have the ability to see things near or far without our physical vision. It could be close by, or halfway around the world. It's been said that the CIA's funded this kind of work for years, but for nefarious purposes.

KURT:

You mean all that nonsense we saw in The Men Who Stare at Goats?

MAGDALENA:

Not everything in Hollywood is made up, sir...

GABRIEL:

I think my wife loves George Clooney...

MAGDALENA:

I'm not surprised! And some even might suggest you can remotely view the future, so it's not just seeing across distance, but also across time.

AMY:

You mean I can take a peek into the future?

MAGDALENA:

With the right caveats, yes. Peering across distance is relatively easy. But once you try to look into the future, you have to realize things can get a bit fuzzy. We shape the future with our decisions of today, and our thoughts of today. So, at best, you have to squint your 'eyes' a bit and pick out the most probable future.

AMY:

Have you ever, like, done this?

MAGDALENA:

Absolutely, just now. After I saw the creek I went up, up, up above the Earth and through, through, through to a future time.



GABRIEL:

So what did you see, Magdalena?

MAGDALENA:

Well, with the caveats I have already mentioned, two things stood out. One, the Earth was a very lush and green place. I won't comment on the coastlines, but what was left remaining looked very beautiful indeed.

KURT:

Oh great, we'll all be under water but at least the trees will survive!

MAGDALENA:

Two, when I looked down at our community, pretty much all I could see were points of light moving around. These points of light were connected to one another in a glowing, gossamer-like, filament network. It was a bit like the streetlights you see when you descend into a city in a plane at night, but imagine a fluid network of streetlights, all connected with one another. It sounds strange, I know, but that's what kept coming to me, over and over.

AMY:

It sounds absolutely flippin' amazing...

GABRIEL:

Well, I just know I'm going to have some wild dreams tonight...

*<Magdalena catches sight of Mina Patel, walking towards them along the bank of creek. Mina is glowing with her special light, almost luminous in nature>*

MAGDALENA:

Mina, how nice to see you.

MINA:

It's always a pleasure to see you, dear Magdalena.

MAGDALENA:

You look lovely, but decidedly different. You have a glow about you, moreso than your usual self. You are feeling well, I trust?

MINA:

This has been my situation for some time now. It had come to me here and there over the last few months, but yesterday it settled in to stay. I have been meditating more and more, and hardly sleeping, so I simply meditate throughout the night. But I rarely feel tired, funnily enough. Though lately, people on the street have been shooting me funny looks!

*<Magdalena and Amy stare at Mina, then give each other a sideways glance>*

MAGDALENA:

Oh, I'm so sorry! Mina, do you know Amy Wu?

MINA:

I do now, it's nice to meet you my dear...Kurt, Gabriel, always a pleasure...

GABRIEL:

Dear Mina, we've become good friends, so let me be candid. One must be balanced in life, and perhaps too much of a good thing can lead to some kind of imbalance?

MINA:

But I have never felt better in my life, except for my blessed days in India as a child!

KURT:

There are anthropological accounts from a lot of cultures where shaman dudes step away from the chop-wood-haul-water paradigm, and zone out for months or even years. Sounds kinda bonkers, but this is what researchers have seen in the field!

GABRIEL:

I don't know about all of that, but to my eye Mina, you have always had such beautiful skin. And today, I would say you are positively glowing!

*<All four look at Mina in a very direct way, and she looks back at them just as directly. Magdalena repositions herself to Mina's side and holds Mina's hand>*

*<sounds of roiling water and some particularly melodic birdsong>*

*<The others see Magdalena take on the beautiful glow that is in Mina. Gabriel notices it first and stiffens a bit, followed by Amy who shyly averts her gaze, and then by Kurt who stands there scratching his head>*

GABRIEL: (CONT'D)

I think I'm going to have to go home and lay down...

*<turns and shuffles away, looking back furtively over his shoulder>*

KURT:

I think I gotta lay down too, but I might just do it right here by the creek...

*<lowering himself to the ground>*

AMY:

I'm going home to have some lunch. But I've got to stop eating so much meat, as it's starting to play tricks on my mind!

*<edges away, but looks back a few times>*

*<Magdalena and Mina stroll along the edge of the Spencer Creek, communicating without words, both glowing like moonlight on a bed of softly fallen snow>*

*<Stage lights fade to black, and their emerging Light holds for a count of three before the stage goes completely dark>*

## **SCENE 2: PERFECT IN EVERY WAY**

*<Magdalena busily lays out yoga mats in the loft of the <local gallery, school or community centre>, in preparation for a combined exercise, yoga and meditation class. Kurt and Gabriel come in next, boisterous in tone and wearing garish exercise clothing that has been obtained from the Bibles for Missions Store. Mina comes in a few seconds later, quietly and purposefully. She sits cross-legged on a mat and smiles at the others. The other folk look shyly back at her, with stolen glances, since she still has the glowing countenance that she exhibited yesterday beside the creek. And then it becomes clear to them that Magdalena has also retained this attribute>*

MAGDALENA:

Alright, kind folks, down to business! First off, let's limber up, and then do some old-school burpees and jumping jacks. Gabriel, make sure Kurt doesn't slack off here.

*<some catchy music swirls up, as a background to the whirl of activity that ensues, and then the room goes quiet as Magdalena brings everyone to focus>*

Okay, okay...I'll now guide you through some yoga poses that we'll hold for some time, really letting the muscles stretch so we can go deeper within to find our true centre.

*<On the second posture in, after holding the downward dog for a good little while, Kurt's lower back goes into an apparent spasm. He groans and rolls on his side, and within seconds Gabriel and Magdalena are there, encouraging him to relax and take deep breaths>*

KURT:

Every so often my lower back goes out on me! Arrrrgggghhh! I swear it's the curse of every academic, since we sit on our duffs all day! Uh, folks, don't worry about me, please carry on. I'll just limp off to the side here and die a slow death. Arrrrgggghhh! But I may make a considerable ruckus in the process! Arrrrgggghhh!

MAGDALENA:

Kurt, just take a deep breath and I'll talk you through some healing principles that I've learned over the years...

KURT:

I think I might have a slipped disc! It's deep and it's bad! My Dad was a truck driver, and I think he passed me the bad back gene! If I was a horse you'd just take me out behind the barn and shoot me!

MAGDALENA:

So the premise is pretty simple. The Divine is in essence pure Love. We can connect to this pure loving Essence, and realize that we are a reflection of that Love.

KURT:

That's more irritating than reassuring, Mags! Painkillers, that's what I need! Painkillers, people, please?!!

MAGDALENA:

We can get our minds in resonance and our hearts in sync with this beautiful loving Force, and then some amazing healing can take place.

*<Gabriel listens, his eyes as wide as saucers>*

KURT:

Gabriel, help me out here, buddy?! Remember that war story you told me about your last football game in university, where your knee got so twisted that your foot was pointing backwards? That's the pain level I'm dealing with here, man!

GABRIEL:

That one incident spelled the end of my dream of becoming a **<name of a well-known, semi-local football team moniker>**! But I had just got hit by a three hundred pound lineman, mister. You were simply just doing a downward dog!

MAGDALENA:

So Kurt, just pause and connect with your heart to that Source you communicate with when you meditate. Hold that connection deeply and steadfastly.

*<The room goes quiet. Mina has her eyes closed. Kurt groans and thrashes repeatedly, with increasing gaps of time between each bout. The others look over at Magdalena, whose sweet visage has taken on the same luminosity and clarity emanating from Mina. To balance this effect, she saucily sticks out her tongue at all of them. Kurt then sits up quickly.>*

KURT:

Guys, my back spasm is gone. Completely gone!

MINA:

*<calls this out in a stage whisper>*  
You've had a deep healing, dear Kurt...

KURT:

Nahhhh, punked 'ya! My back was actually fine, I just hate yoga so much that I needed an escape hatch!

GABRIEL:

You little bum! I haven't been fooled like that since high school!

KURT:

Hey Gabesy, some say lecturing is three quarters theatre. So either go big or go home!

GABRIEL:

I'll get you back, young man! One thing I learned from my playing days was to never get mad, just get even!

MINA:

With all of that sports talk, you gentlemen seem to be thinking alike, have you ever considered that your minds may be joined?

KURT:

Hey, I have grown to love this gentleman since that first time I fell into his arms, catapulting off my bike!

*<laughing>*

But joined brains... that may be going too far.

*<gives Gabriel a playful elbow in the ribs, who in turn yields his best mock grimace>*

MINA:

No, your brains are the soft grey matter in each of your skulls, and these are distinct masses of flesh. But I said joined minds, that which relates to something deeper and not physically-based.

GABRIEL:

Ah, I see what Mina is driving at...I remember reading a book about the energy field that connects us all and connects us across time. Sort of like a joined mind.

MINA:

When we meditate we get in sync with the Divine Mind, and once we do that, watch out! There will be no limits on what we can achieve.

*<looks impassively from person to person>*

GABRIEL:

OK, Mina, I'm up for the challenge! I'm going to go quiet and visualize my mind joined with all the other minds here, and then going outwards I'll envision that we're all joined to Source. Bear with me for a bit.

*<A moment goes by, or perhaps it is much longer. When they open their eyes, it is evident to all that Gabriel has now joined the ranks of Mina and Magdalena, glowing translucently and smiling broadly. Kurt looks at the three of them, a bit dumbstruck>*

KURT:

Holy crap, I've really got to stop hanging out with you guys! Like whatever this is, it could be big-time contagious...

*<Lights fade to black, with three distinct glowing lights>*

### **SCENE 3: GOING BY THE BOOK**

*<Mid-week, as the Summer spins along towards its inevitable end, and a number of folks sit for a glass of watermelon lemonade at the patio of the cafe. At one table in a leaf-shadowed corner sit Henri and Magdalena, engaged in whispered conversation. In another shady corner sit Stephen, Amy and Mina. In between the two tables, sitting in bright sunshine, is Rick Denton. Rick says good morning to everyone whose path he crosses, but rarely goes beyond that. Today he sits with a large brown duffel bag beneath his feet, and has the announcements section of the local paper flattened out on the table before him. Pen in hand, he is studiously making notes and frequently looks up to check to see if someone is looking at him. No drink is on his table, but he issues a stream of light banter to every member of the wait staff that walks by, giving the ongoing impression he is waiting for someone to join him before he orders. But no one will ultimately join him for a beverage.>*

*Back at the one table, Mina is smiling kindly at Amy, who has just finished a lengthy diatribe about the ineffectiveness of her high school education>*

AMY:

And that's why I find high school so underwhelming...

MINA:

I don't disagree with you, Amy. Our educational system is far from perfect.

STEPHEN:

You know, ten or twenty years ago, they were labeling every other kid as ADHD, and pumping them full of meds. Now they're getting kids with ants in their pants out in nature for half the day!

AMY:

But a lot of my friends still just sleep through class!

MINA:

Why don't we start high school at 10 AM? We all know teenagers should not be up before 9! Perhaps kick off the day with standing yoga positions, guided meditation or some chanting. Very powerful activities to facilitate learning, and also a bit of fun?

STEPHEN:

Yes, get kids meditating! Test scores go way up, school violence goes way down. With peace prevailing in the corridors, you might actually be able to get down to some learning.

AMY:

All good, for sure, but what about the really cool stuff, like remote viewing? The first I heard of this was this Summer, and not from one of my teachers.

STEPHEN:

Just reminds me of the old Mark Twain quote: 'I never let my schooling get in the way of my formal education'.

AMY:

My parents can be talked into allowing me to do just about anything, as long as it makes my grades higher! They're happy that I'm not rebelling anymore, just for the sake of rebelling...and truth be told, the drama was getting pretty old...

*<As Amy speaks, Henri stands up to go inside to the loo. He passes by Rick Denton, slows down, and then retraces his steps back to Rick's table.*

*Henri stands over the patio table, glaring down at Rick as he reads his newspaper. Rick doesn't look up. Henri clears his throat in a most guttural way. Rick looks up and then sideways, showing a tiny flicker of fear>*

RICK:

Yeah, what up, dude?

HENRI:

Something seem's a bit fishy...

RICK:

The fish counter's over at the *<name of local chain grocery store>*, bud. I recommend the tilapia.

HENRI:

I couldn't help but notice as I walked by...

*<points downward>*

There is something inside your bag that I believe belongs to my neighbour.

RICK:

Well, let me tell you, I just came from a little shopping at the Bibles for Missions Store, and perhaps I did pick up something that your neighbour donated to them. This happens all the time, Chuck. One man's junk is another man's treasure.

HENRI:

Oh, are you referring to this?

*<deftly reaches into the duffel bag and pulls out a handful of heavy and exquisite silverware. He sits down beside Rick, pulling up his chair uncomfortably close>*

My friend and neighbour, Arabella Duke, has old family silverware with a beautifully etched 'D' on the handles. I have never seen such fine pieces anywhere outside of her formal dining room. Are you trying to tell me that she dropped these off at the Bible Store?

RICK:

Listen, friend, all kinds of people do all kinds of things with their excess stuff. Maybe it came from another family with the last name starting with 'D'? Who knows? And who the hell cares?

HENRI:

Okay, so let's see what else you supposedly purchased at the Bible Store. Pull it all out and put it on the table, and then maybe I'll walk away...



RICK:

Pal, let me tell you, nobody in his right mind asks you to empty your goddamn duffel bag in a cafe! Now piss off!

*<Henri takes matters in hand in a split second of eye shifting, grabbing the handles of the duffel bag and setting it on the top of the table. Under Rick's fuming gaze, he unzips the bag fully and unpacks its contents: Ten knives, all with the emblazoned Duke family 'D.' Under them he finds several pocket watches, followed by four stunning gold necklaces, a pearl choker, and a cased collector's edition of Robertson Davies' Deptford Trilogy. At that moment, Magdalena comes over, sensing Henri might need some moral support>*

MAGDALENA:

Henri, are you setting up for a high-end garage sale?

HENRI:

I was just stepping away to the facilities, and thought I saw some of Arabella's silverware in this guy's bag. I called him out, and he made up some crap about shopping at the charity store! And then I empty out the bag, and it looks like a blend of Holt Renfrew and the Antique Roadshow! Given all the recent thefts in town, I think we're going to have to walk across the street to the police.

*<grabs Rick roughly by the wrist>*

RICK:

Get your bloody hands off me...and you're dreaming if you think my shadow will ever cross the door of the cop shop...let me explain...

HENRI:

Go ahead, man. We've got all day...

RICK:

I've lived in town a long time, so I know who's doing well, and who maybe needs some help.

Ever since The Changes, and all the economic troubles that started with the pandemic lockdowns, even more people needed a helping hand. I just happen to know how to get past a security alarm, so it's not break and enter, okay? I take only stuff that's very portable, and I leave quietly without a trace.

MAGDALENA:

Oh my, Rick, I normally see you downtown on the bench...hmmm, but I guess I have seen you more than once lurking around our neighbourhood. So what in God's name do you do with all of this hot stuff?

RICK:

Listen, Mags, I really don't owe you any explanation...

HENRI:

Yes, you do....out with it, dammit!

*<Henri grabs Rick by the neck, which he indignantly shrugs off>*

RICK:

Okay, okay, but hands off the merchandise, okay?!  
Every week I slide into *<name of a city an hour or more away>* with the spoils, visit a few pawnshop guys I know or even make the odd run down to *<name of an even more distant city>*, and then I roll back with a big wad of bills.

HENRI:

Ah, so this is about padding your bank account?

RICK:

No, dude, I live pretty darn simply. Most of the cash goes into an anonymous donation to the Food Bank, or a hundred bucks in an envelope under the door to families who I know need a hand. And I sleep very well at night. The people I take stuff from have way more than they will ever need. Steal from the rich, and give to the poor! Yep, I loved reading Robin Hood when I was a kid!

HENRI:

But it's against the law, man, and the kind lady you pilfered from has been more than traumatized by knowing that someone has invaded her personal space. I really do think we need to go see the police.

RICK:

Henri, if I heard correctly? Henri LaMontagne? If what my little sister has hinted at is true, it's pretty rich that you're suggesting we should go chat up the constables!

MAGDALENA:

Henri, do you know this fellow's sister?

HENRI:

No...I don't believe so...

RICK:

Not too many guys named Henri in this tiny burgh, and from what Jody has hinted at, her Henri spends a good chunk of his miserable life playing in the shadows!

MAGDALENA:

'Her Henri'? Henri, who's this Jody?

HENRI:

A business associate, but she's not at all relevant to the discussion at hand. I'll get this silverware back to our dear friend, perhaps even without her direct knowledge. We'll take the other goods to the station as found objects, and they'll make their way back to their rightful owners. And you sir, will get the hell out of here, and now!

RICK:

Uh, marginally acceptable under the circumstances, but I want you to know that my intentions were always honourable...

HENRI:

I swear, if I ever see you around Arabella's house again, I will thrash you within an inch of your life!

*<The threat hardly registers as Rick lithely steps away to the street exit, leaving the pilfered goods and his trademark duffel bag without so much as a backward glance. Magdalena and Henri walk back uneasily to their table, but then stop at the trio's table upon receiving a subtle hand wave from Stephen>*

STEPHEN:

I'm afraid duty calls, so I can't linger further, but do sit down and satisfy the curiosity of these two before they fairly burst!

*<Stephen steps off to the street>*

AMY:

OK, what just went down there?

MAGDALENA:

In a roundabout way, we have recovered a good number of items that have gone mysteriously missing from our homes over the past little while. It was all done with good intentions, to help people who are struggling, so we'll just turn the page...

HENRI:

Break-and-Enter Bernie! Light-fingered Louie! There are many names for petty criminals...

MAGDALENA:

Turn the page, Henri, flip the parchment...

MINA:

I have observed Rick many times on my daily walks. He would often be on <name of street with affluent homes> Street and would almost always have his duffel bag. I suppose I should have unraveled the puzzle before now.

AMY:

Why would someone break the law just so they could help poor folks?

MAGDALENA:

I think most things in life come down to a person's level of consciousness.

HENRI:

Oh, not this bullshit again! He's a scoundrel, through and through. Let's call a spade a spade!

MINA:

Rick's actions were controlled by his ego, which hovers largely in some emotional zone. He figured out a way to smooth out a few of the disparities in society to a certain degree, and then his ego made it become habitual. It's a constant battle, to vanquish one's ego.

HENRI:

My ego seems to get me into a lot of trouble...

MAGDALENA:

We need our ego for certain things. Taking a shower, combing our hair, putting on some nice duds to go out. If we didn't care what society thought of us, life would look pretty tattered!

AMY:

I'm trying to burn off my ego...

MINA:

Life is a balancing act, and we all have different fulcrum points.

MAGDALENA:

I am feeling different these days...

MINA:

When one's inner landscape gets in order, the outer shell will reflect that sense of order. The way you're feeling is no accident...it comes from a process of subtle evolution.

AMY:

So we're evolving to become what?

MAGDALENA:

It's a mystery that seems to be unfolding right before our eyes...

*<During this explanation, Henri grows very quiet and looks deeply at the translucent Mina. Amy looks to Mina, and shudders slightly as if goosebumps are washing over her.*

*Amy then looks at Henri, who flickers a bit and then glows with the most beautiful light she has ever seen. And in turn, Magdalena looks at Amy, and sees the same suffused peace emanating from her face. All four sit quietly at their table, looking at one another and basking in their communal light.>*

*<Stage lights fade to half-intensity for a five count, with four distinct glowing lights, and then stage lights fade to black.>*

#### **SCENE 4: PENETRATION OF LIGHT**

*<Stage lights are dark for a count of ten seconds. Muted spotlights are then focused on the two parties engaged in a phone conversation, as they sit comfortably in their home environment>*

ARABELLA:

Hello, dear neighbour.

HENRI:

Bon soir, madame. I wasn't sure if we would ever have another late night conversation. I am afraid to say that I have no more product, as I've gotten right out of the business.

ARABELLA:

No, I'm just calling to close the loop. Tie off any loose ends. I've stepped away from my need for any substances. Cold turkey. It came to me in a dream that I needed to change. To change many things.

HENRI:

Well, perhaps I shared the same dream. Because it has become patently clear that many changes need to be made in my own life as well. And if I continue to hang on to what I'm holding, things will become very painful as they are pried away from my fingers. But if I just let them go, if we just let them go, the way forward could become very clear.

ARABELLA:

How lovely...It's so good to have a neighbour who's on the same wavelength.

HENRI:

Bonne soiree, cher Arabella.

ARABELLA:

Bonne soiree aussi, cher Henri.

*<Arabella goes dark, Stephen is gradually lit>*

HENRI:

*<since Henri now knows Stephen, all of his lines for this section of the scene will be voiced through a hostage-taker voice modulator device, or some reasonable facsimile, to dampen and distort Henri's Gallic accent>*

Mr. Tucker, I have details of another package.

STEPHEN:

I have no further need of your money, sir.

HENRI:

No?

STEPHEN:

Without going into too much detail, I recently found out why my accounts were so deep in the red. My wife does my firm's accounting, and she also had a hellacious gambling habit. She was robbing Peter to pay Paul, and there were precious few shekels left over for my workers.

HENRI:

I'm taking time to process this...

STEPHEN:

Listen, I don't know who in the hell you are! But our conversations have become more like talking to a priest in a confessional booth! My wife's now in addiction therapy, after my cop shop buddies raided a backroom gambling joint here in town.

HENRI:

Gambling is an awful disease. I...

STEPHEN:

And while I'm spilling the beans, mister, let me go for broke! You told me you worked for someone close to one of my family, well I suppose that would be my daughter.

HENRI:

I wouldn't want to...

STEPHEN:

But I've taken care of that as well. I cornered my girl, and found out who she's been hanging around with. And then I set a trap for this so-called boyfriend. And that's the last we'll hear from him. I didn't really need his dirty money, but the process was necessary for me to help my daughter get free of his clutches.

HENRI:

I don't know what to...

STEPHEN:

So overall I should thank you. Not for the money, but for the knowledge it unleashed to help me save my family.

HENRI:

It's my great...

STEPHEN:

But if you ever cross paths with me again, you will surely rue the day you took up this scurrilous work!

*<lights go to black, with Gabriel and Arabella being lit up in turn>*

ARABELLA:

Gabriel, my old friend?

GABRIEL:

Good evening, Arabella. Yikes, this does feel a bit awkward.

ARABELLA:

It's a night of tying up loose ends, and I need to apologize for my previous indiscretion. I hope I didn't create any problems, domestically.

GABRIEL:

No, nothing of substance. It's all forgotten.

ARABELLA:

Maybe I should just leave it at that.

GABRIEL:

Yes, perhaps. But please know the situation was not unflattering.

ARABELLA:

A gentleman to the end. So I can see you on <name of Main Street> and hail you without embarrassment?

GABRIEL:

A mere blush may rise in my cheeks...

ARABELLA:

And so again we're getting dangerously playful! Perhaps we should retreat to our higher senses.

GABRIEL:

The view from the mountaintop is sublime. Thanks for calling, Arabella.

ARABELLA:

The pleasure was mine, or almost mine, dear Gabriel...

*<Arabella's lighting goes dark, Gabriel hangs up, but his phone quickly rings and lighting on Stephen is engaged>*

GABRIEL:

Stephen, old sport?

STEPHEN:

I just needed to hear the voice of Maestro Dunlop!

GABRIEL:

Well, you certainly sound like your normal chipper self?!

STEPHEN:

I'm not out of the woods yet, but I really do feel such an ascendancy in my mood!

GABRIEL:

Things have resolved themselves?

STEPHEN:

Largely, but can one really expect things to be perfect? Giving up some long-held grudges has paid significant dividends. The general murkiness has misted away, and I now have considerable clarity, Gabriel.

GABRIEL:

So the path forward has been defined?

STEPHEN:

I think so, or I certainly hope so. We all know what we need to do in life. But we deny that knowing, push it aside and let the hurly-burley of our existence overtake us. Feeling disillusioned about life can actually bring transformation. Sometimes one just experiences a burst of light, that completely illuminates the entire landscape! Illusions disappear as fast as shadows pushed back by the light, and you're left with the fullness of Truth...

GABRIEL:

Stephen, old friend, thank you. I know I'm going to sleep well tonight...

*<Stage lights go fully black>*

#### **SCENE 5: ALL TOGETHER NOW**

*<A sharp blast of light is followed by the sounds from a thwack of a singing bowl>*

**<STAGE LIGHTS GO TO ONE THIRD OF NORMAL INTENSITY>**



<Gabriel sits upright in bed, awakens a glowing Mary, and they make their way outdoors. They walk rapidly, and see a trio of people waiting expectantly for them at a corner. Henri is in the middle, with Magdalena and Arabella (who is now glowing) each holding one of his arms. They notice Amy half-hiding behind a telephone pole, and she joins in the entourage. Mina, along with Stephen (who is also now glowing), meld in from opposite sides.>

<A sharp blast of light is followed by the sounds from a thwack of a singing bowl>

<STAGE LIGHTS GO TO TWO-THIRDS OF NORMAL INTENSITY>

<Up to this point, Gabriel has been leading the convoy, but he slides back into the middle of the pack and Amy effortlessly takes over. They come abreast of Kurt, who is uncharacteristically without his bicycle yet is inexplicably wearing his cycling helmet. Kurt flickers on and off several times, then glows brightly>

<The throng makes its way east, the sky brightening slightly as they approach <significant nearby natural area>. Over the course of their journey, knots of people have joined in here and there and the size of the group has grown considerably. As they come up to the flat area by the <name of feature near the above natural area>, Henri looks backwards and is astonished at the size and diversity of the group moving behind him. He spies a glowing Rick Denton, who inexplicably has linked arms with Arabella Duke. In turn, he also spies a glowing Jody Denton, who is amorously hanging onto the arm of one of the hipster waiters from the cafe.>

<A sharp blast of light is followed by the sounds from a thwack of a singing bowl>

<STAGE LIGHTS GO TO NORMAL INTENSITY>

HENRI:

Mon Dieu, it looks like the entire town has joined us for our walk to the <name of significant nearby natural area> significant near!

ARABELLA:

And ma cherie, everyone is glowing with their special light!

<The sky is the colour of translucent indigo marble, pregnant with possibility>

HIPSTER WAITER:

What's that up ahead?

*<No response is given, and time seems to stand still>*

AMY:

I don't know, but I'll try to find out...

*<She runs several steps to her left and mounts the stairway of an old observation platform near a big stand of undulating marsh grasses. On her heels is Magdalena, and they are up at the top of the structure in seconds flat>*

It looks like art...some kind of art, with lots of circles and spiral thingys... it's crazy beautiful...

*<an intricate crop circle image is projected>*

MAGDALENA:

My friends, it's a crop circle, celestial art woven right into our beautiful marsh grasses. A stunning formation to be sure.

*<The assemblage of people step loosely into the formed circles. Cresting over the horizon and the ambient vegetation are the first tendrils of sunlight on that Labour Day morning>*

*<all actors look eastward towards the off-stage, low-angle, illumination>*

*<Magdalena puts her arm around Amy>*

What a blessing to be here, and at first light...

AMY:

Magdalena, look down, it appears your vision for remote viewing of the future is 20/20, or even better!

*<looks down at the assemblage, squints her eyes, and then shakes her head>*

*<slowly, the following images are projected with their related sounds:>*

*-A large blue heron flies over **<feature near the significant nearby natural area>**, looking for an early breakfast;*

*-A mockingbird saucily trills out a half dozen calls from a willow tree on the periphery of the assemblage:*

*-A young deer drinks gently from the water's edge, the Sun lighting up its auburn fur>*

MAGDALENA:

It's a day like most others, but something both subtle and profound has changed for all of us...

*<lights dim to half-intensity, with all actors remaining on stage, looking towards the rising Sun, with their internal glowing light fully evident>*

*<Stage lights then go to black, with only the actors' internal lights remaining>*

## **POSTLUDE**

MINA:

*<Mina is back sitting in her meditation chair, with a projection of The Creation of Adam by Michelangelo, as the lighting returns to one third of normal intensity>*

The shift happened at essentially the same point in time in other towns and cities across the country, and around the globe. From now on, all needs will be met with grace and equity, and the old ways and systems will disappear without a trace.

As above, so below.

## **THE END**

<STAGE LIGHTS GO TO HALF-INTENSITY, AND ACTORS PRESENT THEMSELVES FOR AUDIENCE APPLAUSE WITH THEIR INTERNAL LIGHTS FULLY VISIBLE. THE SEQUENCING STARTS WITH JODY AND HER BARISTA, AND ENDS WITH MINA RISING FROM HER CHAIR TO OFFER A LINGERING NAMASTE TO THE AUDIENCE>

**ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT**

Brian Baetz hails from Walkerton, Ontario, and has earned civil engineering degrees from the University of Toronto and Duke University. He is a Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering at McMaster University, and lives with his family in Dundas, Ontario.

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