

# ALMOST, MAINE

BY JOHN CARIANI



Third Revised Edition



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



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*“ALMOST, MAINE is a series of nine amiably absurdist vignettes about love, with a touch of good-natured magic realism...witty, romantic, unsentimental. A beautifully structured play, with nifty surprise endings (most but not all of them happy).”*

**—The New York Times**

*“Sweet, poignant, and witty. Nearly perfect. ALMOST, MAINE’s charm is real. [It] packs wit, earns its laughs and, like love, surprises you.”*

**—New York Daily News**

*“Mega-hit ALMOST, MAINE lands somewhere between Norman Rockwell and Our Town. Unabashedly unhip. There is no pretense of an edge here—the show offers a sweetness and decency that’s become rare at the theater. At this point, it’s a welcome breath of fresh air.”*

**—New York Post**

# **ALMOST, MAINE**

**BY JOHN CARIANI**

## ALMOST, MAINE

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*for Northern Maine and the people who live there*

The first Off-Broadway revival of ALMOST, MAINE was produced by Transport Group (Jack Cummings III, Artistic Director; Lori Fineman, Executive Director), opening on January 21, 2014. It was directed by Jack Cummings III; the set design was by Sandra Goldmark; the lighting design was by R. Lee Kennedy; the costume design was by Kathryn Rohe; the sound design was by Walter Trarbach; the incidental music was composed by Tom Kochan; the production stage manager was Theresa Flanagan. The cast was as follows:

PETE/JIMMY/STEVE/RANDY/DAVE John Cariani

GINETTE/SANDRINE/GAYLE/DEENA/HOPE Kelly McAndrew

GLORY/WAITRESS/MARVALYN/SHELLY/MARCI/RHONDA Donna  
Lynne Champlin

EAST/LENDALL/CHAD/PHIL/MAN Kevin Isola

Note: This production was the first to present the male and female versions of “They Fell” in rotating rep. The female version of “They Fell” premiered at the Tennessee Women’s Theater Project (Maryanna Clarke, Artistic Director) in 2008.

ALMOST, MAINE was originally produced in New York by Jack Thomas/Bulldog Theatrical and Bruce Payne at the Daryl Roth Theatre, New York City, opening on January 12, 2006. It was directed by Gabriel Barre; the set design was by James Youmans; the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter; the costume design was by Pamela Scofield; the sound design was by Tony Smolenski IV and Walter Trarbach; the incidental music was composed by Julian Fleisher; the production stage manager was Karyn Meek. The cast was as follows:

PETE/STEVE/LENDALL/RANDY/MAN Todd Cerveris

GINETTE/GLORY/WAITRESS/GAYLE/HOPE Finnerty Steeves

EAST/JIMMY/CHAD/PHIL/DAVE Justin Hagan

SANDRINE/MARVALYN/MARCI/RHONDA Miriam Shor

The professional premiere of ALMOST, MAINE was produced by Portland Stage Company (Anita Stewart, Artistic Director; Tami Ramaker, Managing Director) in Portland, Maine, opening on October 29, 2004. It was directed by Gabriel Barre; the set design was by James Youmans; the lighting design was by Tim Hunter; the costume design was by Pamela Scofield; the sound design was by Christopher Fitze; the incidental music was composed by Julian Fleisher; the production stage manager was Myles C. Hatch. The cast was as follows:

PETE/STEVE/LENDALL/RANDY/MAN Larry Nathanson

GINETTE/GLORY/GAYLE/HOPE Wendy Stetson

EAST/STEVE/CHAD/PHIL/DAVE Justin Hagan

WOMAN/MARVALYN/MARCI/RHONDA Ibi Janko

ALMOST, MAINE was developed by the Cape Cod Theatre Project (Andy Polk, Artistic Director) in 2002.

## PREFACE

Dear Reader,

After a performance of the Off-Broadway production of *Almost, Maine* in 2006, a friend told me that she was troubled by the behavior of one of the men in the play. In Scene 1 (“Her Heart”), a man, East, unexpectedly kisses a woman, Glory, whom he has just met. He does this three times, even after Glory asks him to stop. My friend warned me that it seemed that East was imposing himself on a woman and that his behavior cast a shadow over the rest of the play.

I defended the scene—and myself—arguing that I never intended for “Her Heart” to be a story about a man imposing himself on a woman. In my mind, the scene is a magical story about two people falling in love. I thought East’s actions were perfectly justifiable.

I have come to realize that East’s actions are in no way justifiable. They’re unacceptable, no matter what I intended. And they’re not at all in the spirit of *Almost, Maine*. So I have rewritten “Her Heart” for this, the Third Revised Edition of the play. The scene now tells the story I intended to tell, which is one of two people awakening to love. In the new version, Glory is falling for East as hard and as fast as East is falling for her. All feelings are completely mutual, and Glory and East both act on these feelings—not just East.

I have also edited Scene 8, “Seeing the Thing.” I removed language that labels romance or expressions of love or kindness or tenderness as gendered (i.e., feminine). (Expressing love or kindness or tenderness isn’t gender-specific. It’s human.) I also changed the language that Rhonda’s friends use to describe her, and I rewrote what happens after Dave unexpectedly kisses Rhonda. In the new version of the scene, Rhonda lets Dave know that his behavior is inappropriate—but she also tells him that she feels for him the way he feels for her. All feelings are mutual as Rhonda and Dave take their relationship to the next level.

I would like to thank everyone who encouraged me to make these changes. *Almost, Maine* is better for them.

And special thanks go out to Aislinn Frantz, Beth Bickers, Haleh Roshan Stilwell, Ibi Janko, Wendy Rich Stetson, Caroline Kinsolving, Rebecca Harris, Sophie DeBruijn, Casey Landman, Kelly McAndrew, and Donna Lynne Champlin for reading the new versions of the scenes and guiding me as I rewrote them.

Sincerely,  
John Cariani  
January 2018

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes more people than I ever imagined to make a play. Below is an incomplete list acknowledging all the help I got from family, friends, and colleagues as I made *Almost, Maine*. Omissions are inadvertent and I apologize for them.

Thank you to everyone at Portland Stage Company, especially Anita Stewart, Dan Burson, RJ McComish, Gabe Barre, Ibi Janko, Wendy Rich Stetson, Larry Nathanson, Justin Hagan, and Jan and Dave Cronin for lending their time, talent, energy, and resources to making the world premiere production of *Almost, Maine*.

Thank you, Jack Thomas and Bruce Payne, who produced the 2006 Off-Broadway production of *Almost, Maine*. Thanks to everyone involved in that Off-Broadway premiere, especially Gabe Barre, Todd Cerveris, Justin Hagan, Patrick Noonan, Colleen Quinlan, Miriam Shor, Finnerty Steeves, Karen Meek, Pat McCorkle, Joel Froomkin, James Youmans, Pamela Scofield, Jeff Croiter, Julian Fleisher, Tony Smolenski, Walter Trarbach, Steven Chaikelson, Brannon Wiles, Kathy Hogg, Andy Polk, Haviland Stillwell, and Daryl Roth.

Thank you, Dramatists Play Service, for publishing *Almost, Maine*, with extra-special thanks to Michael Fellmeth and Craig Pospisil for being so enthusiastic and informative.

Thank you, Nicole Alifante, Michael Borrelli, Christopher V. Edwards, Christian Brandjes, Angi Parks, Elizabeth Synnott, and Wendy Stetson, for helping me get started.

Thank you to everyone who was at the Cape Cod Theatre Project in 2002 for the first official developmental reading of the play, especially Andy Polk, Judy and Roger Day, Justin Hagan, Tricia Paoluccio, Billy Ragsdale, Johanna Day, Ibi Janko, and Larry Nathanson.

Thank you to the following organizations and people for taking a chance on *Almost, Maine* when few would: the Barrow Group, especially Chris Campbell; the Colony Theatre, especially Barbara Beckley, David Rose, Caroline Kinsolving, Dee Ann Newkirk, Donald Sage Mackay, and Louis

Lotorto; the Tennessee Women's Theatre Project, especially Maryanna Clarke; Geva Theatre Center, especially Skip Greer, Mark Cuddy, and Jean Ryon; Syracuse Stage, especially Kyle Bass; the Public Theatre (Lewiston, ME), especially Christopher Schario and Janet Mitchko; the Penobscot Theatre Company, especially Scott Levy; Milwaukee Rep, especially Laura Gordon; Mad Dog Productions, especially Brian Drillinger and Melanie Coote; and the Northeast Theatre, especially David Zarko.

Special thanks to Ibi Janko, whose spirit is all over this play; to Liz Fitzpatrick for all the love; to Marla Ratner for being there at the beginning; to Mari Okuda for always believing; to Julian Fleisher for believing in this play and for the beautiful music; to Stephanie Klapper for all the support and encouragement; to Dawn Denvir and Shalom Stephens for offering me pleasant places to work; to Susan Lovell for helping me think about the play as only she can; to Samantha Barrie for thinking about the play as only she can; to everyone at Shadowland Theatre Company, especially Brendan Burke, Kina Bermudez, Dave Mason, Kathy McCafferty, and Sean Patrick Reilly for believing in a place like *Almost, Maine*; to Dave Mason and Kathy McCafferty for being great friends, great artists, and great collaborators; to JP Driscoll, Finnerty Steeves, and Justin Hagan for the great lines they wrote; to Dick Mullen, Kristie Fuller, Ed Simpson, and Jay Putnam for introducing young actors to *Almost, Maine*.

Thank you, Sarah Cusick (and the cast and crew of *Almost, Maine* at Columbia Prep in Manhattan), for asking me to share the female version of "They Fell" with you.

Thank you, Transport Group, especially Jack Cummings, Donna Lynne Champlin, Kevin Isola, Kelly McAndrew, Hannah Oren, Ali Skye Bennett, Lori Fineman, Theresa Flanagan, Peyton Taylor Becker, and Lizzie Strauss, for the beautiful 2014 revival.

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

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

### **On punctuation:**

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

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

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

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

### **On place:**

Almost, Maine doesn't exist. It is a mythical composite of several Northern Maine towns. Were it to exist, Almost would be located in the remote heart of Aroostook (pronounced, "uh-ROO-stick") County, the sparsely populated, northernmost county in Maine. It would occupy unorganized territory that is officially designated as Township Thirteen, Range Seven, or T13 R7. T13 R7 is some 450 miles north of Boston, MA, and about 50 miles from the border of Canada, where Quebec and New Brunswick meet. (See the map at the back of this volume.)

Almost, Maine, is not a coastal town. It is nowhere near the ocean. Potato farms dominate the landscape, and the expansive North Maine Woods are to the west. *National Geographic* once printed something to this effect: "They call Montana 'Big Sky Country.' Well... 'they' haven't seen Northern Maine."

Winters in Almost, Maine, are long, cold, and snowy. It usually feels like winter there from October to May.

### **On the northern lights:**

The northern lights are brilliant, ribbon-like, otherworldly displays of light. Northern Mainers are fortunate: They live just inside the southernmost tip of an area in which the northern lights regularly appear. Growing up, I remember being treated to a northern lights show at least once a year.

The northern lights occur when atoms become “excited.” During solar storms, plasma (ionized or charged particles) from the sun is sent streaming towards the earth. As it enters the earth’s atmosphere, it collides with atoms, and excites them—that is, it moves their electrons into higher-energy orbits. Those electrons want to return to their normal lower-energy orbits, and when they do so, they release energy in the form of tiny packets of light called photons. When enough photons are produced, the brilliant light display that is the aurora borealis hovers in the sky. When the aurora fades, it’s because the affected atoms have returned to their grounded state. *Almost, Maine* is a play about people who are normally very grounded but who have become very excited by love...and other extraordinary occurrences.

### **On time:**

*Almost, Maine* takes place over a period of about ten minutes. Each scene starts at around 8:50 P.M. and ends a little after 9 P.M. on a Friday night in the middle of winter. The plot of each scene in *Almost, Maine* includes some sort of “magical moment.” These magical moments are all happening at exactly the same time—at 9 P.M. The northern lights and the magical moments give rise to one another.

### **On the people:**

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

The people of *Almost, Maine*, are not cuddly and cute. They’re hard-working, ordinary people. They’re dignified. They’re honest and true. They’re not cynical. They’re not sarcastic. They’re not glib. But this does not mean that they’re dumb. They’re very smart. They just take time to

wonder about things. They speak simply, honestly, truly, and from the heart. They are not precious about what they say or do.

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

### **Cast size and age:**

*Almost, Maine* is a play for four actors. In my mind, these actors should be in their late twenties/into their thirties. However, I have seen the play done beautifully by four actors who were in their forties.

*Almost, Maine* is also a play for as many as nineteen actors.

### **On presenting *Almost, Maine*:**

In the original published version of *Almost, Maine*, “They Fell” (Scene 5) was a scene for two men. Transport Group’s 2014 revival production was the first to present the male and female versions of that scene in rotating repertory. The female version of “They Fell” immediately follows the male version in this volume. You are free to present either version or both versions in rotating repertory. Rotating repertory is my preference.

Original music composed for *Almost, Maine* by Julian Fleisher is available for licensing through Dramatists Play Service. Please visit the *Almost, Maine* page on [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com) for more information regarding the ordering and use of the original music. Designers and directors, please also see “On music” in the back of this volume.

Please keep in mind that “cute” will kill this play. *Almost, Maine* is inherently pretty sweet. There is no need to sentimentalize the material. Just...let it be what it is—a play about real people who are really, truly, honestly dealing with one of the toughest things there is to deal with in life: love.

If you are involved in a production of *Almost, Maine*, please refer to the notes section in the back of this volume.

Thank you for reading.

## **SCENE BREAKDOWN**

### PROLOGUE

### ACT ONE

Scene 1: Her Heart

Scene 2: Sad and Glad

Scene 3: This Hurts

Scene 4: Getting It Back

### INTERLOGUE

### ACT TWO

Scene 5: They Fell

Scene 6: Where It Went

Scene 7: Story of Hope

Scene 8: Seeing the Thing

### EPILOGUE

## **PLACE**

Various locales in Almost, Maine, a small town in far Northern Maine that doesn't quite exist.

## **TIME**

The present.

All events transpire over the same ten minutes  
—from around 8:50 to a bit after 9 P.M.—  
on a cold, clear, moonless, slightly surreal Friday night  
in the middle of the deepest part of a Northern Maine winter.

## CHARACTERS

### **Prologue**

PETE and GINETTE, who have been dating for a little while.

### **Her Heart**

EAST, a repairman, and GLORY, a hiker.

### **Sad and Glad**

JIMMY, a heating and cooling guy; SANDRINE, his ex-girlfriend; a salty WAITRESS.

### **This Hurts**

MARVALYN, a woman who is very good at protecting herself, and STEVE, an open, kind fellow whose brother protects him.

### **Getting It Back**

GAYLE and LENDALL, longtime girlfriend and boyfriend.

### **Interlogue**

PETE, from the Prologue.

### **They Fell**

RANDY and CHAD, two “County boys.”

*and/or*

DEENA and SHELLY, two “County girls.”

### **Where It Went**

PHIL, a hard-working husband, and his hard-working wife, MARCI.

### **Story of Hope**

HOPE, who has traveled the world, and a MAN, who has not.

### **Seeing the Thing**

RHONDA, a tough woman, and DAVE, the not-so-tough man who loves her.

### **Epilogue**

PETE and GINETTE, from the Prologue.

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

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

*Almost, Maine* is for romantics—*not* sentimentalists.

# **ALMOST, MAINE**



## PROLOGUE

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

GINETTE. Pete, I—...

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

PETE. What?

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

PETE. I'm glad, Ginette.

GINETTE. I always do with you.

PETE. I'm glad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

GINETTE. I love you.

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

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

GINETTE. Oh!!

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

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

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

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

I feel so close to you tonight.

*Little beat.*

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

*She slides a little closer to him.*

It's safe.

*She slides a little closer to him.*

I like being close. Like this.

*Little beat.*

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

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

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

*Ginette is truly content. Beat.*

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

GINETTE. What?

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

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

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

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

and you're here

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

then...

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

That's far.

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

GINETTE. Yeah.

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

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

*he tries to save the evening.*

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

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

GINETTE. (*Puzzled.*) Yeah.

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

PETE. And closer...

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

And closer and closer...

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

And closer and closer and closer...

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

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

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

*Transition:*

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

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

*Music. Lights fade. And we begin.*

## **ACT ONE**

### **Scene 1: Her Heart**

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

MAN. Hello.

WOMAN. *(Turns to the man.)* Hello.

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

MAN. I thought I saw someone.

*Little beat.*

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

*Little beat.*

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

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

*She resumes looking up at the sky.*

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

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

MAN. Well, [you are, but it's okay]—

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

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

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

MAN. I guess.

*Little beat.*

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

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

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

WOMAN. Yes.

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

WOMAN. So I have a place to sleep >

MAN. in my yard...

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

MAN. Well, it's not that I [mind]—

WOMAN. Do you mind?

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

WOMAN. Oh, no, I think you mind!

MAN. No, it's not that I mind—

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

MAN. My brochure?

WOMAN. that people from Maine wouldn't mind. It says (*Producing a brochure about Maine tourism.*) that people from Maine are different, that they live life “the way life *should* be.” [*If you ever travel to Maine by car*

*on Interstate 95, you will be greeted by a sign erected by the Maine Office of Tourism that reads, “Maine: The Way Life Should Be.”*] And that, “in the tradition of their brethren in rural northern climes, like Scandinavia,” they’ll let people who are complete strangers—like cross-country skiers and bikers and hikers—camp out in their yard, if they need to, for nothing., They’ll just let you., I’m a hiker. Is it true? >

MAN. Well, [I guess, but]—

WOMAN. That they’ll just let you stay in their yards if you need to? ’Cause I need to. Camp out. ’Cause I’m where I need to be. This is the farthest I’ve ever traveled: I’m from a part of the country that’s a little closer to things— [I’ve] never been this far north before, or east, and did you know that Maine is the only state in the country that’s attached to only one other state?!?

MAN. Um—

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

MAN. Well [I don’t know]—

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

MAN. Well [I don’t know]—

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

MAN. Well [I don’t know]—

WOMAN. Reallyreally needed to?

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

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

*As the woman hugs the man, the brown paper bag she has been holding gets squished between their bodies. The woman is surprised by all of the feelings she is suddenly feeling for the man. The man doesn’t quite participate in the hug, but is surprised by all the*

*feelings he is suddenly feeling for the woman. The woman realizes that she doesn't know the man well enough to be hugging him. Or to be feeling so many feelings for him. Overwhelmed, she releases the man from the hug.*

Oh—sorry about that.

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

Sorry.

MAN. It's okay.

WOMAN. I just—really need to be here and do this, so thanks.

*The woman resumes looking intently for the northern lights.*

MAN. Sure.

*Little beat.*

So [you're just here to see the northern lights, huh?]

WOMAN. *(Suddenly realizing that she doesn't have her bag.)* Oh, no!  
*(Looking around for her bag.)*

MAN. What?

WOMAN. *(Sees that the man has her bag and points to it.)* Oh, God! I need that!

MAN. *(Realizes he has the bag.)* Oh. Here.

*He offers the bag to the woman.*

WOMAN. *(Grabbing the bag.)* Thank you.

*She resumes looking up at the sky.*

MAN. Sure.

*Beat. The man is puzzled.*

Okay. Okay...



*Beat. The man thinks.*

So you're just lookin' for a place to see the northern lights from?

WOMAN. Yeah. Just tonight.

MAN. Well, you know, you might not see 'em *tonight*, 'cause // you never really know if [you're gonna see 'em]—

WOMAN. Oh, no! I'll see them. Because this is the right time: Solar activity is at an eleven-year peak. And I'm in a good place: Your latitude is good. Well, as good as it can be, under the circumstances. I was gonna go to a higher latitude—like, up to Canada somewhere—but I forgot to renew my passport, so I couldn't, and Alaska is just too far away, so this was the closest place I could get to in the lower forty-eight states that sees the northern lights regularly, so I flew, and I took a bus, and then I hiked to get here, so, anyway, everything's in order. And, boy, you have good sky for seeing them. It's so big! And dark! (*Taking in the sky.*) And it's flat here. No trees in the way.

MAN. Used to be a potato farm.

WOMAN. Oh. Makes for a big sky.

MAN. Yeah.

*They look at Northern Maine's magnificent night sky.*

WOMAN. So—you're a farmer?

MAN. No. *Used* to be a farm. I'm a repairman.

WOMAN. Oh.

MAN. Fix things.

WOMAN. Oh. (*Laughs.*)

MAN. What?

WOMAN. You're not a lobster man.

MAN. No.

WOMAN. I guess I thought that everyone from Maine was a lobster man and talked in that funny...way like they do in Maine, and you don't talk that way.

MAN. Nope. You're not Downeast. You're up north. And this is how we talk up north, pretty much.

WOMAN. Oh.

MAN. No real accent up here.

WOMAN. Oh.

MAN. Plus, the ocean's a couple hundred miles away. (*Wryly.*) Be an awful long ride to work if I was a "lobster man."

WOMAN. (*Enjoying him.*) Yeah. Well, anyway, thank you. Thank you for letting me stay and do what I need to do. It's important that I do it, and— ...

*She's sad.*

I've had a pretty rough go of things lately, and I just really appreciate your kindness and understanding—

*Suddenly, the man, who is feeling lots of feelings for this woman, is hugging the woman. The woman doesn't quite participate in the hug, but feels lots of feelings for the man. After a beat, the man pulls away, because he realizes that what he just did was a bit forward.*

MAN. Oh, gosh—I'm sorry.

WOMAN. Um...

*The man and the woman face one another. They are stunned. Each is captivated by the other. But they're more scared than happy. The bag has imperceptibly exchanged clutches again—the man now has it, but doesn't know he has it.*

MAN. Are you okay?

WOMAN. Yeah.

MAN. I'm real sorry I did that. It's just—you just seemed sad. >

WOMAN. Um—

MAN. And also: I think I love you.

WOMAN. (*Gobsmacked.*) Huh?

MAN. Yeah—I saw you from my window, and...I love you.

WOMAN. Um—okay—well...that's really nice of you to say, but that's not [what I'm here for]—... I'm so sorry, but I'm not here for that.

MAN. Oh, no, I didn't think // you were—

WOMAN. I'm here to pay my respects. To my husband.

MAN. Oh, no.

WOMAN. Yeah: My *husband*. Wes. I'm here to say goodbye to him because he died recently.

MAN. Oh, jeez.

WOMAN. Yeah. On Tuesday, actually. And, see, the northern lights—did you know this?—the northern lights are really the torches that the recently departed carry with them so they can find their way home, to heaven, and, see, it takes a soul three days to make its way home, to heaven, and this is Friday, this is the third day, so, you see, I *will* see them, because they're *him*: He'll be carrying one of the torches. And, see, I didn't leave things well with him, so I was just hoping I could come here and say goodbye to him—but what you just did there just a second ago—that's going to get in the way of me saying goodbye to him, I think—or something—and, so, I think maybe I should go find another yard—

*She packs up her map and her backpack and prepares to go.*

MAN. No! // No!

WOMAN. Yeah—

MAN. I'm sorry I did that—I don't really know what happened.

WOMAN. Well, *I* do, I know what // happened.

MAN. I'm not the kind of person that usually does things like that. Please. Don't go. Just—do what you need to do and I won't bother you. Maybe just...consider what I did a-a-a-a...a warm Maine welcome. Or something.

*Beat. If any other guy said something like that, it'd be creepy.*

Um—you know what? I'm just gonna get outta your way and let you do what you need to do.

*He starts backing away, true to his word.*

All right?

*The woman trusts this guy for some reason. And decides to stay in his yard and do what she needs to do.*

WOMAN. All right.

MAN. All right.

WOMAN. Thanks.

MAN. Sure. Sorry about...all that.

WOMAN. It's...okay.

*The man turns and starts to go.*

MAN. *(Stopping.)* And if you need anything, just give a holler, okay?

WOMAN. Okay.

*The woman watches the man turn and go back to his house. And realizes she doesn't want him to go.*

Hey!

*The man stops and turns to the woman.*

Thanks for letting me stay. I really appreciate it.

MAN. Sure.

WOMAN. Um—I'm [Glory]—my name's Glory. Just so you know.

MAN. Okay. Hi, Glory. >

GLORY. Hi.

MAN. I'm East.

GLORY. Huh?

EAST. My name's East. *(He's used to explaining.)* For Easton. It's the name of the town—a little ways that way *(Points towards the east.)* —where I was born. [There was a] Mess-up on the birth certificate...“a son, *Easton*, born on this sixth day of January, *(Insert appropriate year.)*, in the town of Matthew, Maine”...instead of the other way around...

GLORY. *(Amused—and sad for the guy.)* Oh.

EAST. Yeah.

GLORY. Well, happy birthday a few weeks late.

EAST. Thanks.

*Little beat.*

GLORY. So... (*Referring to the place.*) ...Easton. >

EAST. Yeah—

GLORY. Yeah! (*Getting her map.*) I passed through near there on my way here, and, by the way, where is “here”? Where am I? I couldn’t find it on my map.

EAST. Um...Almost.

GLORY. What?

EAST. You’re in unorganized territory. Township Thirteen, Range Seven.

*Glory checks her map.*

It’s not gonna be on your map, ’cause it’s not an actual town, technically.

GLORY. What // do you mean—

EAST. See, to be a town, you gotta get organized. And we never got around to gettin’ organized, so...we’re just Almost.

GLORY. Oh...

*Beat.*

EAST. Okay, well, like I said, holler if you need anything.

*He heads back to his house.*

GLORY. Okay. Thanks.

*Glory is charmed by this guy somehow. And then suddenly realizes she’s missing her bag. She was clutching it to her chest, and now it’s gone. This should upset her so much that it affects her breathing.*

Oh! Oh, God!

EAST. (*Stopping.*) What? What’s wrong?

GLORY. (*Having trouble breathing.*) My heart!

EAST. What? Are you // okay?

GLORY. My heart! (*Seeing that East has her bag, pointing to it and almost hyperventilating.*)

EAST. What?

GLORY. You have my heart!

EAST. I wh//at?

GLORY. In that bag!, It's in that bag! >

EAST. Oh.

GLORY. Please give it back!, // Please! It's my heart!, I need it!, Please!

EAST. Okay, okay, okay.

*He gives Glory the bag.*

GLORY. Thank you.

*When Glory gets the bag back, her breathing normalizes.*

EAST. You're welcome.

*Long beat. East considers what he has just heard.*

I'm sorry, did you just say that...your heart is in that bag?, Is that what you just said, that // your heart—...?

GLORY. Yes.

*Little beat.*

EAST. It's heavy.

GLORY. I guess.

*Little beat.*

EAST. Why is it in that bag?

GLORY. It's how I carry it around.

EAST. Why?

GLORY. It's broken.

EAST. What happened?

GLORY. Wes broke it.

EAST. Your husband?

GLORY. Yeah. He went away.

EAST. Oh.

GLORY. With someone else.

EAST. Oh, no. I'm sorry.

GLORY. Yeah. And when he did that, I felt like my heart would break. And that's exactly what happened. It broke: hardened up and cracked in two. Hurt so bad, I had to go to the hospital, and when I got there, they told me they were gonna have to take it out. And when they took it out, they dropped it on the floor, and it broke into nineteen pieces. Slate.

*She gently shakes the bag, which should be filled with small pieces of slate. Slate shards make a great sound when shaken. [Note: These shards shouldn't be too big—a heart is the size of its owner's fist.]*

It turned to slate.

*Beat. She looks back up at the sky.*

*East takes this in. After a beat, he responds to what Glory has just told him the only way he knows how.*

EAST. Great for roofing.

*Glory looks at East, does not respond to what he just said, and then looks back up at the sky. Beat. East doesn't know what to do, so he starts to head back to his house, but stops after a few steps and asks:*

How do you breathe? >

GLORY. Huh?—Oh—

EAST. If your heart is in that bag, how are you alive?

GLORY. *(Indicating the heart that's now in her chest.)* Artificial.

EAST. Really.

GLORY. Yeah. 'Cause my real one's broken. And there's always a shortage of real hearts for transplants, so I got an artificial one...

EAST. Oh.

*Little beat.*

So... (*Referring to the brown paper bag.*) Why do you still have this one?

GLORY. It's my heart.

EAST. Well, why do you carry it around with you like this?

GLORY. Well, I don't usually—but, since it's the one that loved Wes, I figured I might want it with me when I say goodbye to him or something//—I don't know—

EAST. But it's broken.

GLORY. Yeah, // I don't really [wanna talk about it]—

EAST. 'Cause of him. >

GLORY. Yeah, [I really don't wanna get into it]—

EAST. 'Cause he left you.

GLORY. Yeah, // I really [don't wanna get into it]—

EAST. Why are you payin' your respects to him if he left you?

GLORY. Because that's what you do when a person dies, you pay them respec//ts.

EAST. But he *left* you, >

GLORY. Yeah, but—

EAST. and it seems to me that a man who leaves somebody doesn't deserve any respects.

GLORY. (*Deflecting.*) Well, I just didn't leave things well with him, >

EAST. What do you mean?—

GLORY. and...and I need to apologize to him.

EAST. But he *left* you! >

GLORY. I know, but—

EAST. Why should you apologize?

GLORY. Because!



EAST. Because why?!?

GLORY. Because I killed him!!

*Everything stops. And gets really quiet. East backs away from Glory.*

EAST. Oh...

GLORY. And I'd like to apologize. See, I was over a year into my recovery from when they put my artificial heart in—I was all better, doing almost all the things I used to be able to do—and then Wes just shows up at my place one day and says he wants me back. And I said, “Wes, I have a new heart now. I'm sorry. It doesn't want *you* back.” And that just killed him.

EAST. (*Greatly relieved.*) Oh. But it didn't kill him—you didn't *kill* him—

GLORY. Well, yeah, I did, kinda, because he got so sad that my new heart didn't want him back that he just tore outta there and ran out into the street, and a bus was coming, and it didn't see him, and he didn't see *it*, and it just...took him right out, and if I'd have been able to take him back, >

EAST. Glory—

GLORY. (*Getting upset.*) he wouldn't have torn outta there like that >

EAST. Hey—

GLORY. and been just taken out like that, and so, I just wanted to say goodbye in my own way—not as his sad ex-wife at some big public service—but just privately you know?, And—and—and—

*Suddenly, East comforts her with another hug. Glory melts into the hug for a moment before suddenly pulling/pushing away. When she does, East has her heart again. The strangers stand face to face. Then Glory suddenly kisses East. And just as suddenly pulls away.*

Oh, God—I'm sorry. >

EAST. Don't be.

GLORY. I'm so sorry I did that.

EAST. Don't be! I love you!

GLORY. What? No! [That's impossible!]

EAST. Yeah!

*Glory realizes East has her heart again and grabs it back.*

GLORY. Well, don't!

EAST. Why?

GLORY. Because I won't be able to love you back: I have a heart that can pump my blood and that's all. The one that does the other stuff is broken. It doesn't work anymore—

*East suddenly kisses Glory. Glory fully participates and then pulls/pushes away. East has her heart again. Glory grabs it back. East grabs her heart right back.*

EAST. Let me have this.

GLORY. (*Trying to get her heart back.*) No! It's mine!

*East is thwarting all of Glory's attempts at getting her heart back. This is a game of keep-away—make it convincing.*

EAST. I can fix it!

GLORY. What? No! >

EAST. Glory—!

GLORY. Give it back to me now!

EAST. But, it's broken. >

GLORY. Please!

EAST. It's no good like this.

GLORY. But, it's my heart!

EAST. Yes, it is! And *I* have it!

*This stops Glory. Little beat.*

And I can fix it.

*Little beat.*

I'm a repairman. I repair things. It's what I do.

*Little beat. Then he crouches, gently places the bag on the ground, and starts to open it in order to examine its contents. As he opens the bag, music fades in, and the northern lights appear—in front of*

*Glory, above Glory, on the field of stars behind Glory. Glory sees them...and they're a thing of wonder.*

GLORY. Oh! Oh, wow! Oh, wow! Oh, they're so beautiful...  
(Remembering who they are and calling up to the sky.) Oh! Oh!—Wes!!  
Wes!! Goodbye!! I'm so sorry!! ...Goodbye, Wes!!

*And the northern lights—and Wes—are gone. Glory turns to East, who has taken a little piece of her heart out of the bag and is examining it. Music fades out. She watches East. And thinks about how strange it is that this guy's name is East. It should be more surreal to her than happy. The happiness will come later. For now, she just says:*

Hello...East.

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

## **Scene 2: Sad and Glad**

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

JIMMY. Sandrine!

SANDRINE. Hm?

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

Jimmy!

JIMMY. (A little too excited.) Hey!

SANDRINE. Hey!

JIMMY. Hey!!

SANDRINE. Hey!!

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

JIMMY and SANDRINE. Heyyyy!!!

JIMMY. How you doin'?!?

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

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

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

JIMMY. Great, great! How *are* ya?

SANDRINE. Great, // great!

JIMMY. Oh, that's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. You look great!

SANDRINE. Oh, no—

JIMMY. You look great.

SANDRINE. Than//ks.

JIMMY. You do. You look so great.

SANDRINE. Thanks, // Jimmy.

JIMMY. So pretty. So pretty.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

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

JIMMY. Here, have a seat!

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy, I can't—

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

SANDRINE. Yeah—

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

SANDRINE. I don't know.

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

SANDRINE. Yeah, I, uh...—

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

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

SANDRINE. No! We're not together.

JIMMY. Well [we used to be]—

SANDRINE. We're all set, thanks.

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

SANDRINE. All set!

JIMMY. Okay—yeah, we're good.

WAITRESS. Okay.

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

Well, holler if you need anything.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

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

*And she's leaving.*

SANDRINE. (*To the waitress.*) Okay.

JIMMY. *(To the waitress.)* Okay.

WAITRESS. *(On her way out.)* Okay!

*Beat.*

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

SANDRINE. Yeah—um...the girls.

JIMMY. Oh.

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

*She starts to go.*

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

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

SANDRINE. *(Giving in, sitting.)* Well—

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

SANDRINE. Yeah, that's great!

JIMMY. I run it now! >

SANDRINE. I heard that.

JIMMY. I'm runnin' it! >

SANDRINE. Heard that.

JIMMY. Runnin' the business! >

SANDRINE. Congratula >

JIMMY. Runnin' the whole show, >

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

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

SANDRINE. Yeah?

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

SANDRINE. Oh.

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

SANDRINE. Yeah.

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

SANDRINE. Oh.

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

SANDRINE. Right...

JIMMY. And Mom and Dad retired, headed south.

SANDRINE. Yeah, I heard that.

JIMMY. Vermont.

SANDRINE. Oh.

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

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

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

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy [I really can't]—

WAITRESS. (*Blasting in.*) And I forgot to tell ya—don't forget: Friday night special at the Moose Paddy: Drink free if you're sad. So, if you're sad, or if you two little lovebirds are ready for another coupla Buds or somethin', you just let me know, all right?

SANDRINE. No, we'//re [not together]—

JIMMY. Okay!

WAITRESS. Okay!

*And she's gone.*

SANDRINE. (*Helplessly.*) Okay...

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

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

JIMMY. Naw—

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

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

SANDRINE. Yeah.

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

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Movin' on.

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

*Beat. Then, off his blank look:*

I'm gettin' married.

JIMMY. (*Huger blow.*) Oh.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. Wow.

SANDRINE. Y//eah.

JIMMY. Wow, that's— ...

*He's devastated.*



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

*Little beat.*

Guess it just wasn't for you with me.

*Beat.*

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

SANDRINE. Martin Laferriere. [*Pronounced, "la-FAIR-ee-AIR."*] You know him? The // [forest ranger]—

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

SANDRINE. Yeah!

JIMMY. Wow!

SANDRINE. Yeah!

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

SANDRINE. Yeah.

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

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. And he...found you.

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

JIMMY. How would I have heard?

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

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

*Beat.*

So...when's the big event?

SANDRINE. Um...tomorrow!

JIMMY. Really.

SANDRINE. Yup!

JIMMY. Well then...

*Jimmy downs his Bud and then raises his arm to wave down the waitress. As he does so his unbuttoned sleeve slides up his arm a little. He hollers to the waitress.*

HEY!

SANDRINE. *(Not wanting the girls—or anyone—to see her with Jimmy.)* What are you doin'?

JIMMY. *(Going towards the front—where the waitress has exited and where the bachelorette party is.)* Gettin' our waitress—she said holler. *(Calling to waitress.)* HEY! *(To Sandrine.)* What's her name?

SANDRINE. I don't know, she's new // here.

JIMMY. *(To waitress.)* HEY!

SANDRINE. *(Not wanting to draw attention.)* What are you doin'?

JIMMY. We gotta celebrate! You got found! And you deserve it! He's quite a guy.

SANDRINE. Aw, Jimmy.

JIMMY. *(To Sandrine, and completely sincerely.)* And so are you. I mean—you're quite a girl—woman—person.

SANDRINE. *(Moved by his kindness.)* Jimmy...

*A little beat as Sandrine and Jimmy face one another. Jimmy faces what he lost. Sandrine faces the guy she unceremoniously dumped. Then, Jimmy raises his arm again and hollers to the waitress.*

JIMMY. HEY!

SANDRINE. *(Trying to stop Jimmy from drawing attention to them.)* Jimmy! *(Then, noticing a black marking on the inside of Jimmy's forearm.)* Jimmy!—whoa—hey! What's that?

JIMMY. *(To Sandrine.)* What?

SANDRINE. That! *(Referring to the black marking on his arm.)*

JIMMY. (*Covering the mark; to Sandrine.*) Oh, nothin' — tattoo —

*Jimmy uses his other arm to wave down the waitress.*

(*To waitress.*) HEY!

SANDRINE. What?!?

JIMMY. (*To Sandrine.*) Tattoo, (*To waitress.*) HEY!

SANDRINE. (*Intrigued.*) What — when did you get that?

JIMMY. (*To Sandrine.*) Um... After you left, (*To waitress.*) HEY!

SANDRINE. (*Going for Jimmy's arm.*) Jimmy! Well — what's it of, what's it say?

JIMMY. (*To Sandrine.*) Nothin', nothin', (*To waitress.*) HEY!

*Sandrine grabs his arm.*

N-n-no!

*Sandrine pushes up Jimmy's sleeve, and takes a beat as she reads, on the inside of his forearm, in big, bold letters:*

SANDRINE. "Villian." [*Rhymes with "Jillian."*]

JIMMY. Villain.

SANDRINE. Who's Villian?

JIMMY. Villain. It's supposed to say, "villain."

SANDRINE. What?

JIMMY. It's supposed to say, "villain."

SANDRINE. Well, it doesn't say, "villain." It says, "Villian."

JIMMY. I know, I spelled it wrong — >

SANDRINE. What?!?

JIMMY. — *they* spelled it wrong. It says, "Villian," but it's supposed to say, "villain."

SANDRINE. Well, why is it supposed to say, "villain"? Why would you want a tattoo that says, "villain"?

JIMMY. 'Cause...

SANDRINE. 'Cause why?

JIMMY. Just 'cause.

SANDRINE. Just 'cause *why*?

JIMMY. Just 'cause...when a guy's got a girl like you...well, I just think that losin' a girl like you, drivin' a girl like you away... >

SANDRINE. Jimmy, you didn't drive me away—

JIMMY. is just plain criminal. It's *criminal*. It's *villainy*! And it should be *punished*! So I punished myself, I marked myself a villain so girls would stay away so I'd never have to go through what I went through with you, again—can I kiss you?

SANDRINE. (*Not mean.*) No.

*Jimmy tries to kiss Sandrine. Sandrine stops him.*

Hey! I said no.

JIMMY. Sorry.

*Beat.*

SANDRINE. (*Kindly, referring to Jimmy's tattoo.*) You can get that undone, you know.

JIMMY. Yeah.

*Beat.*

SANDRINE. I gotta head.

*She goes.*

JIMMY. Yeah.

*Little beat. Then, stopping Sandrine:*

Hey, I'm— ...

*Sandrine stops, turns to Jimmy. Beat.*

I'm glad you got found.

SANDRINE. Thanks, Jimmy.

*Sandrine goes back to her bachelorette party—and is welcomed back heartily. We hear this. Jimmy hears this. He is alone, sad, and stuck there. Beat.*

WAITRESS. (*Blasting in.*) Hey! Sorry! You were wavin' me down. I saw you, but it's so busy in the front! There's this bachelorette party: those *girls!* Good thing it's not, "Drink free if you're *glad*," 'cause those girls are wicked *glad*. Gosh—I had to fight my way through to find you, but I did it! I found ya! So: What'd ya need, what can I do ya for? Another Bud?

JIMMY. Um, I'm okay, I'm good, thanks...

*He's sad, looking off to where Sandrine went...*

*The waitress takes in Jimmy's sadness; she looks off to where Sandrine went, then sees the empty chair. She looks back off to where Sandrine went...and puts the pieces together.*

WAITRESS. Oh, pal... Um... Um... Well, remember, like I said, Moose Paddy special: Drinks are free if you're sad. Okay? Just tell me you're sad, and you'll drink free.

*Beat.*

Just say the word. Let me know. 'Cause I know from sad, and you're lookin' pretty sad.

*No response from Jimmy. He's just sad.*

Okay. Well, my name's Villian, if you need anything.

*[Note to actress playing Villian: The next line may be used if you feel you need it for clarity. It's just a back-up, in case you feel the first mention of your name isn't heard, or if the audience is slow to catch on. Use it if you need it; don't if you don't—up to you.]*

Just ask for Villian.

*She goes.*

*After a little beat, the waitress' name registers. Jimmy calls to her:*

JIMMY. Villian!?!

VILLIAN. (*Stopping.*) Yeah?

JIMMY. Hi.

VILLIAN. Hi!

JIMMY. I'm not sad. I just would like another Bud.

VILLIAN. All right!

*She goes.*

JIMMY. *(Making sure her name is actually Villian.)* Villian!!!

VILLIAN. *(Stopping.)* Yeah?!?

JIMMY. I'm glad you found me.

VILLIAN. Aw... *(Leaving, and to herself.)* "I'm glad you found me," that's adorable...

*Music. Jimmy is dumbfounded. He deals with his tattooed forearm in some way. The northern lights appear. Transition into Scene 3...*

### **Scene 3: This Hurts**

*A woman is finishing up ironing a man's work shirt in the laundry room of Ma Dudley's Boarding House in Almost, Maine. A man is sitting on a bench reading from a notebook labeled THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU. The woman looks at the shirt she has been ironing and suddenly crumples it and throws it into her laundry basket. She picks up the iron and wraps the cord around it, preparing to put it away. As she does so, she burns herself on it.*

WOMAN. Ow! Dammit!

*The man takes note of this, produces a pencil, and writes "iron" in his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book. Meanwhile, the woman has put the iron back where it belongs—maybe on a shelf onstage or maybe somewhere offstage. She then goes to the ironing board, folds it up, and turns to put it back where it belongs—which is next to where the iron lives. As she turns, she accidentally wallops the man in the head with the flat face of the ironing board, knocking him off the bench. [Please see the NOTES FOR DIRECTORS section in the*

*back of this volume for guidance on how to execute the ironing board hits.]*

Oh, no! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!, Oh...I didn't see you!, Are you okay?!?

MAN. (*Unfazed.*) Yeah.

WOMAN. No you're not!! I smashed you with the ironing board!, I wasn't even looking!, Are you hurt?

MAN. (*Calmly resituating himself on the bench.*) No.

WOMAN. Oh, you must be!! I just *smashed* you!, Where did I get you?

MAN. In the head.

WOMAN. In the head!?! , Oh, (*Going to him.*) come here!, Are you okay?

MAN. Is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

WOMAN. Well, I'm gonna go get you some ice.

MAN. No. I can't feel things like that.

WOMAN. Like what?

MAN. Like when I get smashed in the head with an ironing board. I don't get hurt.

WOMAN. What?

MAN. I can't feel pain.

WOMAN. Oh, Jeezum Crow, [*Pronounced, "JEE-zum CROW."*] what the hell have I done to you? >

MAN. Nothin'.

WOMAN. You're talkin' loopy!, Listen to you, goin' on about not being able to feel pain!, That's delusional!, I've knocked the sense right outta ya!

MAN. No, I'm okay.

WOMAN. Shh! Listen: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You're hurt. You just took a good shot right to the head, and that's serious.

MAN. No, it's not serious. I don't think an ironing board could really hurt your head, 'cause, see, (*Forcing his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book on her.*) ironing boards aren't on my list of things that can hurt you, >

WOMAN. (*Dealing with his book.*) What is [this]—?

MAN. plus, there's no blood or discoloration from where I got hit, // so [I'm okay]...

WOMAN. Well, you can be hurt and not be // bleeding or bruised.

MAN. And, plus, my list is pretty reliable, 'cause my brother Rob is helping me make it, and I can prove it to you: See, I bet if I took this ironing board,

*He gets the ironing board.*

like this, and hit you with it, that it wouldn't hurt you.

*He smashes the woman in the head with the flat face of the ironing board.*

See?, // That didn't hurt.

WOMAN. OW!! (*Scrambling to get away from him.*)

MAN. Oh!

WOMAN. Ow! What the hell was that?! // Why did you do that?

MAN. Oh! I'm sorry! // Did that hurt?

WOMAN. God!

MAN. Oh, it did, didn't it?

WOMAN. Ow!

MAN. Oh, I didn't think it would, 'cause, see, ironing boards are not on my list of things that can hurt you, but, gosh, maybe they should be on my list, becau//se—

WOMAN. What are you talkin' about?

MAN. I have a list of things that can hurt you—my brother Rob is helping me make it—and ironing boards aren't on it.



WOMAN. Well, that ironing board hurt me.

MAN. Yeah.

WOMAN. So you should add it to your list.

MAN. Yeah.

*Beat. He adds “ironing boards” to his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book, thinks, and then picks up a book labeled THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF.*

Should I be *afraid* of ironing boards?

WOMAN. Well, if someone swings it at your head and wallops you with it, yes.

MAN. Well, it’s not [on this list]—... I have a list of things to be afraid of, too, and ironing boards are not on this list either.

WOMAN. Well they shouldn’t be, really.

MAN. No?

WOMAN. No, you shouldn’t be *afraid* of ironing boards.

MAN. No?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. But they can *hurt* you.

WOMAN. Yeah.

MAN. So I should be *afraid* of them.

WOMAN. No.

MAN. So I *shouldn’t* be afraid of them?

WOMAN. Right.

MAN. But they can *hurt* me.

WOMAN. Well, if they’re used the way you used it, yeah.

MAN. Oh-oh-oh! So, they’re kind of like the opposite of God!

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Well, ironing boards can *hurt* me, but I shouldn't be *afraid* of them, but God, my brother Rob says, God *won't* hurt me, but I should *fear* him.

WOMAN. I guess.

MAN. Boy, this is getting very complicated.

WOMAN. What is?

MAN. This business of learning what hurts, what doesn't hurt, what to be afraid of, what not to be afraid of.

WOMAN. Are you sure you're okay?, // You're just goin' on and on about crazy stuff—

MAN. Oh, yeah, yeah, see, I have congenital analgesia, he thinks. Some // people—

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Congenital analgesia.

WOMAN. Who thinks?

MAN. My brother Rob. Some people call it congenital insensitivity to pain, but...it all just means I can't feel pain. You can hit me if you want to, to see!

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Go ahead., It won't hurt., See?

*He hits his head with the book.*

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See?

*He hits his head again.*

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See?

*He hits his head again.*

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. Go ahead.

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

WOMAN. No!

MAN. Come on!

WOMAN. No!!

MAN. Come on!!

WOMAN. NO!!!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAN. Well, is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

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

MAN. But—

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

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

I'm—my name's Marvalyn.

MAN. Hi, Marvalyn. I'm Steve.

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

STEVE. Room 3, second floor.

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

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

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

STEVE. Oh.

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

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

MARVALYN. Oh.

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

MARVALYN. Yeah.

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

STEVE. You guys are loud.

MARVALYN. Huh?

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

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

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

What's it like?

STEVE. What's what like?

MARVALYN. To not feel pain.

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

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

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

MARVALYN. How does he know that?

STEVE. Oh, he *reads*, >

MARVALYN. But—

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

MARVALYN. But—

STEVE. but he teaches me what hurts, though.

MARVALYN. Why??

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

MARVALYN. Okay. [Makes sense.]

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

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

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

MARVALYN. Pretty girls?

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

MARVALYN. Why should you be afraid of pretty girls?

STEVE. Well, 'cause my brother Rob says they can hurt you, 'cause they make you love them. >

MARVALYN. What?!?

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

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

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

MARVALYN. Well, how does he know that?

STEVE. 'Cause it hurts.

MARVALYN. It shouldn't.

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

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

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

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

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

STEVE. Well...is there any blood?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Any discoloration?

MARVALYN. No.

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

MARVALYN. Yeah. You are.

*Little beat.*

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

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

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

STEVE. Eric. >

MARVALYN. Yes—

STEVE. And you're his girlfriend, right?

MARVALYN. Yup.

STEVE. And if you're his girlfriend and he's your boyfriend, you must love each other, right?

MARVALYN. Yeah, we do, very much.

STEVE. But—you just kissed *me*.

MARVALYN. Yup, I did.

STEVE. And it's Friday night, and you're doing your laundry.

MARVALYN. Yup, I am.

STEVE. And people who love each other, they don't kiss other people and do their laundry on Friday nights, I've learned that. People who love each other, they go to the Moose Paddy on Friday nights, or they go dancing together, or they go skating. And they kiss each other. They don't kiss other people—you know what? I think maybe you and your boyfriend don't actually love each ot//her.

MARVALYN. You know what? (*Preparing to leave.*) I've been down here longer than I said I would be, and he doesn't like that.

STEVE. Who?

MARVALYN. My boyfriend.

STEVE. Who you love. >

MARVALYN. Yes.

STEVE. Very much.

MARVALYN. Y//es.

STEVE. Even though you just kissed me.

MARVALYN. Yes.

STEVE. Wow, I'm going to have to talk to my brother Rob about this!

MARVALYN. No! Don't talk to your brother Rob about this! Tell him to stop teaching you.

STEVE. [Tell him to stop teaching me]... What?

MARVALYN. Whatever he's teaching you. Tell him to stop. What he's teaching you... isn't something you wanna know.

STEVE. But I have to learn from him!

MARVALYN. Look: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You need to go to a doctor and not have your brother read whatever it is he reads.

STEVE. But [I have to learn from him]—

MARVALYN. You know what?, I gotta go.

STEVE. *(Sitting down on the bench.)* Right. You gotta go. You're—you're leaving. I knew you would. That's what people do.

MARVALYN. No, I just have to—. I told you, Eric // doesn't like it if—

STEVE. Your boyfriend?

MARVALYN. Yeah, he doesn't like it if I'm down here longer than I said I'd be, and I've been down here longer than I said I'd be.

*On this line, Marvalyn picks up the ironing board. As as she goes to put it away, she accidentally swings it around and hits Steve in the head, just as she did at the beginning of the scene. Steve gets knocked off the bench.*

STEVE. OW!

MARVALYN. Oh! I'm sorry!

STEVE. OW!



MARVALYN. I'm so sorry!, Are you all right? I can't believe I just did that to you again!

STEVE. OW!!

*Marvalyn goes to help Steve, but stops short.*

MARVALYN. Wait—: What did you just say?

*As Steve rubs his head, he realizes what he just said. Beat. He looks at Marvalyn, tells her plainly:*

STEVE. Ow.

*Music. The northern lights appear. Marvalyn and Steve just look at each other, utterly unsure of what has happened or of what will happen. Transition into Scene 4...*

#### **Scene 4: Getting It Back**

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

GAYLE. (From off.) Lendall!

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

Lendall! >

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

LENDALL. Huh?

GAYLE. Lendall!!!

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

Hey! I need to talk to you!

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

GAYLE. Lendall:

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

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

LENDALL. Hey—you okay?

GAYLE. (*Shutting Lendall up and stopping him from approaching.*) Shhh!  
*She stills herself.*

Lendall:

*She steels herself.*

I want it back.

LENDALL. [What are you talking about?] Huh?

GAYLE. I want it back.

LENDALL. What [do you want back]?

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

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

GAYLE. *Now.*

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

GAYLE. I've got yours in the car.

LENDALL. (*Completely confused.*) What???

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

LENDALL. What are you talkin' about?

GAYLE. I don't want it anymore.

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

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

LENDALL. What?!?

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

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

GAYLE. It's in the car.

LENDALL. You said.

*Beat. Lendall is completely baffled.*

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

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

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

LENDALL. Well, I don't know!

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

*She leaves.*

LENDALL. Under what circumstances? (*Calling to her.*) Gayle, what are [you talking about]—? I don't understand what [you're talking about]—... What are you doing?

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

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

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

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

Here you go.

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

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

LENDALL. Wow.

*Beat.*

That's a *lot*.

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

LENDALL. Whole lot.

GAYLE. *(From off.)* Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

*Little beat.*

All the love I gave to you?

LENDALL. Yeah?

GAYLE. I want it back.

*Little beat.*

So go get it.

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

Lendall, go get it.

*Lendall still doesn't move.*

Please.

*Lendall still doesn't move.*

*Now!!!*

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

*Lendall exits. Gayle sits in the chair and waits. She's upset. Long beat. Eventually, Lendall returns...with a teeny-tiny little bag—a little red pouch—and places it on an end table next to the chair.*

*They look at the little bag, which should be between Lendall and Gayle. And Gayle should be between the many bags of love and the little bag of love.*

GAYLE. What is that?

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

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

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

LENDALL. Yeah.

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

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

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

Hey, hey—what's goin' on?

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

LENDALL. Why do you keep sayin' that?

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

*Lendall remembers, but doesn't want to, because he got scared and quiet when she brought up the subject of marriage.*

In December? ...It was snowing?

LENDALL. Yeah.

GAYLE. Yeah, well, when I asked you...*that*, you got so...*quiet*. And everybody said that that right there shoulda told me everything.

LENDALL. Everybody who?

GAYLE. Everybody!

LENDALL. *Who?*

GAYLE. ...Marvalyn // said—

LENDALL. *Marvalyn?!? >*

GAYLE. Yes, Marvalyn—

LENDALL. Marvalyn said that, // like she's an expert?

GAYLE. Yes, Marvalyn said that how quiet you got was all I needed to know, and she's right: You don't love me.

LENDALL. What—? Gayle, no! [That's not true!!]

GAYLE. Shh! And I've been trying to fix that, I've tried to *make* you love me by giving you every bit of love I had, and now...I don't have any love for *me* left, and that's...that's not good for a person...and...that's why I want all the love I gave you back, because I wanna bring it with me.

LENDALL. Where are you going?

GAYLE. I need to get away from things.

LENDALL. What—? What things?! There aren't any things in this town to get away from!

GAYLE. Yes there are: You!

LENDALL. Me?

GAYLE. Yes. *You* are the things in this town I need to get away from because I have to think and start over, and so: All the love I gave to you? I want it back. In case I need it. Because I can't very well go around giving *your* love—'cause that's all I have right now, is the love *you* gave *me*—I can't very well go around giving *your* love to other guys, 'cause // that just doesn't seem right—

LENDALL. Other *guys*? There are other guys?!?

GAYLE. No, not yet, but I'm assuming there will be.

LENDALL. Gayle—

GAYLE. Shh!!! So I think—. I think that, since I know now that you're not ready to do what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time [like, get married], I think we're gonna be done, >

LENDALL. Why? Gayle—!

GAYLE. and so, I think the best thing we can do, now, is just return the love we gave to each other, and call it...

*She is taking in the bags—the pathetic one that contains the love she gave him and the awesome several that contain the love he gave her.*

...even.

*It's not "even" at all.*

Oh, Jeezum Crow, is that really all the love I gave you, Lendall? I mean, I thought [I gave you way more than that]—. I mean, what kind of person am I if this is all the love I gave y[ou]—...No...n-n-no! (*Fiercely.*) I know I gave you more than that, Lendall, I know it!

*She thinks; collects herself; then, new attack:*

Did you lose it?

LENDALL. What?!? // No, Gayle! No!

GAYLE. Did you *lose* it, Lendall?!? 'Cause I know I gave you more than that, and I think you're pulling something on me, and this is not a good time to be pulling something on me!

LENDALL. I'm not. Pullin' somethin' on you. I wouldn't do that to you... Just—I think—...Gosh—...

*What he says next is not mean; he's simply at a loss.*

I think maybe you should just take what you came for, and I guess I'll see you later.

*This is pretty final. He exits into the rest of the house.*

GAYLE. (*At a loss.*) Lendall—[wait]. Lendall...

*But this is what she wants. She looks at the little bag, takes it, and is about to leave. But curiosity stops her. She opens the bag and examines what's inside.*

(*Calling offstage.*) Lendall—what is this? I don't [understand]—... This isn't [all the love I gave you]—... Lendall: What is this?

LENDALL. (*Little beat; from off.*) It's a ring, Gayle.

GAYLE. What?

LENDALL. (*Returning.*) It's a ring.

GAYLE. What? Well—

*She takes what is in the bag out of the bag.*

This isn't [all the love I gave you]—. This is *not* [all the love I gave you]—  
...

*She realizes it's a box that an engagement ring might come in.*

Oh, Lendall, this is a ring. Is this a...*ring*? A ring that you give to someone you've been with for quite a long time when you want to let them know that you're ready for what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time?

LENDALL. Yup.

GAYLE. Oh.

*Little beat.*

But...all the love I gave to you? Where is it?

LENDALL. (*Referring to the ring.*) It's right there, Gayle.

GAYLE. But [that can't be all of it]—

LENDALL. It's right there.

GAYLE. But [there's no way that's all of it]—

LENDALL. It *is*! That's it! Right there! There was so much of it—you gave me so much over the years—

GAYLE. (*Makes sure he understands just how many years it's been.*)  
*Eleven.*

LENDALL. —over the eleven // years—

GAYLE. *Eleven*, yeah!

LENDALL. —yeah, you gave me so much of it that I didn't know what to do with it all. I had to put some in the garage, some in the shed. And after you asked me if I ever thought we were gonna get married, there was more of it than ever comin' in, and I asked my dad if he had any suggestions what to do with it all, and he said, "You got a ring yet?" And I said, "No." And



he said, "Get her one. It's time. When there's that much of that stuff comin' in, that's about the only place you can put it."

*Little beat.*

He said it'd all fit [in the ring].

*Little beat.*

And he was right.

*They look at the ring. Then, simply:*

That thing is a lot bigger than it looks.

*Little beat.*

So...there it is. All the love you gave me. Just not in the same...form as when you gave it.

GAYLE. Yeah.

*Beat.*

LENDALL. You still want it back?

GAYLE. Yes. I do.

LENDALL. Well, then...take it.

*She starts to open the box, but stops and refers to all the bags of love.*

GAYLE. Can I keep all that?

LENDALL. It's yours.

GAYLE. Thank you.

*She looks at the ring box and is about to open it. But stops.*

Lendall, you didn't have to get me a ring. That's not what I was asking.

LENDALL. Yes, I did. It's way past time. And it's honorable.

*She opens the box.*

GAYLE. Well...it's very beautiful.

*Lendall takes the ring out of the box, gets down on one knee, and puts the ring on Gayle's finger. Little beat.*

Oh, Lendall—...I'm so sorry. It's just—I was at Sandrine's bachelorette party, >

LENDALL. I know...

GAYLE. and she and Martin are already gettin' married *already*, and that got me thinkin' about us, >

LENDALL. Shh.

GAYLE. and then I talked to Marvalyn, and she // said [that how quiet you got was a red flag]—

LENDALL. Shh.

*He quiets her with a kiss. And then hugs her. Music. The northern lights appear. How will these two ever recount the story of how they got engaged? That'll be tricky. But that's a problem for another time. For now, things are okay as the lights fade on Gayle and Lendall—two small people in love [and in a little pain]—hugging it out underneath a big, spectacular, starlit northern night sky. Maybe Gayle can't help but take a good look at that ring.*

## **End of Act One**

*Intermission. Eventually we move to what I'm calling the...*

## **INTERLOGUE**

### **Option 1**

*Music. Lights up on Pete, from the Prologue. He is exactly where we left him: sitting on his bench with his snowball, looking offstage left to where Ginette exited.*

*Beat.*

*He looks at his snowball.*

*Beat.*

*He looks offstage left to where Ginette exited.*

*Beat.*

*He looks at his snowball again.*

*Beat.*

*He looks offstage left to where Ginette exited again. He ponders the consequences of sharing his theory on being “close” with Ginette as the lights...slowly...fade on a lonely, forlorn Pete.*

*Transition. And we begin...*

## **Option 2**

*Shortly after intermission begins, Pete from the Prologue, appears stage left—exactly where we last saw him: looking off to where Ginette exited, occasionally looking at his snowball, and always pondering the consequences of sharing his theory of what it means to be “close” with Ginette.*

*Eventually, he makes his way back to his seat on the bench, all the while focused on where Ginette went. Throughout the intermission, he looks at his snowball, and looks off to where Ginette has gone, and then continues to ponder the consequences of sharing his theory on what it means to be “close” with Ginette.*

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

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

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

## ACT TWO

### Scene 5: They Fell

#### (Male Version)

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

*Randy and Chad—two “County Boys” [A “County Boy” is a man who grew up in Aroostook (uh-ROO-stick) County, the northernmost county in Maine and the largest county east of the Rocky Mountains. To be a County Boy is a source of pride.] —appear. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. These guys are one hundred percent “guy.” They’re probably drinkin’ some beers—Natural Light if you can find it. Music fades. They’re in mid-conversation.*

CHAD. I believe you, I’m just sayin’ —

RANDY. It was *bad*, Chad. *Bad!*

CHAD. I hear ya, b//ut—

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

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

RANDY. Real bad!

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

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

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

RANDY. Really.

CHAD. Yeah.

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

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

RANDY. What?

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

RANDY. (*Taking this in.*) Sally Dunleavy [*Pronounced, "DUN-luv-ee."*] told you that she didn't // like the way [you smelled]—...?

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. When?

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

RANDY. What?!?

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

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

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Well what kinda—...?

*Little beat.*

I don't mind the way you smell.

CHAD. Thanks.

RANDY. Jeez.

CHAD. Yeah...

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

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

CHAD. Yeah.

*Little beat.*

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

*Little beat.*

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

CHAD. What?

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

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

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

CHAD. What do you mean?

RANDY. You didn't win.

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

RANDY. Yeah.

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

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

CHAD. What?

RANDY. Her face broke.

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

RANDY. Yeah. Only get one chance with a girl like Yvonne LaFrance, [*Pronounced, "ee-VON la-FRANTZ." LaFrance rhymes with "ants."*] and her face broke.

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

*Little beat.*

CHAD. How did her face break?

RANDY. When we were dancin'.

CHAD. *Dancin'?*

*These guys don't dance.*

RANDY. Yup.

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

RANDY. (*Quashing the mockery.*) 'Cause that's what she wanted to do! On our date. So I took her. Took her dancin' down to the Rec Center. You pay, then you get a lesson, then you dance all night. They teach "together dancing"—how to dance together—and we learned that thing where you throw the girl up and over, and, Yvonne—well, she's pretty small...and I'm pretty strong. And I threw her up and over, and, well...I threw her...*over... over.*

*Little beat.*

And she landed on her face.

*Little beat.*

And it broke.

*Beat.*

Had to take her to the emergency room.

*Long beat. Then, finally:*

CHAD. That's a drive.

RANDY. Thirty-eight miles.

CHAD. Yup.

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

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

RANDY. [The] whole way!

*Little beat.*

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

CHAD. Oh, no.

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

*Little beat.*

He's [as] small as she is.

*They laugh. Beat. Chad laughs.*

What?

CHAD. That's just—pretty bad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. And sad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. So...I guess you win.

RANDY. Yup.

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

RANDY. Yup!

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

RANDY. Yup!

CHAD. Congratulations!

RANDY. Thank you!

*Little beat.*

CHAD. So what do you pick tomorrow?

RANDY. Bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

CHAD. Good.

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

RANDY. What?

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



RANDY. Yeah.

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

RANDY. Aw, buddy...

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

RANDY. Yeah.

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

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

RANDY. (*Extricating himself from an extremely awkward and strange and uncomfortable situation.*) Well, I'm gonna head. >

*He starts to leave.*

CHAD. Yeah...

RANDY. (*Disengaging from Chad.*) I gotta work in the mornin'...

CHAD. Well, I'm just supervisin' first shift at the mill, so I can pick you up any time after three—

RANDY. Oh, I don't know, Chad: Me and Lendall, we got a long day tomorrow—we're still catchin' up, fixin' roofs from all the snow in December., [We] gotta do Marvalyn and Eric's, and—

CHAD. Well, four // or five? Six or seven?

RANDY. Prolly busy all day, I don't know when we'll be // done.

CHAD. Well, you just // say when—

RANDY. I don't know, I don't know, I don't know, // so—

CHAD. Well, I'll be ready whenever // you want me to come pick ya up—

RANDY. (*Putting a stop to this—he wants outta there.*) Hey-hey-HEY!!:  
I'll see ya later!

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Yeah.

*He leaves.*

CHAD. Yeah-yeah-yeah...

*Chad watches Randy go, then calls to him.*

Hey, Randy!—

*Randy stops and turns to Chad, and, when their eyes meet, Chad suddenly and completely falls down. This should be a crumple to the ground. Love is often described, after all, as making people weak in the knees. A slow crumple is best: knees/shoulder/face. [Note: Eye contact is what initiates the falls.]*

RANDY. Whoa. (*Rushing back, seeing Chad on the ground.*) Chad! You okay?

CHAD. Yeah [no]...

RANDY. What the [heck happened]—... Here.

*Randy helps Chad up.*

CHAD. Thanks. Um—

RANDY. What was that? You okay? What just happened there?

CHAD. (*Trying to figure out what just happened.*) Um...I just fell.

RANDY. Well, I figured that out.

CHAD. No [it's more than me just falling]—... I just [fell in love with you]—.

*Little beat.*

I think I just...fell in love with you there, Randy.

*Chad's eyes meet Randy's as he says this, and he crumples to the ground again.*

RANDY. Chad!

CHAD. Whoa...

CHAD. (*On the ground, face-planted.*) Yup. (*Getting up.*) That's what that was. Me fallin' in love with you...

*As Chad gets up, his eyes meet Randy's, and he crumples to the ground again.*

RANDY. Chad: What are you doin'? Come on, get up!

*Randy gets Chad up, roughly.*

CHAD. No-no-no, Randy! [I'm just gonna fall down again—]

*His eyes meet Randy's again, and he crumples to the ground again.*

RANDY. (*Fiercely.*) Would you cut that out?!?

CHAD. (*Fiercely right back, and from the ground.*) Well, I can't help it!! It just kinda came over me!! I've fallen in love with ya, here!!

*Randy takes this in. Confusion. Fear. Long beat. Then:*

RANDY. Chad: I'm your best buddy in the whole world...and I don't quite know what you're doin' or what you're goin' on about...but (*Furious. He might beat Chad up.*) —what the heck is your problem?!? What the heck are you doin'?!? Jeezum Crow, you're my best friend, >

CHAD. Yeah—

RANDY. *YEAH!* And that's a thing you don't mess with! And you messed with it! And you don't *do* that!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Scene 5: They Fell**

### **(Female Version)**

*Deena and Shelly—two “County Girls” [A “County Girl” is a woman who grew up in Aroostook (uh-ROO-stick) County. To be a County Girl is a source of pride.] —appear. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. They’re probably drinkin’ some beers—Natural Light if you can find it. Music fades. They’re in mid-conversation.*

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

DEENA. It was bad, Shell. Bad.

SHELLY. I hear ya, b//ut—

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

SHELLY. No, *you’re* not listenin’, ’cause >

DEENA. Real bad, *historical*-bad!

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

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

SHELLY. It was pretty bad, Deena.

DEENA. Really.

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. Okay: Go. [Let’s hear it.]

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

DEENA. What?!?

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

DEENA. (*Takes this in.*) Todd *Dunleavy* [*Pronounced, “DUN-luv-ee.”*] told you that he didn’t // like the way [you smelled]—...?

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. When?

SHELLY. When he picked me up. I got in his truck—we were backin’ outta my driveway—and all of a sudden, he starts breathin’ hard—hyper-hyper-

(*Searches for but can't find "ventilating."*) // breathin' —

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

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

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

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

DEENA. Well, jeez!

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

DEENA. Allergic?

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

DEENA. What?, “The women”?!?

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

DEENA. “The *lengths*” we [go to to smell nice]—?!?

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

DEENA. Oh!, Like, *perfume*!

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

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

SHELLY. Yeah.

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

SHELLY. No! // No!

DEENA. Well, what the—?

*Little beat.*

I don't mind the way you smell. >

SHELLY. Thanks.

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

SHELLY. Thanks.

*Little beat.*

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

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

SHELLY. I know!

DEENA. Todd has issues!

SHELLY. Yeah.

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

What are you doin'?

DEENA. Doin' somethin' to his truck.

SHELLY. Deen!

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

SHELLY. Deen—

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

SHELLY. Deen! >

DEENA. We *are*!

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

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

SHELLY. Nah.

DEENA. Yeah!

SHELLY. Anyway: Pretty bad, huh?

DEENA. Yeah. And a little sad, too.

SHELLY. Yeah.

*Little beat.*

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

*Little beat.*

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

SHELLY. What?

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

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

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

SHELLY. What do you mean?

DEENA. You didn't win.

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

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Really.

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Well, then: [Let's hear it.]

*She gives Deena the floor.*

DEENA. Mine's face broke.

SHELLY. *(Takes this in.)* What?

DEENA. His face broke.

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

DEENA. Face broke, yeah.

*Little beat.*

Told you it was bad.

*Beat.*



SHELLY. How did his...face break?

DEENA. When we were dancin'.

SHELLY. *Dancin'?* Darren LeMans [*Pronounced, "luh-MANZ."* *LaMans rhymes with the word "fans."*] took you dancin'?!?!

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Down to the Rec Center?!?

DEENA. Yeah.

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

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. What a good guy! >

DEENA. Yeah.

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

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

SHELLY. What happened?

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

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

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

SHELLY. He is, isn't he?

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

SHELLY. He does!

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

SHELLY. He really *is*, isn't he?

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

*Little beat.*

And it broke.

*Little beat.*

Ocular—orbital—bone fracture.

SHELLY. Oh.

*Beat.*

DEENA. Had to take him to the emergency room.

*Long beat. Then, finally:*

SHELLY. That's a drive.

DEENA. Thirty-eight miles.

SHELLY. Yup.

DEENA. (*Disgusted.*) And he *cried*.

SHELLY. Oh, no...

DEENA. The whole way.

*Little beat.*

Asked me to call his *mom* to come get him.

SHELLY. Seriously?!?

DEENA. Yeah. And she *did*. Asked me to “please leave.”

SHELLY. Aw, Deen, I'm sorry!

DEENA. It's all right. He was a lousy dancer.

SHELLY. Most of 'em are.

DEENA. Yeah.

*They laugh at the ridiculousness of Deena's evening. Beat. Deena falls into sadness. Shelly laughs.*

What?

SHELLY. That's just—pretty bad.

DEENA. Yup.

SHELLY. And sad.

DEENA. Yup. So...I'm guessin' I win!

SHELLY. Oh—yeah—no question, no question! That right there might make you the big winner of all time!

DEENA. Yup!

SHELLY. “Baddest-date-girl” of all time!

DEENA. Yup!

SHELLY. Congratulations!

DEENA. Thank you!

SHELLY. So what do you pick tomorrow?

DEENA. Bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

SHELLY. Sounds good.

*Beat. Sadness. Shelly laughs.*

DEENA. What?

SHELLY. Oh, Deen, I don't know. Just sometimes...I don't know why I bother goin' “out.” I mean—I know *why*—it's 'cause you gotta go out, but I'm scared 'cause I've been *goin'* out and nothin's *comin'* of it, you know?, And I feel like I'm runnin' outta chances, >

DEENA. Don't say that, don't say that—

SHELLY. and lately I've been wonderin' why I even have to bother...*goin'* out. I mean—I don't like it, Deena. I hate it. I hate goin' out on these *dates*. I mean, why do I wanna spend my Friday night hangin' out with some guy I might *maybe* like, when I could be spendin' it hangin' out with someone I *know* I like, like you, you know? >

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. I mean...that was rough tonight. In the middle of Todd tellin' me how he didn't like the way I smelled—I mean, he doesn't smell all that great!

DEENA. Not many of 'em do!

SHELLY. Yeah!, And, well—anyway—I got so sad.

DEENA. Aw, but it wasn't you, // it wasn't you!

SHELLY. I know, I know, but after he said *that* [that I smelled bad], all I could think about was how not much in this world makes me feel good lately or makes much sense anymore, and I got really scared, Deen, 'cause there's gotta be somethin'—at this stage of the game—there's gotta be somethin' that makes you feel good or at least makes sense in this world, or what's the point, right?

DEENA. Yeah...

SHELLY. But then I kinda came out of feeling sad, and I actually felt okay, 'cause I realized that there *is* somethin' at this stage of the game—there *is* one thing in this world—that makes me feel really good and that *does* make sense, and it's you, it's always been you.

*Beat. Shelly is a bit surprised—and mortified—by the string of words that just came tumbling out of her mouth.*

DEENA. *(Trying to figure out if she heard what she thought she just heard.)*  
Huh?

SHELLY. *(Trying to cover.)* Nothin'.

*But it's too late. Everything has stopped. Shelly isn't quite sure what she has just said. Deena isn't quite sure what she has just heard. Long, long beat of these women sorting out what Shelly just said and Deena just heard.*

DEENA. *(Extricating herself from an extremely awkward and strange and uncomfortable situation.)* Okay, well, I should get goin' home, Shell. The cats get lonely lately.

*She starts to leave.*

SHELLY. Yeah... Well, I'm only goin' into the mill early tomorrow., Just got some maintenance issues to resolve. [I] bet I'll be done before noon, so I can pick you up...lunchtime?

DEENA. Yeah—no—I // don't think [I wanna do much of anything tomorrow]—

SHELLY. Oh! They got the craft fair goin' at church, maybe we could hit that before // bowlin' —

DEENA. Oh, I don't know, 'cause, you know what?, I kinda forgot, Shell: I've got a big day tomorrow. >

SHELLY. Well—

DEENA. I gotta be up at the crack o'crack to open the salon: We're doin' Sandrine St. Pierre's wedding tomorrow., [I'm] Doin' the bride's hair and the bridesmaids' hair and the moms' hair and all the makeup and the nails, and I might // not be up for anything afterwards —

SHELLY. Well, // I'll come get ya whenever you're done, like we planned —

DEENA. Mmm...proably gonna be busy all day., We might have to do touch-ups for the wedding pictures, I don't know when we'll be // done, you know?

SHELLY. Well, we could skip bowlin' and just do supper at the Snowmobile // Club.

DEENA. And I'm gonna be really exhausted, so, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know // so—

SHELLY. Well, I'll be ready whenever // you want me to come pick ya up —

DEENA. Hey-hey, Shell: Maybe we oughtta just give it a couple days and see when we both have the time, and we'll make a plan, okay?

SHELLY. Well, the craft fair's only // this weekend, so—

DEENA. Yeah, you know what?, You know what?, You know what, Shell?: I'm gonna head.

*Little beat.*

Okay?

SHELLY. Okay.

DEENA. (*Making sure/insisting that everything is okay.*) Okay?

SHELLY. Okay.

DEENA. (*Making like everything's okay.*) Okay!

SHELLY. Okay!

DEENA. (*Leaving.*) Bye!

SHELLY. Bye!

*Shelly watches Deena go. Then:*

Hey, Deena!

*Deena stops, turns to Shelly, and when her eyes meet Shelly's, Shelly suddenly falls down. This should be a crumple to the ground. Love is often described, after all, as making people weak in the knees. A slow crumple is best: knees/shoulder/face. [Note: Eye contact is what initiates the falls.]*

DEENA. Whoa! (*Rushing back, taking a moment to try to figure out how Shelly ended up on the ground.*) Shell, hey! What [happened]—? You okay?

SHELLY. Yeah [no]...

DEENA. What the— ... Here.

*She helps Shelly up.*

SHELLY. Thanks. Um—

DEENA. What was that? You okay? What just happened there?

SHELLY. (*Trying to figure out what's going on.*) Umm...I just fell.

DEENA. Well, I know, I saw.

SHELLY. No [it's more than I just fell]— ... I just [fell in love with you]—.

*Little beat.*

I think I just fell in love with you, there, Deena.

*Her eyes meet Deena's as she says this, and she crumples to the ground again.*

DEENA. Shelly!

SHELLY. Oh, boy...

SHELLY. *(On the ground, face-planted.)* Yup. *(Getting up.)* That's what that was. Me falling in love with you...

*As she gets up, her eyes meet Deena's again, and she crumples to the ground again.*

DEENA. Shelly: What are you doing? Come on, get up!

*Deena helps Shelly up.*

SHELLY. No-no-no, Deena [I'm just gonna fall down again]—

*Her eyes meet Deena's again, and she crumples to the ground again.*

DEENA. Would you cut that out?!?

SHELLY. Well, I can't help it!! It just kinda came over me!! I've fallen in love with you, Deen!

*Deena takes this in. Confusion. Fear. Long beat. Then:*

DEENA. Shelly: I'm your best friend in the whole world...and I don't quite know what you're doin' or what you're goin' on about...but *(Angry.)* — what are you talking about?!? What are you *saying*? Shell: You're my best friend, >

SHELLY. Yeah—

DEENA. and that's—... I love that! But—I don't [understand why you just said what you just said]—. I mean—yeah, it's true: You're about the only thing that feels really good and makes sense in this world to me, too. You keep me from feelin' like I'm gonna become that crazy cat lady—but now, what you've *done* [fallen down] and what you've *said* [that you've fallen in love with me], well, it makes me feel for sure like I'm gonna become that crazy cat lady 'cause me-and-my-best-friend-in-the-whole-wide-world doesn't make sense at all right now. And that doesn't feel good. And I think I'm really mad at you! 'Cause you can't go back! Once it's out there, you can't take it back—something like that—and now it's just hanging there, and what do you *mean*?!!? We're *friends*! >

SHELLY. Yeah...

DEENA. *Best friends!* >

SHELLY. Yeah!

DEENA. And there's a line when you're friends that you can't cross! And you crossed it!

*And then, Deena, who should be on the opposite side of the stage from Shelly, far away from her, meets Shelly's eyes and falls down, crumpling to the ground.*

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

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

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

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

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

## **Scene 6: Where It Went**



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

PHIL. It still feels like you're mad.

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

PHIL. But you were., You are: >

MARCI. you'd pay more attention lately.

PHIL. You're mad.

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

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Good.

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

PHIL. (*Continuing his defense.*) I mean, I was late because Chad/Shelly [*Insert the appropriate name depending on which version of Scene 5 ("They Fell") was performed.*] called me in to the mill. I had to work. I need the hours.

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

PHIL. I did [have to work]!

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

PHIL. What?

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

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

*Phil starts looking for Marci's shoe.*

It's gotta be here.

MARCI. Where is it?!?

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

Is this you being funny?

PHIL. N//o.

MARCI. 'Cause it's not funny. >

PHIL. I [never said it was]—

MARCI. It's cold out here!

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

MARCI. Phil!

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

*Little beat.*

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

*Little beat.*

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

PHIL. Marce. [Let it go.]

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

PHIL. (*Lying.*) It was.

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

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

Echo Pond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*She closes her eyes and makes a wish.*

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

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

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

*Phil keeps searching the sky.*

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

PHIL. What's that supposed to mean?

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

PHIL. What?

MARCI. that you didn't see it.

PHIL. What?

MARCI. The shooting star.

PHIL. Why?

MARCI. You don't pay attention, Phil.

*Little beat.*

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

MARCI. I'm not.

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

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

PHIL. It's not in the car.

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

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

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

*She senses Phil's sadness.*

What's wrong?

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

MARCI. Oh.

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

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

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

MARCI. Uh-huh.

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

MARCI. The bright one?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. *(Pointing.)* That one?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Right there?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Phil:

PHIL. Yeah?

MARCI. That's a planet.

PHIL. What?

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

PHIL. That's a [planet]—?

MARCI. Yeah, >

PHIL. Well, how do you know?

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

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

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

PHIL. Well—

MARCI. You gotta pay attention.

PHIL. Why do you keep sayin' that?

MARCI. What?

PHIL. That I gotta pay attention?

MARCI. 'Cause you don't.

PHIL. What are you talkin' about?

MARCI. Phil: Happy Anniversary.

*Beat. Long, loud silence.*

PHIL. Huh?

MARCI. Happy Anniversary. That's what I'm talkin' about.

*Beat.*

PHIL. I'm [sorry]—.

*He can't bring himself to say he's sorry. Little beat. Then, instead of apologizing:*

I knew you were mad.

MARCI. I'm not mad, // Phil!

PHIL. You're mad at me, and pretty soon, outta nowhere, it's gonna get ugly. >

MARCI. Phil, I'm not mad, // I'm [frustrated!]—

PHIL. I mean, Marce: I'm *sorry*!! I know I missed some things, but I gotta work! I gotta take a double when Chad/Shelly needs me at the mill! He's/she's helpin' me—*us*—out, you know, // offering me the overtime! *[Insert the appropriate name and pronoun depending on which version of Scene 5 (“They Fell”) was performed.]*

MARCI. I know, // I know—

PHIL. No, you *don't* know: Me workin' is for *us*, and the kids, and it's a lot sometimes, and it messes me up!

MARCI. Phil! I'm not mad about you workin'. You gotta work. I understand that. What I don't understand is why I'm lonely, Phil. I got a husband and a coupla great kids. And I'm lonely.

*Little beat.*

You just—... You don't pay attention anymore. You go away. And I don't know where you go, but you go somewhere where you can't pay attention and you miss your son's first varsity hockey game and // you forget Missy's birthday and >

PHIL. Hockey equipment costs money!

MARCI. (*Furious.*) you forget your *anniversary*! I mean, I brought you here hoping you'd remember about us. But you didn't. And that makes me so *mad* I don't know what to do anymore...

*Beat.*

PHIL. You *lie*.

MARCI. What?

PHIL. You lie so bad.

MARCI. What?

PHIL. (*Seething.*) You're mad at me. But you don't *tell* me—even when I ask you over and over.

MARCI. Because *you* wouldn't // pay attention if I *did* tell you—

PHIL. (*Exploding—this should be ugly.*) No! No! No! Because *you* don't know how to tell me what you feel like about me, so I never know where I am, where I stand! Maybe that's why I go away! So I can know where I am for a *SECOND*! And you know what?, It's lonely there too, where I go. And you sent me there. You went away a long time before I did. And now all's you do is lie.

MARCI. I don't lie!

PHIL. (*Explosive and ugly.*) Yes, you do! You say you're not mad, but you're mad! You say you have fun, but you didn't! You didn't have fun tonight, did you?

MARCI. No.

PHIL. But you kept sayin' you did.

MARCI. I didn't. I didn't have fun, Phil. I don't have fun with you anymore.

*Beat.*

Did you?

PHIL. No. I had a rotten, lousy time.

*Beat.*

MARCI. Well, then...

*Little beat.*

What are we doin'? What are we waiting for?

*Beat. And then...a shoe that looks exactly like Marci's other shoe drops from the sky, right between Marci and Phil. Marci and Phil stare at the shoe.*

*Beat. Marci and Phil survey the sky, trying to figure out what just happened.*

*Beat. They look at the shoe again. Little beat. They look back up at the sky. Little beat. They look at the shoe again. And wonder what the heck just happened.*

*Phil checks the sky once more as he tentatively retrieves the shoe and gives it to Marci. Marci puts the shoe on. Beat. They survey the sky one more time. Marci gets up. She then takes the car keys out of her pocket. She looks at Phil. He's not looking at her. He's not moving. So she exits, and we hear her start the car...and then drive away.*

*Music. Phil is alone. A shooting star cuts across the night sky on the field of stars. Phil sees it.*

*The northern lights appear. Transition into Scene 7...*

### **Scene 7: Story of Hope**

*A stylishly dressed woman appears. Music fades. She pulls a wheelee suitcase and has a fancy purse. She approaches the front porch of a modest home in Almost, Maine. She knocks on the door or rings the doorbell. Beat.*

*The lights come on in the house; then a porch light comes on. A man who is not the man he used to be answers the door a bit cautiously, because people don't normally drop by at nine o'clock at night in Almost, Maine. The man comes out onto the porch and stops cold. He knows this woman.*

*[Note: The actor playing the man should be short. This is crucial to the magic of the story. If the actor playing the man is not short, line options are included in the scene. Please use the appropriate set of lines depending on what kind of person the actor playing the man is.]*

WOMAN. *(Fast and furious—so absorbed by what she has to say and by what she has come to do that she really doesn't take in/look at the man.)* I know this isn't going to be very easy, but I was just out there all alone in the world, and I got so scared, because all I could think about was how I had no place in this world, but, then, I just—outta nowhere—realized that there



was one place in this world that I did have, and that was with you, so I flew, and I took a taxi to get to you., I just had to come see you., Thank God you're—...

*The woman finally really looks at the man. The man is not who she thought he'd be.*

Oh [I'm sorry]—... Wait—[you're not who I thought you'd be]—...I'm sorry! You're not [who I thought you'd be]—... I'm [sorry]—... (*Checking to make sure she's at the right place.*) This is the house... I'm so sorry!... Does Daniel Harding live here?, I'm looking for Daniel Harding.

MAN. You're // looking for [Daniel Harding]—?

WOMAN. Looking for Daniel Harding, yeah. He *lives* here. I thought. But... (*Off the man's confused state, realizing that Daniel Harding doesn't live there anymore, and trying to make light.*) ...Ooooh...he doesn't, does he? Oooh, I am so sorry!

*The woman gathers her bags, preparing to leave, trying to make light.*

I am so embarrassed! “Who is this woman and what is she doing here?”

*She laughs. The man doesn't. Little beat.*

I just honestly thought he'd be here. I always thought he'd be here. Always.

*The woman is at a loss, but realizes that this man might be able to help her.*

Do you know him? Big guy, big tall guy. Played basketball, All-Eastern Maine, center? *Strong*. Do you know him?, Played hockey, too? >

*If the actor playing the man is not short, but thin or of average build, please use these lines:* Do you know him? Big guy, big strong guy. Wrestled? Heavyweight? All-Eastern Maine? *Strong*? Do you know him?, Played hockey, too?

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

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

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

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

*Little beat.*

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

*Little beat.*

I didn't stay. I went away.

MAN. Most people do.

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

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

Oh, there he is, perfect!

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

Boy it's cold. I forgot.

MAN. Yeah.

*Beat. The woman starts to go again.*

WOMAN. (*Stopping.*) I can't believe—... I took a taxi here. From Bangor. [*Pronounced, "BANG-gore."* Bangor is Maine's third-largest city, pop. 33,000.] To see him.

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

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

WOMAN. Yeah.

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

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

MAN. Why did you do that?

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

MAN. Why?

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

MAN. Oh?

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

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

WOMAN. He asked me to marry him.

MAN. Oh.

*Little beat.*

And you...

WOMAN. Didn't answer him. No.

*The man whistles.*

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

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

I mean, I didn't answer him in the first place because I didn't *have* an answer at the time. I mean, I was going to *college*, and then...the *night* before I'm about to go off into the world to do what I hope and dream, he

asks me, “Will you marry me?” I mean, come on! I was leaving in the morning! What was I supposed to do?

MAN. I don’t know.

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

MAN. That sounds like an answer to me.

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

*Little beat.*

MAN. What?

WOMAN. I think he thought I’d say, “Yes.”

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

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

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

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

*She considers. Then, honest and true:*

Yes. I did.

*Little beat.*

I do.

*Little beat.*

I feel like I dashed his hopes and dreams.

MAN. Oh, come on.

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

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

*Beat. What follows is more pointed.*

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

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

*Beat. Then, at a loss:*

Okay. Well...thank you.

MAN. For what?

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

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

MAN. Goodbye, Hope.

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

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

Danny?!?

DANIEL. Hello, Hope.

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

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. I didn't // rec[ognize you]—>

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. I didn't even // recognize you!

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. You're so...

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. ...small.

*[Note: Only use this line if the actor playing Daniel is small or thin. If the actor playing Daniel is not small or thin, this line should be cut and replaced with silence—a silence in which Hope will search for a descriptive word but not be able to come up with one.]*

DANIEL. Yeah. I, uh, lost a lotta hope. That'll do a number on you.

*Long beat. Daniel and Hope stand in a stunned, still, and awful silence. Finally, Hope says something.*

HOPE. Danny: I'm so sorry I never came back [to answer you]—

DANIEL. Shh. It's okay. 'Cause, you know somethin'? You're early.

HOPE. What?

DANIEL. You're early! You said you'd be back with an answer to my question before the sun came up, and Jeezum Crow, the sun's not even close to being up yet! It only went down a few hours ago. Look how early you are! That's good of you.

*Beat. They enjoy his goodness.*

So...a taxi all the way from *Bangor*?!?

HOPE. Yup.

DANIEL. To tell me...?

*Hope is about to say, "Yes," when she is interrupted.*

SUZETTE. (*From off.*) Honey? Dan? Hon? Who's there?

*Beat. Hope is stunned. And then devastated. Daniel remembers he has a wife.*

Hon?

DANIEL. Just somebody...needs directions.

SUZETTE. It's awful late for directions.

DANIEL. Yeah—Suzette, listen...

*Beat.*

...I'll be right in.

SUZETTE. Okay...

*Beat.*

DANIEL. I—...

HOPE. What?

DANIEL. (*Simply and matter-of-factly.*) I hope you find it, Hope. Your place in this world.

*Beat.*

Bye.

HOPE. Goodbye, Danny.

*Daniel goes inside. Hope lingers—she is at a loss. She starts to go; she stops; and, finally, after all these years, she answers Daniel. She knows he won't hear her. She knows it wouldn't matter even if he did hear her. But she answers him anyway.*

Yes.

*Beat. Then, smaller and to herself:*

Yes.

*Hope starts to go. Maybe she turns back—and the porch light goes out. Music. Northern lights. Transition into Scene 8...*

### **Scene 8: Seeing the Thing**

*Dave and Rhonda appear. They have been snowmobiling and are wearing full snowmobile regalia, replete with helmets, gloves, and*

*snowmobile suits. Dave carries a present—a wrapped painting. Music fades.*

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

RHONDA. Okay. This is it. You're in. You're inside.

DAVE. This is the porch.

*He'd like to go further inside.*

RHONDA. It's winterized.

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

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

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

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

RHONDA. What's this?

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

RHONDA. Yeah!, [It] Was!

DAVE. I mean, twenty miles out there, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. beans and franks at the Snowmobile Club, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

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

RHONDA. Awesome!

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

RHONDA. It's a Polaris, [*Pronounced, "pull-AIR-iss."* Polaris is a popular brand of snowmobile.] man!

DAVE. I know, and you whupped my butt!



RHONDA. Yeah! That's what you get for ridin' an Arctic Cat! [*Arctic Cat is a popular brand of snowmobile, and competitor of Polaris.*] Ya get yer butt whupped! And I whupped it!

*She smacks Dave around as she teases him.*

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped your butt! >

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped it! >

DAVE. I know!

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

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

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

DAVE. I know!

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

RHONDA. That was fun.

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

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

RHONDA. (*Scoffing.*) Together?!?

DAVE. Well—

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

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

RHONDA. Yeah, so?

DAVE. And, well—...

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

RHONDA. Well what?!?

DAVE. *Shh!*—and— and— and— ... And, here.

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

RHONDA. What are you doin' here, bud?

DAVE. Open it.

RHONDA. “Together.” Hm. I don't know about this...

DAVE. Just open it.

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

RHONDA. What is it?

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

RHONDA. It's a picture.

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. A paintin'.

DAVE. Yeah.

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

DAVE. What do you mean it looks homemade?

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

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

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

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. For me?

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. Oh...

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

Why?!?

DAVE. Well—...

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

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

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

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

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

DAVE. Yeah. This is—...

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

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

RHONDA. Picture of what?

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

RHONDA. Oh, come on, Dave!

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

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

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

RHONDA. What're you talkin' about?

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

RHONDA. Huh?

DAVE. You gotta trick it.

*He demonstrates "trickin' it" by stealing glances at it as he walks by it.*

Trick it!

*He demonstrates how this "trickin' it" business works again.*

See? Trick it!

*He demonstrates "trickin' it" again.*

Trick it!

*He demonstrates again.*

You gotta trick it!

*He demonstrates again.*

You gotta not let it know. And hopefully you'll eventually see what it is. It's a common thing—it's somethin' everybody knows.

*Rhonda tries "trickin' it" a few times, like Dave did. This "trickin' it" business should be pretty darn funny.*

There ya go, there ya go!

RHONDA. (*Giving up on "trickin' it."*) This is stupid. I don't see anything.

DAVE. No, you were doin' good—!

RHONDA. Dave!

DAVE. All right, all right, then, do this: Do what you usually do around the house at night, and check it out real casual-like,

*He demonstrates checking it out "real casual-like."*

and—

RHONDA. I usually have a Bud and talk to you on the phone.

DAVE. Well, do that. Where's the kitchen?

*He starts to go into the house.*

// I'll get you a Bud, and you can talk to me—

RHONDA. (*Stopping Dave—she doesn't want him going inside.*) N-n-n-n-no! >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. I'm outta Bud. [I] only got Natty Light.

DAVE. (*Starting back into the house.*) All right, I'll get you a Natty Light, // and you can have your beer and talk to me—

RHONDA. (*Stopping Dave forcefully.*) No-no-no!

DAVE. Why not? Come on, let's go inside and get us a coupla beers and hang out! >

RHONDA. No! (*Focusing on the painting.*) We gotta trick this thing, right?

*Rhonda resumes the "trickin' it" business.*

See? I'm trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it! Trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it!

DAVE. It's what people who've known each other for a long time do: They have some beers and hang out! Hey! Come on!! Hey!! *Hey!! Quit it!!*

*Dave's raised voice puts a stop to Rhonda's "trickin' it" routine because this guy doesn't raise his voice very often.*

How many years I know ya?, I come all the way out here every Friday night, and I never been inside your house for beers?! That's not natural. It's unnatural, // Rhonda! So let's do what's the *natural* thing to do and go inside and have some beers and hang out!

RHONDA. I don't care what it is, I gotta trick this thing. Hey! Hey-hey-hey, *DAVE!!* Quit runnin' your *suck!!* I gotta *look!* At this *thing!*

*Rhonda sits and stares straight at the painting, which frustrates Dave.*

DAVE. You're doin' it wrong! >

RHONDA. Shh!

DAVE. That's not [how you do it]— . You gotta trick it!, You gotta trick it!

—

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, Okay, okay!! I got somethin'!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah: Roadkill.

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Roadkill. Dead raccoon in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What?!? No! That's not what it is!

RHONDA. Okay, deer. Dead bloody deer // in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What?!? No!! Rhonda! It's not // a dead deer in the middle of the road!!

RHONDA. Okay, moose. >

DAVE. What?!?

RHONDA. Dead bloody moose in the middle of the road.

DAVE. *RHONDA!!!* No!!! No!!! That's not somethin' I'd wanna *paint!!!* // that's not even close to what it is! Dead *moose?!?* Come on!!!

RHONDA. Well, that's what I see!, I don't know what it is!, Don't get *mad!*, Jeezum Crow!

DAVE. You don't see what it is?!?

RHONDA. No!

DAVE. Well, can I give you a hint?

RHONDA. Yeah!

*Dave suddenly swoops in and kisses Rhonda right on the lips. That's the hint. Rhonda immediately gets up/pulls away/pushes Dave off her. Then, angry/flustered:*

What are you doin'?!? What was that?!? Why did you do that?!?

DAVE. 'Cause I was givin' you a hint.

RHONDA. Well, you can't just do that to someone!

DAVE. Well—

RHONDA. And don't ever do that again! >

DAVE. Okay—

RHONDA. To me! >

DAVE. Okay—

RHONDA. Ever, okay?!?

DAVE. Okay—I'm sorry.

RHONDA. And GET OUTTA HERE!!!

*Rhonda storms off into the house. Beat. Dave is stunned.*

DAVE. *(To himself.)* Jeezum Crow.

*He gathers his things and starts to go; stops, thinks, and then explodes:*

HEY, RHONDA!!

RHONDA. *(From off.)* WHAT?!?

DAVE. I LIKE YOU, YOU KNOW!

*Rhonda doesn't answer.*

A LOT!

*Rhonda doesn't answer.*

AND I THINK WE OUGHTTA BE TOGETHER! OR...GO OUT. OR SOMETHIN'!

*Still no answer from Rhonda.*

AND A LOTTA PEOPLE THINK SO, TOO, YOU KNOW!

*Little beat.*

RHONDA. *(From off.)* WHAT?!?

DAVE. I SAID A LOTTA PEOPLE THINK WE OUGHTTA BE TOGETHER! OR GO OUT! OR SOMETHIN'!

RHONDA. (*Returning.*) Who thinks that?

DAVE. Just—a lotta people.

RHONDA. How do you know they think that? (*Advancing on Dave a little.*)

DAVE. (*Retreating a little, because Rhonda could kick his butt.*) 'Cause they said so.

RHONDA. Well, who said so?

DAVE. Everybody.

RHONDA. Everybody *who*?

*Dave struggles to answer the question, because the people who said this are Rhonda's friends.*

DAVE. Just...

*Dave has no way out, and meekly admits:*

...Suzette.

RHONDA. *Suzette*?

DAVE. Yeah, and Dan...

RHONDA. (*Disbelief.*) Suzette and Dan Harding said that we oughtta be together or go out or somethin'?

DAVE. Yeah.

*Little beat.*

RHONDA. Well [why would they say that?]

*She is hurt that people have been talking about her love life behind her back.*

Who else said that?

DAVE. Marci.

RHONDA. *Marci?!?*

DAVE. Yeah, and Phil, // and— >

RHONDA. Marci and *Phil?!?*—



DAVE. yeah—and Randy and Chad/Deena and Shelly, [*Insert the appropriate names depending on which version of Scene 5 (“They Fell”) was performed.*] and >

RHONDA. *Randy and Chad/Deena and Shelly?!?—*

DAVE. Lendall and Gayle, and >

RHONDA. *Gayle?!?*

DAVE. Marvalyn and Eric, and >

RHONDA. Marvalyn...?

DAVE. and Jimmy, and Sandrine, and *East!*

RHONDA. *East??*

DAVE. Yeah. And that’s just to name a few...

RHONDA. (*Deeply hurt.*) Well, why would they [say that we oughtta be together behind my back]—...? I love those guys. I’m good to those guys. Why would they say that? That’s talkin’ about me. Behind my back. That’s mean.

DAVE. No, I don’t think they’re bein’ mean, Rhonda. They were just tellin’ me to go for it with you ’cause they like you. And me. Us. They’re rootin’ for us, Rhonda.

RHONDA. Who’s rootin’ for us?

DAVE. Everybody, Rhonda! East and Gayle and Lendall and Randy and Chad/Deena and Shelly—

RHONDA. Well, they never told me that, that they’re “rootin’” for us—

DAVE. Well, that’s ’cause I told ’em not to tell you they were. ’Cause I wanted you to find out from me that I liked you. Not [from] them.

*Beat. Rhonda is still hurt. But mostly confused.*

Just—...I’m sorry if I made you mad. When I kissed you.

RHONDA. You can’t just do that [kiss someone like that], you know.

DAVE. Yeah—I know—sorry—I just thought you liked me the way I like you.

RHONDA. I do.

DAVE. (*Stunned.*) You do?

RHONDA. Yeah.

DAVE. (*Takes this in.*) Well...all right, then!

*Little beat.*

So...then, can I [kiss you]—wait—so, do you wanna be...together?

RHONDA. (*Thinks. And then answers.*) Yeah. I guess.

DAVE. Well, all right, then!

*Little beat.*

So...then...can I [kiss you]—I would like to kiss you, if that's okay.

*Dave moves in for a kiss.*

RHONDA. It's not.

*Dave stops.*

DAVE. Oh. Okay.

RHONDA. 'Cause... (*This is a tough thing to admit.*) ...I don't know how.

DAVE. (*Confused.*) Huh?

RHONDA. I don't know how.

*Little beat.*

I've never done it before.

DAVE. What do you mean?

RHONDA. I won arm-wrestling at every Winter Carnival from fifth grade on, and I work in plywood at Bushey's Lumber Mill, and that's not what most men wanna...want.

DAVE. Oh, now, where do you get that?

RHONDA. From *everybody*.

DAVE. Well then...you got it wrong, Rhonda, 'cause, I gotta tell ya, there's a lotta guys that think you're...really pretty.

RHONDA. No!

DAVE. Yeah! I mean—I do. [I think you're really pretty.]

*Beat.*

So, um, have you never [really ever been with anybody]—? (*Realization.*)  
You never...have [been with anybody]...?

RHONDA. No.

DAVE. Oh.

*Little beat.*

Well...do you wanna [be with me]...?

*Little beat.*

You know what?, Let's, um...try [kissing each other]—... Um...why don't you try givin' me a kiss, and see what happens. And I'm not gonna make fun of you or nothin' bad like that—if you're worried about that—I promise...

RHONDA. No—no—let's do the...this.

*She goes back to the painting so she can figure out what Dave has painted for her.*

Is it raspberries?

DAVE. Nope.

*Dave has taken Rhonda's hand. Rhonda doesn't acknowledge this, but doesn't resist.*

RHONDA. Cherries?

DAVE. Nope.

*Dave has pulled Rhonda close.*

RHONDA. Big open-faced strawberry rhubarb pie?

DAVE. Nope.

*Rhonda looks into Dave's eyes. They stand face to face. There are lots of feelings. Dave slowly moves in for a kiss. And Rhonda suddenly finishes what Dave has started and kisses Dave hard. For*

*a while. Rhonda breaks away, overwhelmed. Rhonda and Dave stand face to face for a beat. Everything has changed.*

You okay?

*Rhonda suddenly kisses Dave again and the kiss turns into Rhonda hugging Dave tightly, eyes closed. When she opens her eyes, the painting is directly in her eyeline and she finally sees what Dave has painted for her.*

Oh, Dave!

*She gives Dave a playful, triumphant shove.*

I see it! It's a— . I see it. It's— ...

*She goes to the painting.*

It's nice. That's really nice. It's good. You're *good* at this!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah.

*Dave suddenly kisses Rhonda and breaks away.*

DAVE. And you are very good at *this*...

*Rhonda suddenly kisses Dave hard and breaks away.*

RHONDA. I thought it'd be hard!

*Rhonda suddenly kisses Dave hard again.*

And it's not!!!

*She kisses Dave again.*

At all...

*She kisses Dave again.*

And I feel like I wanna do it for a long time, but I also feel like I wanna do somethin' else...*next*...

*She is dying to know what's next.*

But I don't know what that *is*!

*Little beat.*

DAVE. I do.

*He shows Rhonda what they might wanna do next...by unzipping her Polaris snowmobile jacket and taking it off her. Then he encourages her to unzip his Arctic Cat snowmobile jacket...which she does. Dave rips off his jacket. He then takes off his boots. And then helps Rhonda take off her boots. Rhonda starts taking her snowmobile pants off. Dave helps and pulls them off her, and then starts taking his snowmobile pants off, which Rhonda pulls off him. And then Rhonda and Dave start to take off layer after layer after layer [at least five layers total—the more layers the better—and funnier!] of snowmobile and/or winter clothes, which they do more and more rapidly and with more and more intention until it's a bit of a frenzy, and we end up with two people from Northern Maine facing each other wearing only their long johns—and a great big pile of winter clothes on the floor between them. Beat. Rhonda and Dave are breathless—and dying for each other.*

You wanna know what comes next-next?

RHONDA. Yeah.

DAVE. Well, why don't we go inside...and I'll show you...

RHONDA. Well, how long is it gonna take?

DAVE. Well...it could take all night. Maybe longer...

RHONDA. Well, wait! We're workin' tomorrow, first shift.

*Dave and Rhonda sadly realize that they have to get up super early for work. After a beat, Dave has a revelation.*

DAVE. Says who?

*Little beat.*

RHONDA. *(Catching Dave's drift.)* You mean...call in? Like we're sick?

*Dave nods.*

We're callin' in?!?

*Dave nods again. This is a very exciting idea—because these people never call in sick!*

We're callin' in!!! We're callin' Chad/Shelly!! 'Cause you and me? We're not workin' first shift or *any* shift tomorrow!!

*She kisses Dave and sends him into the house.*

You get yourself *inside*, there, Mister Arctic Cat-Man, and you get ready to show me what's *next*!

DAVE. (*Exiting into the house.*) All right!

*Rhonda takes in the painting. A beat of joy. Then, from inside, Dave calls:*

**HEY, RHONDA!**

*Snapped out of her reverie, Rhonda heads inside. As she does so, she quickly, casually, and in an un-stagey way grabs the painting so that we can finally all see what it is—it's a heart—and brings it inside. The northern lights appear. Music.*

## **End of Act Two**

*Transition into...*

## EPILOGUE

### Option 1

*Music. Pete appears right where we left him—sitting on his bench, with his snowball, looking off left where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He looks at his snowball. He contemplates what has transpired this evening.*

*Eventually, he gets up, taking his snowball with him, and goes toward where Ginette exited to see if he can see her. Where did she go? Beat. Defeat starts to creep in. And then...Ginette slowly enters from the other side of the stage, stage right. This should be miraculous.*

*Ginette stops and sees Pete looking off to where she exited. She slowly makes her way to the bench. Pete turns to go inside because maybe he's given up on Ginette—and then he sees her. He stops cold. He looks off to where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He looks at Ginette. He looks off left where Ginette exited one more time. And then looks back at Ginette. He then nonverbally asks, using the snowball, if she's been all the way around the world. Ginette nods, "Yes." She's been all the way around the world, and she's back. She's "close" again. Pete wonders how this can be true.*

*The northern lights appear. Ginette and Pete take them in. They're awesome. Ginette sits on the bench and looks up and out at the northern lights. Pete sits on the bench and looks at Ginette while she looks up and out at the northern lights. Then he looks up and out at the northern lights.*

*And it all begins again. Lights fade to black.*

### End of Play

or...

### Option 2

*Pete appears stage left, exactly where we last saw him—standing, staring offstage left to where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He has his snowball. He looks at it...and ponders his theory on what it means to be “close,” and wonders if maybe he shouldn’t have shared his theory with Ginette. He looks off left to where Ginette exited...and eventually makes his way back to the bench. He sits where Ginette was sitting in the Prologue, all the while keeping his attention on where Ginette went.*

*And then...Ginette slowly enters from the other side of the stage, stage right. This should be miraculous.*

*Ginette stops and takes Pete in. He is still looking for her offstage left. She makes her way to the bench. Once she reaches the bench, she stops. Pete gets up and turns to go inside, because (maybe) he’s given up on her—but then he sees Ginette. He stops cold. He looks off left to where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He looks at Ginette. He looks off to where Ginette exited one more time. And then looks back at Ginette. And nonverbally asks, using the snowball, if she’s been all the way around the world. Ginette nods, “Yes.” She’s been all the way around the world, and she’s back. She’s “close” again. Pete wonders how this can be true.*

*The northern lights appear. Ginette and Pete take them in. They’re awesome. Ginette sits on the bench and looks up and out at the northern lights. Pete sits on the bench and looks at Ginette while she looks up and out at the northern lights. Then he looks up and out at the northern lights.*

*And it all begins again. Lights fade to black.*

**End of Play**



## PROPERTY LIST

### **Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue**

Snowball

### **Scene 1: Her Heart**

Small brown paper grocery bag, filled with small slate pieces

Maine travel brochure

### **Scene 2: Sad and Glad**

Two bottles of Budweiser

Tray for the waitress

### **Scene 3: This Hurts**

Man's shirt

Ironing board

Iron

Laundry basket filled with folded laundry

Two composition books

Pencil

### **Scene 4: Getting It Back**

Large cloth bags or sacks filled with batting or pillow stuffing

Small, small pouch with ring box (and ring) inside

### **Scene 5: They Fell**

Two cans of Natural Light beer

### **Scene 6: Where It Went**

Men's hockey skates

Women's skates—hockey or figure

Winter shoe

**Scene 7: Story of Hope**

Purse, suitcase

**Scene 8: Seeing the Thing**

Wrapped painting

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

### **Scene 1: Her Heart**

Distant door and screen door opening, slamming

### **Scene 2: Sad and Glad**

Bar activity

Bachelorette party noise

### **Scene 4: Getting It Back**

Pounding on door

Door opening, closing

Car doors opening, closing

### **Scene 6: Where It Went**

Car door opening, closing

Car starting, leaving

### **Scene 7: Story of Hope**

Car approaching, idling, leaving

Doorbell

Fancy-shoed footsteps in snow

Door opening, closing

### **Scene 8: Seeing the Thing**

Snowmobiles approach, park

## NOTES FOR DIRECTORS

### **On programs:**

If in your program you plan to include a list of the characters appearing in each scene, please do the following:

Please list the waitress from “Sad and Glad” as “Waitress.”

Please list the man in “Story of Hope” as “Man.”

Please do not list Suzette from “Story of Hope” at all.

If you are performing both versions of “They Fell” in repertory, please list both casts.

### **On casting:**

*Almost, Maine* is a play for character actors. Actors of all shapes, sizes, colors, and abilities can be in this play.

### **On the Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue:**

The Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue can help audiences understand that all of the action in *Almost, Maine* is taking place at the same moment. They anchor the play in time. The idea is that—while all of the other scenes are happening—Pete is sitting on this bench and wondering where Ginette went. Is she testing his theory of what it means to be “close”? Or did she just leave?

If you use Option 1, Pete will be discovered on the bench in the Interlogue and in the Epilogue. This requires the use of blackouts. The audience should not see the actor who plays Pete making his way to the bench. He should simply appear exactly where they last saw him. I have learned that this is tricky to accomplish. Often there’s a low-light scramble of the actor playing Pete trying to get into place. So...

...We created Option 2 for the recent Off-Broadway revival of the play. The idea is that, at the end of the Prologue, Pete is left sitting on the bench, pondering. He then wanders off a bit towards where Ginette exited...as Glory appears for “Her Heart.”

The Interlogue is a continuation of this action. We see Pete exactly where we last saw him—stage left, wondering where Ginette went, then making his way back to the bench, and sitting back down and pondering. Then, at the end of the Interlogue, he again wanders off towards where Ginette exited...as Randy and Chad or Deena and Shelly appear for “They Fell.”

The Epilogue is a continuation of the Interlogue. We see Pete exactly where we last saw him—wondering where Ginette went and then making his way back to the bench. He sits and ponders...and then...Ginette returns!

Whichever option you choose, please remember that the Interlogue should pick up exactly where the Prologue left off, and the Epilogue should pick up exactly where the Interlogue left off.

If done properly, the Epilogue can lift *Almost, Maine* one dramatic notch higher than the end of “Seeing the Thing.” Ginette’s return should be huge and rousing and epic and glorious. She has walked all the way around the world in an instant, and that is miraculous.

Please honor the stage directions in the Prologue, the Interlogue, and the Epilogue. In the Prologue, please honor that long opening beat. At the end, when Ginette leaves, please follow the stage directions closely. They are the actors’ “lines.” Don’t be afraid to take time in these sequences, and please practice taking that time in rehearsal. Rehearse the silences as much as you rehearse what’s spoken.

### **On the physical business in Scene 3, “This Hurts”:**

The ironing board hits should be as real as can be, as surprising as can be, and as simple as can be. Marvalyn should always “operate” the ironing board with both hands. The key to hitting Steve is in the pivot. Marvalyn should choose a point upon which to pivot as she simply turns to go and put the ironing board away. The momentum of her turn will generate enough speed to make for a pretty great wallop of Steve. It works best if Steve has his back to the audience and Marvalyn hits him on the crown of the head (or his forehead, protected by a hand, perhaps), sending Steve tumbling downstage off the bench. This way, the actor playing Steve can see the hit coming and can control it.

Don’t pad the ironing board too much. The flat top of an ironing board is not solid metal—it’s mesh-like, so it really doesn’t hurt. And there are

moving metal parts on the board's underside, which make a great sound when the board hits something like a human head. Padding dampens the sound. Safety first—yes—but getting hit in the head with an ironing board is not as painful as it seems!

Steve's books of THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU and THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF should be composition books, because they make a great sound when they smack a human head, and they don't actually hurt.

### **On Scene 7, “Story of Hope”:**

It is important to me that the actor who plays the man in “Story of Hope” be short or thin. “Story of Hope” is a story of loss, and a physical manifestation of loss in the man is key—lost height (again, this is best), lost weight—because this man is literally half the man he used to be, because he has lost so much hope. You'll be surprised by how magical and heartbreaking and funny this scene is when the physical manifestation of the man's loss is crystal clear.

Many people want to know why Daniel doesn't reveal himself to Hope at the beginning of the scene. Well, first off, Daniel is utterly stunned that Hope has returned. Second, at the beginning of the scene, he isn't really given a chance to reveal himself, because Hope doesn't give him a chance to speak: She's too busy talking. And, third, as Daniel realizes that Hope has no idea who he is, he's probably intrigued by how this is all going to play out, and by what she has to say to him—because she thinks he's a stranger. There are places in the middle of the scene where Daniel could reveal himself. But I think he decides to withhold the information Hope needs because...maybe it's his way of exacting a little bit of revenge. I do think his speech is cryptic and pointed. But it's not an attack. Daniel is passive-aggressively letting Hope know that what she did was wrong. Fortunately, though, once he reveals himself, he chooses to be kind. Until he remembers—and Hope realizes—that he's (maybe happily, maybe just contentedly) married. That's the twist I love!

### **On structure:**

*Almost, Maine* is unique in that it is comprised of nine complete tales, each of which begins, climaxes, and ends. Each tale is its own unique emotional

nut to crack. Serve each one well and individually. If the parts are well done, the sum of the parts will be well done and effective, and the natural progression of the scenes will fuel the overall arc of the play.

### **On transitions:**

The transitions between each scene in *Almost, Maine* must not slow the play down. Keep them as short as possible. This can be best accomplished when there isn't much stuff to clear/set up between scenes.

In many of the productions I've seen, the transitions are blackouts during which the northern lights appear. And this works. But blackouts create full stops. And stops allow audiences to disengage slightly. So I think the best way to do *Almost, Maine* is without blackouts.

The most recent Off-Broadway revival was a blackout-free affair, thanks to director Jack Cummings III. When one scene ended, the lights would change (the northern lights flickered), music would establish, and the scene would dissolve...as the next scene materialized. This did not muddle the endings of the scenes. It simply kept the play moving forward as a whole.

### **On the endings of each scene:**

Please note that the endings of the individual scenes in *Almost, Maine* are crucial. They're not easy, happy endings. They're not endings at all, actually. They are complex, fragile, and sometimes awful *suspensions*, fraught with uncertainty.

I do think that, at the close of each scene in the play, the characters are *about* to experience joy. Great joy. But not just yet—not in what I've written. In what I've written, the lights fade on the moment of change. And change is hard and confusing and uncertain. So don't cheat. Don't skip those uncertain, scary, trepidatious feelings. Don't go straight to the joy. The real, unmitigated joy happens *after* these scenes end. What the folks of *Almost* (and what the audience) experience at the end of these scenes is that moment just *before* the joy! It's there, bubbling under the surface, and I definitely think there's room for a *hint* of the joy to come. But—going *straight* to joy at the end of each scene is the corny, easy way to do this play. And nothing in this play should be corny. Or easy. Because love isn't easy in any of these scenes, especially in Scenes 6 and 7 (“Where It Went”

and “Story of Hope”). If you manage to keep the endings suspended and keep the audience *almost* happy, *wanting* for resolution and catharsis until the very end of the last scene of the play, you’ll have done your job perfectly!

Only at the end of the final scene in the play (“Seeing the Thing”) does the audience get a true, cathartic “happy ending.” Joy has to be earned, and I think only Rhonda and Dave have earned it. All of the other folks in this play have to wade through fear or sadness or pain before they get the joy! Make the audience wade with them! The “*almost-happiness*” of Scenes 1 through 5 and the bittersweetness—heck, *bitterness*—of Scenes 6 and 7 will make the end of Scene 8 wonderfully cathartic and deliriously joyful. (And, yes, the last scene of Act One—“Getting It Back”—has a pretty happy ending, but that whole scene is a fight—the consequences of which must be dealt with. And, yes, the Epilogue has a happy ending, too. But the joy there has been earned, because the Prologue ends in the utter uncertainty of a quiet, gentle, profound disaster.)

### **On language:**

I call the dialogue in *Almost, Maine* “quietly heightened.” It’s not particularly poetic. It’s true to the way people talk. So please encourage your actors to talk the way people talk, not the way actors talk. And—although I don’t think I’ve written poetic language—I think I *have* written poetic *situations*. This is the kind of poetry I like: poetry that is well disguised; poetry that sneaks up on an audience; poetry that surprises. Unexpected poetry gets people where it counts—in their hearts and souls.

### **General note:**

I think *Almost, Maine* can best be described as a midwinter night’s dream. Or as a romance. A really funny but really sad romance. It’s been fun for me to watch audiences take in productions of *Almost, Maine*, because they think they’re watching a simple, realistic little comedy...and then, all of a sudden, they’re not. They’re watching something that isn’t simple or real or comic at all. Nothing is what it seems. And this surprises people. And it’s wonderful to watch people get surprised. People laugh when they’re surprised. They gasp. They make strange sounds. This should



be your goal as you direct the play: Make the audience make noise. Make them laugh and gasp and utter strange sounds. Make them desperately wonder if what seems to be unfolding before their very eyes...is actually unfolding before their very eyes. Keep them guessing. Stay ahead of them. Don't give them what they expect. Don't telegraph. Keep the surprises alive. If you don't succeed in this—then *Almost, Maine* will languish in corny sentimentality. And it will be bad. Because this play is *almost* bad. It toes the line. Don't let it be bad. Make it good. Great, even.

## NOTES FOR ACTORS

### **On punctuation:**

I've addressed the // and > symbols in the notes section at the beginning of this volume. I just wanted to remind you that the overlaps are very specific and difficult. Please figure them out—accurately! Please remember that // means that the next speaker should start speaking and that > just means keep talking and don't stop and wait for the other character to speak. Drive through to the end of the sentence or thought.

Some other punctuation notes:

Sometimes you'll see commas after exclamation points or question marks:

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, Okay, okay!!

This is simply to encourage pace and keep things moving. Push through to the landing place—which is, in this case, the double exclamation point.

Remember that sometimes you'll see lines in brackets like these [ ]. They shouldn't be spoken. They're just guides to what is unsaid.

A dash (—) at the end of a line means that the next speaker cuts off the current speaker.

A dash followed by a period (—.) or a dash followed by an ellipsis (—...) at the end of a line means that the person speaking cuts themselves off with thought. The next character to speak does not do the cutting off.

An ellipsis (...) at the end of a line means that the thought trails off.

Dashes (—) inside lines mean that the person speaking cuts themselves off.

Because pace is key to this play, keeping your lines of thought active is key, as is noting when the characters are actually listening to each other. Often you'll be playing people who aren't listening to each other. Explore that—the non-listening that happens when people are thinking, or are too busy talking. I think the big epiphanies come when people actually listen to and hear each other—and I think epiphanies—and true listening—are rather rare.

### **On dialect:**

Northern Mainers don't really have a distinctive dialect, though Rs are pretty pronounced. Words like "sorry" or "forest" or "tomorrow" are pronounced "SORE-ee," "FORE-est," and "to-MORE-ow." The "or" sound is the key. That's about all I'd do with dialect—because the Maine dialect most people know of is a coastal thing, and Almost, Maine, is a couple hundred miles from the ocean. It's not "Downeast," so please don't do "Downeast" Maine. Please. It's not who these people are. Do not think "lobstah" or "A-yuh." Think Canadian if anything. Most important, just talk. And hit your Rs a little harder than you normally might. And, while the people of Almost, Maine, are rural dwellers, that doesn't mean they have Southern accents.

### **On language:**

Please honor the beats—the quiet moments—in *Almost, Maine*. And make sure they are full and electric. This play must never feel...slow. There's a buoyancy to the material. A lightness. And I think it's in the language. Find where the words come tumbling out of the characters' mouths. Find where the words don't come so easy—where the quiet moments are. Much is communicated in those quiet moments. The play must continue to move forward inside those quiet moments.

Please note that the characters from out of town (Glory and Hope) talk more—and faster—than the people of Almost. They have most of the play's monologues. They use words in an attempt to stay in control of situations that get out of (their) control.

### **On characterization:**

Your job as an actor in these plays is to tell the stories. You're a storyteller. Don't worry too much about being a chameleon. Don't create caricatures. Sure, you want to create distinct characters—but trust the stories to do a lot of that work for you. Tell the stories, and allow the characters to come to life. This doesn't mean be lazy. It doesn't mean don't be outrageous. It doesn't mean don't be creative. It doesn't mean do nothing or be boring. It just means...construct truthfully!

Remember: The people of Almost, Maine, are not cuddly and cute. They're not quaint eccentrics. They are not simpletons—although there is a

guilelessness about them. They're not quirky. They are ordinary people. It's their *situations* that are odd, extraordinary, and quirky.

My advice: Don't forget how much the people of Almost, Maine, are hurting. Honor the ache, play the pain (keep most of it covered), and don't forget that *Almost, Maine* is a comedy. Sadness and pain are the funniest things in the world.

## NOTES FOR DESIGNERS

### **On creating place:**

Almost, Maine, is a quiet, remote, sometimes lonely place. It is empty. The people of Almost live uncluttered lives. Keep this in mind as you decide how much stuff you need to define the different locales of *Almost, Maine*. I think the less stuff the better. The bleaker the better—it will play nicely against the sweetness and (presumed) sentimentality of the play.

Please consider visiting [www.crownofmaine.com](http://www.crownofmaine.com) for terrific photos of Northern Maine. Look for links to photos by Ken Lamb and Paul Cyr.

And—here’s something that I’m not sure anyone can do anything about, but it’s always been on my mind. When people think of Maine, they think of lobster and the ocean. But Almost, Maine, is nowhere near the ocean. It’s almost in Quebec, Canada. I’ve tried to make this clear as subtly as possible in the text—but it takes a lot more to break down a common misconception than a passing mention! *Anything* you can do to help people understand what and where this very special place is would be very much appreciated.

### **On creating the northern lights:**

The northern lights are not complex and extravagant. They’re clean lines of light—like ribbons or curtains. They can be white, yellow, green, red, blue, or purple, depending on what gas is being excited. The most common color combinations are green and red. I believe lower-atmosphere oxygen makes the green color when plasma collides with it and upper-atmosphere oxygen makes the red color. Red is rarer. But better for this play, I think. I’ve seen yellow, white, and green most frequently; red, occasionally; blue, once (most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen); purple, never. Whenever I’ve seen the northern lights, I’ve felt like they’re alive. They *move*. And they are soundless—but when they appear, it feels like there’s a humming in the air. This humming is sensed more than heard. Light and some sort of subtle sound might work to help capture the mystery/enhance the creation of the northern lights.

**On costumes:**

The people of *Almost, Maine*, don't wear funny clothes and funny hats. Keep the clothes simple and functional.

**On music:**

Interstitial music will play a big part in *Almost, Maine*. Julian Fleisher's music was written for the play, and it is available for licensing through Dramatists Play Service. You can find more information on ordering and licensing this music by going to the *Almost, Maine* page on [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com). I strongly encourage its use.

If you do use other music, try not to use music with lyrics. I think instrumental folk music is the way to go—stuff that features guitar, hammer dulcimer, harmonica, fiddle, etc. Music with lyrics tends to provide an analysis of what has just happened—and I really want the stories to speak for themselves. Let the scenes be the songs.

Again, thank you for reading.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

### **On Maine:**

Maine is the eastern-most and northeastern-most state in the United States.

Maine has 611 miles of international border with Canada, more than any other state except Alaska and Michigan.

Maine is the only state in the country that's attached to only one other state.

Maine's total area is about 35,400 square miles. The other New England states (Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) have a total area of about 36,600 square miles. Despite its size, Maine contains only 9% of the region's population.

With 1.3 million residents Maine is the most sparsely populated state east of the Mississippi River. It has 40 people per square mile. (Consider this: Vermont—*Vermont*—has 65 people per square mile; Massachusetts has 810; New Jersey: 1,100.)

Maine's largest city is Portland, pop. 65,000. (Greenwich, CT, has 61,000 residents.) Only Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming have smaller "largest cities."

Maine's unorganized territories make up more than half of the state's total land area.

Maine is more forested than any other state in the country. It is 90% woods.

Maine has more moose per square mile than any other state.

Maine contains the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail: Mount Katahdin in Central Maine.

### **On Aroostook County:**

Aroostook is the largest county east of the Mississippi River, with an area of 6,828 square miles. It is considerably larger than Connecticut (4,800 sq. mi.) and Rhode Island (1,045 sq. mi.) put together.

Aroostook County's population is about 68,000, making it one of the most sparsely populated counties east of the Mississippi. (Connecticut and

Rhode Island's combined population is 4.5 *million*.) Aroostook has about 10 people per square mile, making it less densely populated than the Dakotas.

**On Almost, Maine (hypothetical):**

Almost, Maine, would be located in T13 R7, in the heart of Aroostook County. T13 R7 is some 75 miles northwest of the northern terminus of Interstate 95; some 120 miles north of Mount Katahdin; some 200 miles northwest of the ocean (at its closest); some 300 miles north of Portland, Maine; and some 450 miles north of Boston.

Population: probably about 300.

Median annual household income: probably about \$30,000.

Hours of daylight in mid-January: about 9.

Average January temperature: 9 degrees Fahrenheit.

Average annual snowfall: 110 inches.

If you're working on a production of the play, thank you for believing in a place like Almost, Maine.





## **Note on Songs/Recordings, Images, or Other Production Design Elements**

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