

Howl at The Center

Auditions: Tuesday (1/16/2024) @ 7pm

Performance Dates: March 1-3, 2024 (Friday & Saturday @ 8pm, Sunday @ 3pm)

Location: The CENTER for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck

The following short plays will be a part of our program.

***We are seeking a variety of performers (please see notes below).**

Audition sides are attached.

***Star Surge* by David Simpatico**

Synopsis: Molly and Ross, a mismatched dance team from New Jersey, prepare for a nationally televised talent competition. Backstage, at the five-minute call, Ross has a surprise for Molly.... The first half of the scene will be read on book; the second half is the dance, and we will choreograph a short number for the reading.

Seeking:

MOLLY, a dancer, Ross's lover

ROSS, a dancer, Molly's lover

DEE DEE, a rival dancer

ED MCCANN/STAGE MANAGER, the offstage voices of the show

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***Home Base* by Louisa Vilardi**

Synopsis: In *Home Base*, Joey is quickly summoned to care for his rapidly deteriorating father, Frank, for only one day. After Frank's memory is triggered and they relive one of the greatest moments in the history of baseball, Joey realizes his father is closer to striking out than he could have ever imagined.

Seeking:

FRANK: a father with dementia; 70+ Male

JOEY: Frank's son; 40+ Male

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“The Art Machine” by Paul Allman

Hal is an amateur historian and folklorist whose wife has disappeared from his life without his knowing why or where. He is giving a TED talk about his obsession: tracking down the mysterious Art Machine – which took place while his wife was secretly plotting to leave him.

Seeking:

Hal, male, any adult age range. Anywhere from bookish, to Explorers Club member, to nutty professor.

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***My Own Man* by Margie Castleman**

Synopsis: TREVOR, visiting his middle aged parents in rural upstate NY, delivers his exciting news. HANK and BETTY, longing for a grandchild, are shocked to hear of his new relationship. Nope not with a woman, nope not with a man...he's hooked up full speed ahead with...?

Seeking:

BETTY and HANK, 55ish, married

TREVOR: 35ish

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***Yalu River* by Nan Gatewood-Satter**

Synopsis: Lys and Zack, strangers who meet in an airport boarding area in Anchorage, Alaska, love the adrenaline rush of extreme physical challenges and exotic destinations, but the very things that make them perfect for each other threaten to derail the possibility of a relationship. As they wait for their delayed flight, they engage in a courtship of getting-to-know-you one-upsmanship.

Seeking:

ZACK: Male. Mid-30's to mid-40's. Professionally successful, extremely competitive, focused, extremely fit.

LYS: Female. Mid 30's-mid-40's. Professionally successful, extremely competitive, focused, extremely fit. Fair-skinned if possible but that's not essential.

GATE AGENT 1 AND GATE AGENT 2: Male or Female. Played by one actor. Voice only.

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***Pauline's Hair Express* by Dwight Watson**

Synopsis: In desperate need of hair care, Jeanie takes her lunch break from a stressful job at the DMV for a quick fix from hair stylist Pauline (who is suffering from her own issues brought on by the pandemic and the demands of her clients).

Seeking:

PAULINE GROSSNICKEL: A popular hairstylist—a mature woman, owner of “Pauline’s Hair Express”

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***Put It To Rest* by Anthony Leiner**

Synopsis: When ED and his partner, Aris, go to his estranged father’s funeral in the hopes to close the book on their past. They discover that they are at the wrong funeral once they come face to face with the deceased.

Seeking:

ED - Male - Mid 40’s. Reluctantly attending his father’s funeral. Dressed in a suit and tie.

ARIS - Gender Neutral - Late 30’s. Ed's partner. Empathetic. Dressed in an elegant dress / vest combo.

SCENE ONE

Dressing Room.

Off-stage dance music fades away as the lights rise.

MOLLY, exuberant and nervous, stuffs herself into a sexy corset outfit. She works in a bakery, stuffing jelly donuts in Lodi, N.J.

ROSS enters, carrying a bowl of warm cereal. He is calm, centered, Hollywood handsome. He moonlights as a personal trainer at the Lodi Living Well Lady Personal Gym and Yoga Center.

Ross has worked hard on losing his thick North Jersey accent; occasionally, it pops through.

ROSS
Did you eat?

MOLLY
No.

ROSS
Here.

MOLLY
No.

ROSS
Here.

MOLLY
Honey, you want me to puke now or later?

ROSS
It's good for you.

MOLLY
You're the one told me you gotta stay hungry like in order to transcend the influence of gravity like.

ROSS
Trust me, it's Amaranth, Mystic Food of the Aztecs.

MOLLY

Hello, it's Wheatina, it's 39 cents a box and it makes me very, very regular, thank you. What's the matter, baby, don't you want me to transcend gravity or what?

ROSS

(Struggling to contain himself)

Molly, if you are going to attack me I'll leave. I do not need a psycho-slash-emotional assault, not tonight of all nights. Accusations and implications, you're always so ready with the implications, and I'm tired of it, do you understand me, I am tired of it. I have to stay centered!

The Stage Manager knocks on the door and says: FIVE MINUTES!

ROSS (CONT'D)

(Barking)

Thank you!

MOLLY

(Taken aback)

Wow, Ross, lighten up, I mean I'm sorry, I'm just a little overly nervous is all, I got nothing to imply, honest, I mean, I know you want me to transcend and all, I mean you taught me, right, I mean before I met you I had no idea I was a lotus in the motherfucking mud puddle, I mean who would of thought. Believe me, baby, I don't mean a thing you think I mean, no accusations here whatsoever. Now tell me, be honest, how do I look? Oh my God, not yet, two seconds--

She continues dressing.

ROSS

There is no reason for you to be nervous, Mol.

MOLLY

God I love that about you Ross, you are so goddamn centered. I wish I was. It's gotta be all that Buddha stuff, you know, he's really, really great. No, I mean it, he really really is.

She stuffs her cups.

ROSS

Eat this cereal before it gets mushy and loses all its protein.

MOLLY
Ross, my stomach.

ROSS
Just eat it please.

MOLLY
No, I can't.

ROSS
Eat it.

MOLLY
I don't want any.

ROSS
Molly.

MOLLY
I said no.

ROSS
(Losing it)
Molly, just eat the goddamn cereal, please!

Shocked, she takes the bowl. Ross
centers himself.

MOLLY
Alright already Jesus Christ Almighty!

She munches angrily.

ROSS
(Calm again)
Thank you.

MOLLY
No problem. Just remember whose fault it is in
ten minutes when I suddenly get very very
regular on nationwide syndicated TV. I'm
serious, Ed McCann better be ready with a
friggen mop.

ROSS
He won't have to, Molly. I'm telling you not to
worry.

MOLLY
Ross, I don't get you sometimes, it's like you
got no nervous system, I mean, you're always so
cool and collected like an underarm or
something. It frightens me, it truly does.
(MORE)

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I mean you're lucky you can dance, baby, otherwise I'd toss you outta bed for someone just a little less 'evolved.'

She kisses him; he does not respond.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

What.

ROSS

Molly--

MOLLY

What's the matter? Do I smell?

ROSS

Molly, let me--

MOLLY

Don't I taste good, do I got plaque or something? I mean, it's like kissing a dead man here!

ROSS

Molly--

MOLLY

(Realization!)

Oh my God, I am so sorry, really honey, I didn't mean it, is it your astral plain again? I thought you got it all tuned up and all. God, I am such a bull in a china shop, I'm always knocking into someone's fucking iridescent aura, you know? It's just I am so nervous but of course there is nothing to worry about anyways since we are gonna kick some nationwide butt, am I right or what here? Ed McCann is gonna drop dead, knock on wood. So, ok. Now. How do I look?

She presents her sexy self.

ROSS

I'm replacing you with DeeDee, Molly. I am sorry.

MOLLY

No, seriously, how do I look?

ROSS

Not as good as DeeDee.

She picks up an invisible phone.

MOLLY

Pardon me, hello? I think I got a bad connection here.

ROSS

Molly, you are not dancing with me tonight. Trust me, I've given the matter a lot of thought, I chanted all week and it has occurred to me for the good of the number, I had to get a new partner.

MOLLY

(Stunned, hit, hurt)

You--you knew about this all week?

(She laughs it off)

Oh God, Ross, you're pulling my leg again, right--God, honey, not tonight, I'm too friggen nervous. You got such an 'enlightened' sense of humor.

ROSS

I swear, this is not a personal decision. If you remove yourself from the situation and look at it objectively, you'll see I made the right move.

She realizes he's telling the truth.

MOLLY

You're very serious here.

ROSS

I am.

Pause.

Molly bursts into tears. Ross watches her, uncomfortably. Fixes his hair.

ROSS

Molly, come on. Molly. I wish you wouldn't cry like that. It makes it harder for me to like self-actualize.

MOLLY

How can you do this to me, Ross, I'm your dance partner--

ROSS

Not tonight.

MOLLY

I'm your lover, goddamnit, I love you.

ROSS

That has nothing to do with it.

MOLLY

Excuse me, but I think it has everything to do with it.

ROSS

And Bam!, that's your essential problem, Molly, both as a dancer and a human being. You focus on peripheral, non-consequential factors that like dissipate your attention from the critical issue at hand. Your perception is what you call sloppy.

MOLLY

Sloppy? Who the hell are you, my mother? You're looking me straight in the face and stabbing me in the back and telling me it's all part of some grand universal plan, am I following you here?

ROSS

Molly--

MOLLY

I mean, like who do you think you're trying to kid, here? You dance with somebody nine hours everyday, you think you know him, but you obviously do not. You want to know who you are? I'll tell you who you are, you are Satan motherfucking incarnate, that's who you are.

ROSS

If you'd only learn to moderate your breathing, you'd see my point.

MOLLY

Burn in Hell, you lying sack of shit. You're killing me, you are literally ripping my heart out of my body and leaving my guts hanging on the floor.

ROSS

You'll have to stop vilifying so I can explain, Molly.

MOLLY

(clutching her shattered pride)

Who the fuck is DeeDee?

ROSS

You met her last week at the preliminaries. She has red hair.

MOLLY

With the neck? What does she have that I don't have?

ROSS

Well, objectively speaking, DeeDee has teeth, legs, a face, a head of hair, a bust, and of course, that neck.

MOLLY

Yeah, well, I mean, you know, so do I.

ROSS

Yes you do, which indicates the pivotal factor lies in like a fundamental degree of difference between hers and yours.

MOLLY

I hope you die.

ROSS

Wonderful. Now I'm the bad guy, right?

MOLLY

No, you're the fairy fucking godmother, hello.

ROSS

Listen to me. I have worked all my life for this night and I am not going to blow it on account of being stuck inside some twisted notion of obligation, don't blame me, blame my karma.

MOLLY

Fuck your karma.

ROSS

It would be a mistake to deny the truth: by keeping you as my dance partner, I would be undermining my forward growth in an attempt to hang on to residual failures and like inadequacies. If we accept the fact that we create our own realities, then my choice is clear: go forward with DeeDee, or stay chained to the past with you.

MOLLY

Oh, excuse me, I didn't realize I was holding you back. I was under the impression maybe I was supporting you. I didn't realize paying the rent and buying all the groceries and doing the laundry was a way to undermine somebody's career, you goddamn puke-eater.

ROSS
That's not what I meant. I appreciate all that,
I wouldn't change any of it, not for a second.

MOLLY
Well, you're too late, slime ball.

ROSS
Fine. Then I'm too late. But tonight, I am
going on with DeeDee.

MOLLY
But Ross... (*singing*) You got the looks baby, I
got the motion we got together, we'd be causing
a commotion!

ROSS
Not true.

MOLLY
Says who?

ROSS
Says not just me.

MOLLY
Like who?

ROSS
At the callbacks, I was given a private
critique. They loved the costumes, they loved
the song, they loved the choreography, they
loved me, they loved everything about the act,
except one thing.

MOLLY
(A little fragile)
Me?

ROSS
I am sorry, but in this reality, you did not
please the judges. He said it was a shame to
waste such a talented young man such as myself
and gave me the single option to go on provided
I get a new partner. What would you do?

MOLLY
I'd tell him to blow it out his ass.

ROSS
I doubt that. Look, I am simply taking a turn
on a pre-ordained path. It has nothing to do
with you. Look at me, do I look like I belong
in New Jersey, training those old bags at
Living Well Lady Personal Gym and Yoga Center?
(MORE)

Molly resists, and the two women start a real Pier 6 Brawl, with Ross dancing in the middle of it. DeeDee cocks her fist, but accidentally punches Ross in the nose. He crashes to the floor.

Molly and DeeDee take center stage and with a blazing, terpsichorean display, brilliantly end the dance. The audience goes wild.

Ross groggily rises to his feet, standing between the two women.

ED (CONT'D)

(Vo)

Absolutely incredible! Talk about Old School, anybody out there remember Madonna? Alright now, let's hear it for Spontaneous Combustion, aren't they terrific, folks?

Molly steps forward to applause, as does DeeDee.

Molly steps in front of her, but DeeDee grabs her hair, pulls her back and takes the spotlight.

Molly jumps on DeeDee's back, and the two are at it again.

Ross tries to get in-between them, and all three degenerate into a wild catfight.

ED (CONT'D)

(Vo)

Ladies and Gentlemen, can Spontaneous Combustion beat Body Glove's score of 3.75 and return next week as our reigning champs? Let's find out!

Drum roll. Molly picks her head up from the fight as do Ross and DeeDee, freezing in anticipation.

(Ed (CONT'D)

(Vo)

On a scale of one to four, the judges have awarded the challengers a combined total of...4.0!!! We have a new set of champions, ladies and gentlemen, let's hear it for Spontaneous Combustion!

Instantly, Molly, DeeDee and Ross are up, hugging each other and crying with delirious joy.

ED (CONT'D)

(Vo)

Yes, our brand new champions, Spontaneous Combustion! They'll receive a thousand dollar cash prize for today's victory and return next week to continue their trek towards the ultimate Million Dollar Star Surge Finals! So until next week, remember, everyday, in every way, you are getting better and better. Goodnight folks!

Causin' A Commotion swells. DeeDee and Ross embrace.

Molly and Ross embrace. As they part, Molly deftly knees Ross in the groin. Ross crumbles.

Molly and DeeDee embrace center stage, waving to the audience in victory. The lights fade to black.

The End.

Star Surge 4.17.20

HOME BASE BY LOUISA VILARDI - AUDITION SIDE

Lights up on FRANK. He is diligently working on a puzzle and wears glasses. He spends a moment insisting that a certain piece fits where he believes it does. It doesn't. He gets frustrated. His son, JOEY, enters covered in some snow and carrying a bag of groceries. He shakes off the snow, puts down the bag, and removes his coat.

JOEY

Cold out there.

FRANK

This fucking piece!

JOEY

Enough with that puzzle, dad. How long can you possibly work on *one* puzzle?

FRANK

It's this one piece, Joey. It's supposed to fit here. It just won't fit.

JOEY

I don't know. I guess...just try another part of the puzzle, dad.

FRANK

I know how to do a puzzle.

JOEY

I didn't say you didn't know how to...(beat) Forget it. Roads are bad. No wonder Antonia couldn't make her shift. And your walkway's a mess. You can't let it get that bad. I coulda split my head open if I fell.

FRANK

Antonia?

JOEY

Yes, Antonia.

FRANK

Toni.

JOEY

Whatever you want to call her. Her car's a piece of crap. I can see why she had to cancel.

FRANK

Does she even work today?

JOEY

Yes. Today's her 12 hour day.

FRANK

Now what?

JOEY

Well (*he presents himself*), you got me for the day.

FRANK

Oh, Christ.

JOEY

Come on, dad.

FRANK

Is Toni coming or not?

JOEY

No, dad. Not today.

FRANK

Why?

JOEY

I said it's snowing. Roads are bad. Ice too.

FRANK

Oh, I know.

JOEY

You know? Did you go outside?

FRANK

No. I mean I know I gotta just work on another part of this puzzle. But this one piece!

JOEY

While you finish that, I'll go salt the walkway. You can't go out there. You understand?

FRANK
Out where?

JOEY
Anywhere outside. It's icy.

FRANK
You afraid I'm gonna break?

JOEY
Kind of.

FRANK
Eh, if I break, I get to go to the hospital and they've got that mac & cheese I like.

JOEY
Jesus, dad. I can make you mac & cheese. Antonia even told me to get you some. It's in the bag. I'll make you a little.

FRANK
You can't make it like Toni. She coming or what?

JOEY
No, dad. Not today.

FRANK
So then who's coming?

JOEY
Me.

FRANK
You?

JOEY
Yeah.

FRANK
Christ. You gonna wipe my ass?

JOEY
I guess so.

FRANK
This piece!

AUDITION SIDES for
"The Art Machine" by Paul Allman

(NOTES: Hal is an amateur historian and folklorist whose wife has disappeared from his life without his knowing why or where. He is giving a TED talk about his obsession: tracking down the mysterious Art Machine – which took place while his wife was secretly plotting to leave him.)

(HAL advances a slide. He studies the screen)

I was sure these were the tracks of the Art Machine, leading from a dirt horse path to this narrow asphalt road in the woods.

Here is the turn in the road in the woods where I decided to lay in wait. Back at the hotel, I told Helen about my plan, and she fixed me a sandwich. Here is a picture of the sandwich.

It could have been an afternoon, it might have been a day. From where I was hiding in the bushes, I could hear the beast moving, in the distance – a low rumble, squeaks of metal. The rumbling came closer, along with a curious insect-like scraping sound.

(HAL advances a slide. He studies the screen)

HAL

Here is a selfie of myself in the woods. You can see my disguise has gone askew. And sure enough, the machine – the great machine – moving slowly, rolling on its rubber casters, trembling and rumbling, neared the curve in the road just below me. To my amazement, there were half-a-dozen children aboard the machine. They had climbed up on its back and were getting a ride. I could hear the heels of the children drumming against the steel sides of the machine. And their voices, their delighted voices.

MY OWN MAN by Margie Castleman

Some where in rural Upstate New York ,early morning. HANK and BETTY, late 50's married, are having breakfast as TREVOR, 30, their son, nervously circles the table.

BETTY

Trevor, my goodness. Sit down to breakfast.

HANK

Acting like a spider on a hot shovel.

TREVOR

I'm fine. I'm good. I'm fanfuckingtastic.

BETTY

Somebody got out of the wrong side of the bed.

TREVOR

Sorry it's just...Look at you two. Having the same morning you've had for, what? The last thirty years?

BETTY

Thirty-two years, thank-you very much. And proud of it.

TREVOR

Same table, same chairs, same sunnyside up runny eggs, same soggy white toast, same see-through coffee/

BETTY

Excuse me Mister City Big pants, this here is Starbuck's which I bought special for you. Here Trev, a nice big cup of French Roast.

TREVOR looks at photos on the fridge

TREVOR

And these? Baby photos. Come on, Mom. Torturing yourself?

BETTY

Those are Emmie's grandkids, my great nephews and nieces, your cousin's children.

TREVOR

What if you never have any grandchildren of your own?

HANK

Son, what the heck's got into you?

TREVOR

Healthy changes, Dad. Working on *not* letting things get into me, really more not letting *me* get into things.

HANK

He was all twitchy at dinner, up at dawn, running lickety split round the pond, round and round. Like he's on something. One of those make you go fast drugs.

TREVOR

HE is right here in front of you. Talk to the HE.

BETTY and HANK

Well?

TREVOR

The last thing I want is any type of drug in my body. I'm just newly energized.

HANK

There's energy and then there's jumping out of your skin.

BETTY

Want me to scramble up some eggs, bring you down to earth?

TREVOR

Just crack a couple of eggs in a glass. I drink them raw now.

HANK

So that's it. Gone back to wrestling, he's in training.

BETTY

Oh my. He was so good in those high school matches. Remember when he beat Jimmy Haggett? So exciting. It was a draw, then that referee gave him another half point.

TREVOR

Yoohoo. I am right here. At the table. It's okay to talk to *me*, for god's sake. I am the *him*.

BETTY

'Cause you haven't been here in so long, that's all. Anyway, that referee sure took a liking to you, Trev.

HANK

Yep. He definitely favored you, son.

STOP SIDE #1

SIDE# 2 _____

HANK

You got someone special though? Some guy you take a fancy to?

TREVOR

Not exactly.

BETTY

Well, you know what they say...when you least expect it. And like I said, be it man or woman, no matter, there is someone out there perfect for you.

TREVOR

Okay, if you must know, I have found someone. He's far from perfect but really working on being the best human he can.

BETTY

Oh, honey. That's wonderful, isn't it Hank?

HANK

If this person is a *he* and makes you happy, son, I'll rally 'round, 'cause like I said, 'progressive'.

BETTY

You going to bring him up here? Want us to come down to the city and meet him?

TREVOR

Oh, you have met him.

BETTY

Brad! I knew it.

HANK

Not that creepy referee, I hope.

TREVOR

Me. It's me. Your son Trevor.

BETTY and HANK

Huh?

TREVOR struts around the kitchen

TREVOR

CELIBACY! I have been living a celibate life for nine months and I am on fire with new energy, life prospective---compassion and empathy to spare.

BETTY

You mean like a monk?

TREVOR

Minus the religion part. No sex, no interference.

HANK

Does this have to do with that computer church?

TREVOR

(with great pomposity)

I have been wandering in the wilderness of casual sex my whole life. It all seemed so easy and meaningless. Sure enough whatever sexual partner I had, she or he, would want something more from me. And I didn't have anything more, and then they would be sad and devastated and I would feel really guilty.

HANK

Oh now son, we all had a few of those slam bams, thank-you ma'ams. No biggie.

BETTY

(to HANK)

You did?

TREVOR

These liaisons of pure pleasure for me, were painful episodes for others. I was perpetrating misery! All the time all I had to do was say no. No more sex. Even the air I breathe feels cleaner. I think everyone should try celibacy. It's true freedom.

BETTY

This is your fault Hank. You never had the 'talk' with Trevor. No wonder he's got all confused now.

HANK

Now hold on there Betty. Who do you think put those condoms in his Christmas stocking when he turned sixteen?

BETTY

Sweetie you could have asked us anything about anything.

TREVOR

It's all about discovery, Mom. For instance, Carla? She lasted longer than any other partner. I thought she understood the whole no strings attached thing. Sure enough, after about a year and a half/

HANK

A year and half is probably not that casual/

TREVOR

Dad, please. Anyway, sure enough after a particularly orgasmic session/

BETTY

Oh my stars.

TREVOR

Carla asks for definition, who, what and where are we going, the usual. She was so upset when I told her this was it, I wasn't going anywhere else with her---she even threatened suicide. She sent me a priority list of three ways to kill herself. I was ruining lives of these friends with benefits, basically sending them to self-slaughter.

HANK

Well, if nothing else, you got a conscience.

TREVOR

Then, serendipity strikes. I'm on the subway and there's a poster with a tear off contact sheet. "Fly into thoughtfulness, leave the carnal behind! Celebrate celibate!" Like a bolt of lightning, I knew. No sex, no problem.

The whole celibacy thing saved Carla's life, because clearly I wasn't dumping her for anyone else, I was dumping sex altogether. You see how clean this makes everything?

ZACK and LYS - 1

YALU RIVER

ZACK
(flatly; still staring ahead)

Best trip ever. What was it?

LYS

Are we having a conversation now?

ZACK

Uh huh.

LYS

Okay, just wanted to be sure. Because earlier it seemed that we weren't. For overall trip rather than a single event... mmm ... Myanmar. Mountains, beaches, golden temples shimmering in the desert at sunrise. No Westerners either, which is always a plus.

ZACK

Except you.

She stops pulling.

LYS

Seriously?

He stops pulling.

ZACK

Sorry. Sometimes I just can't help being an asshole.

LYS

Because we don't have to have a conversation.

They resume pulling in sync silently. Pause.

ZACK

I've thought about Myanmar.

LYS

Uh huh.

ZACK

You really recommend it?

LYS
(shrugging)

I gave the overall trip an 8+.

He stops pulling.

ZACK

You rate your trips? So do I!

She stops pulling.

LYS
(abruptly)

Walk me through your criteria.

ZACK

In no particular order: landscape, danger, exoticism, rush, sense of accomplishment. Then I come up with an overall return on investment, where the investment isn't just financial, but takes everything into account on a weighted basis. You?

LYS

Pretty much the same. Highest score?

ZACK

Whitewater rafting in the Tsangpo Gorge. 9. Lowest score?

LYS

Antarctica. 2. Exciting idea but crappy ROI. Yours?

ZACK

Mount Kilimanjaro. 2. What was I thinking?

LYS

What *were* you thinking?

ZACK and LYS - 2

YALU RIVER

ZACK (CONT'D)

So, let me guess. You started later than you wanted, too much snow melt, a raging current, you lost your balance.... Am I headed in the right direction?

LYS

Were you watching from behind a scruffy pine or something?

ZACK

(smiling a smile meant to charm)

I'm just really good at deducing the possibilities offered by any given set of facts.

LYS

Good to know.

ZACK

So what happened?

LYS

Try deducing.

ZACK

You fell on your wrist.

LYS

Incomplete answer.

ZACK

You fell on your wrist and... almost got swept away by the frigid water. Jesus, it's like, 0 degrees.

LYS

Yeah. Extremely stupid mistake. Fortunately, my friend was there to grab me.

ZACK

Shit. Well, kudos to you. Must have hurt like a motherfucker.

LYS

I was so numb I couldn't feel anything for a while, so no, not at first. The hypothermia, however/

ZACK

/Hypothermia, know it well. When I was in the Andes/

LYS

/Climbing or trekking?

ZACK

Trekking. My girlfriend wasn't a climber. Turns out she wasn't a trekker, either. *(Beat.)* You know, you're lucky to be here. What did you do once your friend dragged you out?

LYS

Stripped down, put on dry gear, he wrapped me in a reflective blanket, and we hiked out. It was intense. My legs were this bright crimson—I mean, not a color normally seen on the human body—and my veins were like snaky rivers of cobalt running up and down them. By the time we made camp I could barely function. My friend zipped our bags together and used his body heat to warm me up. It took hours.

ZACK

Well, with your fair skin it's not all that surprising about the hyperpigmentation and the pronounced venous coloration. Speaking of which, you have beautiful skin.

LYS

(surprised)

Thank you.

ZACK

No. I'm a dermatologist. I'm speaking professionally.

LYS

(drily)

Thank you anyway.

ZACK

So, when I was hypothermic/

LYS

(deadpan)

/In the Andes.

ZACK

Yeah, in the Andes. You're a good listener! It was Day 3 of an eight-day trek and some weather rolled in. Incredible wind. We were trapped for a day and a night and the whole time my girlfriend was terrified that the tent was going to blow away.

LYS

I had that feeling in the Italian Alps.

ZACK

Climbing or trekking?

LYS

Trekking. Barefoot.

A brief pause.

ZACK

Back in the Andes, it turns out my girlfriend wasn't crazy to be scared about our tent blowing away. A ground peg came loose, I went out to secure it, got drenched, and you know how that goes when you're at elevation. Severe...

ZACK

Hypothermia.

LYS

Hypothermia.

LYS (CONT'D)

I hope your girlfriend was grateful.

ZACK

Not really. She was actually pretty pissed off. Turns out she never wanted to go to the Andes in the first place. Turks and Caicos was more her style.

LYS

Oh, spare me Turks & Caicos. So many people...

ZACK

So many margaritas...

LYS

Gotta watch out for those frozen margaritas. Too many of them and hypothermia sets in.

They smile at each other, reevaluating.

LYS

YALU RIVER

LYS

I thought I'd go for an early morning swim. I got to the river, put on my goggles, wet suit, and flippers, and slipped in just as a small group of Chinese men did too. I knew the border was right down the middle of the river, and I'd planned to stay away from it. But one of the men motioned me to join the group, so I did, and pretty soon I realized that we were headed straight for the other side.

ZACK

Jesus.

LYS

Yeah. I kept telling myself that as long as I stayed with these middle-aged men in their funny bathing caps I'd be fine. But as we approached the halfway point my heart was thundering so hard I thought I'd pass out. And then we were beyond halfway and they just kept swimming and so did I. Off in the distance I could make out a barrier, but it wasn't 'til we were much closer that I could see it was just some ragged netting suspended by a line of flimsy-looking poles in the water near the shore. That was the border barrier. Ragged netting on a line of flimsy poles.

When we were just short of the barrier, the men stopped. We treaded water, watching the North Korean shore—which was just a swamp really, marsh grass and a few scrawny trees. There was a ramshackle hut not too far from the riverbank, and at first I thought it was deserted, but then I saw a gun extending out through a window. And then I saw the gun move.

ZACK

Goddamn.

LYS

Yeah. And then the group turned around and headed back. It was so strange. We swam over. We saw a gun. We swam back. When we got out on the Chinese side, everyone stripped off their wetsuits and layered up. The men took off at a jog—the current had dragged us downriver—but I couldn't move. I couldn't stop wondering who I would be if I lived on the other side. Would I be this me, the me I know and recognize? Not even close. And what about the gun? Was its movement threatening, or just a way to say "Hello People-Who-I-Will-Never-Meet. How are you this morning?" And what was the guard's life like, watching us swim free while he was confined to a lonely hut with just a gun for company? And then I started thinking about the different kinds of huts we construct for ourselves, and the different kinds of guns we use to scare people away, and ...

LYS IS INTERRUPTED

ZACK

YALU RIVER

LYS (CONT'D)

Best single experience? Not entire trip, but single experience.

ZACK

That's easy. Windsurfing in the Mediterranean. Antibes. No true danger, but.... There was this morning with the most incredible deep-blue sky—I've been looking for a way to describe the exact blue of it ever since. I caught a pocket and the vibration from the board shot a current of energy straight up my legs and through my body. I felt like I was flying.

LYS

That must have been incredible.

ZACK

I've tried to repeat the experience but I've never... Maybe it's just one of those once-in-a-lifetime things.

GATE AGENTS 1 & 2

YALU RIVER

GATE AGENT 1 & GATE AGENT 2 are offstage voices. Male or Female. To be played by one actor. In our first two encounters with Gate Agent 1 below, they are friendly and even-tempered. After that Gate Agent 1 gets increasingly stressed. Gate Agent 2 sounds entirely different.

GATE AGENT 1

We have an update for all passengers on Air Alaska Flight 826 to Los Angeles. Your aircraft has departed from Fairbanks. Expected arrival here in Anchorage is 5:40pm, at which time we will deplane and clean the aircraft as quickly as possible in order to get you all on your way at last. Thank you for your continued patience, and thank you for flying Air Alaska.

GATE AGENT 1

All right, intrepid travelers on Alaska Air Flight 826 to Los Angeles, we are now ready to start boarding! If you are traveling with children under the age of two, or are an active member of the military, or if you just need a little extra time boarding, come on down! And I see we have two wheelchairs and five, no six strollers, so everyone is just going to have to be patient as they wait their turn to board this completely full flight.

GATE AGENT 1

We now invite passengers on Air Alaska flight 826 who are seated in rows 20-25 to board the aircraft. And please, everyone, I said to step lively, but that's no excuse for forgetting our manners, is it?

GATE AGENT 1

Rows 15 and above, you are now welcome to board flight 826. Excuse me. Excuse me! I said rows 15 and above only, and remember what I said about those manners!

GATE AGENT 1

(silken-voiced once more)

This is the final boarding call for Flight 826 to Los Angeles. I repeat, this is the last and final boarding call for Flight 826. And let me take this opportunity to apologize to anyone who may feel that my tone and manner have been inappropriate for an airline professional.

GATE AGENT 2

(sounding distinctly different from Gate Agent 1)

Attention all passengers on Air Alaska Flight 222 to Seattle. Your flight has been canceled due to continued bad weather in the Seattle area. Gate agents are standing by to help you rebook your flight, or, why not skip the lines and visit our website at AirAlaska.com and rebook online? That's A-I-R-A-K dot com. Thank you for choosing Air Alaska and have a *beautiful* evening.

Audition side for PAULINE'S HAIR EXPRESS (casting for the character of Pauline)

Characters

Pauline Grossnickel: A popular hairstylist—a mature woman, owner of “Pauline's Hair Express”

Jeanie Rickeldorfer: A client of Pauline's—a mature woman, works at the DMV.

Place

A Hair Salon— “Pauline's Hair Express”

Time

During the pandemic

The Tuesday after Columbus Day (Indigenous Peoples Day)

A few minutes after 12 noon

Synopsis

In desperate need of hair care, Jeanie takes her lunch break from a stressful job at the DMV for a quick fix from hair stylist Pauline (who is suffering from her own issues brought on by the pandemic and the demands of her clients).

Scene. A few minutes after noon at Pauline's Hair Express and Salon. PAULINE, a woman not defined by age but profession, is well manicured with a hair style and color that celebrates her expertise and status as a hair care specialist. A popular stylist, PAULINE has extremely loyal clients.

At Rise. *Without an appointment, and with much determination, one of PAULINE'S devoted clients, JEANIE, rushes in the door. SHE takes a quick turn to look out the window, as if she were pursued by someone. PAULINE straps on her face mask.*

PAULINE: (to JEANIE) Well, look, it's Miss America! Where's your face mask, Missy?

JEANIE: (takes a seat in PAULINE'S empty salon chair) Get to work. I've only got ten minutes.

PAULINE: Your mask, Jeanie.

JEANIE: I know this is your lunch break, too.

PAULINE: Your mask.

JEANIE: I've been wearing one for four hours, non-stop, since I first arrived this morning at the DMV. You have just got to let me breathe for ten minutes!

PAULINE: There are rules.

JEANIE: Pauline, I have heat related issues.

PAULINE: Rules.

JEANIE: I'll dangle it on one side. If you decide to spit out a speech, I'll strap it on.

PAULINE: Good God, girl, this virus is deadly.

JEANIE: I watch the news. But just once, Pauline, I need some air, to ventilate.

PAULINE: Well, keep that mask on an ear in case somebody walks in.

JEANIE: Bless you, Pauline. (*dangling the facemask on an ear*) You are right there with all the other service working heroes. And now, you've got ten minutes to save my life.

PAULINE: What do you expect me to do in that ridiculous amount of time? (*fluffing JEANIE'S hair*) Look at this!

JEANIE: It's a disaster. I woke up this morning, looked in the mirror, and told my husband to call 911.

PAULINE: Ten minutes?

JEANIE: I'll come back Saturday for full service, but I can't extend my lunch today.

PAULINE: Why not?

JEANIE: (*pointing through the window*) Look across the street there, Pauline. The Tuesday after Columbus Day is just crazy. See, it's barely 12:15 and they are flocking already, like buzzards to road kill.

PAULINE (*Removing her face mask, leaving it on the tray next to the chair, SHE takes a few steps to look out the window.*) How many years have you been at the DMV, Jeanie?

JEANIE: Only five, child. I don't have much seniority. (*SHE removes the dangling face mask and places it on the tray.*) I'm not sure how much longer I can work in that place. Everybody is shitty. The customers. The supervisor. The co-workers. People. They're all shitty.

PAULINE: That's why I live alone with my cat. (*SHE takes a drink from her water bottle.*)

JEANIE: We treat everybody the same at DMV—no exceptions! I tell them, politely, when they walk in to, "Take a number." But they are already angry about social distancing and having to wear a mask, and, so they yell at me, "How long am I gonna have to wait?" I wanna say, "Just as long as it takes, asshole!" "This isn't a McDonalds drive-thru!" But, I smile, because I'm public servant, and I say, "We will get to you soon,

sweetheart." Meanwhile, their nasty-little-snot-nose children are knocking stuff off my desk, yanking on my computer, and passing out headaches. It's just a mess!

3

PAULINE: You need a break, Jeanie.

JEANIE: I do. I don't sleep well. And when I wake in the morning, I feel like my head has been in a rotisserie. And my eyes. Just look. And now everybody is using Botox, and I just feel like crying.

PAULINE: Let me tell you something, Jeanie Rickledorfer, you take that job TOO serious.

JEANIE: You may be right. I guess I'm lucky to have work. There are plenty of others furloughed or fired because of this virus thing.

PAULINE: And I was closed for over two months, you know.

JEANIE: I do. Those were dark days without you, Pauline.

PAULINE: They shut all stylists down.

JEANIE: And, you, an essential worker!

PAULINE: (*fluffing JEANIE's hair*) Listen, I'll refresh it a little, just to get you through the afternoon, but there ain't a hairstylist on earth that can give you the works in ten minutes.

JEANIE: You are a true hair magician. I don't know what I would do without you.

Side 1

ARIS

Not a lot of people here.

ED

Probably pushed them away too.

ARIS

Scratching at wounds won't help them heal. You know why?

ED

Please don't bring up your "forgiveness is the way forward" mantra -

ARIS

Forgiveness is the way forward. Nothing good comes from hate. Love conquers all.

ED

Hate can drive you. And you can't tell me you didn't hate your family when you came out.

ARIS

You can't hate someone for not understanding. There are thousands of forces out there, thousands of gods to guide us. I gave them time and they came 'round eventually. We all have a finite amount of time in this world. The least we can do is help each other get through it.

ED

He wasted his time.

ARIS

Doesn't that make you sad?

ED

Not my problem. He didn't want to be in my life so he missed out. I succeeded, I grew up without him. I learned everything I needed without a father.

ARIS

Except tie a tie.

ED

His version of a tie felt like a nose.

ARIS

Put it to rest.

ED

One of those gods once said "Ain't no rest for the wicked."

ARIS

Let. It. Go!

They come to the casket.

I don't see Joannie.

ED

Now that you two are "facebook official" you're calling my mom by her first name?

ARIS

Poor dear, I hope she's okay. Hey, are you?

ED

We'll try to find her on our way out.

They kneel in front of the casket. Pause.

Airy.

ARIS

Yeah, Ed?

ED

I don't know who this is.

ARIS

What are you talking about it's-

ARIS pulls the photo to the corpse's face.

I don't know who this is either. Maybe it's the embalming. Everyone said my Nonnie looked different at her funeral.

ED

Embalming doesn't change your race, Aris.

ARIS

Do you think they brought out the wrong body?

ED

And no one here noticed?

ARIS

Death affects us in different ways.

ED

Doesn't make you blind. We're at the wrong wake. Just wait until I get my hands on my sister.

ARIS

What should we do?

ED

Leave.

ARIS

Should we tell someone?

ED

No. Let's not linger.

ARIS

We should at least sign the book.

ED

Why would we do that?

ARIS

Common courtesy.

To the deceased.

Sorry for the mix up. You look great by the way. I love your tie. You wear that boutonniere knot with such grace. Real eye catcher. I hope you have a lovely funeral.

They back away slowly.