

THAT IT ALL MAKES PERFECT

By

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CHARACTERS

10 Performers (5 Musicians, 5 Actors)

MUSICIANS: 5 any gender, any (portable) instrument

ACTORS: 2F, 1M, 2 any gender

MUSICIANS PLAY:

Players 1-5 - 5 of any gender

Chorus

ACTORS PLAY:

The Reader/Anna - Female

White Board Writer - Any gender

Card Players 1-2* - 1M, 1F, 1 of any gender

Chess Player* - Any Gender

*Card Player 2 & Chess Player will double for Mom and Dad

ACTORS** ALSO PLAY:

Technicians 1-4

The Boss

Mom

Dad

Chorus

AND ACTORS** WILL ROTATE TO BECOME:

Him

Her

**Excluding actor playing The Reader/Anna

Note: The cast of characters should be a diverse one, as they will represent a wide variety of California couples. That said, they could also be around the same age, and seem neither old nor young.

Second Note: The card game the card players play should be an version of elaborate slapjack, such as: <https://www.pagat.com/invented/slap.html>

Final Note: For full chess game chess player plays, see Sample Game here: http://www.family-games-treasurehouse.com/sample_chess_game.html

SETTING

An open, empty space; A union hall; various places of the normal everyday; a kitchen; somewhere between living and dying;

All of these settings should be represented as simply as possible, and none of them should seem too real.

TIME

Un-time/every-time

PROLOGUE - A BEGINNING

(The Reader sits, alone. Vast, empty space. Really, nothing. The Reader sits, and waits. There is no sound. Not even breathing.)

(Technicians #1 and #2 enter, come to the reader. They stop next to Reader, and stand on either side of her.)

TECHNICIAN #1

On three then. Ready?
One, two, three.

(The Reader takes a deep breath in. It's a first. Tech #1 checks Reader's vital signs.)

TECHNICIAN #2

Good. Good.
You can let it out now,

(Reader lets out her breath. Also a first.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Good. Good.
Keep it going,

(Big, awkward breaths.)

TECHNICIAN #2

You don't have to work quite so hard.
Try and forget you're doing it.
The motion might feel strange for a while, but you'll get used to it.

(Reader practices breathing naturally. Tech #1 continues checking vital signs.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Good.
Good.

(Technicians #1 and #2 leave. Reader breathes. She is getting a little

better at it.)

(Technicians #3 and #4 enter.)

TECHNICIAN #3

Welcome!

I see you've found your breath?

READER

I think so,

(Speaking and breathing at the same time is weird. She takes a couple of extra breaths to make up for it.)

TECHNICIAN #4

Could you stand for me?

(Reader stands. Technician #4 takes a brief measurement.)

TECHNICIAN #3

Good.

You may sit.

(Reader sits. They take and record a few more seated measurements.)

READER

Where was my breath before I found it?

TECHNICIAN #4

Hm?

READER

You said I'd found my breath. Where did I find it?

TECHNICIAN #3

It was just a figure of speech.

READER

Oh.

(she takes a deep breath)

READER

I couldn't do that before though.

(deep breath)

READER

It had to come from somewhere.
You're sure you don't know where?

TECHNICIAN #4

Well, where were you when you found it?

READER

Right here.

TECHNICIAN #3

Then there you have it!
You found it here.

(Technicians leave.)

(Reader gets up, examines the chair to see if there's a place her breath would have come from inside of it. No luck.)

(Technician #2 enters carrying a heavy scale. Tech #2 sets it down as soon as possible, close to where the entrance to the room was.)

TECHNICIAN #2

Come over here, please.

(Reader does)

TECHNICIAN #2

Step up,

(Reader steps onto the scale. Tech #2 makes adjustments, writes notes, makes more adjustments.)

READER

What are you measuring?

TECHNICIAN #2

This and that.

(Records more measurements, makes an adjustment, records again.)

READER

Do you think my breath could have been hiding in that chair over there?

TECHNICIAN #2

Your breath?

READER

Yes. Someone came in, and I found it. While sitting in that chair.
That's where I was sitting when I found it, and there really aren't very many other places around here that it might have been hiding.
So do you think it was in the chair?
Or somewhere else?
And if it came from somewhere else, how did I happen across it without getting up?
And what will happen if I lose it by accident?

TECHNICIAN #2

Turn around, please.

(She does. Tech makes more adjustments, and write things down.)

READER

Do you know?

TECHNICIAN #2

Know what.

READER

What would happen if I lost my breath.

TECHNICIAN #2

You can't lose it.
Step down.

(reader steps off the scale. Tech picks it up, and start to carry it off.)

READER

Are you absolutely sure I can't lose it?

TECHNICIAN #2

You're asking a lot of questions.

READER

There's a lot I'd like to know.

TECHNICIAN #2

Well it's no use asking me, I'm just a technician.

(tech leaves.)

(Reader goes back to the chair, sits.
Looks under it. Sits. Waits. breathes.)

(She gets an idea, and lays down on the
ground, listening to it. Nothing. She
sits back in the chair again, and
waits.)

(Tech #1 enters with a folder, and
takes out a pamphlet.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Welcome to orientation.

(Reader takes the pamphlet. The moment
she does, everything assembles around
her. All the other techs and chorus
arrive, in a hurry, fully prepared for
orientation.)

(Orientation Begins. The entire next
section is a highly coordinated chaos,
in which there are always at least two
people talking. All techs take parts of
the following lines. It should run more
or less chronologically, but
Technicians overlap so much it goes by
rather quickly. Bolded lines are
suggestions for what might be said in
unison, or otherwise pop out. The
details are entirely up to you.)

TECHNICIANS AND CHORUS

Hello, and welcome.

(opens pamphlet to page 1)

If you open your pamphlets to page 1, you will see the list of topics we will be addressing, including a basic breakdown of the operating structure here, which, if you turn to the last page,

(reader raises her hand)

Please hold all questions until the end

(hand down.)

Some basic ground rules, page 2:

(everyone turns to page 2)

No inter-unit transfers allowed.

All promotions come from within.

If you become interested in moving up, get to know your boss.

Turning to page 6,

(turns to page 6)

I would recommend though that you take a closer look at the tendencies and trends section, especially section B: Religions, Beliefs, and Where they Come From.

(turns to page 10)

Turning to page 10, you can see the breakdown for how the hierarchy of the assignment halls work. It's pretty simple--you'll all leave here today with a starting number, based on your incoming assessment data.

Don't be afraid of taking what sound like unpleasant assignments--**you won't remember it once you come back,** so on the plus side it'll feel like nothing ever happened.

On an unrelated note, do be sure not to skip page 15 when you read this all later

(turns to page 15)

It's a complete, annotated list of actions that will get you **demoted or dismissed. Page 15.**

(checks the time)

Ok.

It's a little early, but we're going to go ahead and stop there.

Good luck.

(They all begin to leave. Reader raises her hand, and stops the last Technician from leaving.)

READER

Excuse me,

TECHNICIAN #2

Yes?

READER

What are the jobs that we'll be doing?

TECHNICIAN #2

It's all in the pamphlet.

(They leave.)

(Reader opens pamphlet, reads.)

PART 1 - THE UNION HALL

(A union hall of sorts. There is a giant white board in front, and a lot of chairs all scattered about. You get the feeling that they used to be in orderly rows, but most of them have been moved into little groupings here and there to better accommodate the card games and conversations happening throughout the room.)

(The Reader sits in a chair reading her pamphlet. A white board writer writes nonstop on a giant whiteboard that should take up as much of the upstage wall as possible. In the seats we have: Two card players setting up to play an elaborate version of slapjack, five musicians starting to work through a new piece, and one chess player playing against him or herself. The room comes to life as naturally as possible.)

(Card Player 1 shuffles)

CARD PLAYER 1

Which rules should we play?

CARD PLAYER 2

How about
same suits, doubles, slap jacks, plus one, minus one.

CARD PLAYER 1

No sandwich?

CARD PLAYER 2

Yeah, okay, sandwich.

CARD PLAYER 1

Allright,

(Card Player 1 deals.)

(Chess player sets up a game from the beginning. Chess player recites)

CHESSE PLAYER

We are told with equal enthusiasm that we learn from experience, and also that we are creatures of habit. To reconcile these mutually contradictory claims, we must conclude that the exceptional among us learn from experience, while the rest remain creatures of habit. A case in point: The great Steinitz quickly saw the fallacy of attack for attack's sake, while the mediocre Dufresne contributed over and over again to the making of an immortal game:

King's Gambit Declined!

G.R. Neumann playing white.

J. Dufresne playing black.

Berlin, 1863. A bright, clear morning. The board set, they began.

(Chess players makes the moves as narrated.)

White P-K4, black P-K4.

White P-KB4, Black B-B4.

Very prudent - so far.

(Player 1 stops playing, the others are still going.)

PLAYER 1

Wait wait wait, what are we doing there.

Guys. Guys.

Hey. Stop playing for a sec.

(The Players stop playing.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ready?

CARD PLAYER 2

Ready.

CARD PLAYER 1

On your mark, get set, go.

(They play the card game slap (see character page for rules). As quickly as possible.)

PLAYER 1

What are we doing there?

PLAYER 2

Where?

PLAYER 1

Measure 18. How long are we holding that.

PLAYER 3

We're playing it as written.

PLAYER 1

I thought we'd decided-

PLAYER 2

No, we're doing it as written.

PLAYER 4

We are?

PLAYER 1

Does anyone have a pencil?

(In this time, Chess player has continued play under his breath. It picks up to full volume whenever the players stop speaking.)

CHESS PLAYER

White Kt-KB3, Black P-Q3

White B-B4, Black Kt-KB3

White Kt-B3, Black O-O

White P-Q3, Black Kt-Kt5?

Serious neglect of his development. By simply playing 6...Kt-B3 he would have had a good game.

(Card players continue to play slap, as quickly as possible. If exclamations arise as a natural part of the game, use them.)

(For a moment, all we hear is card players playing.)

(Player 1 finishes writing on the score.)

PLAYER 1

Okay, let's take it from the pickup to measure 8. Ready?

(they return to playing.)

(Chess player has continued playing the moves below, spoken softly. After a moment of playing, we hear chess at full volume again, wherever that happens to time out.)

CHESSE PLAYER

White R-B1, Black KtxP?

Worse yet; he sees a "combination": If 8 Ktxkt, Q-R5ch etc.

White R-R1!

Naturally: Having the permanent address of Black's King, Neumann is delighted with the gift of the open King's Rook file.

Black Kt-Kt5

(Chess player stops and studies the board. No more moves yet.)

(After the next slap in the card game, whenever that is,)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ow! Shit,

CARD PLAYER 2

Oh no! Sorry,

CARD PLAYER 1

It's okay, I just caught my nail,

CARD PLAYER 2

I'm sorry,

CARD PLAYER 1

Really, it's fine.

CARD PLAYER 2

Should we take a break?

CARD PLAYER 1

Sure.

(Player 2 stands up, stretches, and starts doing yoga. The other card player joins in. It is highly

coordinated, and clearly something they do all the time.)

CHESS PLAYER

White Q-K2.

(As this happens, the Players go into high gear. They play and play and play. Chess player stretches, gets up, joins the choreographed yoga.)

(The white-board writer, who has been furiously writing this whole time, caps the pen, turns to the group and yells out:)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

JOB CALL!

(It is instantly quiet, and all attention is at once focused on the white-board writer.)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

One: to Mary and Antonio Arenas.
Valley Village, California.
First try.
Low income.
History of depression. No drug use. 56% chance of alcohol use.
Eight week assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A2.

CHESS PLAYER

Pass.

A3 on assignment, A4. WHITE BOARD WRITER

Pass. READER

B1. WHITE BOARD WRITER

Pass CARD PLAYER 1

B2. WHITE BOARD WRITER

Accept. PLAYER 3

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes B2 next to the Arenas assignment.)

Thank you. Please report immediately. WHITE BOARD WRITER

(Player 3 puts away his or her instrument, and leaves.)

Two: to Abe and Sheila Hardy. WHITE BOARD WRITER

Fresno, California.

Third try.

Low middle income.

History of insomnia. Light drug abuse. 82% chance of alcohol use.

Eighteen month assignment.

A1.

Pass. PLAYER 1

A2. WHITE BOARD WRITER

Pass. CHESS PLAYER

WHITE BOARD WRITER
A3 on assignment, A4.

READER
Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
B1.

CARD PLAYER 1
Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes B1 next to the Hardy
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card player 1 leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Three: to Mandy and Gabriel Reinhardt.
Montecito, California.
First try.
High income.
History of entitlement. Sparse drug abuse. 22% chance
of alcohol use.
Twelve year assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1
Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes A1 next to the Reinhardt
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 1 puts away his or her
instrument and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Four: to Jeff and Harmony Choe.
Culver City, California.

Fourth try.
Middle income.
History of diabetes. Rare drug abuse. 0% chance of
alcohol use.
Two and a half year assignment.
A1 is assigned,
A2.

CHESS PLAYER

Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes A2 next to the Choe assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Chess Player leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Five: to Emma Fields and John Ackmann
Rancho Cucamonga, California
Second try.
High income.
History of varied mental illnesses. Constant drug
abuse. 98% chance of alcohol use.
Fifteen year assignment.
A1, two, and three assigned,
A4

READER

Pass

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1 and two assigned,
B3

PLAYER 2

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B4

PLAYER 4

Pass.

CARD PLAYER 2

Shit.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes C1 next to the Ackmann assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Assigned to C1 by elimination. Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card player 2 is pissed off, and leaves)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Six: to Alfred and Lilliana Lee.
Mill Valley, California
Sixth try.
High Middle income.
History of assorted autoimmune disease. High drug abuse. 99.9% chance of alcohol use.
Twelve year assignment.
A one through 3 assigned, A4.

PLAYER 4

Nobody wants this one, right?

(Nobody says otherwise. Player 4 starts to pack up.)

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes B4 next to the Lee assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Assigned to B4 by elimination. Thank you. Please-

PLAYER 4

I'm going, I'm going.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Last call for today: Charlotte and Max Ramirez
Watsonville, California
Second try.
Middle income.
History of farsightedness. No drug abuse. 0.7% chance of alcohol use.
Ten year assignment.

A1, two and three assigned,
A4

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1 and two assigned,
B3.

PLAYER 2

Accept.

(Writer writes B3 next to the Ramirez
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 2 puts away his or her
instrument, and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Call over.
Intermittent assignments will be reviewed throughout
the day.

(White board writer begins methodically
erasing the board. Only the Reader and
is left. She studies the empty room.)

(Player 3 enters, and goes back to
playing music right away. The rest of
the band is gone, so it's all tinkering
around instrumentals.)

(The Reader stares. Player notices.)

PLAYER 3

Want to play?

THE READER

I don't know how.

(Player goes back to playing. Reader

watches.)

(Card player 1 returns, sits, shuffles cards. Reader watches. Card player notices.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Want to play?

THE READER

I don't know how,

CARD PLAYER 1

It's easy. I'll teach you.

(The reader goes over to sit with the card player. Card player shuffles, and sets up the game.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Alright. Cards go low to high. Ten, jack, queen, king, ace. Ace is high. Want to shuffle?

READER

Sure.

CARD PLAYER 1

Here.

(Reader takes the cards, card player 1 shows her hold to hold them She shuffles.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Nice. Try it again.

(She tries it again.)

(White-board writer gets some sort of message. Maybe there is a mail slot in the white board or something. Anyway, writer reads it and calls out)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Job just in!

(Player 3 stops tinkering. Reader hands back the cards.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Steven and Mira Mitchell
Nevada City, California
Second try.
Middle income.
History of minor arthritis. Zero drug abuse. 9% chance
of alcohol use.
Two year assignment.
A1, two and three assigned
A4.

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Have you ever seen Nevada City?

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Have you ever seen Nevada City, A4?

READER

No,

WHITE BOARD WRITER

It may not sound nice, but there's no better place I
can think of to grow up.
Second try.
Middle income.
History of Minor arthritis. Zero drug abuse. 9% chance
of alcohol use.
Two year assignment.
!
A4.

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1?

CARD PLAYER 1

Accept.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card Player 1 leaves. The Reader picks up the cards, practices shuffling.)

(Another message to Writer is delivered, through the same means as before. It's read. It's important.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4,

READER

Yes?

WHITE BOARD WRITER

The boss would like to see you.

(Everything changes very fast, and everyone and everything moves except for the Reader, who stays in the same place as the space empties around her. There is nothing left except for her, and the one chair she occupies.)

(The Boss enters. The Boss is very short, and rather unexceptional looking. The Boss studies her.)

BOSS

You're new.

READER

Yes, and-

BOSS

This was your first job call?

READER

Yes, and-

BOSS

And you're A4 already! Very Impressive.
The bosses must see great potential in you.

READER

Aren't you the boss?

BOSS

The Boss? God, no.
A boss. Of one very small corner.
But it's a good corner, I think.

.
There were some excellent assignments in the job call
today.
Why didn't you take one?

READER

I want to know what the things are that I won't
remember.

BOSS

Ah.
I see.
Well,

READER

And why won't I remember them?
At orientation they told me not to be afraid of bad
assignments because in the end it will be like nothing
happened, but does that happen with good assignments
too?

BOSS

You ask a lot of questions.

READER

There's a lot I want to know.

BOSS

Even so, it's a habit I wouldn't keep.

READER

Why not?

BOSS

Questions like that will lead you down roads with limited options and dead ends.

READER

Is that bad?

BOSS

It's something I do my best to avoid,

(Boss pulls out a box of slides from a desk, and holds it out to Reader)

BOSS

Take it,

(She takes the box, and looks at the slides.)

READER

What are they?

BOSS

Options.

(Reader pulls one out, looks at it. Squints.)

(The Boss puts a hand on the slide, and holds it up to the light. They look at it.)

BOSS

What do you see?

READER

An apartment.
Someone tying their shoes.
Someone else clipping their fingernails.

BOSS

Option one.

READER

I can't pick somewhere to go from this! It doesn't

tell me anything.

BOSS

Then you aren't looking hard enough.

(Reader looks harder.)

READER

They're still not doing anything,

BOSS

Then pick a different one. There are a lot of options. You can sit in here, take your time, and look through all these on your own.

Pick one that seems nice, all right?

.
Okay.

(The Boss pats The Reader on the back, and begins to leave.)

READER

Wait! Do the parents know how long our assignment are too?

BOSS

No,

READER

Shouldn't they be told?

BOSS

Remember what I told you about questions?

READER

Yes, but-

BOSS

Pick a job, and I'll pretend you never asked any.

(The boss leaves. The Reader picks up a card, and holds it up to the light.)

PART 2 - MOMENTS

(Another part of the stage comes to life as the card is held up. It's like a window into a miniature moment of a life. We all watch it together*.)

HELLO HUG (#1: TIM/WILEY)

(He waits for her. And waits. And waits.)

(She arrives, but he doesn't see yet. She taps him on the shoulder, he turns around. They hug. And hug. And hug.)

(The Reader puts the card down, and moves to the next card in the pile. It is held up, and another part of the space comes to life.)

(This will happen over and over and over, as the Reader takes a look at each card in the pile. There are fewer cards than moments, so The Reader will come back to cards and see a new moment from time to time. She thinks this will help her decide. It doesn't. There's always another card to look at, again and again and again.)

(Though all of these moments are played as a Him and a Her, the pairings should be a rotation of all available actors, regardless of gender.)

(Also, as a general note, all of these moments should feel as purely normal as possible.)

#2: Beer (Marilet/Sarah)

(Him and Her sitting on a front stoop
in a city. It is warm out. They each
hold a bottle of good beer. They also
drink it.)

(They drink and watch the world.)

(Drink and watch it.)

(He finishes his, draining the last
bit. Stands.)

HIM

I have to piss.

HER

Can you grab me another while you're up?

HIM

Sure.

(He leaves. The world goes by. She
watches it.)

(She drinks and watches the world.)

(Drinks and watches it.)

(She finishes her beer, draining the
last bit.)

(He comes back, with two new beers
already opened. He hands her one.)

HER

Thanks.

(He sits. They drink.)

[end]

#3: bad milk (tim/marilet)

(She sits, drinking a hot beverage from a mug. He holds a milk bottle. He is smelling it. He swishes it around, and smells it again. Another sniff.)

(He brings the jug to where she sits)

HIM

Does this smell bad to you?

(He holds it out. She sniffs)

HER

No.

(He sniffs it again)

HIM

Are you sure?

(Holds it out. She sniffs.)

HER

It smells fine.

[end]

#4: Sherlock 1 (Wiley/Sarah)

(Him and Her lying in bed. She is reading him a story. Some Sherlock Holmes.)

HER

"I owe you an apology," he said, raising his golden prince-nez to his eyes. "I trust that I am not intruding. I fear that I have brought some traces of the storm and rain into your snug chamber."

"Give me your coat and umbrella," said Holmes. "They may rest here on the hook and will be dry presently. You have come from the south-west I see."

"Yes, from Horsham."

"The clay and chalk mixture which I see upon your toe caps is quite distinctive."

"I have come for advice."
"That is easily got."
"And help."

(beat)

HER
Are you still awake?

HIM
Mmhmm.

HER
"And help."
"That is not always so easy."

[end]

#5: Knocking (Wiley/Marilet)

(Him and her at a front door. She
knocks. they wait. They wait. He
knocks. They wait. They wait. They
wait.)

(He tries the door. She stops him.)

HER
Try the doorbell.

(He does. They wait. They wait.)

HIM
Does it work?

(they wait. He knocks. He tries the
door.)

HIM
It's open, we could just go up,

HER
We can't do that,

HIM
They do that at our place all the time,

HER

Try the doorbell again.

HIM

Are we even sure they're home?

HER

Maybe they didn't hear us.

(He knocks really really loudly. They wait. and wait. and wait.)

#6: Cloud Gazing (Tim/Sarah)

(Him and Her lying down on the ground, looking at the sky.)

(beat)

(peaceful quiet)

(beat)

HIM

There's a rabbit.

HER

Where?

HIM

Straight up.

The ears are getting lopsided, but it still kind of looks like one.

(beat. They look.)

(beat)

HER

Where?

(he points)

[end]

#7: Shoes/secret (Tim/Wiley)

(She sits, tying her shoes. He comes in, bends down, and whispers her a secret.)

(grin)

[end]

#8: Morning Goodbye (Marilet/Sarah)

(Early morning light. She is still asleep in bed. He stands next to her, dressed for work. He watches her sleep for a moment, then sits on the bed.)

(beat)

(He kisses her on the forehead. She wakes up the tiniest bit.)

HER

Hm.

HIM

Bye.

(He sits with her for a moment longer before touching her hair, standing up, and leaving.)

[end]

#9: Whistling (Tim/Marilet)

(Him and Her, standing. They are waiting for something. He starts to whistle. It is something vaguely familiar, but hard to place.)

HER

What are you whistling?

(He stops, smiles)

HIM

I'm not whistling,

(They wait. Beat. He starts whistling again, the same as before.)

[end]

#10: Neck Ointment (Wiley/Sarah)

(He is reading. She comes over, rubbing the nape of her neck.)

HER

Something hurts right here.
Can you look at it and see if you see anything?

(He stops reading, and comes over to look.)

HIM

Here?

HER

Here.

(She points.)

(He moves her hair aside and looks, touching the spot gently.)

HIM

Right there?

HER

Yeah.

(he looks)

HIM

It looks kind of red.
Do you want me to put something on it?

HER

Okay.

(He leaves to get stuff to put on it.)

[end]

#11: Groceries (Wiley/Marilet)

(She tries to carry 4 full grocery bags. She stops, shakes out her hands.)

(He comes to help, takes two of the bags. She picks two up again.)

(Him and her carrying full loads of grocery bags. They stagger a bit under the weight as they cross the stage. She stops for a moment, puts one bag down, gets keys out of her pocket, picks the bag back up with keys in hand, and walks off.)

[end]

#12: Where to eat? (Tim/Sarah)

(Him and her stand, almost ready to go.)

HIM

Where do you want to eat?

HER

I dunno. We could do chinese. Or indian. Thai sounds good too.

HIM
Ramen?

(thinks)

HER
Maybe not ramen,

(thinks)

HIM
How about thai or indian.

HER
Okay.

HIM
Which sounds better?

HER
Either one.

HIM
I'll grab my sweatshirt, you pick.

(He leaves. Comes back, sweatshirt on.)

HIM
So?

HER
They both sound good to me.

HIM
Then pick one!

HER
I picked last night, so-

HIM
No you didn't! You said something small so I made us
tacos.

HER
Well, they both sound good.

HIM
Let's just walk, okay?

(He leaves. Beat. She follows.)

#13: Where you going'? (Tim/Wiley)

(Him and Her walk down the street. He turns one way. She keeps going in the same direction. She stops, looks back.)

HER

Hey,

(He stops. Confused.)

HER

Where you going?

(He looks around.)

HIM

This way. Isn't it-

HER

No, it's this way.

(beat)

HIM

Oh.

(beat)

HIM

Okay,

(He adjusts course, walks her way.)

#14: Baseball (marilet/sarah)

(An open space. They stand about ten yards apart, tossing a baseball back and forth. They throw and catch with bare hands.)

(Throw, catch. Throw, catch. Throw, catch. Throw, catch.)

(maybe one of them drops it once. Or maybe they're total pros.)

(Throw, catch. Throw, catch. Throw, catch. Throw, catch.)

[end]

#15: Sick Care (Tim/Marilet)

(She is in bed, half asleep. He comes in with a thermometer, helps her sit up a little.)

HIM

Open your mouth,

(She does. He carefully puts the thermometer under her tongue. She closes her mouth, and lays back down a little. He strokes her hair. Or rubs her back. Or both.)

HIM

Are you hungry?

(Shakes her head.)

HIM

Would you eat some broth if I warmed it up?

(A non-committal I-guess-so shrug)

(He strokes her hair a little more. Or rubs her back. Or both.)

(The thermometer beeps. They look at it.)

(He hands her some water from nearby.)

HIM

drink.

(She does, hands him the empty glass.
He leave. She goes back to sleep.)

[end]

#16: Late-night grading (Wiley/Sarah)

(She is writing. And crossing things
out. And writing. There's a stack of
papers next to her, and it appears to
be a late-night grading session.)

(He enters, comes to her, looks over
her shoulder and kisses her on the
cheek.)

HIM

Are you coming to bed?

(beat)

(He looks over her other shoulder,
kisses her other cheek.)

HER

mmmhmm.
I'm almost done.

HIM

Ok.

(He kisses the top of her head. She
reaches up and scratches his hair for a
moment, without pausing at all in her
work.)

[end]

#17: Back Pimple (Wiley/Marilet)

(She reads a book. He comes to her,
kneels down, lifts up his shirt showing
her his back.)

(She stops reading, makes a professional assessment.)

HER

It's not ready to-

HIM

Do it anyway.

(She pops it for him. It hurts. She shows him what came out.)

#18: Clothing Approval (Tim/Sarah)

(SHe enters, stops, and holds out his arms to better display his clothing.)

HIM

Does this look stupid?

HER

Turn around,

(he does)

HER

No.

HIM

Are you sure?

HER

Mmmhmm.

You look very nice.

(He looks at himself in the mirror.)

HIM

You don't think these shoes look dumb?

(She looks at his shoes. Shrugs.)

HER

They're alright.

HIM

Do you think my other ones would be better?

HER

Which other ones?

(He leaves to get the other shoes.)

[end]

#19: Packing (Tim/Wiley)

(Him and her stand, think.)

HIM

What else am I forgetting?

HER

Did you get your toothbrush and stuff?

HIM

Yeah.

HER

Will you want your slippers?

HIM

Oh yeah.

(He exits. enters again.)

HER

What about your medicine?

HIM

Got it.

HER

Something to read?

(He exits, enters again.)

HIM

What else am I forgetting?

HER

Directions?

HIM
Got it,

HER
Socks and underwear?

HIM
Got it,

(She thinks)

HER
I think that's everything.

[end]

#20: Smoke Alarm (Marilet/Sarah)

(She waves a dishtowel at the ceiling.
Frantic. He watches.)

HER
You could open the window,

(He leaves to do just that. She fans,
and fans, and fans.)

(She stops fanning.)

[end]

#21: Tree Game (Tim/Marilet)

(They're standing, waiting in the cold
and playing a game, while jumping up
and down a little to stay warm.)

HIM
Pine.

HER
Oak.

Madrone.	HIM
Redwood.	HER
Eucalyptus.	HIM
Maple.	HER
Apple.	HIM
Do fruit trees count?	HER
It's still a tree,	HIM
Ok, orange tree.	HER
Lemon tree.	HIM
Cherry tree.	HER
Avocado tree.	HIM
Palm tree.	HER
Peach tree.	HIM
Fir.	HER
Walnut.	HIM
Oak.	HER

HIM
You already said oak, my point.

HER
I did?

HIM
Yep.

(he thinks)

HIM
Breakfast cereals.

HER
Cheerios.

HIM
Cornflakes.

HER
Rice Crispies.

HIM
Life.

[end]

#22: Snake Dream (Wiley/Sarah)

(They sit in the early morning half
light, drinking coffee.)

(They drink.)

HER
I had a dream last night that we came home from
vacation and there was a snake living in the oven. We
heard a hissing and thought maybe there was a gas leak
or something, but then I opened the door to the stove
and there were these two giant snake eyes staring out
at us.
And then you called animal control,
but they wouldn't come get it because we couldn't
prove it hadn't been our pet.

(they drink)

HIM
Aren't snakes supposed to be a really old symbol for
stuff?

HER
Like what?

HIM
I don't remember.

HER
What do you think it means?

[end]

#23: Shoes On (Wiley/Marilet)

(Him and Her sit on the ground, socks
and shoes off. They each use one of
their socks to brush their feet free of
sand. He does this much faster than
Her, and brushes off both feet and has
his socks and shoes on by the time she
is just starting to put on her first
shoe.)

(He reaches over, takes her 2nd sock,
and brushes off the sand on her 2nd
foot for her, puts on the sock, and
slips on her shoe. He ties it.)

HER
Thank you.

(they stand.)

HIM
You're welcome.

(Kisses her on the cheek)

HIM
You were taking too long.

[end]

#24: Pick teeth (Tim/Sarah)

(Him and Her drinking tea, sitting
across from each other. They are post-
meal, mid-thought.)

HER

-or we could go north first.
If you'd rather.

HIM

Does that make sense though?
If we're coming from-

HER

You have something in your teeth.

HIM

Where?

HER

Right here.

(She points to the corresponding spot
on her own teeth. He tries to pick it
out.)

HIM

Did I get it?

(He bares his teeth. She looks.)

HER

No, right here.

(She points again to her own teeth. He
tries to get it out.)

HER

The other side.

(He switches sides, still trying to get
it out.)

[end]

#25: Fight or sex (Tim/Wiley)

(Him and Her brushing their teeth. Brush brush brush. We start to hear some noises from the apartment next door. Voices and some banging. Him and Her hear it too, stop brushing, and look at each other. They listen.)

(The sounds come and go. It's enough noise to definitely tell that something's going on, but muffled enough to be a bit of a mystery content-wise.)

(They listen)

HIM

Are they fighting,
or having sex?

(They listen.)

HER

I can't tell,

(They listen.)

(He goes back to brushing. She goes back to brushing.)

[end]

#26: Football (Marilet/sarah)

(Him and her stand about ten yards apart. They toss a football back and forth.)

(Toss, catch. Toss, catch. Toss, catch.)

Toss, catch.)

(Maybe one of them drops it once. Or maybe they're total pros.)

(Toss, catch. Toss, catch. Toss, catch.)

[end]

#27: Power's out (Tim/Marilet)

(All dark. The power is out. Dark. Silence.)

HIM

Do we have any flashlights?

HER

Somewhere,

(Dark. Beat. Beat.)

HIM

I guess I'll go see if I can find one,

(Sound of him walking off.)

[end]

#28: Sherlock 2 (Wiley/Sarah)

(Him and Her lying in bed. He is reading her a story. Some Sherlock Holmes. She is mostly asleep.)

HIM

He shuffled towards the door, but Atheleney Jones got in front of him.

"Wait a bit, my friend," said he. "You have important information, and you must not walk off. We shall keep you, whether you like it or not, until our friend

returns."

The old man made a little run towards the door, but, as Atheleney Jones put his back up against it, he recognized the uselessness of resistance.

"Pretty sort o' treatment this!" he cried, stamping his stick. "I come here to see a gentleman, and you two, who I never saw in my life, seize me and treat me in this fashion!"

"You will be none the worse," I said. "We shall recompense you for the loss of your time. Sit over here on the sofa, and you will not have long to wait." He came across sullenly enough and seated himself with his face resting on his hands.

(beat)

HIM

Are you still awake?

(no answer)

[end]

#29: Paperwork (Wiley/Marilet)

(Him and Her sit next to each other. They are filling out a stack of forms on a clip board. She writes. Then stops writing. Looks at Him.)

HIM

Six-five-six,
two-eight,
three-three-eight-one

(She writes it. Pauses.)

HER

Three-three-eight what?

HIM

One.

(She writes. And fills in more

information. Then stops, looks at him again. After each answer he gives, she checks a box.)

HIM

No,
No,
No,
No,
Yes,

HER

Really?

HIM

Yeah, I think my grandmother had it.
No,
no,
no,
no, no, no,
No for everything else.

(She fills out more information. He points to a section of the form.)

HIM

Let's leave that one blank for now.

(she crosses something out.)

[end]

#30 She's Gone! (Tim/Sarah)

(She lays down, resting. He runs in, stands over her. Beat.)

(He yells, in glee.)

HIM

She's gone!

(joyous laughter)

HIM

She's gone she's gone she's gone!

(He celebrates)

#31: Big Decision (Tim/Wiley)

(Him and her sit, fairly far apart. He look at her. They sit. And sit. She thinks.)

HIM

Have you you thought about it?

(beat.)

(beat.)

HER

Yeah,

(beat)

(beat)

(beat)

HER

I don't know.

#32: Arm Pit Smells (Marilet/Sarah)

(Him and her standing. They sniff.)

(They each sniff their own arm pits.)

HIM

Do I smell?

(She sniffs his arm pits.)

HER

No. Do I smell?

(He sniffs her arm pits)

HIM

No.

(She sniffs her own again)

HER

Are you sure?

(He smells her arm pits again)

HIM

Maybe a little.

#33: Laundry Folding (Tim/Marilet)

(They stand in a laundromat folding laundry. He pulls out a sheet, and she joins him to help. They each find two corners, and do the sheet-folding routine they know so well until it's closet-sized and ready to be put away.)

[end]

#34: Teacher Rant (Wiley/Sarah)

(They are on a walk. He is in the middle of a rant. She listens.)

HIM

So besides it being a
Giant Waste of Time, everyone
continues to talk about the whole trend like it's this
Big New Thing, and it's some
Huge Issue.
But if anyone even bothered to stop for just
half a second
and listen to what they were Actually Saying,
they'd realize how much they sound like fucking
Idiots.
But That's completely impossible
since it requires more than like
an ounce of self-reflection,
which is never going to happen,
because not only are they convinced they're never
wrong,
but they pretty much Assume all our students are
dumb lazy assholes, and if they can't understand the
material after
One Shitty Lecture, it's never
"maybe these guys should do their Job better,"

it's just the kids' fault for not working hard enough. And I can't say anything because then I'd be the asshole who just got here and is already telling people what to do.

.
Anyway, it's annoying.

[end]

#35: Hand Slap Game (Wiley/Marilet)

(Him and her sit facing each other on the ground. Hands out, palms touching.)

(They play the hand-slapping game. Fiercely. Seriously. Playfully. They play for a while.)

#36: Book/Waiting (Tim/Sarah)

(She stands, waiting. She looks down the street, doesn't see anything. She holds a book. Opens it. Reads. She stops reading, and looks down the street again. Nothing. She reads.)

(He enters, walking fast, and comes to her.)

HIM

Sorry.
That took a lot longer than I thought it would.
Have you been waiting long?

HER

Maybe five minutes or so

HIM

Thank you for waiting.

(He kisses her.)

HER

Want to go in?

HIM

Sure.

(They exit.)

[end]

(Boss returns. The reader hasn't made any progress at all in picking a card. The ones she has looked at are scattered about on the floor in front of her.)

BOSS

Well? What'll it be?

READER

Does it matter a lot which I choose? I'm still not sure what a good one looks like.

BOSS

It's mostly a matter of taste.

READER

Oh.

(Reader starts picking up some cards off the floor, randomly flipping through them.)

BOSS

If you're not ready I can come back. There's no hurry,

READER

What about this one? Does it seem nice to you?

(Reader hands Boss one of the cards. Boss holds it up to the light. A moment we have seen before plays out with no sound.)

BOSS

Yes.
This one,
Seems Very nice.

(Boss holds out the card to Reader.)

BOSS

Good luck.

(The reader takes back the card and leaves. One of the Him and Her pairs become Mom and Dad. An interlude. They sing to an imaginary small thing sleeping in front of them.)

MOM AND DAD

(singing)

One day, when you are grown
One day, when you are grown
The sun will rise to greet you
And send new light to meet you
As morning breezes brush your skin.
When you are grown, one day.
When you are grown, one day.

Until that morning, sleep, dream.
The sun is down
The light is low.
Until that morning, sleep, dream.
While evening breezes blow.
Evening breezes blow.

PART 3 - DINNER

(Dad has been cooking dinner, and is just now finishing up. The radio is on. He whistles. Cooks. Sets the table.)

DAD

Anna!

(Sets plates down)

DAD

Dinner's ready!
Anna!

ANNA

(from off)

What?

DAD

Dinner!

ANNA

Just a minute!

(He finishes setting dinner on the table, and sits down. Waits. Waits.)

DAD

Anna,

ANNA

Coming!

(She enters. (this is the reader, by the way) Sits. Picks up her water and drinks. Sets it down.)

ANNA

Do we have to listen to this?

DAD

No,

(She gets up, leaves. The radio is turned off. She comes back, sits down. They eat.)

(They eat)

DAD
Do you have a lot of work tonight?

ANNA
Not really.

DAD
What were you just working on?

ANNA
Nothing. I was on the phone.

(Beat. They eat.)

DAD
With Lara?

ANNA
No, with Anna Gardner.

DAD
Do I know her?

ANNA
I don't think so,

(they eat)

DAD
Wasn't she on your school team last year?

ANNA
No.

DAD
Who was the girl with short hair?

ANNA
That doesn't really narrow it down,

DAD
The one who was taller than everyone by six inches.

ANNA
It wasn't Anna Gardner, she's like five foot two.

DAD

What were you talking about?

ANNA

We have to do a Spanish project together so we were trying to figure out when we could meet.

DAD

When are you meeting?

ANNA

I don't know. I had to come to dinner.

(they eat)

(Sound of mom through the door. She enters with a backpack, puts it away. Kisses Dad)

MOM

Smells good,

(Kisses Anna)

MOM

How was your day?

ANNA

Fine.

MOM

Can I get you anything?

DAD

No thanks

ANNA

I'm fine.

(Mom gets her plate and a glass, and sits down.)

MOM

We set a weekend for the street fair. May eighteenth. Hopefully it won't still be raining. You both free that day?

DAD

I think so.

ANNA

I'm gone that week.

MOM

In May? Gone where?

ANNA

Isn't that when Senior overnight is?

MOM

Shit. You're right.
I'm sorry.

ANNA

It's fine.

MOM

I know you love it, but-

ANNA

It's fine,

MOM

-we'll do it again next year, and-

ANNA

Mom, it's fine.
I've been like twelve times.

(they eat)

MOM

This is good. What's in it?

DAD

Dill. Lemon. Paprika.

MOM

It's delicious.
Thank you for cooking.

(they eat. Beat.)

ANNA

Can I be done?

DAD
You didn't finish,

ANNA
I'm full.

DAD
Clear your plate.

(She does, and leaves. They watch her
go. beat.)

MOM
How was she?

DAD
Quiet.

MOM
More than last night?

DAD
The same.

MOM
Did you talk about it?

DAD
No,
I didn't know how to start.

(Beat. They eat.)

DAD
Did you see Doug?

MOM
We had lunch today.

DAD
What did he say?

MOM
Well,
He said he'd have to talk to her to be sure, but from
what I told him he thought she sounded
Within The Normal Range.

DAD
Normal what?

MOM
Teenage depression.

DAD
So he didn't think
There was anything else.

MOM
Well,

(beat)

DAD
What.

MOM
Well apparently there have been one or two recorded
cases of kids saying similar things.

DAD
And what happened to them?

MOM
Exactly what they said would happen.
But it
didn't Really sound like Anna.

.
And it was a long time ago.

(beat)

(beat)

DAD
Maybe we should try
Taking her to someone tomorrow?

(Anna appears)

ANNA
Dad,
Have you seen my book?

DAD
Is it on the couch?

(she leaves)

MOM

Anna!

(She pops her head back in)

MOM

Actually, can you come sit with us for a minute?
We need to talk to you.

ANNA

Does it have to be right this second?

MOM

Yes.

(Anna comes in, sits.)

MOM

We're worried, Anna.

(beat)

ANNA

About?

DAD

You know what about.

MOM

I talked with Doug today,

ANNA

I'm not a liar.

DAD

He didn't say you were.

ANNA

Did he say I'm depressed?

MOM

He thought maybe you sounded like-

ANNA

Because I'm not.

All I've ever said is I'm going to die soon.

How does that make me depressed?

DAD

Are you thinking at all about taking your own life?

(Anna giggles)

DAD

This isn't a joke,

ANNA

No, I know.

I'm not, I'm definitely not.

Why would I?

DAD

You've been very quiet recently.

ANNA

That's because I don't have much to say. And when I do have something to say, you don't want to hear it.

MOM

We do want to hear what you have to say. We want to hear you. Your thoughts, your feelings, What worries you,

ANNA

The only thing that worries me is that the one thing I needed to tell you, you didn't want to hear.

DAD

You can tell us now.
We're listening.

ANNA

I already told you.
Like, twice.

DAD

Try again.

ANNA

This is dumb, no matter how I say it-

DAD

Please.
Try again.

ANNA
Do you promise to believe me?

DAD
I'll try.

MOM
I'll try very hard.

ANNA
Promise to Actually believe me.

MOM
Anna, this is the best we can do.
.
Please.

(beat)

ANNA
I am going to die soon.

(beat)

MOM
Are you going to kill yourself?

ANNA
No.

MOM
Do you swear it.

ANNA
On whatever you want, yes, I swear it.

DAD
Are you involved in drugs?

(Anna laughs)

ANNA
Dad!

DAD
I'm just asking,

ANNA

No! Stop being
Ridiculous.
I am just going to die soon.
End of story.

(beat.)

ANNA

Now do you believe me?

(Mom starts to cry.)

ANNA

Stop. Stop,
It's not that sad,

MOM

We would miss you so much,

ANNA

I know. I'm sorry.
But I'll remember all of this forever.

DAD

Why are you doing this?

ANNA

I thought
it might make things easier. When it happens.
If you already knew.

(beat.)

ANNA

I just wanted to make it easier.
Ok?

(She kisses her mom.)

MOM

I love you.

ANNA

I love you too.

(she kisses her dad)

Ok?
ANNA

I'm trying,
DAD

Ok.
ANNA

(Anna leaves.)

(Beat.)

(Mom stands, picks up some dishes.
After a moment, Dad joins her and they
clean up the kitchen together.)

(Mom and Dad cleaning up the kitchen.
There is nothing to say. Dad puts on
water for tea.)

(A humming begins. Faintly, from
everywhere, and is the sound of all the
other actors in the play humming a
single, soft note. Nobody onstage
notices it. It stops.)

(A couple of chorus members enter the
space, and stand as unobtrusively as
possible. The humming begins again, a
little louder. Anna hears it, and comes
onstage. She has her book. Mom and Dad
clean up. Anna notices them noticing
nothing, and the humming stops.)

(A couple more chorus members enter the
space, and find an out-of-the-way spot.
The humming begins again, a bit louder
and possibly breaking into a couple of
different notes. Anna stops, looks
around in earnest. The humming stops.)

(More members of the chorus enter. More humming begins--this time it is starting to become a complex and beautiful sound. Anna listens. Carefully. Dad makes tea. He and mom both drink.)

ANNA

Mom?

(The humming stops.)

ANNA

Mom?

(It begins again. The last chorus members enter, and the sound builds into something slightly more complex and beautiful than the last.)

ANNA

Mom!

(The humming is louder than she is. They do not hear her.)

ANNA

Shit.

(She grabs a pen.)

ANNA

Shit.
Shit.
Shit.

(She searches for paper. Any paper. Anna finds a notecard she's been using as a bookmark, and writes. The longer she writes the more frantic it becomes.)

ANNA

Things to remember. One:

(The humming stops.)

ANNA

The sound you both make when you take a sip of tea.

(Mom and Dad take a sip of tea.)

(Humming begins again. Anna writes.)

ANNA

Things to remember. Two:

(the humming stops)

ANNA

The face dad makes when he's thinking.

(Dad makes a thinking face.)

(Humming begins again. Anna finds a new card, and writes.)

ANNA

Third thing:

(The humming stops.)

ANNA

The way mom bites her nails, then reminds herself not to.

(Mom begins to bite her nails, then pulls her own hand away.)

(Humming again. It continues to grow. Anna pulls out a new card, keeps writing.)

ANNA

4th thing:

The way you both,

.

4th thing!

(The humming stops.)

ANNA

The way you both look at me when you think I'm not looking.

(They look at Anna. It's lovely.)

(Humming again, stronger still. Anna is having real trouble stopping it now. She writes.)

ANNA

5th thing.
5th thing, the 5th thing!

(Humming quiets, but does not stop.)

ANNA

The way your eyes crinkle up before a sneeze comes,

(Mom's eyes crinkle, and she sneezes. Humming grows again.)

ANNA

6th! The sound of your yawn.

(They yawn. We can't hear it over the humming, which does not stop.)

ANNA

7th. The color of your eyes.
8th. Your smell.
9th, your hair before it is brushed,
10th,

(The humming is extra loud, complex, and beautiful. It takes over everything completely.)

ANNA

10th thing. The 10th,

(It stops.)

(Silence.)

(She is alone in the middle of the chorus. Out of place, out of time.)

PART 4 - DYING

PHASE 1

(The Reader/Anna, onstage, alone. The rest of the cast is there too, but not really visible. When she breathes, everyone breathes.)

THE READER (anna)

This is it, it's happening.
I can feel it
Starting. Now.
I can't tell what's going on in my actual body, that's
not what I feel, and
I can't even remember where I was when it started to
start.
Or what I was doing.
Or who I was with.
Huh.
I really
Really,
Can't Remember.
But I absolutely know for sure it's beginning. I can
feel it in my breath. I don't
Have to use my lungs anymore, because my whole body's
starting to breathe.

(breath)

It feels so cool.

(Breath)

It feels like the air is coming in through my head,
and my hands, and my feet.
It feels Amazing.

(breath)

If I were a fish, this is exactly how I imagine gills
must feel.
It's going in through my feet now.

(Breath)

And out my eyes,

(breath)

Through my wrists

(breath)

And Elbows
And Thighs.

(breath)

I can feel my calves breathing. And my lips and my
teeth.

(breath)

It's going in my neck and along my back now,
Down into every toe.

(breath)

But I don't
Actually have feet anymore. Or arms or wrists or a
face, so I don't
Have the ability to See anything.
Not with real eyes
Because they aren't there, they've turned into a
breath

(breath)

And if you could see me right now, the Real me, not
the Body me,
You'd see me start to dissolve into everywhere.
The parts I can feel breathing you would see melting
into the space around me.
That's what's happening now.
If you could see me, the real me,
The only thing left in this moment would be my collar
bone.
And once that starts breathing too, I'll be gone.
Totally melted away,
Just one Big Breath.

(breath)

It's a melting.

(breath)

A dissolving

(breath)

So gradual, you barely even notice how it grows.

(breath)

And now that I'm here
It's the best thing I've ever felt, and there's no
desire to

Be anywhere else, no
Longing to go Back, or fear, or worry
Or Any of that.

(breath)

Best I've ever felt.

(breath)

(breath)

(breath)

It's in my collar bone now.

(breath)

(breath)

(breath)

Here comes something else,

PHASE 2

(Simultaneously with the chorus making
the next page a cacophony. It starts as
a whisper, and grows to a roar.)

THE READER:

THIS
PART

IS JUST
ABOUT

KNOWING
EVERYTHING

SEEING
EVERY
THING

THAT HAS
EVER
HAPPENED

AND
UNDERSTANDING

(IN A FLASH)

THAT IT
ALL

MAKES

PERFECT

SENSE

Once upon a time,

Coffee, tea, and machine guns.
Mortgages. Departments. Napa valley wines.
Daffodils, daisies, redwood, orchid growing
conventions
Hitler and Stalin and Ghandi and Jesus
People crying and dying and lost and found.
The Classics. Misogyny. Abandon.
The best of times, the worst of times.
Pink. Lemonade. The post-industrial revolution.
Badges, honors, cadbury creme eggs.
Radio stations that never say anything worthwhile.
The day you were born. Presidential elections.
The various states of human suffering, the limits of
loving.
Ski lifts, grocery stores.
AP History, AP lit. English, French, Babylon.
Hypothesis and Fact.
Playing and fighting, games and grabs and landslides
and water slides and typhoons.
Treasures, buried or alive.
5-Spice chicken. Camels and Chives.
He said, and she said, and they said, and you said.
Immigration and stagnation and politics and animals.
You see them mourning? It doesn't matter.
You see them hungry? It doesn't matter.
Fire pits, girl scout cookies, new pens, sharp
pencils, and sleepovers and hot chocolate with
marshmallows and cinnamon and whipped cream.
New york, new year's eve, ride the subway, get lost.
Dance for change--pennies, nickels, dimes.
It all fits together, don't you see?
It all fits. It all fits.
Cats and dogs and broken nests on the fire escape.
Raspberries. Cows. Vampire bugs. The northern lights.
Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, Giant Pacific Ocean.
Earthquake, fires. Tragedy, comedy, Shakespeare,
sleeping, waking.
Sun, rain, snow, music, drums.
People with names, people with names you can't
remember, people without names.

The end.

THE READER

And then,
I arrive.

(The Union hall drops into place around
the reader, Mechanically and all at
right angles.)

PART 5 - BACK AT THE HALL

(Back in the Union Hall. Exactly the same set-up as the beginning of the play. The Reader is sitting alone, still holding the book she had when she was Anna. She is trying to remember what just happened to her. She can't remember anything.)

(The room comes to life as naturally as possible.)

(Card Player 1 shuffles)

CARD PLAYER 1

Which rules should we play?

CARD PLAYER 2

Let's keep doing suits, doubles, slap jacks, plus one, minus one. And sandwich.

CARD PLAYER 1

Allright,

(Card Player 1 deals.)

(Chess player plays the same game, from where it left off last time.)

CHESS PLAYER

Black's move. Black B-B7ch?
White K-B1, black Kt-QB3
White P-B5!, Black B-B4

(Player 1 stops playing, the others are still going.)

PLAYER 1

Wait wait wait, what are we doing there.
Guys. Guys.
Hey. Stop playing for a sec.

(The Players stop playing.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ready?

CARD PLAYER 2

On your mark, get set, go.

(They play the card game slap. As quickly as possible.)

PLAYER 1

What are we doing there?

PLAYER 2

Where?

PLAYER 1

Measure 18.

PLAYER 3

We've been over this!
Play it as written.

PLAYER 2

Didn't you write it in?

PLAYER 1

Does anyone have a pencil?

(Chess player has been playing quietly.)

CHESS PLAYER

White Kt-KKt5!, black Kt-R3
Black is defenseless (a state to which his futile check for "attack" o move 9 has contributed)

(Card players continue to play slap, as quickly as possible. If exclamations arise as a natural part of the game, use them.)

(Player 1 finishes writing on the score.)

PLAYER 1

Okay, let's take it from the pickup to measure 8.
Ready?

(they return to playing.)

(Chess player has made one more move:

Black knight to f6)

CHESS PLAYER

White player thinks.
And,
White Q-R5.

(The next slap in the card game comes
right away.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ow! Shit,

CARD PLAYER 2

Oh no! Sorry,
I'm sorry,
Should we take a break?

CARD PLAYER 1

Sure.

(Player 2 stands up, stretches, and
starts doing yoga. The other card
player joins in. It is highly
coordinated, and clearly something they
do all the time.)

CHESS PLAYER

Black Q-K1.

(As this happens, the Players go into
high gear. They play and play and play.
Chess player stretches, gets up, joins
the choreographed yoga.)

(The reader opens the book she's been
holding this whole time, and reads.)

(It doesn't last long this time,
because the white-board writer, who has
been furiously writing this whole time,
caps the pen, turns to the group and
yells out:)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

JOB CALL!

(It is instantly quiet, and all attention is at once focused on the white-board writer. Except for Reader, who still reads.)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

One: to Carla and Ryan Billford.
San Francisco, California.
Second try.
Middle income.
History of insomnia and gallstones. Moderate drug abuse. 67% chance of alcohol use.
Four and a half year assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A2.

CARD PLAYER 2

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A3.

PLAYER 4

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4.

READER

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1.

CHESS PLAYER

Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes B1 next to the assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card Player 1 leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Two: to Art and Wendy Soren.
Stockton, California.
Fifth try.
Low middle income.
History of reckless driving. High drug abuse. 82%
chance of alcohol use.
Twenty-two month assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A2.

CARD PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A3.

PLAYER 4

Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes A3 next to the assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 4 leaves. During the white
board writer's next job listing, The
Reader finds her note card in the book,
and takes it out. Holds it up. Reads
it. Nobody notices. They watch the
proceedings.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Three: to Mary and David Carthy.
Piedmont, California.
First try.
High income.
History of baldness. Sparse drug abuse. 12% chance of
alcohol use.

Twelve year assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1

Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes A1 next to the assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 1 puts away his or her instrument and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Three: To Karina Marquez and Joseph Krouse.

Lancaster, California.

Third try.

Middle income.

History of gout. Moderate drug abuse. 40% chance of alcohol use.

Six year assignment.

A1 on assignment, A2.

CARD PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A3 on assignment, A4.

(No answer. The reader reads her card furiously. It is all that exists. She cannot read it fast enough.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4?

(The rest of the Union Hall is still silent, and turns to watch The Reader. Card Player comes over to her, and tries to read over her shoulder. Remaining Players drift over as well.)

CARD PLAYER 2

What is that?

(White Board writer makes a valiant attempt to carry on. Nobody listens.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4 passes, B1 on assignment,
B2?

CARD PLAYER 2

What does it say?

WHITE BOARD WRITER

History of gout. Moderate drug abuse. 40% chance of alcohol use.
Six year assignment.

CARD PLAYER 2

The handwriting's terrible. Is it a list?

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Six year assignment. B2!

PLAYER 4

Is it?

CARD PLAYER 2

I think it is,

(They peer. Reader is so involved with reading and remembering, she's oblivious to everything else. Card Player 2 deciphers.)

CARD PLAYER 2

One. The sound you both-

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B2!

CARD PLAYER 2

What!

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Do you pass?

CARD PLAYER 2

Sure.

(Goes back to deciphering with the others over Reader's shoulder. White Board writer caps pen, comes over to the group.)

CARD PLAYER 2

One. The sound you both make when you take a sip of-

(White Board Writer puts a hand over the Reader's card, covering it completely. A general outcry from all but the reader.)

CARD PLAYER 2

Hey!

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4.

(White Board Writer tries pulling the card from her hand. She does not let go, and is pulled to standing instead. They both hold the card. Neither lets it go.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Let go, A4.

(She doesn't. Beat.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4, I'm going to have to-

READER

I want to see the boss.

(Everything changes very fast, and everyone and everything moves except for Reader, who stays in exactly the same chair, in exactly the same position he or she was left in.)

(The space empties. There is nothing there now except for the Reader in her chair, one other chair, and a small table.)

(The boss enters)

THE BOSS

May I see your collection?
I'll give it back.

(reader hands over her card, and the Boss reads it)

THE BOSS

Those are
Very nice.

(the boss hands it back. The reader reads the card.)

THE BOSS

Would you like to know your options?

(beat)

THE BOSS

They are, unfortunately, limited. But you do have three.
One: Return your card, forget, and go back to work.

READER

No thank you.

THE BOSS

Two: Accept immediate dismissal, or
Three: Immediate promotion.
I'm sorry I can't present you with any additional alternatives, but rules are rules, and I'm afraid I can't push them any further than we already have.

READER

I don't want to forget,

THE BOSS

There will be other jobs,

READER

I don't want others. I want to remember this one.

THE BOSS

I understand, but-

READER

No you don't, you-

THE BOSS

I understand more fully than you can possibly imagine.

(beat)

THE BOSS

I won't make you go back, if you're sure.

READER

I'm sure.

THE BOSS

Then you are left with two choices--dismissal, or promotion.

READER

But I've barely done anything.

THE BOSS

That's not always what matters,

READER

What would I do?

THE BOSS

Maybe something similar to what I do. Maybe something different. I can't be sure, there's a wide range of possibility.

READER

Would I get to remember?

THE BOSS

In some positions, yes. I can't guarantee you would. I'd give it a 20% chance.

READER

What's dismissal?

THE BOSS
It's not my first recommendation,

READER
But what is it?

THE BOSS
I don't know. I've never been dismissed.

READER
Where would I go?

THE BOSS
I don't know.

READER
What would I remember?

THE BOSS
I don't know.

(beat. Reader holds up her card.)

READER
Do I have to give this up? To be dismissed?

THE BOSS
No. You can keep it.

READER
Then I'll take dismissal.

THE BOSS
Are you sure?
There's a one in five chance with promotion, and it
would suit you well. You have great potential.

READER
I don't want a one in five chance.

THE BOSS
Dismissal may be zero chance,

READER
You don't know that.

THE BOSS
No, but-

READER

It could be one hundred percent remembering.

THE BOSS

I doubt it.

READER

But it could be.

(beat)

THE BOSS

All right then. Just,
sit tight and
Enjoy the space for a moment.
I'll tell the people who need to know, and everything
should take care of itself.
Alright?
.
Okay.

(The Boss pats Reader on the back, and
leaves.)

(The Reader rereads her card, and
remembers.)

ANNA

The sound you both make when you take a sip of tea.
The face dad makes when he's thinking.
The way mom bites her nails, then reminds herself not
to.
The way you both look at me when you think I'm not
looking.
The way your eyes crinkle up before a sneeze comes,
The sound of your yawn.
The color of your eyes.
Your smell.
your hair before it is brushed,

(Anna holds the card up to the light,
and another part of the stage comes to
life. We watch whichever moments played
out before that Mom and Dad appeared
in. As this happens, the Reader speaks.

Everyone breathes.)

THE READER

(breath)

Everyone panics until they get to this point. But once
you get here
It's the best thing you've ever felt, and there's no
desire to
Be anywhere else, no
Longing to go Back, or fear, or worry
Or Any of that.

(breath)

Best I've ever felt.

(breath)

And I can still remember your look,

(breath)

It's in my collar bone now.

(breath)

The color of your eyes

(breath)

And smell,

(breath)

hair before it is brushed,

(breath)

(breath)

Here comes the rest,

(The reader, at the same time as
everyone else in the chorus humming.
The sound of everything. As the reader
goes through the following, the humming
melts into breathing. by the end, it is
all swallowed in one big intake of
breath. The reader whispers through
it.)

THE READER

This part
Is just about
Knowing everything.

Hearing everything that has ever happened,
And understanding
(In a flash)
That it all
Makes
Perfect

(A moment of pure stillness, then The
Reader takes the last big swallowing
breath with the chorus.)

END OF PLAY