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 ! Flows are relatively stable! Of course. Of course. On the
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Provisional Biography of Mose Eakins

Evan Dara

Provisional Biography of Mose Eakins



A Play by Evan Dara

aurora
New York - Roma

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organizations, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, institutions, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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CHARACTERS

The play calls for several dozen characters, many appearing very briefly, whose roles should be divided among at least seven actors, including at least two women.

All characters should be individuated and distinct, each with an article of clothing, prop and/or other identifying marker that clearly establishes the character's identity.

In parallel, the play calls for a group of presences called the Swirl, non-individuated people who all wear the same article of clothing and/or bear some other indication that they are, when then on stage, part of the Swirl.

Actors move back and forth between characters and the Swirl.

The only character who does not appear as other characters or as part of the Swirl is MOSE EAKINS, 35-ish and spry.

TIME: c. 2015

SETTING: As bare as you can stand it. Two chairs.

ACT ONE

MOSE EAKINS ambles onstage. He talks to a series of people who are not physically present.

MOSE: Tell me something, Jeff. Those numbers convincing to you?

(to someone else)

Bring me the swordfish. Not blackened. You got that? Not blackened. Go.

(to someone else, jauntily)

Well, you know what they say...

(to someone else)

Nice, Zina – the chart is really good. Zina, your students will love it!

(to someone else, laughing)

Tell him that and he's totally going to have a kitten!

(to someone else)

Roger, do not use the Stern Coefficient for lateral seismic stress! Pump conditions in Nigeria don't require it! Flows are relatively stable!

(to someone else)

Of course. Of course.

(to someone else)

On the contrary – your genuine action will explain itself.

(to someone else)

Listen, I earned it. No one gave nothing to me, and I have never broken any laws. I don't have to justify anything to anybody.

(to someone else)

But Mondrian, all his, like, patchwork of colors, he, like, just gives you this feeling like—

(to someone else)

Andy, man – will you stop! Numbers! Show me numbers! I’ll believe it when I see it!

(to someone else, while giving a high five)

Gorgeous! Gorgeous! Chris, who knew that you would make history’s all-time greatest jump shot!

(to someone else)

Now you’re talking: It’s the individual, and individual effort, that made this country. Freedom from is freedom to.

(to someone else)

Ah. Let me get back to you on—

(SWIRL MEMBER 1 enters. Mose turns away, continues gesturing as if talking.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Hear it here! Mose Eakins (born June 10, 1978) is an American field-risk analyst working for Concord Oil. Specializing in mid-level hard-soil extractions, he won the Kamden Prize for his research into adjacent fauna protection and occasionally lectures in his field.

(Mose turns forward.)

MOSE: OK, Jake. Now let me see it expanded to 200 miles around the rig.

(to someone else)

A blueberry chai albino-spinach latte...?!

(to someone else)

Well... I mean, I... OK, count me in.

(A colleague enters, walks to Mose, who speaks with him.)

Jim, we’re thinking of a weekend in Boston in July. Weren’t you just up there?

(The colleague nods and exits. RACHEL enters. Mose speaks with her empathetically.)

I know. I know.

RACHEL: Thanks. It’s really been tough.

(Mose gives Rachel a hug. She exits. Mose then speaks to a colleague passing invisibly by:)

MOSE: Ah – Gerry, can I get a reading on—

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Eakins was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and raised in a family of non-observant Episcopalians. For the past six years, he has been dating high-school chemistry teacher Zina Cordoi (born August 22, 1981).

(ZINA enters, walks to Mose.)

MOSE: ...So how about Thursday? Or Saturday, after the market?

(Mose and Zina move a few steps.)

So, OK, Zina – the window is open now, OK?

SWIRL MEMBER 1: They engage in a full range of urban and peri-urban activities.

(Mose and Zina sit downstage.)

MOSE: ...And when I said he was—

ZINA: Mose, look how many stars are out tonight.

MOSE: Mm.

ZINA: The second you get out of the city, nature just forces himself on you.

MOSE: Himself...?

ZINA: Sexist raccoon!

MOSE *(beat)*: Don't you mean sexist pig...?

ZINA: Now you start with animal discrimination?

MOSE: Sorry. Next time we're in the Rose Cafe, remind me to order you raccoon cutlets.

ZINA: Yeah.

(beat)

Amazing... Just a bit of hydrogen burning and distance disappears. All that wash of stars – they're unthinkably far away. And they're right in our retinas.

MOSE: Mm. You think maybe we invite Carl over on—

(Mose and Zina push a cart slowly, join a check-out line. Mose takes something from a shelf.)

You want...?

(Zina takes the object from Mose.)

ZINA: It's 82 percent – a little darker than we like, but... The cocoa's from Peru.

MOSE: So, nah, we don't need...only one!

(Mose flips two chocolate bars into their cart. Then he and Zina do aerobics.)

ZINA: Hup! 'N hup!

(They stroll an open-air art show.)

MOSE: Hm. Look at... Those reds and ambers are really...

ZINA: His work's like that lithographer we saw in—

(They participate in a protest.)

MOSE AND ZINA:

The fat cats

Just get fatter

When you think your votes don't matter!

(They gab with friends.)

ZINA: And of course you know what Jan wants better than she does—

(she jolts)

Ow!

(to 'Jan,' playfully) Sorry!

MOSE: So when the check finally came, what—?

(Mose and Zina sit downstage.)

ZINA: So...so I...

MOSE: What—

ZINA: I mean—

MOSE: You—

ZINA: It's like—

MOSE: Exactly. Really, we're on the same page.

ZINA: Mm. You still use paper?

(They smile. Pause.)

MOSE: We go to my place tonight?

ZINA: Maybe can we come to me? I've got – thank God – the last maybe eight of the exams to grade.

MOSE: Sure. Want to leave now?

ZINA: I never want to leave here. It'd be rude to all the stars to walk out on them so quickly.

MOSE: Just tell them we have work.

ZINA: Don't worry. They know.

MOSE: Hey, has Gerry said anything about—

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Considered a conscientious and disciplined worker, Eakins also enjoys access to Concord Oil's employee health club.

(With Zina turned away, Mose plays ardent ping-pong.)

On May 10, 2015...

(It's morning, and Mose and Zina prepare to leave for work.)

MOSE: OK, Zeen. So, Friday night we're on with Michaela and Ken?

ZINA: Oh, I got a WhatsApp from Michaela that they confirmed.

MOSE: Nice. OK, see you tonight about seven, sweets.

(Mose kisses Zina, leaves for work. She goes off. At his office, Mose passes a (visible) colleague, MIKE.)

Hey, Mike, how you doing?

(Mike gestures a friendly greeting. Mose then talks with colleague CHRISTINE.)

Christine, we find a moment to speak about Texas? The zoning council now wants an impact statement.

CHRISTINE: Total exhilaration.

MOSE: OK... Maybe in my office at three?

CHRISTINE: Hey – I am in absolute control.

(Christine leaves, Mose looks after her quizzically. He walks, meets colleague JEFF.)

MOSE: Hi, Jeff. Hey, if I can... Is Christine OK? She—

JEFF: Why this rush to judgment?

MOSE: Well, I mean she—

JEFF *(agonized)*: How can he say I'm "a little high-strung"?!

(Mose reacts as Jeff leaves. Soon colleague ANDY walks by.)

MOSE: Andy, man, someone put something in the water today—?

ANDY: Hey, someone is always like real interested in tearing me down, you know what I'm saying? Really interested in making me feel like shit.

MOSE: Andy – I'm sorry you... Did I ever—?

ANDY: I do not get anyone's coffee cup. I do not get anyone's coffee cup!

MOSE: What? I...

(laughs)

Ah – great! Very funny! OK, Andy, I hereby officially relieve you of the need to get my coffee cup. Hey – who started this—?

ANDY: I did it. I got the coffee cup. I am such a... Tonight, home, a big, big session of masturbation.

MOSE *(laughs)*: Exactly! Great! Hey, Andy – take a good stroke for me!

(Mose laughs, Andy leaves. Mose approaches colleague LISA.)

Hey, Lisa – Pittsburgh is where hyenas go on vacation!

LISA: What's that?

MOSE: Pittsburgh is where hyenas go on vacation!

LISA: Wait. What?

MOSE: Ah – sorry! You don't – you aren't in on...?

LISA: What are you—?

MOSE: Forget it – it was just a... OK, Li, be well.

(Mose goes. Then remembers something and returns to Lisa.)

Li, have you got the specs for Tuesday's meeting?

LISA: Suicide...? Suicide for gaining three-eighths of a pound?

(Mose reacts as Lisa leaves. He goes to his boss, RICARDO, who's busy with paperwork.)

MOSE: Ricardo – hey, bossman. Bossman, are you aware of any—?

RICARDO *(in his thoughts):* ...and if I say that, they'll give me credit for the idea...

MOSE: Uh – exactly! And I think they're outside! I'll go get them!

(Mose flees the office to the street, where pedestrians pass. Mose frets, thinks, approaches one.)

Pardon, you know where Clark Street is?

(The pedestrian walks on. Mose reacts, then starts to indicate chest pain, approaches PEDESTRIAN 2.)

My God... I – I think I'm – I'm having a heart attack!

PEDESTRIAN 2 *(in his thoughts):* ...And I think I'll have the brisket.

(Pedestrian 2 walks off. Mose runs back inside his office building, then to Ricardo, who's still doing paperwork.)

MOSE: Ricardo, Bossman – er, do you—?

RICARDO: Take the rest of the day off!

MOSE: Uh – OK. Thanks. I think I need it!

(Mose starts to leave—)

RICARDO: Once – just once! I wish someone would say that to me.

(Mose stops, approaches Ricardo.)

MOSE: OK. Ricardo – take the rest of the day off!

RICARDO: But if I fire Andy as an efficiency measure, I can argue for, what, fifteen percent of his salary?

(Mose reacts, then leaves the office and the building. Swirl Member 1 comes forward.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: A convinced rationalist, Eakins responds as he must. He goes for medical advice.

(Fretting, confused, Mose speaks with DOCTOR MACK.)

DOCTOR MACK: So – what seems to be the problem?

MOSE: Doctor, I... It's like I—

DOCTOR MACK: Mm hm...

MOSE: I mean, something – I don't seem to be—

DOCTOR MACK: Mm hm...

MOSE: It can't just be a collective practical joke. But—

DOCTOR MACK: Mm hm...

MOSE: I mean, I feel all right, but when I, with other people—

DOCTOR MACK: That'll be four hundred and fifty dollars.

(Mose reacts, leaves. He pulls out his phone, dials, speaks into it.)

MOSE: Hey, Z, Zina, hi—

(Zina enters, speaking on her phone.)

ZINA: Hey. How're—?

MOSE: Listen, Z – something's come up, and I – I don't think tonight's good. I don't think we can meet after work.

ZINA: Oh, whatever you want. Everything OK?

MOSE: Sure. I got a thing at the office. OK? Big big hug.

(He hangs up. Zina walks to him.)

ZINA: Hi, doll. What're we doing tonight?

MOSE *(confusedly)*: But—

(Zina hugs Mose.)

ZINA: It's good to see you, sweetheart—

MOSE: Um, thanks, Z – but as I mentioned, I don't think this is the best evening for us to—

(Mose takes a step away.)

ZINA: Ah, OK. Whatever. Do what you have to.

MOSE: Thanks, doll. Speak to you later.

ZINA: Listen... Paula's making her cassoulet tonight, and she invited me over. I'll be at her place, OK?

(She kisses Mose, exits. Swirl Member 1 comes forth.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: At 7:17 PM that same day, Eakins visits Princeton-trained neurologist Reginald Cooper.

(COOPER stands near Mose. Beat.)

COOPER: Mm hm—

MOSE: Doctor Cooper – please don't say 'Mm hm'!

COOPER: That'll be six hundred and fifty dollars.

MOSE: Wha—?!

COOPER: That'll be seven hundred and fif—

MOSE: Doc – go back to 'Mm hm'!

COOPER: Your illness is very, very grave.

(Mose reacts, spins out, frets.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Four hours after leaving work, Eakins is unsure what to do, where to turn.

(SWIRL MEMBER 2 enters.)

SWIRL MEMBER 2: He spends the evening in Galsworthy Park, watching the simple interactions of passersby.

(Folks stroll, chat, laugh, act out. Mose is fearful, feels excluded.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Described by colleague Andy Hopper as, quote, the most strong-willed person at Concord Oil, unquote, Eakins continues to try to understand.

(Mose approaches a series of people walking by.)

MOSE: Pardon me, sir...

(The person ignores him.)

Um, Ma'am, would you...?

(The person ignores him.)

Sorry, but might I...?

(The person shoots a glance at Mose, walks on.)

Hi there! Any chance you could...?

(The person ignores him. Mose approaches another passerby but loses spirit, shrinks and slinks away. He sits, forlorn.)

SWIRL MEMBER 2: On May 12, 2015, Eakins hears of Doctor Julius Mazlane, associate professor of idiopathology at Rutgers, known for his work in neuro-linguistic disorders—

(Mose runs to Swirl Member 2.)

MOSE: Wait – there's a doctor who specializes in this?

(Mose runs to DOCTOR MAZLANE, who takes notes.)

Doctor – Doctor Mazlane...!

DOCTOR MAZLANE *(in the tone of the prior doctors' "Mm hm"):* I see...

MOSE: Doctor, I – something has, where I—

DOCTOR MAZLANE: I see...

(Mose throws up his hands, looks to heaven. Doctor Mazlane snaps to professionalism:)

OK. Thank you. Thank you indeed.

(Mose reacts. Mazlane looks in Mose's eyes and throat.)

I recognized it immediately, but wanted to confirm my diagnosis with absolute surety.
Mr... Mr...

MOSE: Eakins.

(Not hearing Mose, Mazlane reads Mose's name from his paperwork.)

DOCTOR MAZLANE: ...Mr... Eakins, it is quite certain that, I am sorry to inform you, you have come down with a condition—

MOSE: Doctor, please be direct—

DOCTOR MAZLANE: —a condition that over, oh, the past five to seven years, has come to be known as imparlence.

MOSE: Imparl—?

DOCTOR MAZLANE: It seems to be a disorder associated with—

MOSE: Is it danger—?

DOCTOR MAZLANE: —with Broca's Area in the brain, which is located frontal in the left cerebral hemisphere. At present, etiology is unknown. Indeed, many aspects of the disease are not well understood.

MOSE: So for how long will I—?

DOCTOR MAZLANE: According to the literature, frequency of the disorder among the general population is rising, dramatically so.

MOSE: But what is it—?

DOCTOR MAZLANE: But based on the latest observational studies, we can say with confidence that the condition largely is benign. You'll have no risk to general health.

MOSE: Is it a virus, an infection—?

DOCTOR MAZLANE: At present, response options are limited—

MOSE: Doctor Mazlane, there must be something we can do about...!

(Mose moves, paces, wrings his hands.)

DOCTOR MAZLANE: Mr. Eakins... If you please.

MOSE: Sorry...

(But Mose continues fretting.)

DOCTOR MAZLANE: Treatment entails lifestyle changes, counseling – Mr. Eakins, if you can not calm yourself, I will not be able to—

MOSE: I'm calm. I'm calm!

(Dr. Mazlane loses patience, writes on a small paper.)

DOCTOR MAZLANE: Mr. Eakins, take this and come see me again in two weeks.

(Mose takes the paper.)

MOSE: Medicine! Doctor Mazlane – I don't like to take anything unless it's, like, a matter of life or death!

(Doctor Mazlane walks away. Mose reacts, puts the paper in his pocket, leaves. Soon he is back on the street, among pedestrians.)

I – I don't believe...!

(Mose approaches a MALE PASSERBY.)

Pardon me, sir, but—

MALE PASSERBY: Government is the problem.

MOSE: Of course. But may I just ask you—

MALE PASSERBY: GOVERNMENT IS THE PROBLEM!

(He walks off. Mose reacts, approaches a FEMALE PASSERBY.)

MOSE: Um, Ma'am...Ma'am? Do – do you hear me?

FEMALE PASSERBY: Of course.

MOSE: Are you sure?

FEMALE PASSERBY: Well, yes.

MOSE: Every word? Everything's coming through?

FEMALE PASSERBY: Perfectly!

MOSE: Are you a chimpanzee?

FEMALE PASSERBY: Sure. Undeniably. I'd love to. Thanks very much.

(Mose reacts, the female passerby walks off. Despairing, Mose goes to a STREET VENDOR, points to something on his stand.)

MOSE: A Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR: Ninety-five cents.

(Mose pays, stumbles away nervously, eats a Tic Tac. He looks at the people walking by him, takes out his phone, dials.)

MOSE: Hey, Zina, hi... Listen, something's turned up again and, I'm sorry, I don't think I can come by tonight... Something at work... Sorry to do this again... Ah. Nice. What a nice thing to say, doll. Oh, and – I think we'd better cancel with Michaela and Ken Friday night... OK? OK, I gotta go. I... Thanks, doll. Thank you again, all your understanding, your kind words. You are, and remain, the best.

(Mose closes his phone, walks.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Back in his apartment, four rooms rendered in understated urban chic, Mose attempts to understand his new circumstance.

MOSE: Impudence.

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Impertinence, insolence, the quality of effrontery—

MOSE: Not that. Damn, what...? Impermanence.

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Transitoriness, non-durability, one of the three marks of existence in classical Buddhism.

MOSE: Dammit, how do I—?

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Did you mean: impartialness.

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Fair, just, not biased—

MOSE: No. Absolutely not—

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Imparlence.

MOSE: Wait... What...? That—

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Imparlence. I, m, p, a, r, l—

SWIRL MEMBER 1: —e, n, c—

(SWIRL MEMBER 3 enters.)

SWIRL MEMBER 3: —e. A chronic disorder of the autological system—

SWIRL MEMBER 2: —which is further defined as that part of the psycho-semantic interface responsible for the generation and communication of significant meaning.

MOSE: Wha...? So—?

SWIRL MEMBER 1: First observed by researchers at Rockefeller University, imparlence awaits formal classification by the American Medical Association.

SWIRL MEMBER 3: Imparlence's mode of transmission is only dimly understood, though William Watson, at Georgetown University, has proposed a genetic component to susceptibility.

MOSE: So what'll happen to me—?

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Symptoms are chronic and invasive: described broadly, people with imparlence lose the capacity to infuse their words with intelligible significance.

MOSE: What...? I—

SWIRL MEMBER 3: Ronald Dorfman, at Tufts, has described the imparlent individual as a person whose linguistic output, quote, has sound but no weight, presence but no punch. Unquote.

SWIRL MEMBER 2: In short, the words of a person with imparlence do not mean anything. To anyone.

MOSE: Are you—?

SWIRL MEMBER 1: Lionel Scott, at USC, says imparlence, quote, produces utterances akin to non-fat milk. Amid the full range of human expression, imparlence removes the cholesterol of communication. Unquote.

MOSE: But – but this...! Imparlence! I can't get it out!

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Secondary symptoms include anxiety, erratic pulse, malaise, and agonizing self-doubt.

MOSE: I don't believe it—

SWIRL MEMBER 3: Also a rise in skepticism. This, however, is temporary.

(Mose reacts, turns away.)

MOSE: I... Inaudible man!

SWIRL MEMBER 2: Curiously, when speaking with someone who has imparlence, people often give voice to thoughts they usually keep hidden. It's as if they lose all inhibition.

SWIRL MEMBER 3: Or they sense no risk in talking so.

(Swirl Member 1 approaches Mose.)

SWIRL MEMBER 1 *(intimately)*: Or you don't entirely exist for them.

MOSE: Hmph... But OK. Thanks. Thank you for giving it to me straight.

(Mose wanders to a place with PEDESTRIANS, timidly approaches one.)

Uh, pardon me—

PEDESTRIAN 3: Of course.

(Pedestrian 3 walks away. Mose reacts, regroups, then tries to communicate with another pedestrian via pantomime. The pedestrian takes out his smart phone, walks on. Mose then approaches PEDESTRIAN 4.)

MOSE: Oogle ogle blick bing. Tangle oogle—

PEDESTRIAN 4: Exactly! Government is the problem!

(Mose reacts; Pedestrian 4 leaves. Mose sees PEDESTRIAN 5. Mose whips out a pad and pen, writes, gives a page to Pedestrian 5, who looks at it then turns to Mose.)

PEDESTRIAN 5: Everyone knows Americans don't read.

(Mose reacts, goes to PEDESTRIAN 6.)

MOSE: Pardon me, but...can you hear me?

(Pedestrian 6 laughs.)

You really can't hear...?

PEDESTRIAN 6 *(still laughing)*: Oh, that's good!

MOSE: But how is that possible?

(Pedestrian 6 howls with laughter.)

But I'm here! Bones and breath and insecurities and all. I am here, right in front of you—!

PEDESTRIAN 6: That's so great! Hey, wonderful to see you, man. Really good. Keep in touch.

(Chuckling, Pedestrian 6 walks off.)

MOSE: I'd love to keep in touch...

(Mose goes to the swirl. From here forward, however many swirl members are on stage take turns speaking individually.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Normal and understandable. The imparlent individual often comes to over-value verbal meaning.

MOSE: If you say so—

SWIRL MEMBER: According to Melanie Klein, accommodation and assimilation are the keys to psychological well-being.

MOSE: But I don't want to accommodate and...uh—

SWIRL MEMBER: Assimilate.

MOSE: So if I don't want that, what—?

SWIRL MEMBER: Extant therapies include—

MOSE: But maybe – maybe their words and replies are correct, perfectly correct, and I'm misunderstanding them. Maybe my comprehension is the problem.

SWIRL MEMBER: Certainly possible.

SWIRL MEMBER: If profoundly unlikely.

MOSE *(to himself)*: My God – what is happening here...? What did I do to...? Whose justice is being served by this?

(to the swirl) So, you – so tell me: What can I—?

SWIRL MEMBER: There is no known cure. Imparlence is untreatable—

MOSE: But the doctor – the doctor recommended medicine!

(Mose pulls out the paper given by Doctor Mazlane, shows it to the swirl.)

He told me to take this and come see him again! It's a prescription...

(reads the paper)

...a prescription...to pay him five hundred and twenty dollars... And I thought bleeding patients went out in the nineteenth century.

SWIRL MEMBER: There's been a strong return to traditional medicine.

MOSE: So tell me: is my thing, like, absolute? Am I going to flapgaggle like that with everyone? Even the people closest to me?

SWIRL MEMBER: Impossible to know. Universal information is as impossible to obtain as it is fearsome in its implications.

MOSE: Mm... OK, thank you. Thank you again – for your directness, your honesty.

(Mose walks away, pulls out his phone.)

Hey, Marcel, ole buddy, how you doing? Listen, I was wondering if... But Marcel, I was thinking maybe... Ah... OK, that's good to hear... Hey, Marcel – where are you...? Where have you gone...?

(Mose cuts the call, despairs. He approaches a passerby, indicates his phone.)

Hey – you want this? I sure as hell don't need it any more.

(The passerby walks on.)

Just ask the first person who calls what the number is!

(Mose frets, approaches Zina nervously.)

Hey, Z. How're you—?

ZINA: Hello, darlin'! How's this and that?

MOSE: Hoo. Don't ask—

ZINA: Good – good—!

(Mose panics – does she not hear him?)

MOSE: What—?

(Zina takes Mose in a hug.)

ZINA: It's just so good to see you after another unendurable day.

(Mose calms. They sit in the chairs.)

Had a department meeting that went on forever, and the only thing they didn't talk about was fixing the light switch in my classroom. It took me like two minutes to turn it on today – with all the kids waiting and squirming!

MOSE: Hm.

ZINA: Oh, and I heard from Michaela and Ken—

MOSE: No – Z, didn't you tell them? Remember, I told you we can't see them on—

ZINA: —And they have to cancel for Friday night. And I just said no problem.

MOSE: Of course.

ZINA: We'll do it some other time.

(Mose reacts.)

MOSE: Z, you know, if you don't mind my saying so, I'm kinda glad they can't make it. I mean, the last time we saw them, you remember, it was like... They really aren't the most interesting, there really wasn't much, you know, back and forth. Maybe let's give them a rest for a while.

ZINA: OK.

MOSE: Nice. You sure you're good with that?

ZINA: Hey: you're part of the process, too! So, what're we doing tonight?

MOSE: Well, I was—

ZINA: Oh, I gotta tell you... I saw this article today, about something called Reiki. You heard about it?

MOSE: Think so.

ZINA: Yeah, it's this really interesting kind of alternative medicine thing, though it dates back over two hundred years – to Japan! It's really kinda amazing... It uses the same meridian system as acupuncture, and thank you for not saying I'm boring you to tears.

MOSE: Come on, Z. Never.

ZINA: So, OK, what we up for tonight? Maybe just stay in and watch something?

MOSE: Sure – great!

ZINA: I'm kind of in the mood for a movie. Something long that we can lose ourselves in.

MOSE: Sounds good.

(They settle in.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Progressively more fearful of non-Zina human interaction, Eakins takes six days off before returning to work. There, he is greeted by his department head, William Greavey.

(Mose approaches GREAVEY.)

GREAVEY: Mose, where have you been? What the hell's happening with your phone? Are you OK? We've been worried about you! You're fired!

(Mose reacts. Greavey looks at paperwork.)

MOSE: But Bill... Mr. Greavey... My mortgage is like... And Alicia – that's – that's the name Zina wants to give to the baby she – that we want to... I've been here thirteen years!

(Greavey walks off, nose in paperwork. Mose reacts.)

SWIRL MEMBER: On May 18, 2015, 11:32 AM, Eakins is without work, without leads, without possibilities. He views himself as a fraction of what he had been—

MOSE: Exactly – a fraction! What can I—?

SWIRL MEMBER: His despair is such that—

MOSE: Wait... Once you said I could – you said there are therapies.

SWIRL MEMBER: Indeed, many therapies exist—

SWIRL MEMBER *(like a TV ad):* Looking for a little linguistic lift—?

SWIRL MEMBER: Those phrases no longer carrying their weight—?

SWIRL MEMBER: You say you're not saying all that well?

SWIRL MEMBER: The Roar Store – where you can find today's full range of noun boosters, adverb vitamins, expressive enzymes and verbal viagra—

SWIRL MEMBER: Doctor Ozaku Willenstein, licensed ForeverSing practitioner, will gently guide you through his award-winning program of integrative whispering and holistic howling—

SWIRL MEMBER: Can we talk? If you're one of the millions of Americans suffering from irregular vowel movements—

SWIRL MEMBER: Receive fifteen percent off our next Incommunicative Singles Weekend when you—

(Mose turns away, reacts.)

SWIRL MEMBER: The next day, Eakins leaves for Cleveland, where he signs up at Josey's Word Gym, in the heart of downtown.

SWIRL MEMBER: There, he joins their program of high-impact consonant strengthening.

MOSE (*exaggerating sounds*): Kra-ka-to-a, Kra-ka-to-a. Fran-k Zap-pa, Fffran-kk Zzzap-PAHH.

SWIRL MEMBER: He works with semantic rejuvenation.

(Mose walks, stops, points down.)

MOSE: The floor.

(Mose walks more, stops, points down.)

A shoe.

SWIRL MEMBER: He abandons Josey's Word Gym after two days.

SWIRL MEMBER: Three days later, Eakins travels to Miami, to consult a specialist in vocal-cord implants.

(Mose approaches a door, stops when two people gingerly emerge: a PATIENT and his medical assistant. The patient speaks to his assistant in a horrific/comic squeal:)

PATIENT: It's... working... nicely...!

(Mose rears away.)

SWIRL MEMBER: On June 5, 2015, Eakins returns home, where he makes a claim for disability benefits.

(Mose is sitting in a chair, facing the other chair, which is empty.)

MOSE: Yes, Ms. Jenkins... Yes, Ms. Jenkins... And so you see, my claim is entirely valid – I lost my job because of a medical condition... Ms. Jenkins, I have a mortgage – I have obligations that are certainly still communicating to me! What do you mean, Nice the sun's back out... What do you mean, Nice the sun... I – I'm dreaming... I'm dreaming! Damn you, Ms. Jenkins – damn you! If you can't hear me, I might as well

say what I want! So, OK, Ms. Jenkins, forget the words – forget them! Do you not hear the need?

(Mose stands, breaks away, returns.)

Ms. Jenkins, don't you see? I'm proving my claim right here in front of you – by not being able to prove it!

(Mose moves from the spot. He arrives at a street, among pedestrians. He looks at them wistfully, approaches STREET VENDOR 2, speaks without gesturing.)

A Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR 2: Ninety-five cents.

(Mose pays, leaves, pops a Tic Tac in his mouth. Then realizes something. He returns to Street Vendor 2, speaks without gesturing.)

MOSE: Another Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR 2: Yes, sir.

(The vendor gives the Tic Tac.)

MOSE: Wait – you hear me?

STREET VENDOR 2: Anything else for you today?

MOSE: Actually, yes: Do you know when bus number 12 comes by?

STREET VENDOR 2: Thank you very much, sir.

MOSE: Sorry, I meant to ask where the bus stop is.

STREET VENDOR 2: What an ugly shirt this guy's got on.

(Mose reacts. Then speaks without gesturing:)

MOSE: You know what – I'll take another Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR 2: Here you go.

(The vendor hands it to Mose.)

MOSE: Oh, and can I get a pack of Doublemint?

STREET VENDOR 2: Of course.

(The vendor complies, Mose reacts and pays. Mose runs to STREET VENDOR 3.)

MOSE: Hello, an Almond Joy, please.

(Vendor 3 gives Mose the Almond Joy.)

STREET VENDOR 3: Anything else?

MOSE: Holy shit! Oh – sorry! Actually – no worries!

(Mose pays, runs to STREET VENDOR 4.)

Two Tic Tacs, please.

STREET VENDOR 4: You got it.

(Vendor 4 produces, Mose pays.)

MOSE: Thank you. Thank you!

(Mose scoots away, exhilarated.)

Something! I have something!

(He pulls out his cell phone, speaks into it. BILLINGS appears, talking on his office phone.)

Hello, Billings – Billings, how're you doing? How's the market today?

BILLINGS: Hello, who's—?

MOSE: It's Mose. Actually, just listen: I want you to buy ten thousand shares of Crandall Energy, OK?

BILLINGS: Ah, Mose, how're you—

MOSE: Fine – I'm fine. But please, listen to this: Mose Eakins is asking you to buy ten thousand shares of Crandall Energy for him right away, at market price, OK?

BILLINGS: Will do. But Mose – what the hell is Crandall Energy?

MOSE: Trust me – they're good, OK? They're good.

BILLINGS: Ten thousand shares at...the stock's at seven dollars and change. Mose, that's nearly sixty percent of your portfolio. Mose, that's too much exposure—

MOSE: Just get it, OK? Actually, correction: revise the order! Mose Eakins is asking you to buy fifteen thousand shares of Crandall Energy at market price, OK? Billings, do you hear that Mose Eakins wants fifteen—

BILLINGS: Of course I – Mose, are you OK? What—

MOSE: Just buy the stock, OK? Buy it for me!

(Mose hangs up. Billings shrugs, exits. Mose reins in his exhilaration, joins Zina strolling.)

ZINA: ...I prefer strawberries to peaches any day.

MOSE: You're not the only one.

ZINA: And raspberries to them both!

MOSE: Sign me up!

ZINA: Really. Going to Midtown Market is like visiting a museum!

MOSE: I know. And this museum is making me hungry.

(Mose goes to STREET VENDOR 5.)

The trail mix, please.

STREET VENDOR 5: For you, sir – anything.

(Vendor 5 smiles, gives Mose a bag of trail mix. Mose pays, hands the bag to Zina, runs back to Vendor 5.)

MOSE: Well done!

(Mose runs back to Zina. They resume ambling.)

ZINA: You know, it's so nice here now, I've been thinking: why should we go to Boston?

MOSE: Really?

ZINA: I mean, I hope I don't disappoint you, but it's gorgeous here this time of year.

MOSE: Well, if you prefer, I suppose we can put it off.

(They arrive at the chairs, sit.)

ZINA: So, the news: I've decided to take a class in Reiki.

MOSE: Wow—

ZINA: Starts this Saturday. And – and I'm really excited. Learning something entirely outside my – well, outside my usual world.

MOSE: Always good.

ZINA: I mean, the whole thing's just so fascinating: a method of physical healing where you don't even have to touch the other person. There are a few ways to do Reiki, but the best, and most rigorous, involves putting your hands above the meridian points – you know, the spots where they put the needles in acupuncture? – and just holding them there. Then the Ki energy flows... and magic happens.

MOSE: Wow.

ZINA: I mean, it's amazing: just the force inherent in you, and flowing through you, it heals people – it heals all kinds of things, back problems, asthma, stress. And it really works! I've read about dozens of people who were totally cured by Reiki.

MOSE: Hm.

ZINA: It's touch without touch, contact with no contact. Separation, like, disappears. It shows that the distance between us is illusory... Just like we learned the atom is mostly empty space, Reiki shows we're unitary with the things around us.

MOSE: Nice.

ZINA: Thank you, doll. Really – your being so good about this is, like, really important to me. I mean, this is a big big big step for me, and I totally appreciate your support.

MOSE: Hey – easy enough to support the one person on the entire planet who, you know, supports me.

(A swirl member comes forward as Mose and Zina separate.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Known for his resilient spirit, Eakins adapts to his new circumstances. He finds work where he can.

(A man walks to Mose, hands him a bed sheet, goes off. Mose starts to fold the sheet, the man returns, takes the sheet, gestures for Mose to leave. Mose has been fired. The man exits. Mose reacts.)

A woman walks to Mose, hands him a mop, goes off. Mose starts to mop, the woman returns, takes the mop, gestures for Mose to leave, exits. Fired again, Mose reacts more vexedly.

A man walks to Mose, hands him a garbage bag, walks away. Mose starts to pick up debris, the man returns, grabs the bag, leaves. Mose reacts even more negatively.

A man approaches Mose, hands him a piece of paper. Mose reads it, speaks to the man.)

MOSE: A – a dollar fifteen for one orange? Two dollars for water?!

(The man goes off. Another man approaches Mose, hands him a piece of paper. Mose reads it, speaks to the man.)

But last month – last month my electricity bill was—!

(The man goes off. A woman approaches Mose, hands him a piece of paper. Mose reads it, speaks to the woman.)

I...! But isn't there some kind of limit, some legal limit to how much a person's property taxes can go up in one year? There's absolutely no reason for – this is imposs...!

(The woman goes off, leaving Mose with his papers and his escalating worries. Billings enters, speaking on his office phone. Mose takes out his phone.)

BILLINGS: Hello, Mose – Mose! It's Billings.

MOSE *(into his phone):* Yeah, what's... How are you?

BILLINGS: Listen, Mose, I gotta speak to you about Crandall Energy—

MOSE: What—

BILLINGS: This Crandall Energy you asked me to buy for you – it's not having a good day—

MOSE: What—?!

BILLINGS: There've been rumors – rumors about information getting out. Not exactly insider trading, but some kind of access to information that shouldn't have been made public—

MOSE: O my Gah—!

BILLINGS: So what you want me to do with it? It's down to just over four – that's like forty percent under what you paid for—

MOSE: So sell it – sell the damn—!

BILLINGS: Mose, you know, I'm not authorized to talk along these lines, but maybe it's a good time to get out—

MOSE: Yes! Yes!! Sell the—

BILLINGS: But you gotta let me know, OK? Just tell me what you want to do—

MOSE: I did! I have! Billings, please, sell ev—!

BILLINGS: Please, Mose, the thing's down another thirty cents since we began this call—

MOSE: Billings – Billings! I ask you, I command you—!

BILLINGS: Hup! You just lost another fifty-five dollars on this clunker—

MOSE: So cut it loose, cut—!

BILLINGS: Hup! Another hundred and twenty gone—

MOSE: Tank the thing—!

BILLINGS: Hup! And say goodbye to another five percent of your net worth—

MOSE: Billings—!

BILLINGS: Mose, don't be so pig-headed! Accept your loss, accept that you made a mistake!

MOSE: I have! I did! I really and truly did!

BILLINGS: Mose – I'm not allowed to say this but... sell the loser! Sell it now! Get the hell out!

(Mose, agonized, hangs up. Billings hears the click, shrugs, exits.)

MOSE (to himself): I don't believe...! Buy and not sell, get in and never get out... Sadness is a one-way street! Someone!

(Mose runs to a passerby.)

Pardon me, sir, I'm – would you be kind enough to...

(The passerby passes by. Mose approaches another passerby.)

Ma'am, please – I'm in a bit of a situation...

(The passerby passes by. Mose runs to STREET VENDOR 6.)

Give me a Tic Tac.

(The vendor hands a Tic Tac to Mose.)

STREET VENDOR 6: Yes, sir.

(Mose pays. Then:)

MOSE: Give me another.

(The vendor gives Mose another Tic Tac.)

STREET VENDOR 6: You must like these things!

MOSE: And another.

(The vendor gives a Tic Tac.)

STREET VENDOR 6: Hungry today, are we?

MOSE: And one more.

STREET VENDOR 6: Sorry, sir, sold out.

MOSE: Wha...?

STREET VENDOR 6: You got the last of them.

(Mose reacts. He then hands the vendor all the Tic Tacs he just bought. The vendor tries to give them back, but Mose pushes the Tic Tacs on him. Pause.)

MOSE: A Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR 6: But... OK.

(The vendor hands a Tic Tac to Mose, who pays.)

MOSE *(to himself)*: OK. Something!

(to vendor) A Tic Tac, please.

STREET VENDOR 6: I...!

(beat)

OK, sir. Whatever you say.

(The vendor gives the Tic Tac, exits.)

SWIRL MEMBER: By August 2015, Eakins is improvising an existence, buttressed by the noble sentiments of culture.

(In a park, amid passersby, Mose stands behind a hat, recites.)

MOSE: ...And our larger experience discovers the identical nature appearing in us all. Persons acquaint us with the impersonal.

(He looks around, grows vexed.)

And what we commonly call a man, the eating, drinking, counting man, does not only represent himself, but...

(Defeated, Mose gives up. He looks in his hat, finds nothing, sits.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins' savings, enough to sustain him for several months, can not carry him indefinitely.

(JACK GOBETZ, a bulky man, enters and places a bag with food by Mose.)

MOSE: Thank you.

(Gobetz nods compassionately, exits. Mose eats eagerly.)

SWIRL MEMBER: He spends his days in Leddy Park, far across town from the ambit of his girlfriend, Zina, to avoid being seen. The deceptions involved are difficult for him.

(Mose speaks on his phone. Zina enters with her phone.)

MOSE: ...Yeah, it seems I have to stay another three days... But it's OK, San Francisco's OK, and the team Greavey gave me is quite competent. They're working pretty good.

ZINA: O Mose... I miss you.

MOSE: Yeah... Me, too. We'll see each other soon.

SWIRL MEMBER: The situation provokes despair.

(As Zina exits, Mose approaches passersby.)

MOSE: Spare a quarter of an hour...? Pardon, have you got ten sentences for me...? Can I borrow a holler?

(Ignored, Mose retreats to his turf.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Simultaneously, Eakins battles two afflictions: financial distress, loneliness.

(Gobetz enters, places a food bag by Mose. They exchange nods. Mose puts the bag aside, for later.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Each assails his thoughts: How will he survive? Why should he survive? His mind courts and caresses one word – one word, over and over again: Vulnerable.

(TWO COPS enter, approach Mose.)

COP 1: Put your hands above your head!

MOSE: What? What do you—?

COP 2: Hands! Above your head!

(Mose does so. The cops pick up the food bag left by Gobetz. They look inside, then speak to Mose.)

COP 1: You have the right to remain silent—

MOSE: Right surrendered! Right surrendered!

COP 1: Anything you say can and will be used against you—

MOSE: Yes! Please! Use it *all* against me!

(The cops bundle up Mose's belongings, lead him away.)

COP 2: You have the right to an attorney. If you can't afford an attorney – Jesus why do we waste our breath on this...

(All exit.)

ACT TWO

Mose sits in a chair, being interrogated by the two cops.

COP 1: ...And the one thing you must believe, streetman: Here, now, honesty is your friend – your best friend. You will make life much simpler for yourself if you just tell us the truth.

MOSE: Sir, there's nothing I'd like better than to tell you the truth—

COP 1: So, streetman: How did you do it? Tell us – how did you steal this phone?

(The cop holds up a smartphone.)

MOSE: What? I didn't steal a phone! Never in my life!

COP 2: Good. Things will go much easier for you, and more quickly for all of us, now that you've admitted guilt.

MOSE: What...? I want to call my lawyer!

COP 1: Don't move.

MOSE: I have the right to call my lawyer...!

(The cops leave. Mose deflates:)

...to tell him not to bother showing up.

(Mose frets.)

SWIRL MEMBER: For the first time in his life, Eakins worries about his blood pressure.

(Cop 1 enters.)

COP 1: OK. Until sentencing—

MOSE: Sentencing—!

COP 1: —you will be remanded to the County Detention Center—

MOSE: I don't believe—!

COP 1: —with arraignment scheduled for within four weeks.

MOSE: Please, sir! I – I didn't—

(Cop 2 enters, whispers to Cop 1. Cop 1 speaks to Mose, sternly.)

COP 1: Do not move.

(The cops leave. Mose agonizes.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins ransacks his imagination – who can help him, how to get those persons to help him—

(The cops enter.)

COP 1: We have news. It's serious. You're free to go.

MOSE: Wha—?

COP 2: Pick up your things at the cage on the way out.

(The cops exit. Mose reacts, goes.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins has now lived the vulnerability that he had so deeply feared. By 4:15 PM, he is back at Leddy Park. And incapable of restraint.

(Mose speaks on his phone. Billings enters with his office phone.)

MOSE: Billings – Billings, please!

BILLINGS: Who is this?

MOSE: Billings, you've got to – whatever's left in my account – sell it, sell it all, you've got to—!

BILLINGS: I'm a busy man!

(Billings hangs up, exits.)

MOSE: Billings – sell me... if you can get anything for it.

(Mose approaches a passerby.)

Pardon me, would you...?

(The passerby hastens on.)

Hello, might I impose upon you to...?

(The passerby hastens on.)

Here, here – look: I've got five dollars in my hand. Do you want it? Can I give it to you?

(The passerby rears away. Mose retreats to a corner of the park. Seeking comfort, he talks to himself. Some passersby look at him. Some do not.)

I mean, this is... This is...! Hm. Sorry to hear it, man... Yeah, tough for a lotta folks these days. You got that straight. But still, you know, we've got some fine sunshine today. There you're right, some fine sunshine.

(Mose loses heart. He sits in another part of the park. Doesn't see Gobetz approach him.)

GOBETZ: Pardon me.

MOSE: No reason to bother with me. No reason at all.

GOBETZ: Pardon me, sir. May I—

MOSE: Go away!

(Mose turns, sees Gobetz, warms.)

Oh. Hello.

GOBETZ: You poor—

MOSE: Sorry. Sorry to be so—

GOBETZ: Listen – I gotta ask you something. How'd you do it?

MOSE: What's—?

GOBETZ: How'd you steal my telephone?

(Gobetz holds up the same phone as was shown to Mose by the police.)

MOSE: That's the phone from the police! What're you doing with—?

GOBETZ: You recognize this? I got it from the police depart—

MOSE: Sir, I didn't steal – it was inside the bag! The bag you gave me!

GOBETZ: You know, if you need a phone, you can just ask me.

MOSE: I don't need a phone. And I can't ask you for one—

GOBETZ: When I saw it was you I decided not to press charges. And – just forget about the bail. Hey, you gotta behave yourself. Everything's stacked against... people like you.

MOSE: Tell me about it.

GOBETZ: You don't need a phone. You need a job. Stop by 18 Williston Avenue on Friday. 11 AM. We'll see if we can find something for you.

(Mose and Gobetz look at each other. Gobetz extends his hand.)

GOBETZ: Jack Gobetz.

MOSE: Mose Eakins.

(Mose shakes Gobetz's hand.)

GOBETZ: Yeah – fantastic the Red Sox won today!

(Gobetz leaves. Mose moves, lies down on the floor. Zina sits by him.)

SWIRL MEMBER: 9:15 that evening, Eakins is in Zina's apartment.

MOSE: ...Yeah, it was OK: I was able to leave San Francisco a day early—

ZINA: OK, now. Relax, close your eyes, and just attend to your breathing. Concentrate on every breath, in and out and...

(Zina does Reiki on Mose, moving her hands above and across his body.)

Mmm. This is the first time I've practiced on someone not in my class. I mean, do you feel this? Do you *feel* this? Reiki is just so powerful, just so feelable.

MOSE: Mm. Nice.

ZINA: It's like I'm not even here any more – I'm pure conduit, a vessel through which immeasurable things pass—

(Mose sits up, hugs Zina.)

Hey, what—?

MOSE: Zina, doll – thank you, OK? Just thank you – my lovely doll vessel-conduit!

ZINA: Whoo...! Reiki really kicks!

(As Mose's affection continues...)

SWIRL MEMBER: Zina maintains her position as Eakins' center and strength—

SWIRL MEMBER: His crux, his axis—

(Mose goes to the swirl, Zina exits.)

MOSE: Right. She's my constant, my consistency. Thank you for recognizing that.

SWIRL MEMBER: Nevertheless, Eakins—

MOSE: But please, tell me: There must be – I'm sure there's some kind of association, or support group, for people with my—

SWIRL MEMBER: Indeed, numerous support groups exist for the imparlent—

SWIRL MEMBER: Numerous!

SWIRL MEMBER: With the largest being UA – Under-expressers Anonymous.

MOSE: So I'd love to—

SWIRL MEMBER: The problem is finding them.

SWIRL MEMBER: How to contact a group—

SWIRL MEMBER: —that can make no contacts.

SWIRL MEMBER: How can they spread the word of their existence—

SWIRL MEMBER: —with words that do not work.

MOSE: Wait. I – you're telling me I can never find any of these groups?

SWIRL MEMBER: A sorrowful thing.

MOSE: You're saying I can't join the only groups that would have me as a member? So how do *you* know they exist?

SWIRL MEMBER: As was observed by Schopenhauer: Knowledge of is easy...

SWIRL MEMBER: Knowledge into, the most dangerous.

(Mose huffs. Gobetz enters and, during the following, shows Mose around his restaurant.)

SWIRL MEMBER: That Friday, August 9, 11 AM, Eakins reports for work. He finds that Gobetz owns a restaurant called Chez Jackie, an upscale spot open for lunch and dinner—

SWIRL MEMBER: —referred to on the menu as déjeuner and dîner—

SWIRL MEMBER: —seven days per week. With fifty-two covers, it specializes in earthy, peasant fare from the Languedoc region of France.

(Gobetz is explaining to Eakins his responsibilities.)

GOBETZ: ...OK? We open in ten minutes. You can start right away.

MOSE: Thank you. Really—

GOBETZ: Lunch is mostly regulars from the offices around here. So mind your P's and Q's and remember your ABC's: Always Be Courteous. This is service, and the one thing you gotta be in service is courteous... Yeah, I been lucky. I got a nice place here.

MOSE: Clearly. But, um, Mr. Gobetz, if I may... The salary?

GOBETZ: OK? I gotta go speak with the cook.

(Gobetz walks off, Mose reacts. But he quickly snaps back, brightens, sets in to work. He speaks to (invisible) customers.)

MOSE: Hello! Welcome to Chez Jackie. Perhaps this table here?

(Mose shows the customers to a table, then returns to the greeting area.)

Ah – nice for you to stop by. Please follow me. Your waitre – your waitperson will be with you shortly.

(Mose returns to the greeting area.)

Hi-hi! Let me show you to your—

(Mose walks, stops when he's given a ten-dollar bill by a customer.)

Well – thanks. Thank you very much!

(Mose walks back, approaches Gobetz.)

GOBETZ: Not now – busy—

(Mose shows Gobetz the money.)

Hey – ten bucks! You got a tip. Well done. It's entirely all right for you to get personal tips.

MOSE: Thanks, Mr.—

GOBETZ: Just put it in the green jar behind the bar. All my workers do it. They pool everything here – they think it's fairer. You know, all of 'em working together.

MOSE: Will do.

GOBETZ: A ten-dollar tip during your first shift... I knew you'd be a good greeter. Excellent people skills.

(Mose reacts as Gobetz goes off. He puts his tip in the green jar.)

SWIRL MEMBER: The hours pass quickly. Eakins achieves easy mastery. His learning curve is steep. At 1:12 PM:

(Mose leads guests to their table.)

MOSE: We have excellent catfish today – no, I'm sorry, my mistake, it's grouper. Whatever – it's good.

SWIRL MEMBER: Forty minutes later:

(Mose leads other guests to their table.)

MOSE: Good to see you again! Wait: We've never met before.

SWIRL MEMBER: Twenty-five minutes after that:

(Mose leads other guests to their table.)

MOSE *(cheerfully)*: That's right, push past, scan the room – I'm just lubricant smoothing the way to your table.

SWIRL MEMBER: And five minutes further on:

(Mose leads other guests to their table.)

MOSE *(smiling very broadly)*: Right, you come here to fork up fake foie gras while billions of your brethren could be saved by a handful of rice! Enjoy your swirl!

(Gobetz walks by, smiles, flicks Mose a confidential thumbs-up.)

SWIRL MEMBER: At 4:30, Eakins is given his ten-minute break. Instinctively he returns to Leddy Park.

(Among passersby, Mose thinks:)

MOSE: ...But I – maybe I triggered it... Maybe I said a word, just one wrong word, that somehow unleashed this whole thing... One bad choice that was the pivot into... So then maybe – then there's got to be another word that will crash me back, a return-word that will...!

(By now, Mose is sitting near WALT, a street person. Mose speaks to him.)

Isn't that true? Isn't that necessarily true?

(Walt looks at Mose.)

Come on, man!

(Walt just looks at him. Beat. Mose reaches into his own pocket.)

So, OK. Listen: I want to buy the phrase “That’s entirely possible” from you.

(Walt looks at Mose.)

Come on! Here’s a dollar – here’s one dollar for you.

(Mose hands Walt a bill.)

And in exchange for the payment of this one dollar, please say to me: “That’s entirely possible.”

WALT *(awkwardly)*: That’s entirely possible.

MOSE: Good! Now, here’s fifty cents. And for this fifty cents – because it isn’t worth as much – I want to buy the phrase “Nice day today.”

(Walt takes the coins, speaks oddly.)

WALT: Nice day today.

MOSE: Good! Thank you! Thank you very much.

(Pause.)

WALT: My name is Walt.

MOSE: I didn’t order that! You think I’m going to pay for…?

(beat)

Ah – sorry. Mose Eakins.

(Mose shakes hands with Walt.)

So, OK, here’s two dollars – two dollars, OK?

(Mose gives the money.)

And with this I am purchasing the declaration: “I know that your name is Mose.”

WALT: I know that your name is Mose.

MOSE: Great. OK. So, how you doin’, Walt?

(Walt looks at Mose.)

SWIRL MEMBER: By 10:40 that first Friday night, with the last customers slumping behind tall drinks, things are winding down at Chez Jackie.

(As Walt exits, Gobetz approaches Mose. Gobetz carries the tip jar.)

GOBETZ: Hey! You're doing great! The clients love you! Only very positive things they said. Come on.

(Gobetz leads Mose into the kitchen. Among the men working are dishwasher BOB 1, wipe-and-mop man BOB 2, and chef BOB WEAVER.)

Guys! Guys! This here's your new golden goose. Gratuities way up tonight – maybe twenty percent!

BOB 1: O right!

BOB 2: Do it, my man!

BOB WEAVER: We keep cookin'!

GOBETZ *(to Bob 2):* Bob – do the distribution. I'll see you all tomorrow.

(Gobetz gives Bob 2 the tip jar, exits. Bob 2 starts counting, Bob 1 approaches Mose.)

BOB 1: Yes yes yes, man of the front. Thank you for thy magic touch. Long may thee reign. I'm Bob.

(Bob 1 shakes hands with Mose.)

MOSE: Thank you. Good to meet—

BOB 1: Hey: that chiquitita with the long black braid tumbling all down to here – you see her? Friday night is her night – and our night, too. We live for a glimpse of that caroling tempest—

BOB 2: And, mmm, oh-tight dresses—!

BOB 1: Our whole week is justified by a lick of a look through those quick-swinging doors.

MOSE: Sorry, but – I—

BOB 1: I saw her! I did!

BOB 2: I saw her, too!

BOB WEAVER: You guys saw her... But the chef, the chef here...

(points to himself)

...I got into her.

BOB 1 AND BOB 2 *(laughing)*: Yes you did! Yes you did!

BOB 1 *(to Mose)*: But what's that, frontman? You're out there, you're among the chatters and the chewers and you don't even see her?

MOSE: Well, I—

BOB 1: That's all right. No perturbation, frontman – we'll keep thee informed! She's only interested in us, anyway!

(The kitchen employees laugh, exit. Mose walks forlornly.)

SWIRL MEMBER: By 11:15 that evening, down darkened streets, Eakins is dragging home—

MOSE *(to the swirl)*: Pardon me.

SWIRL MEMBER: A solitary journey made more melancholy by—

MOSE: Pardon – I mean, if you have a moment. Would you – I mean, could you maybe tell me how to find, like, one of those support groups you spoke about?

SWIRL MEMBER: The imparlent individual often sees comfort in numbers.

MOSE: Please. Any one of them. Is – is there anything you can—?

SWIRL MEMBER: The imparlent individual also overestimates the power of communal consolation.

MOSE: Guys—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Jenny Reese, an imparlent from Boise, Idaho, logged over two thousand hours looking for anyone who shared her symptoms.

SWIRL MEMBER: Rachel Pushner, an imparlent in Atlanta, started, in March 2014, an imparlent association—

SWIRL MEMBER: —that attracted no members.

SWIRL MEMBER: Because it couldn't attract any members.

MOSE: So – so that’s it? That’s it for me? I can only just flapgaggle by myself for the rest of my days – flapgaggle and hope?

SWIRL MEMBER: Perhaps inevitable. According to Robert Nozick of Harvard, imparlence is just the latest expression of the ownership society.

SWIRL MEMBER: Meaning has been privatized. It’s been made part of the private sphere.

SWIRL MEMBER: Significance is no longer a publicly-owned utility, a service provided by a command and control center.

SWIRL MEMBER: This will vastly increase our linguistic productivity—

SWIRL MEMBER: —liberate our potential as creators of meaning—

SWIRL MEMBER: —freeing us from the restrictions and inefficiencies of the nanny dictionary!

MOSE: But...

(He deflates.)

OK, listen: thank you. Thank you for that. At least you hear me.

SWIRL MEMBER: That’s why we’re here.

(Mose walks heavily off.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins continues home.

SWIRL MEMBER: His steps articulating what his words can not.

SWIRL MEMBER: The next morning, Eakins meets with Walt.

(Mose enters with Walt.)

WALT: Come on – finding some kind of support group isn’t important!

MOSE: Yeah, Walt. You’re probably right.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Besides, other people are usually lessons in disappointment.

MOSE: There you got it!

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: You have Zina – what more do you need?

MOSE: Well, exactly. Precisely.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Come on – finding some kind of support group isn't import—!

MOSE: Walt – I gave you fifty cents! Say the fifty-center!

(Walt looks at the coin in his hand.)

WALT: Sorry.

(talks as before)

Remember, truth's salient vessel is silence.

MOSE: Yeah. You can say that again.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: So – you see the new Greta Gerwig movie?

(Walt exits. Zina enters and sits with Mose.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Still, Eakins knows some comfort.

MOSE: ...and the sun was amazing – super-strong and like, constant, just constant. And the city is huge, but they've set up this traffic system in Phoenix that makes it really easy to get around. Made maybe one wrong turn the whole time I was there.

ZINA: Nice.

MOSE: And one night, I think it was Tuesday, I had time to take in a movie – not something you would see, they only have commercial fluff there.

ZINA: Good for you.

MOSE: Yeah.

ZINA: And here... Not much to report. Except that I think I'm going to take a class in meditation.

MOSE: Wow. Great!

ZINA: Thank you, doll. Yeah, it should be real interesting. There's a center over on Shelburne Road where they work with a kind of meditation called Anapanasati—

MOSE: Anna's pants are snotty—?

ZINA: —which sounds really intriguing. The technique is all about paying attention to your breathing – just listening to yourself breathing in and out, in and out, and using that to stop all the endless clatter ricocheting around your head – you know, 'Pretend this!' and 'Want that!' and 'Buy this and then – then! – life will be better, you'll be loved.' All that stuff that has such power over us.

MOSE: But what—

ZINA: Again, doll, I really want to thank you for supporting me in this.

MOSE: My dear, it's my pleasure. So, what we up for tonight?

ZINA: Really, it's just so great that you're not being judgmental, or negative.

MOSE: Hey: it's what we're here for. So: maybe a movie? But at home, OK? I don't feel like going out.

ZINA: It's like, this kind of meditation – it just seems like the antidote, you know what I mean?

(Mose bolts up, looks at Zina.)

Ah – right, let's make a move. So, what you want to do tonight—?

MOSE: Zina! I...! Listen, Z – I, I gotta go. I – my plane leaves at six tomorrow morning and—

(Mose jolts away. Zina exits in confusion. Mose goes to the swirl.)

Is it possible? It's been weeks! Zina and I have been talking about everything under the sun since the imparlence came on. And she—?

SWIRL MEMBER: Who can know? The entirety of contemporary humanistic inquiry leads to the certainty that certainty is no longer ascertainable.

SWIRL MEMBER: According to Stanford's Richard Kimball, advances in bandwidth and computational ability have proven that language is a failed technology. It should have been abandoned at beta testing.

MOSE: But Zina and I, we've spent entire evenings together—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Beyond its mechanical limitations, language carries social debris. Need for acceptance. Need to convince. Warpages arising from power and status relations.

SWIRL MEMBER: Now add cultural barriers. Think of our linguistic inheritance, also known as the wisdom of the ages: Don't judge a book by its cover—

SWIRL MEMBER: But clothes make the man.

SWIRL MEMBER: He who hesitates is lost—

SWIRL MEMBER: Though you must look before you leap.

SWIRL MEMBER: Birds of a feather flock together—

SWIRL MEMBER: While opposites attract.

SWIRL MEMBER: The unexamined life is not worth living—

SWIRL MEMBER: And curiosity killed the cat.

MOSE: OK... But—

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins, don't worry if you don't immediately understand. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

SWIRL MEMBER: Though the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting different results—

MOSE: Ay!

SWIRL MEMBER: Thus understanding remains elusive. William H. Gass, at Washington University, describes understanding as, quote, Nothing more than a moment – usually heartbeat-brief – when external factors come together to reinforce one's illusions. Unquote.

SWIRL MEMBER: Adds Gass: And what can be the value of that?

MOSE: I don't—

SWIRL MEMBER: The only adequate response, according to Rousseau, is independence of thought. Rousseau said you must divest yourself of social and cultural constraints and move to freethinking, where you are your own author, your own judge, your own master—

SWIRL MEMBER: —unfettered and unlimited in your capacities to engage with the world.

SWIRL MEMBER: Culture is a prison whose walls you must shatter—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Whose sentries, Mose Eakins, you must slay!

MOSE: But—

SWIRL MEMBER: Rousseau was a father of The Enlightenment!

(beat)

MOSE : Wow... OK. I... Thank you.

(Mose drifts in thought.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Thus Eakins begins his inner liberation. But he still must earn his keep. He is grateful for his work at the restaurant.

(Mose leads (invisible) guests to their table.)

MOSE (to himself): And just keep smiling, keep smiling...

(He leads the next guests.)

...But now I don't mind, because I've seen through the illusions of the fallen world.

(Gobetz approaches.)

Yes, Mr. Gobetz.

GOBETZ: Come on over here! It's the magic moment. Payday!

MOSE: Ah – great. I was wondering about—

(Gobetz counts banknotes.)

GOBETZ: The clients continue to be very impressed. Keep up the good work!

(Gobetz gives money to Mose, who counts it.)

MOSE: Thank you, Mr. Gobetz. I'm delighted you're pleased with what I'm... But, um, pardon me, Mr. Gobetz... I worked over thirty hours this week. I kept a record. This—

GOBETZ: Yes, really excellent!

MOSE: —This is only a hundred and forty dol – it's less than minimum wage. Far less than—

GOBETZ: You have a future in this business!

(Gobetz goes off. Mose runs into the kitchen, where the three Bobs are working.)

MOSE: Bob...? Bob—?

BOB 1: Now that is some serious money you got in thy hand, frontman. Some serious money!

(The crew laughs.)

BOB 2: You got all that for only one week's work?

(The crew laughs again.)

MOSE (to Bob 1): Bob, this can not be correct. Forty, forty-five hours of work and—

BOB 1: And on top of all that – you get tips, too? Pshew!

BOB 2: Hey they aren't tips. They're gratuities!

BOB 1: Oh yeah! Oh yeah!

(to Mose) All thy luscious earnings plus gratuities? Frontman, thee is a king, living in clover!

MOSE: Right. The gratuities.

BOB 1: You are one rich frontman, frontman. One rich frontman!

MOSE: But... But from the gratuities, when we divide them up every night, what do we get, usually: maybe twenty dollars? Twenty dollars apiece? It's not enough to live on!

BOB 1: In Chez Jackie restaurant, frontman, you do not count thy money. You count thy blessings.

MOSE: I mean, it's great that we divide the gratuities. But how do you make it to the end of the month? Bob! Guys! This is...!

(Mose moves to the swirl, speaks to them.)

It's impossible! No one can live on this.

SWIRL MEMBER: According to Heinz Kohut, a healthy accommodation to reality includes accepting, freely, things that do not accord with our preferences, even that we find abhorrent.

SWIRL MEMBER: While understanding that individual sacrifice is often in service to a larger good. The free market is the best means known to man for allocating societal resources – in terms of prices, in terms of wages—

SWIRL MEMBER: In terms of all things central to social continuance.

SWIRL MEMBER: And what underlies the wondrous efficiencies of the free market is human freedom – freedom of choice.

MOSE: Of course—

SWIRL MEMBER: According to John Locke, the good life is where one’s internal laws, freely elected, accord with the laws of one’s culture.

MOSE: But they do! I do! I’ve never broken any laws—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Avoid inner/outer divergences!, Locke said. Cherish your culture’s freedom as enabling your own!

MOSE: Yeah... You’re right. Once again, you – you’re right. Thank you.

SWIRL MEMBER: For Eakins, on August 18, Locke’s precepts ring true. He decides to apply them where they are most important.

(Mose walks to Zina, who has entered.)

MOSE: ...Yeah, Z, I’m really glad: The soil engineer wasn’t ready with his report, so I was able to come back early. I mean, I wouldn’t have minded staying in San Diego a few more days – but given the chance to get back to you: No contest!

(He kisses her.)

ZINA: Thank you, doll. Great you’re here. So, what we in the mood for tonight?

MOSE: You up for a movie?

ZINA: Sounds good.

MOSE *(pleasantly)*: Maybe you want to go see the three wheels, three wheels, dingle dingle o crap dingle?

ZINA: Sure. Let’s do it... Actually, I heard good things about the new Cate Blanchett film. It’s an indie – she’s really stretching out.

MOSE: OK...

(breaking) Zina... Zina, mine! For how long have you – have we—?

ZINA: I mean, the reviews have been really good, and—

MOSE: Did it start even before my... Has our whole relationship just been a carnival of imparlence—?

ZINA: —and Blanchett’s always worth looking at. Maybe we see that film instead?

MOSE: OK, doll, whatever you... I mean, Zina, sweetheart, my only—

ZINA: Great. I heard really good things about it—

MOSE: Listen, Z, I – I’m sorry, I’ve got – I just remembered I...

(Mose takes out his phone, points to it.)

I’ve got to...!

(Mose runs off.)

ZINA: So maybe we meet later, at the theater?

(She waves confusedly, exits. The stage is empty. Beat.)

WALT *(offstage):* ...What can I tell you, man. It’s tough. It’s really tough!

(Mose and Walt enter, stroll.)

MOSE: Thank you. But Walt – what’s, what am I supposed to...?

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Just hang in there, man. Hang in there!

MOSE: But I’m, like, totally lost. Totally by my...

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Aloneness is our existential state, the irremediable reality of our earthly passage. Even Huxley, the great humanist, said we are, quote, “island universes.” Unquote.

MOSE: Yeah. I think I read that once.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Everything’s going to be all right—

MOSE: Oh stop. Talk about delusions! You’re living in your own world, man! How do you come up with that crap! Nothing’s going to change for me – ever!

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Everything’s going to be all right.

MOSE: Hm. Wish I could believe it.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Everything's going to be all right.

MOSE: Thanks. Yeah. You're right. I'll – I'll be OK.

(beat)

Dammit, no! Walt – enough, OK? Enough with your platitudes and palliatives! Something real, please! A real response – something that speaks from the heart!

(Walt looks at Mose. Pause. Then Walt puts out his hand, for a coin. Mose breaks away, goes to the swirl.)

MOSE: I don't... Is that the only thing left?

SWIRL MEMBER: Sartre! Salvation – only through action!

MOSE: Right. OK!

(Mose crosses to Zina, who has entered.)

Zina – hi, doll.

ZINA: Oh, hi. You take care of your other business?

MOSE: I did – I most certainly did. Hey: come here.

(He takes her in an embrace.)

ZINA: Oh... Wow! Thanks, doll, I—

MOSE: Z, doll, listen. You know, we have so much history together – so many years, and so many good times – the trip to Kyoto, Janie's birthday, remember out on the patio there? Doll, we have so much together – and that's what counts, that's what counts. I mean, you mean more to me than I can express, anyway – you're my source, my wick, the origin of my goodness... And my God, finally – finally! – I can tell you this... And so yes, I understand the situation between us, I am fully aware of where we are. But what couples are without problems, which couples know perfect communication... But we have something good, and solid, and absolutely worth preserving... The shortcomings are nothing compared to what you still – still! – give to me. We are still so much better together!

(He kisses her.)

ZINA: Mmmm. Thank you, doll. I love it when you're romantic.

MOSE *(beat)*: I love you, Zina.

ZINA: I love you, too. So, doll, we go to the Cate Blanchett tonight?

(Mose reacts, reels into the restaurant kitchen. Zina exits.)

MOSE: Guys – I...! Sorry, I'm just a little tired of... dealing with all the customers out there.

BOB 2: Hey, frontman, you hand me that rag?

MOSE: Sure.

(Mose gives Bob 2 a rag, then uses another rag to wipe plates.)

BOB 1: All right, frontman! Pitching in! Pitching in!

(Mose smiles, continues working.)

At home, I try to get my daughter to do that. Not the easiest—

(Gobetz thunders in, grabs Bob 2.)

BOB 2: Hey... Hey—!

GOBETZ: Out! Get outta here! Miserable thief! Get out!

BOB 2: Wait, Mister Gobe...! I—!

(Gobetz hurls Bob 2 off stage. Gobetz regroups, then turns back to the crew.)

GOBETZ: Once it starts, it never stops!

(Gobetz leaves. All react. Pause.)

MOSE: What was—?

BOB 1: Oh yeah. One more time. Fare-thee-well, o Bob.

MOSE: But what—?

BOB WEAVER: Glad he didn't come after me. You know, call me complicit.

BOB 1: You give him anything?

BOB WEAVER: You crazy?

MOSE: Guys – what—?

BOB 1: I knew him. Guy was hungry. Five people he's taking care of at home. Thy know that, Bob Weaver?

BOB WEAVER: Didn't.

BOB 1: Wife on disability for her back. Man...

MOSE: So he took something to eat? That's why—?

BOB 1: He knew the rules. I was here when Mister G explained them to him. When he showed him the camera.

(Bob 1 gestures to high on the rear wall.)

MOSE: What – there's a camera in the room? What's—?

BOB 1: Didn't listen.

MOSE: Monitoring you guys—?

BOB WEAVER: Couldn't listen. Hungry enough – do anything.

MOSE: Wait. You guys work with food all day – handling it, preparing it for other people. And you can't—?

BOB 1: Well, the camera don't lie. Though not too good at picking up hunger.

MOSE: But that's – that's unbelievably cruel—!

BOB 1 *(to Mose)*: Don't look at me that way, frontman! I'm one lucky one! I only got two people to take care of at home! Only two people to care for on my lived abundance of four dollars an hour!

MOSE: Four dollars an hour? That's—!

BOB 1: Plus gratuities!

MOSE: That's obscene!

BOB WEAVER: Yep... Once it stops, it never starts up again.

(He giggles ironically.)

BOB 1 *(roars)*: Do NOT laugh, Bob Weaver! Thee are not to laugh at any of this!

(Bob 1 and Bob Weaver return to work. Mose runs to the swirl.)

MOSE: Did you see that?

SWIRL MEMBER: Of course.

MOSE: So – so do you have any thoughts about it? The restaurant is a fountain of money. Gobetz is a monster!

SWIRL MEMBER: Many would agree.

MOSE: But – but he gave me a job... The only one who would—

SWIRL MEMBER: You're correct. It's essential to separate the significant from the insignificant, the meaningful from—

SWIRL MEMBER: —the senseless.

SWIRL MEMBER: Signal—

SWIRL MEMBER: —from noise.

SWIRL MEMBER: For twelve days now, you have worked among this. And during that time, surely you have sensed—

SWIRL MEMBER: —felt—

SWIRL MEMBER: —intuited—!

SWIRL MEMBER: —the truth of your situation. Still, you did not know it.

SWIRL MEMBER: What changed? How did you mature from passive awareness to an awareness both forceful—

SWIRL MEMBER: —and engaged? The answer is information.

SWIRL MEMBER: Norbert Wiener speaks of a reciprocal relationship between information and understanding—

SWIRL MEMBER: The more there is of one, Wiener says, the less of the other.

MOSE: He's right—!

SWIRL MEMBER: But Alvin Goldman posits that information is understanding's predecessor, its precondition.

SWIRL MEMBER: Goldman's position is seen as optimistic, in terms of human betterment—

SWIRL MEMBER: Because, as Paul Davies has argued, all of experience—

SWIRL MEMBER: —the universe itself—!

SWIRL MEMBER: —is composed of information, Boolean data that contain and explain the entirety of possibility. Our universe is information waiting to be tapped, a limitless source for understanding—

SWIRL MEMBER: —which can then be converted into more information!

MOSE: OK...

SWIRL MEMBER: Says Ken Wilber, information is our friend — our means of organizing the universe's flux and tumble into something comprehensible—

SWIRL MEMBER: While Doctor Oz argues that information is love: a means for forging unities, a vessel for sharing, the seed for growth.

MOSE: But—

SWIRL MEMBER: Accept it: Information is the romance of the universe, the erotic bringing-together of phenomena and consciousness to create something greater.

SWIRL MEMBER: As such it is your servant, your loving servant, offering you meaning and stability.

SWIRL MEMBER: So you must love it, too – cherish it as it deserves to be cherished—

SWIRL MEMBER: Ultimately, information is our refuge from the postmodern agonies, something that can not be relativized or deconstructed—

SWIRL MEMBER: —and so a possibility for liberation!

SWIRL MEMBER: The potential of an understanding—

SWIRL MEMBER: —that transcends understanding!

SWIRL MEMBER: Check?

MOSE: Um – yes! OK! Thank you. Many – um, many thanks...

(Mose, reflective, walks away.)

SWIRL MEMBER *(to audience)*: Eakins' new learning gives him comfort, security.

(Mose pulls out his phone, dials. Zina enters with her phone, speaks into it.)

ZINA: Hello.

MOSE: Hi, doll. Good to hear your voice.

ZINA: Oh, I'm fine.

MOSE: Yeah... Listen, Zina, doll, I just wanted to make contact, OK?, and let you know how immeasurably much you mean to me. In whatever form it gets through – through the calm of my breathing, the easy pauses—

ZINA: Mm. I had the veggie burger—

MOSE: I'm sure something communicates... And it's enough for me – it's enough for us to be like this... Zina, doll, what I'm trying to say is that I accept the situation, I accept it and you and all the sorrow and exhilaration it'll bring. Love is acceptance – radical acceptance.

ZINA: Thanks, doll. You know, I'm glad you called, because I've really been wanting to say thank you, again, for all the support and generosity you give me. It's really beautiful.

MOSE: Great to hear.

ZINA: But that's also part of – I don't know... It's like, sometimes I feel like I'm subjecting myself too much to you... That when I'm with you, I often deny my own desires... I don't know, it's like I ignore myself, and what I want, and who and what I am—

MOSE: Z—

ZINA: I mean, I adore you, Mose, I really do, I adore our time together and everything you do for me... But it's like you – your generosity, your beautiful generosity... It makes demands upon me – demands I don't want any more!

MOSE: I don't—

ZINA: I mean, this whole patriarchal thing you impose upon me, all these structures of patriarchy that... I mean, I know I'm not expressing this well... But doll – doll! – I just think we should take some time apart, OK?, that we should—

MOSE: Zina, what—?

ZINA: Doll, I'm sorry, but the way you impose yourself upon me – I mean, we're through, OK?, we're—

MOSE: But—!

ZINA: Doll, our story is finished, OK? I don't want to see you any more!

MOSE: Zina, this...! It's...! Zina, please...!

ZINA: Thanks, doll. I knew you'd understand. You've always been so sensitive.

(Mose hangs up. Zina exits. Mose runs across the stage.)

MOSE: Walt! Walt...!

(Mose pulls Walt from the wings.)

Walt, can you...? Help me out on this!

(Walt looks at Mose.)

Come on, man!

(Walt looks at Mose.)

Oh, Christ...

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: How about this weather!

MOSE: Yeah...

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: How you doin' today!

MOSE: Fine... How's by you?

(Mose gives Walt money.)

WALT: Alone-ness is our existential state, the irremediable reality of our earthly passage—

MOSE: Wha...? I didn't ask for...!

(He realizes.)

Ah. Sorry. My mistake. Gave you the wrong amount. Here.

(Mose gives Walt money.)

So... How's by you?

WALT: Every day is sacred.

(Pause. Walt looks at Mose.)

You think this is easy for me?

MOSE: I—

WALT: You think this is dignified for me – to serve as your puppet?

MOSE: No, I—

WALT: Your automaton? Put a coin in the slot, watch the machine run?

MOSE: I—

WALT: Where's your thought for me as a person? As a human being, with feelings and with dignity.

MOSE: I – I'm sorry—!

WALT: Where is it?

(Walt looks at Mose. Pause. Walt reaches into his own pocket, takes out money. He tries to give it to Mose, but Mose refuses it. Walt presses the money upon Mose until he accepts. Pause.)

MOSE: Everything's going to be all right.

WALT: Bullshit.

(Walt walks off. Mose follows him for a few steps, runs to the swirl.)

MOSE: Guys, what...? OK – I – I'm just going to lose myself in my work. Lose myself in my work!

(Mose hustles to the restaurant, speaks to (invisible) guests, leads them to their table.)

Hello. How are you. Please come this way.

(Mose leads the next guests.)

Hello. How are you. Please come this way... Just don't take a single step inside the kitchen, you won't find anything appetizing in there!

(to himself) Argh!

(Mose runs to the swirl.)

Guys – guys, please: Have you ever found a way for me to contact any of those groups you spoke about – you know, the therapy groups, the ones for people with im—

SWIRL MEMBER: You've visited this question three times.

MOSE: I – I know—

SWIRL MEMBER: Why would you want to find a group whose words would mean nothing to you?

MOSE: I—

SWIRL MEMBER: Where all communication would add up to zero?

MOSE: I know – I get that!

SWIRL MEMBER: Maybe you don't. You would be entering a sinkhole: no one expressing, no one receiving, a situation that would only multiply your misery. How could that do you any good—?

MOSE: Because it would! It would... Even just to be with people who *know* they can't communicate with each other.

SWIRL MEMBER: Mr. Eakins, your group is the entire world.

(Mose reacts, moves away from the swirl. He drops to his knees, raises his clutched hands in prayer.)

MOSE: Sir... Sir...! You who listen... You who hear the human music... and heed all propositions about life... You for whom nothing is flaggaggle...! In the beginning was the word!

(Mose stands, listens.)

What's that...?

(beat)

What's that...?

(Pause.)

SWIRL MEMBER: According to Daniel Dennett of Tufts, the consolations of faith are ever more necessary in our mechanized, economized, dessicated world.

SWIRL MEMBER: Though, ultimately, they do not satisfy.

SWIRL MEMBER: While C.S. Lewis says faith is the one permanent human communication.

SWIRL MEMBER: But you must not listen to them—

SWIRL MEMBER: All things of significance you must find for yourself!

SWIRL MEMBER: Recall Benjamin Franklin: Independence of thought! Liberty of judgment! Free-thinking as the sole road to verity and identity—!

SWIRL MEMBER: And Hegel! History is the progressive working-out of freedom—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Spinoza! The measure of humanness is autonomy!

SWIRL MEMBER: Indeed, the tradition goes back to Augustine—

SWIRL MEMBER: —who said: Authority is the weakest form of proof.

SWIRL MEMBER: Believe him!

SWIRL MEMBER: Grant full authority to any man who denounces authority!

(Mose reacts. Then wanders, lost in thought.)

MOSE: In fact... You're right. You're right! Freedom – I've been given freedom! Extraordinary freedom, maybe greater freedom than anyone has ever known! I can say exactly what I want, unafraid of political risks or social mutilations. I mean, finally I can say – to anybody! – all the things I've always wanted to say!

(ANGELA, a young woman, enters and sits on a chair, reads a book. Mose runs over, sits, speaks to her.)

Ma'am, I am small, and anxious, and crazily afraid... I feel so fragile and inconsequential, a flit of wind in the hurricane of history... And sometimes my ability to live with this – sometimes the protective mechanism I set up to block my awareness of this falls away – even for a micro-second – and I'm invaded by fears and dreads and heart-shaking shame so awful that I—!

ANGELA: Amen to that!

MOSE: Ma'am, sometimes I feel so inadequate... And my suffering is proof: I'm even inadequate at protecting myself from my feelings of inadequacy!

ANGELA: Hm.

(beat)

MOSE: I... Forgive me... I'm fine, I...

(Pause.)

ANGELA: Some pretty heavy stuff you got goin' there.

MOSE: Really, I'm OK—

ANGELA: The kind of feeling that no one's allowed to own up to.

MOSE: Just talking to nobody.

ANGELA: So what's eatin' you like that?

MOSE: Oh... I think it's something at work. Bad situation there.

ANGELA: Often the case. I mean, at my job—

MOSE: And I can't see what I can do about it – hey! Wait! You understand me—?

ANGELA: I mean, my boss, he is just one big kinda stinker. One big kinda—

MOSE (*disappointed*): Yeah. Of course. What was I thinking?

ANGELA: Like once he—

MOSE: Go on... Just go on.

ANGELA: Thank you. So, yeah, at my job, once—

MOSE: Wait – you understand...? You hear me?

ANGELA: Hey, nothing wrong with my ears!

MOSE: I—!

ANGELA: So my boss – I also got this boss who's the worst—

MOSE: I – I don't believe it!

ANGELA: Really – he *is* the worst!

MOSE: No no – it's...! But go on, please. Go on!

ANGELA: I will, if you'll let me!

(Angela smiles at Mose. He smiles and nods back.)

So, yeah, this guy I work for—

MOSE: Actually, hold on for a second, will you? Hold those words!

(Mose runs to a MAN walking by.)

Pardon me, you know what time it is?

MAN: My government right or wrong!

(Mose turns to Angela.)

MOSE: Don't go anywhere!

(Mose runs back to Angela, sits. The man exits.)

Sorry. So, you were saying.

ANGELA: Yeah. So, like, my boss—

MOSE (*with excessive interest*): Really? Oh, really?

(*Angela looks at Mose quizzically.*)

Sorry! Please – continue.

ANGELA: So, yeah, my boss, his name is Lumbo – can you believe that, guy’s first name is Lumbo! – anyway, we’re over at Stevens Insurance – and I can guarantee you the only thing they’re insuring is their bottom line... I mean, you wouldn’t believe how they twist numbers... Numbers! They’re supposed to be objective!

MOSE: Tell me about it. I used to be with an oil company. But now I’m working in a restaurant, and what I see—

ANGELA: Yeah – restaurants. Everyone knows what goes on there. And they don’t know. Don’t want to know about it.

MOSE: Well, I know about it now—

ANGELA: People: all talk, no action.

(*beat*)

MOSE: So, um... What’s your name?

ANGELA: I’m Angela. You?

MOSE: Mose. Nice to meet you.

ANGELA: Nice to meet you – that’s original!

(*She smiles.*)

Sorry. Hey, you know how they ask your name in France? Comment tu t’appelles. It means How do you call yourself.

MOSE: Yeah.

ANGELA: Isn’t that slick? Your identity is what you call yourself. Could be right.

MOSE: Hm. Listen, Angela, I’m, like, really sorry, but I’ve got to get back to work.

ANGELA: No reason for an apology—

MOSE: I mean, I'd love to hang with you – you can't imagine how much – but I can't lose this job.

ANGELA: That's one cliché I understand.

MOSE: Yeah. So, um, you come here often?

ANGELA: You come here often...? Heard that before, too!

MOSE: Sorry. I—

ANGELA: I land here most days around 5:15. Detox after work.

MOSE: Yeah. So, OK – maybe we'll see each other. So: Good to meet you. Really, it's been good.

ANGELA: And there we go with the small talk again. You can't do any better?

MOSE: Yeah. Sorry. I'll do better next time.

ANGELA: Oh, it's OK. Don't mind me. I like small talk. Small talk, big fun.

(She smiles. Mose walks from her as she exits.)

SWIRL MEMBER: At 6:12 PM, Eakins returns to Chez Jackie restaurant—

SWIRL MEMBER: —newly invigorated.

(Mose talks spiritedly to (invisible) guests, leads them to their table.)

MOSE: Welcome! Please come this – oh, just get to the damn table yourself! I know you can do it!

(Mose runs into the kitchen. The crew, working, now includes BOB 3.)

Hey, guys – guys! We have to...!

(sees Bob 3)

Oh, hello. Who are—?

BOB 1: Frontman, let me present to thee... Bob. A good man. Came on this afternoon.

BOB 3: How you doin'.

(Bob 3 shakes hands with Mose.)

MOSE: Hey, Bob, welcome. Nice to meet you. Where you from?

(Bob 3 returns to work. Mose reacts, approaches Bob 1.)

Bob – guys... Sorry for butting in, but, you know, I'm, like, wondering... Why do you put up with the conditions here? How do you put up with—?

BOB 1: Hand me that rag over there, frontman.

(Mose flinches, gives Bob 1 the rag.)

MOSE: Guys, really. The pay scale – four dollars an hour! The prohibition against eating anything. You're being starved to... It's—!

BOB 1: I know what thee are thinking, frontman. I know it loud and clear. Tough times, yes sir, yes sir. And in tough times, a man does not complain.

MOSE: But—

BOB 1: Here you got your salary, you got your position—

BOB WEAVER: You get your tips. Every day, you get your tips—

MOSE: Of course. But last night, after, what, ten hours of work, a long, long day, what did we get in tips – eighteen dollars? Wasn't that it? Eighteen dollars apiece! Guys, that's nothing! It's unjust!

(points at Bob Weaver)

It's unjust to you!

(points at Bob 1)

It's unjust to you—!

BOB 1: Do NOT gesture like that in front of the camera, frontman!

(indicates rear wall)

NEVER gesture like that in front of the camera!

MOSE: Guys – guys! You have to – we have to—!

(Mose breaks, runs to the swirl.)

I – guys! They won't listen! They don't—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins!

SWIRL MEMBER: You're sweating—

SWIRL MEMBER: You're fretting!

SWIRL MEMBER: Your pulse is pushing 180 per—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Your blood pressure is punching up to two-ten over—!

SWIRL MEMBER: According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, these are physiological consequences of imparlence—

SWIRL MEMBER: Bodily responses—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Acute ones—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Physical degradations—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Research shows that, as a result of attendant social stresses, eighty-five percent of imparlents experience significant declines in their body's defenses—

SWIRL MEMBER: In your capacity to fight off predators!

SWIRL MEMBER: It's as if your immune system is shutting down—

SWIRL MEMBER: Shutting off—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Viruses and other invaders cannot be neutralized—

SWIRL MEMBER: According to Val Moreno at Johns Hopkins, imparlence can lead to the total incapacitation of your messenger RNA!

SWIRL MEMBER: Leading swiftly to pan-somatic meta-genetic decay!

SWIRL MEMBER: Also not the best for that stomach acid.

MOSE: Ay...!

(beat)

But... OK. It's – it's important to know. Thank you.

(Mose flusters. He then sees Angela, walking. He goes to her.)

Hey, Angela!

ANGELA: Oh, Mose – hi! Hey, you stalking me?

MOSE: Nono – not at all. Just passing by to see if you're here – you said 5:15, right? So, um, maybe you want to go for a stroll?

ANGELA: A stroll...? Sure.

(They amble.)

So how you doing?

MOSE: I'm OK... I'm fine.

(Angela looks at him.)

Yeah, sorry – no small talk.

(officially) My moods are varying within acceptable parameters.

(Angela giggles.)

Really. Can't complain. Literally!

(to himself) Hey: maybe there's an upside to this—

ANGELA: What are—?

MOSE: Sorry. Mostly I'm happy to see you.

ANGELA: Thank you.

MOSE: You?

ANGELA: I'm good. Tough day at work. James, a colleague of mine – real good guy – he got canned. Unbelievable. Didn't meet some sort of quota or something. Man they got us on a short string. Really sad.

MOSE: Sorry to hear it.

ANGELA: That true? That truly true?

MOSE: Well, mostly I'm sorry you were upset by it.

ANGELA: You see – you can do it... So I made up for my tough day the best way I know how – at lunch, I bought myself a big old waffle with strawberry ice cream.

(She starts to cry.)

MOSE: Angela! What—?

ANGELA: No – it was good... The ice cream was really good...

MOSE: But what's...?

(Angela goes to the chairs, sits, weeps. Mose follows.)

ANGELA: I'm sorry... My mother, like, she missed a mortgage payment – damn those guys! She sent it in the twentieth of the month – like she always does, like she has for eighteen years! It's when she gets her disability check. And they claimed they never got her payment. The mortgage company's saying it was never received—!

MOSE: Horri—!

(Angela starts to cry again.)

ANGELA: I'm sorry...! I don't want you to see me like this!

MOSE: Angela – that's—!

ANGELA: They're monsters – they're...! What they're doing is totally obvious! It's all a pretext! My mother's going to be put out on the street!

MOSE: O God—

ANGELA: She can't afford to pay any lawyers to defend herself! They know that, they know that perfectly well!

MOSE: So what can—?

ANGELA: And I can't, I haven't got—

MOSE: Do you have any family—?

ANGELA: I mean, I support her as much as I can – more than I can – but I've got to go in for this small surgery on my back—

MOSE: Oh, Ange—

ANGELA: —and I can't, I haven't...!

(She composes herself.)

Sorry. Really, I'm sorry, Mose. But this back thing is... I don't like to talk about it. I hurt enough, I don't need to make other people feel bad.

MOSE: No, please—

ANGELA: Mose, really, I'm sorry about—

MOSE: Please don't apologize! You don't need to. That's what friends are – people with whom you don't have to hold back.

ANGELA: Thank you. So, OK...?

(She gets up, leads Mose strolling.)

MOSE: So what are you going to...?

ANGELA: Wish I knew. Wish I knew.

MOSE: I mean, I would help you, I would love to help you—

ANGELA: Oh come on—

MOSE: Really! I—

ANGELA: Mose, you don't have to—

MOSE: But I'm in a bit of a difficult situation at the moment.

ANGELA: Hm. Sorry to hear it.

MOSE: Yeah. It's hard to admit, but I'm, like, at the total end of my—

ANGELA: Please, Mose, I wasn't asking you to – that would just upset me more. Hmph.
To be is to be misunderstood.

MOSE: But Angela... I understand you. Every word.

ANGELA: Oh stop.

(beat)

You're sweet, you know.

(She kisses Mose's cheek.)

So – we were saying... How are you?

(She takes Mose's arm, strolls.)

MOSE: Well, since we were talking about it – I am a little concerned about my financial situation.

ANGELA: You are not alone!

MOSE: But I'll be all right. I'll be all—

ANGELA: You know, I've decided to volunteer for this new project where—

MOSE: Ah – sorry. I shouldn't be talking about myself again—

ANGELA: —where, you know, kids in school have to take a class in social justice.

MOSE: Nice. And is it—?

ANGELA: Actually, I'm hoping they have to take a few classes – you know, it's a big subject—

MOSE: Great idea—

ANGELA: —maybe in grades eight and nine, and even into tenth grade.

MOSE: Wait. Angela—

ANGELA: You know, when they're old enough to understand it.

MOSE: I... Wait. Hey, Angela – you know Fatamorgana? It's a really good ice-cream parlor—

ANGELA: I'm hoping to help with the curriculum—

MOSE: It's right near here—

ANGELA: —you know, planning what the kids learn—

MOSE: —right on Libera Road. They have waffles!

ANGELA: Though those educator types – boy, they do not let you into their—

MOSE: No! Angela—!

(Mose takes a step from Angela.)

ANGELA: —those teachers are all like super-protective of their positions and—

MOSE: Angela...! Where did you go? Where did you—?

ANGELA: But I'm gonna try...

(Angela, facing Mose, starts walking backwards, away from him.)

For sure, I'm gonna give myself to this—

MOSE: Angie, don't—!

ANGELA: Because this is something good, something that I—

(Angela, walking backwards, exits.)

MOSE: Angela! I – I'll try to help you! I have a little savings left! You, or your mother, I'll give...!

(Mose reacts. Billings enters with his phone. Mose's phone rings. He pulls it out, answers.)

Hello—

BILLINGS (*urgently*): Mose – hello. It's Billings. Listen, there's news about Crandall Energy, the company you bought into so heavily—

MOSE: Of course—

BILLINGS: Mose, listen, the rumors cleared—

MOSE: What?

BILLINGS: The rumors about inside information, which drove the price down so terribly—

MOSE: So—

BILLINGS: The SEC determined there was nothing behind the rumors. It was just hot air, put out by a competitor—

MOSE: So—!

BILLINGS: Mose, they've been cleared! The company's good! And now they're in talks to be taken over! Mose, the price is skyrocketing – up eighty percent just today!

MOSE: So sell—!

BILLINGS: Mose, you've made back all your losses – and then some! You're heavily in the black—

MOSE: So sell it! Sell it immed—!

BILLINGS: Of course you've got some capital gains to think about, but—

MOSE: Billings, sell the stock! Sell all of it!

BILLINGS: Mose, please, give me a cue – I think this is a good time to get out!

MOSE: OK! Yes! Get—!

BILLINGS: You'll walk away with something nice – tens of thousands, many of them! Mose, please listen to me on this!

MOSE: Billings – I am listening to you! And I'm directing you to sell every share I have! Do not put this phone down til you do!

(Billings closes his phone in frustration, exits. Mose reacts, runs to the swirl.)

Angela left me – she turned! What—?

SWIRL MEMBER: In the words of singer, actor and bandleader Louis Prima: Life's home address is sadness.

MOSE: So is there no one? Not one breathing body who—?

SWIRL MEMBER: Well, yes. There is.

SWIRL MEMBER: Certainly there is!

MOSE: So—

SWIRL MEMBER: There *is* someone who hears everything you say.

SWIRL MEMBER: Someone who pays rapt attention to your every word—!

SWIRL MEMBER: —who lives for your opinions!

MOSE: So how do I—?

SWIRL MEMBER: And you know him.

SWIRL MEMBER: You may even know him well.

MOSE: Who is this person?

(Simultaneously, all swirl members produce mirrors and point them at Mose. He reacts.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Someone who heeds all your suggestions—

SWIRL MEMBER: Someone who grants every one of your preferences absolute authority—

SWIRL MEMBER: Who finds the meagerest of your ideas inviolable—

SWIRL MEMBER: Who organizes his entire life around your whims and moods!

SWIRL MEMBER *(beat)*: But Eakins... What good does it do you?

(Mose runs to the kitchen.)

MOSE: Guys – guys!

BOB 1: Slow down, frontman. Slow down. We are in a period of mourning.

MOSE: What hap—?

BOB WEAVER: Here we are saddened.

MOSE: But...

BOB 1: Mister G has decided to increase his cut.

MOSE: What?

BOB WEAVER: To raise his take.

BOB 1: To withdraw, every evening, even more from the tip-jar.

MOSE: Wait. Mister G – he takes from your tips? From our tips?

BOB 1: No longer sufficient was fifty percent. Management now requires sixty percent!

MOSE: I don't – has he always...?

BOB 1: We feel we must tell thee, frontman – that we must prepare thee. This evening, your sizable income will be sizably reduced.

BOB WEAVER: Cut down almost to nothin'. That's what Mister G means by sharing!

BOB 1: Thank you, Bob Weaver. This is what Mister G means by sharing.

MOSE: But – but this is totally... It's, like, abominable!

BOB 1: Frontman, there's an inverse relationship between money and truth.

BOB 3: Yep. The more there is of one, the less of the other.

MOSE: But guys... Guys! How do you stand it? Why do you stand it?

(The crew starts back in to work.)

You have to do something about it. We have to—!

BOB 1: Do not look at me that way, frontman! Do not cast thy frontman eyes upon me in such fashion!

MOSE: I—!

BOB 1: Are you concerned for us, frontman? Is thy heart weeping for thy distinguished colleagues? Thee and who else?

(Bob 1 turns from Mose, and the crew goes back to work. Mose runs to the swirl.)

MOSE: They're...! I mean, they earn pebbles! They're not allowed to eat!

SWIRL MEMBER: So it is.

SWIRL MEMBER: Such, we're told, is the natural order!

SWIRL MEMBER: So it's up to you—

SWIRL MEMBER: To you!

SWIRL MEMBER: Mose Eakins—!

SWIRL MEMBER: It is time!

SWIRL MEMBER: Realize your independence of thought—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Your independence of being!

SWIRL MEMBER: Says Joseph Addison: Freedom of thought compels freedom of action!

MOSE: But I... I've never—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Now!

SWIRL MEMBER: Do it now!

SWIRL MEMBER: Millions move and act and do while you sit immobilized—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Inert!

MOSE: But Gobetz is... He's—

SWIRL MEMBER: He's an abuser—

SWIRL MEMBER: An exploiter—!

MOSE: Yes!

SWIRL MEMBER: But he is relying on you.

SWIRL MEMBER: He is trusting you.

SWIRL MEMBER: He has given you a job.

SWIRL MEMBER: He is paying you!

SWIRL MEMBER: Hundreds of people enjoy his restaurant—

SWIRL MEMBER: An institution long-standing and beloved by its community!

SWIRL MEMBER: Your co-workers have to support themselves—

SWIRL MEMBER: To support their families—

SWIRL MEMBER: Dozens will fall!

SWIRL MEMBER: Their lives, their existences – precarious and fragile!

SWIRL MEMBER: Above all, do no harm.

SWIRL MEMBER: Don't be evil!

SWIRL MEMBER: Honor thy—

SWIRL MEMBER: Turn the other—

SWIRL MEMBER: Thou shalt not—!

MOSE: Silence! Please – no more! I—!

(Mose breaks away, runs to the kitchen. The crew is working.)

Guys – enough! Enough of this! You're going to receive your due. What anyone on earth would say is your fair share!

(The crew continues working.)

It's your right to take something to eat. To share in the food that your hands prepare. Just like every other person who comes into this restaurant!

BOB 1: Hey, Bob Weaver, you throw me a towel?

(Bob Weaver tosses the towel.)

BOB WEAVER: Here you go.

MOSE: Guys! You will be prisoners no longer!

(Mose grabs a chair. Swirl members enter the scene. Mose moves the chair to the rear wall, underneath the camera.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Eakins!

SWIRL MEMBER: Think before you—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Do not act in haste!

(Mose climbs on the chair. The restaurant crew starts to notice.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Countering injustice with injustice leads to—!

BOB 1: Frontman!

BOB 3: Frontman, what you—?

SWIRL MEMBER: Freedom without discipline descends into chaos!

SWIRL MEMBER: Possibility is not license!

MOSE *(to restaurant crew):* Even if it's for two minutes, you, and you, and you—

(indicating the three crew members)

—you'll be able to take something to eat.

(Mose reaches up, removes the camera from the wall. Steps off the chair.)

SWIRL MEMBER: You have a contract with your employer!

SWIRL MEMBER: Your word is your bond!

SWIRL MEMBER: That is not your property!

(Mose smashes the camera to the ground.)

MOSE: OK...!

(growing unsure)

OK... Guys, I, for you... I've never—

SWIRL MEMBER: It is a great and magnificent thing to strike back at oppression!

SWIRL MEMBER: You have fought for first principles—!

SWIRL MEMBER: Stood up nobly for noble human equality!

SWIRL MEMBER: The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to remain silent!

(beat)

MOSE: Thank you.

(to crew) So, OK...! Guys, now you can—

(The crew attacks Mose, beating and kicking him. He is pummeled to the ground. Gobetz runs in.)

GOBETZ: Hey – what? The picture went down!

(Gobetz sees Mose’s sprawled body, the camera lying near him.)

What – what happened in here? What...?

(Pause.)

BOB 1: He fell off the chair.

BOB WEAVER: Fell real hard!

GOBETZ: I – I see! It’s – it’s terrible! Is he OK?

(Bob 3 kneels to Mose, looks up, shakes his head.)

Oh, my—

BOB 3: Fell real hard.

GOBETZ: So, what...? I mean... But – it happens. It happens every day! Industrial accident. The table salt’s stored up there.

(Bob 3 places the chair on its side, near Mose’s body.)

I gotta go call the police.

(Gobetz starts to leave – then stops when Bob 1 picks up the camera.)

BOB 1: Look. The camera broke.

GOBETZ: Hm.

BOB 1: Still working. Still in one piece.

(Bob 1 and Gobetz look at each other. Bob 1 drops the camera, crushes it with his foot. Looks at Gobetz.)

He – he must have fallen on it.

(Bob 1 gives the camera to Gobetz.)

GOBETZ: Yeah. Fallen real hard.

(Gobetz turns to leave, stops, looks at the crew.)

BOB 1: You'll have to buy a new one.

(Gobetz exits.)

OK!

(The crew returns to work. Bob Weaver dashes to Mose and takes his phone from his pocket. Then returns to his post.)

Hey, Bob Weaver... You got that olive tapenade?

(Bob Weaver nods. The crew labors. Pause. The swirl comes forward.)

SWIRL MEMBER: Two hours later, Jack Gobetz is in police headquarters.

(Gobetz sits in the remaining upright chair, between TWO POLICEMEN.)

GOBETZ: ...terrible... Terrible! It was a terrible tragedy... A nice guy, a very nice guy... Really appreciated by the customers... Always cheerful, always ready to help.

POLICEMAN 1: So why do you think he was climbing up like that?

GOBETZ: Probably looking for an ingredient up on a shelf over there... He was helping the guys in the kitchen... Always eager to help... I was trying to help him, too, if you remember... Took him from the park. A homeless, you remember. Had nothing.

POLICEMAN 2: Yeah. We seen the records.

GOBETZ: I thought I could do something for him... So, do you, um, think there'll be anything like an autopsy here?

POLICEMAN 2: We – in cases like this, guy with no connections, no real reason.

POLICEMAN 1: Not a wise use of public funds.

GOBETZ: Hm. Terrible... Listen, thank you, boys. Mustn't be the easiest for you.

POLICEMAN 1: Doin' our job.

GOBETZ: Come on by a little later, if you like. We have a nice cordon bleu on the menu today. Very tasty.

(Gobetz gets up, starts to leave.)

POLICEMAN 2: Hey, Jack – something we haven't been able to find out. What was the guy's name?

GOBETZ: Don't know... He didn't say.

POLICEMAN 1: You never asked him?

(The three look at each other, then separate. One by one, all cast members come forward and join the swirl as it speaks.)

1 SWIRL MEMBER: Hear it here! Mose Eakins was the maître d' of the highly popular Chez Jackie restaurant—

2 SWIRL MEMBERS: —an upscale spot specializing in earthy, peasant fare from the Languedoc region of France.

3 SWIRL MEMBERS: Beloved by the restaurant's patrons, Eakins fit in easily—

4 SWIRL MEMBERS: —with the businessmen and socialites who frequented the eatery.

(Mose joins the swirl.)

4 SWIRL MEMBERS PLUS MOSE: Jack Gobetz – 'Jackie' of the restaurant's name – was proud to have discovered Eakins—

5 SWIRL MEMBERS PLUS MOSE: —when Eakins, homeless and living hand-to-mouth in Leddy Park, was working as a street performer.

ALL SWIRL MEMBERS PLUS MOSE: Said Gobetz, "I immediately recognized Eakins' natural gifts." Eakins was a diligent worker and a well-appreciated member of the restaurant's dedicated staff—

(Mose breaks from the swirl, turns to it.)

MOSE: No! Negative...!

(beat)

ALL SWIRL MEMBERS: Eakins—

MOSE: That's not...!

(beat)

ALL SWIRL MEMBERS: Eakins was—

MOSE: You don't know.

(beat)

ALL SWIRL MEMBERS: Mose Eakins was—

MOSE: You don't know!

(Pause.)

ALL SWIRL MEMBERS: Mose Eakins is—

BLACKOUT