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The Jack Plays

The House That Jack Built

Appoggiatura

Miranda

Three plays by

JAMES STILL

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(THE JACK PLAYS)

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THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

The House That Jack Built was originally produced by the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Indianapolis, Janet Allen, Artistic Director; Steven Stolen, Managing Director.

The House That Jack Built was developed in part at a retreat at the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, Weston, Vt.

The House That Jack Built was further developed as part of The New Harmony Project conference.

The House That Jack Built was the winner of the Todd McNerney Playwriting Prize and given readings at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival.

APPOGGIATURA

Appoggiatura was commissioned, premiered and originally developed by the Denver Center Theatre Company, a division of The Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Kent Thompson, Artistic Director.

Appoggiatura was developed as part of the LAUNCH PAD Preview Production Program at University of California, Santa Barbara - Department of Theater and Dance, Risa Brainin, Director.

Appoggiatura was developed at Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

MIRANDA

Miranda was commissioned and first produced by Illusion Theater, Minneapolis, Michael H. Robins and Bonnie Morris, Producing Directors.

Miranda was developed by Illusion Theater as part of Fresh Ink.

Miranda was further developed as part of the New Harmony Project conference.

The Jack Plays

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Foreword

I have had the great good fortune to closely observe nearly 25 years of James Still's playwriting career. The breadth and depth of that career continue to leave me breathless. In our 2017-18 season, we honored James' 20th year as playwright-in-residence at the Indiana Repertory Theatre (IRT), celebrating the vast diversity of his work as well as the close relationships he has developed with our artists and audience. It is the rare playwright who can excel in so many forms, and for so vast an audience. From three-year-olds to 103-year-olds, James' work continues to charm audiences not only in Indianapolis but also across the country.

The IRT produced the world premiere of *The House That Jack Built* in 2012 and was the first theatre to produce all three plays in the trilogy (albeit not in order). We created those all-important second productions of *Miranda* in 2017 and *Appoggiatura* in 2018. Our audiences have enjoyed the conversation about how the plays are both separate and interlinked, giving them wonderful insight into the mind of a playwright in intersection with story and character.

Perhaps most important to the casual reader or producer, these plays stand alone beautifully, with no diminution in their impact by seeing or reading them alone or in any order. For those who see more than one, however, the accumulation of detail is delightful, with the introduction of new characters in each and the appearance of oft-discussed offstage characters appearing in the second and third plays. The plays pass the proverbial baton of family and generation from one to the next, focusing in one play on the middle generation of adults (Jules and Lulu), in another on the split generations of grandparent and grandchild (Helen and Sylvie), and in a third on Miranda, who has pulled herself out of the familial

centrifugal force for reasons only she can reckon with. In each play, James creates a unique social surround for these family members, illuminating their resiliency, their curiosity, their yearning for connection and their zest for life.

James has told me that he actually began writing the trilogy in what turned out to be the middle—with characters taking a trip to Venice as they do in *Appoggiatura*. He soon realized that he didn't know enough about the characters—which is how he began on *The House That Jack Built*, its chronological predecessor. *Miranda* came later, as an exploration of a character about whom much is said but little is known. *Miranda* also reveals a key piece about the polestar character of the trilogy, Jack, who remains an elusive offstage mystery, haunting all three plays. Thus, we watch a playwright's mind at work in deep discovery of character and story. I hope he writes one more play about this family before he finishes with them—I would love to see what fireworks ensue when Helen, Lulu, Miranda, Jules and Sylvie all end up in one temporal plane!

The plays all share an exploration of this extended and unusual family and their journeys to reconnect or escape one another, the magnetic polar opposites of intention. Three generations are united and separated by loss—loss created by divorce, death, dementia and the dislocation of self both geographically and psychically. Each play expands the reach of the family and extends location as a character. In *The House That Jack Built*, several are at home in Vermont on Thanksgiving; in *Appoggiatura*, a different group decamps to Venice for a holiday; and in *Miranda*, we experience the toll taken by Miranda's work in the war-torn Middle East—far from her family. This vast reach of place, particularly in our 21st-century global landscape, speaks to a deep yearning for home: Where is it? Is it a chimera? Is

it possible to find it by searching? Can one be lost and find one's way home? The characters all yearn for a sense of belonging while being deeply distrustful that such a sense is even possible in today's fractured world.

The plays are also united by a theatrical commitment to explore (and explode!) time. It's as if the past is always present, just outside our field of vision, waiting for us to hold still and experience it. In each play, the past overlaps and competes with the present—you might storm out of the house into your own childhood in Vermont, or turn a corner in Venice and find yourself 50 years ago, or re-experience an explosion from years ago as you quietly sit in your apartment today. These sequences don't work like typical flashbacks, but more like seamless and instantaneous jump cuts from one temporal plane to another. The past sometimes soothes and sometimes intercedes like a case of PTSD, but always it is vivid and simultaneous with the present, as can only happen in the theatre. And always it creates profound wonder in the characters who slip back and forth through the time barrier.

Ultimately, the plays exist in very different styles, making the trilogy a delightful collective act. Where *The House That Jack Built* is Albee-esque in its fractured revelation of family dynamic, *Appoggiatura* is Chekhovian in its wistful humor and longing, while *Miranda* is almost a John le Carré action thriller. This experimentation with form awards the reader or audience member with insight into the jazz riffing of a master playwright as he rotates the lens on a set of characters, gaining dimension, depth and diversity as the trilogy progresses.

The hallmark of James' work, both in this trilogy and in all his work, is a deep sense of humanity. While there are social issues in all the plays, the characters' open hearts and their yearning to connect are what drive this writer. In our

technology-driven era, where media so often overwhelms us, James reminds us that human beings must connect and be heard, understood and loved, with all their many differences and flaws, in order for all of us, artists and audiences alike, to deeply experience our humanity.

—Janet Allen
Executive Artistic Director
Indiana Repertory Theatre

The House That Jack Built

The House That Jack Built premiered at Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis on Nov. 2, 2012.

CAST (in order of appearance):

Jules.....Jenny McKnight
Lulu.....Deirdre Lovejoy
Ridge.....Joseph Foronda
Eli.....Christopher Allen
Helen.....Patricia Hodges

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Artistic DirectorJanet Allen
Managing Director Steven Stolen
DirectorJanet Allen
Scenic Designer Russell Metheny
Costume Designer.....Guy Clark
Lighting DesignerMichael Lincoln
Composer and Sound Designer..... Fabian Obispo
DramaturgRichard J Roberts
Casting, Chicago Casting..... Claire Simon
Casting, New York Casting.....Stephanie Klapper
Stage Managers..... Amy K. Denkmann, Nathan Garrison

The House That Jack Built was developed in part at a retreat at the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company (Weston, Vt.) in 2011. The play was further developed as part of the 2012 New Harmony Project conference, and it was the winner of the 2012 McNerney Playwriting Award and given readings at the 2012 Piccolo Spoleto Festival.

The House That Jack Built

CHARACTERS

JULES: in her mid-40s.

LULU: in her mid-40s.

RIDGE: in his 50s.

ELI: in his early 30s.

HELEN: in her 70s.

PLACE

A funky house in Vermont.

TIME

Thanksgiving (mostly in the present).

NOTE: There is no intermission.

“The social ramble ain’t restful.”
—Satchel Paige

“Any idiot can face a crisis; it is this day-to-day
living that wears you out.”
—A. Chekhov

“We have all eternity to please the dead,
but only a little while to love the living.”
—Sophocles

The House That Jack Built

(We're in a house but not just any house, not a boxy, cookie-cutter house, not a house you've seen in a million other plays ... more rambling, a run-on sentence if architecture were grammar.

Look closer, and it's beautiful in its rawness, comfortable in its shadows, almost perfect in its incompleteness. Exquisite furniture and pieces of art are all mixed in with found objects now reconsidered and slyly celebrated.

Evidence of a child having spent time here, growing up here. Books and more books everywhere. A framed copy of the Declaration of Independence shares the space with posters of Colette, Farrah Fawcett, the movie Charade starring Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant, and various political races through the years. A map of Tuscany. A much-used dartboard featuring Sarah Palin's face ... ah, nostalgia. A faded, old Soviet Union flag. It's all part of a comfortable, lived-in, mash-up jumble of a life.

JULES lives here, it's home. Her English accent is both who she is and who she used to be. She makes hosting seem easy and looks good while doing it. Some people have all the luck.

ELI is the new boyfriend. Younger. Barefoot. The odd man out.

LULU is JULES' sister-in-law and oldest friend. An American now living in Canada with her husband, RIDGE. He's Asian-Canadian and a good ten years older than the women.

A cold sunny afternoon in November.

Thanksgiving.

Vermont.

JULES is mixing drinks; LULU is stirring a pot on the stove. [There it is, right from the beginning, those two things are all you need to know.]

LULU. ... Sean Connery or Daniel Craig.

(JULES hands RIDGE a drink.)

JULES *(to RIDGE)*. Cheers.

LULU *(to JULES)*. Pick one.

JULES *(to LULU)*. Keep stirring.

RIDGE *(about the drink, noncommittal)*. Hm.

LULU. Sean Connery or Daniel Craig.

JULES *(to RIDGE)*. Wait, did you just say “hm” or “mm”?

(RIDGE takes another drink.)

JULES *(cont'd, to ELI)*. You heard him, right?

LULU *(pressing)*. Sean Connery or Daniel Craig?

RIDGE *(about the drink)*. Mmm.

JULES. That was definitely a “mmm.”

ELI. What is he drinking?

JULES *(to RIDGE)*. Please tell me I've finally redeemed myself.

RIDGE. Redemption, dear Jules, would require further tasting. Testing. Taste-testing. Test-tasting—testing one-two-three—

LULU. Ridge! Just drink it!

(RIDGE drinks.)

JULES *(to ELI)*. My attempts at bartending are famously awful.

RIDGE. That's true.

LULU *(to ELI, faux British accent)*. Thank God there's at least one thing she's not good at.

RIDGE. Mixing a proper drink—

JULES & LULU (*together*). —it's an art.

RIDGE. Exactly.

JULES (*to RIDGE*). So?

(RIDGE starts to speak, then playfully and greedily takes another drink.)

LULU. Jack was always the bartender in the family.

RIDGE. Jules ... ?

JULES. Yes ... ?

(RIDGE looks at the drink, pauses dramatically.)

JULES (*cont'd, laughing*). What???

(RIDGE finishes off the drink.)

LULU. It's cruel to tease a recovering perfectionist.

RIDGE (*simple, surprised*). It's good.

JULES. Truly?

(RIDGE holds out his glass.)

RIDGE. Fill 'er up.

JULES. How many years have I waited to hear you say that?

RIDGE (*shrugs*). You know me, I'm just a people pleaser.

(JULES and LULU laugh/groan.)

ELI (*about the drink*). What is it?

RIDGE. A Calgary Red-Eye.

ELI. Never heard of it.

RIDGE. The national drink of Canada.

JULES. Is that true?

RIDGE & LULU (*together*). No.

(JULES playfully punches RIDGE.)

LULU (*translating*). Beer and tomato juice.

ELI. No way.

RIDGE (*to ELI*). Have a sip.

ELI. Beer and tomato juice.

JULES. And clam broth.

RIDGE. The secret ingredient.

JULES. Mustn't forget the clam broth.

(JULES hands ELI a drink.)

ELI. Beer and tomato juice and clam broth.

LULU. It tastes better than it sounds. Really.

ELI. Then why aren't you having one?

LULU. Oh I don't drink.

(JULES clocks this.

ELI takes a sip.)

RIDGE. So?

ELI. So now I can say I've tasted a Calgary Red-Eye.

(They laugh.

JULES very casually kisses ELI on the mouth. LULU and RIDGE exchange glances.)

LULU. One or the other, Jules: Sean Connery or Daniel Craig?

JULES. Mmmmm ... in tuxedo or swimsuit?

LULU. You're stalling.

JULES. You were telling us about the faculty party ...

LULU. Ooo, right!

RIDGE. It wasn't a "faculty party"— *(To LULU.)* You make it sound like something from the '60s.

LULU. They served absinthe.

JULES. At the faculty party?

RIDGE. It wasn't a faculty party—

ELI *(to LULU)*. I thought you don't drink.

LULU. It was absinthe, how could I say no?

RIDGE *(to JULES)*. It was cocktails at the dean's house—

LULU. Sounds dreary, right?

JULES. Not if they were serving absinthe.

LULU. But we didn't know they'd be serving absinthe—

JULES. You always make living in Canada sound so damned civilized.

RIDGE. They didn't really serve absinthe—

LULU. Are you telling the story or am I telling the story?

RIDGE. Which version?

LULU. The version that happened.

RIDGE. OK, doc, but I get to tell her why we went—

LULU. For cocktails at the dean's house ...

(LULU cedes the floor to RIDGE.)

RIDGE. As you know, I am not a political person—

JULES. Sweetie, that is not something to be proud of—

RIDGE. I'm stating a fact, not waving a flag.

JULES. It's still a cop-out.

LULU. And a big fat lie.

(JULES opens bottles of wine.)

JULES. And anyway, saying

you're "not political"—

that's pretty aggressive,

don't you think?

LULU. He's just trying to

pick a fight—

RIDGE. Aggressive? How is it aggressive?

JULES. I'm not saying it isn't subtle—

RIDGE. Which is it, Jules? Aggressive or subtle?

LULU (*to the rescue*). It's subtly aggressive.

JULES. Exactly! Which means it's entirely too calculated NOT to be a cop-out—

RIDGE. Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa, all I said is that I am not a political person—

JULES. —which is, let's face it, a subtle act of political terrorism.

RIDGE. Hey, I'm Chinese!

JULES. So?

LULU. See? He always uses that—

RIDGE. AND Canadian—

LULU. Cop-out.

RIDGE (*to ELI*). It's true! I'm Chinese and Canadian—

ELI. Which makes you ... ?

RIDGE. Swiss. Totally neutral.

(*JULES and LULU laugh/groan.*)

RIDGE (*cont'd*). I am!

LULU. Oh come on, Ridge! JULES. You? Neutral?

RIDGE. OK, OK, if the prosecution would kindly just hear me out. It's true that I have been known, on occasion, to have slightly strong opinions about this or that—

JULES (*to ELI*). Ridge's politics are just to the right of Attila the Hun.

RIDGE. That radical lefty bastard? Way too liberal for me.

JULES. Do you even know the definition of liberal?

RIDGE (*relishing*). Oh this is going to be fun!

JULES. Seriously! The word "liberal"? It means "open-minded."

LULU. So when did being open-minded become the same thing as being the anti-Christ?

JULES. He was a liberal.

LULU. Who?

JULES. Jesus Christ.

ELI. But wouldn't that make Jesus Christ the anti-Christ?

(They stop and look at ELI.)

LULU. What?

JULES. Eli is right. Jesus could never get elected president. Too liberal.

ELI. Now wait a minute. Are we talking about religion or politics?

LULU & JULES *(together)*. Yes.

RIDGE. No, no, let's not get on religion yet, we have the whole weekend to kill each other.

LULU. Fine. But only if we don't talk politics either.

RIDGE. Fine.

JULES. Fine.

(ELI realizes they're all looking at him.)

ELI. Yeah, OK.

(Beat.)

RIDGE. No religion, no politics.

(Beat.)

They have nothing to talk about.)

JULES. I'm bored. Lick me.

(ELI perks up, the only one who seems to have heard what JULES said, but things keep moving.)

LULU *(to RIDGE)*. What was your point?

RIDGE. That being opinionated and being political are two entirely different things.

LULU. You're splitting hairs— JULES. Semantics!

RIDGE. Anyone can have an opinion! Just because you're loud doesn't make you political. That's an American fallacy.

JULES. So ... what? You've lost your edge?

RIDGE. No, no, no, I know exactly where it is.

JULES. Ridge goes soft. It's the end of an era.

RIDGE. Soft? I'm employed by a university! Every day is like trying to get the Middle East to hold hands and sing "We Are the World"—in Hebrew—during Ramadan.

LULU. What???

JULES *(laughing)*. Crikey.

RIDGE. Let's just say I know myself, which is code for "I'm a tired old fart."

JULES *(cheeky)*. You are not old.

RIDGE. Old enough to have finally risen above the petty politics of academia, which is why you are looking at the new head of the department.

JULES. What?

RIDGE. They finally realized it was either put me out to pasture or put me in charge.

JULES. My God! When did this happen?

RIDGE. A couple of months ago—

LULU. He wanted to surprise you.

RIDGE. Surprise.

JULES. That's amazing. *(To ELI)*. Isn't that amazing?

ELI. Uh-huh.

(JULES kisses RIDGE.)

JULES. A couple of months—? *(To LULU.)* I can't believe you didn't tell me.

RIDGE. I can't believe you didn't tell her either.

LULU. You seem hurt.

RIDGE. No.

LULU. I wanted to tell her, but you said you wanted to surprise her—

JULES. Eli?

(ELI helps JULES with a bottle of champagne.)

RIDGE. No, I know, but it seems like if you thought it was really great news—

LULU. Of course I thought it was really great news—

RIDGE. I mean news you were really excited about—that you wouldn't have been able to keep it a secret, especially from Jules.

LULU. So what—you were testing me?

RIDGE. No—

LULU. And I didn't pass the test.

JULES. I knew something was going on—

RIDGE. No you didn't—

JULES. I did! You seem—*anew.*

RIDGE *(mocking/teasing)*. “*Anew*”? I seem *anew*?

JULES. Like a man who knows he's accomplished something. I thought maybe you'd finally read Proust.

RIDGE *(to ELI)*. She gave me that book for my birthday.

JULES. Did I?

RIDGE. Twice.

JULES. Anyway: being the head of the math department becomes you.

(They all clink glasses of champagne and sip.)

JULES *(cont'd, to LULU)*. I thought you weren't drinking.

LULU. Champagne doesn't count.

RIDGE *(to ELI)*. Have you read Proust? It's OK to lie.

ELI. I read *Proust for Dummies*.

JULES. Oh God!

ELI. I read it twice.

RIDGE. Did Jules give you a reading list? She's a real snob, you know. Best-selling author that she is.

JULES. It was a cookbook—

RIDGE. Which sold a billion copies—

JULES. A zillion years ago, and I am not a snob.

ELI. You wrote a book?

JULES. I wrote a cookbook—

LULU. And it was a *New York Times* bestseller.

RIDGE. You didn't tell him about your book?

LULU. *Fast Cooking for Fast Living*.

RIDGE. Hollywood bought the movie rights.

ELI. To a cookbook?

RIDGE. Jules was famous.

JULES. I was not famous—

LULU. You were on the *Today* show.

JULES. It was *Good Morning America*, and it wasn't a book, it was a cookbook. It wasn't even a cookbook—it was a microwave cookbook.

RIDGE. And it made a lot of money—

JULES. And I've not written anything since. ANYWAY!
We're toasting the new head of the math department!

(Clink.)

RIDGE. Department of math and statistics.

(They clink glasses again.)

JULES, LULU & ELI. Department of math and statistics.

(All drink.

Beat.)

RIDGE. To be honest, I didn't want it.

JULES. What do you mean?

RIDGE. I was the only one who didn't lobby for the job.

JULES. So you've been rewarded for NOT being political.

RIDGE. What a world, huh? And all these years I thought I'd be rewarded for being brilliant.

(LULU raises a champagne glass.)

LULU. You ARE brilliant.

RIDGE. Thank you.

(LULU and RIDGE kiss. They all clink glasses again.)

LULU *(continuing her story)*. Which brings us back to why we go to the cocktail party at the dean's house.

RIDGE. I just grabbed her by the hair and said: *(Macho voice.)* "C'mon, woman. We're going for drinks at the dean's house." *(Explaining.)* She's the dean—it wasn't optional.

LULU. The *Queen* Dean—

LULU & RIDGE. As we like to call her—

(They suddenly stop, seeing JULES staring at them.)

LULU. Jules? Are you OK?

Appoggiatura

Appoggiatura: *uh-poj-uh-toor-uh*

Noun.

From the Italian *appoggiare* meaning “to lean”

Or “to prop”

Or “to support”

In music, *appoggiatura* is a note of long or short duration sometimes creating a dissonance before resolving into a main note.

Also: a note of embellishment preceding another note and taking a portion of its time.

Appoggiatura was originally commissioned and developed by the Denver Center Theatre Company, a division of The Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Kent Thompson, artistic director. The play opened in The Ricketson Theatre on Jan. 16, 2015.

CAST:

Helen Darrie Lawrence
Aunt Chuck Rob Nagle
Sylvie/Young Helen Lenne Klingaman
Marco/Young Gordon Nick Mills
Old Italian Man/Tour Guide/Older Gordon Paul Bentzen
Vivaldi/Tour Guide/Gondolier Julian Remulla
Kate/Tour Guide..... Mehry Eslaminia

PRODUCTION:

Director Risa Brainin
Set Design David M. Barber
Costume Design Meghan Anderson Doyle
Lighting Design Charles R. MacLeod
Sound Design Tyler Nelson
Musical Direction and Arrangements Michael G. Keck
Projection Design..... Charlie I. Miller
Dramaturgy Douglas Langworthy
Voice and Dialect Coaching..... Kathryn G. Maes
Movement Coaching..... Robert Davidson
Casting Elissa Myers Casting, Paul Foquet
Director of Production Jeff Gifford
Stage Manager Rachel Ducat

Appoggiatura was developed through the LAUNCH PAD program at the University of California, Santa Barbara - Department of Theater and Dance, Risa Brainin, director.

Appoggiatura was also developed at the Perry-Mansfield New Works Festival, and further developed at the Colorado New Play Summit, Denver Center Theatre.

“Youth is a given; age is achieved.”
—May Swenson

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”
—William Shakespeare,
A Midsummer Night's Dream (1.1.134)

“Rome is your wife;
Florence is your mistress;
and Venice is your lover.”
—Graffiti in Venice

Appoggiatura

CHARACTERS

HELEN: in her 70s.

SYLVIE: in her early 20s. Also plays YOUNG HELEN in her early 20s.

AUNT CHUCK: in his 50s.

MARCO: in his mid-20s. Also plays GORDON in his mid-20s and again in his early 50s.

TRIO OF VENETIAN STREET MUSICIANS: also play all the other characters including:

KATE: in her mid-20s.

OLD ITALIAN MAN: also plays GORDON in his 70s.

ANTONIO VIVALDI: a violin-playing, red-headed priest.
And TOUR GUIDES, a WAITER, two DOGS named Sophia and Loren, a GONDOLIER and others.

PLACE: A makeshift guest room in a crumbling Venetian hotel. And various spots around Venice.

TIME: June, recently. And another June, not so recently.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The various Tour Guides and the different languages they speak are flexible to fit your production.

The dogs Sophia and Loren are not intended to be played by actual dogs. Possible suggestions for your production include puppets or rigid suspended leashes that are voiced by actors.

Appoggiatura

ACT I

1

(Nothing but darkness.

A breath of black, black darkness.

Then a sliver of moonlight on a masked, red-headed ANTONIO VIVALDI playing his violin. “Summer” movement three: “Presto” [aka: “Storm”].

Suddenly, big wooden window shutters push open toward us, and VIVALDI’s music instantly stops.

At the open window:

HELEN looks out at us, her face glowing with expectation, free of suspicion ... Even though she’s in her seventies and wears false eyelashes, it is as if she’s just been born.

HELEN looks left to right, right to left, searching ... for ... something ... something ... something more than the awful stubborn silence. Something.

HELEN slowly pulls the wooden shutters closed and—

In faint moonlight, VIVALDI instantly begins again. The wooden shutters explode open—

And VIVALDI instantly stops.

HELEN resumes her search for the source of the music.

Only silence.

HELEN slowly pulls the wooden shutters closed—

VIVALDI resumes—

HELEN tries a fast fake-out, open-and-close—

Right on cue, VIVALDI stops-and-starts-and-stops when—

HELEN again pushes the wooden shutters open.

*Now it's a game: HELEN closing and opening the shutters,
VIVALDI starting and stopping ...*

Fast

and slow

and FASTER—

*Until HELEN pulls the wooden shutters closed one last
time with a loud BANG!*

And VIVALDI instantly begins again—the apparent winner.

*But the wooden shutters suddenly burst open again, and
VIVALDI is caught with his musical pants down ... playing
on ...*

*VIVALDI steps into HELEN's view, serenading her,
romancing her, promising her ...*

HELEN begins to LAUGH.

Church bells begin to ring.

More ringing church bells.

*VIVALDI's "Summer"/"Storm" gives way to a Venetian
summer storm:*

Rain and thunder and winds.

VIVALDI rushes away to escape the storm.

*Unafraid, HELEN looks up at the night sky then pulls the
wooden shutters closed one last time.*

Everything is darkness again.

The raging storm grows louder ...

And louder ...

And louder.)

2

(A gorgeous, tacky, falling-down, makeshift guest room inside the Palazzo della Fortuna.

Middle of the night.

The only music now is the sound of more rain. Lots of it.

HELEN reads by candlelight.

AUNT CHUCK generously fills a chaise lounge and restlessly listens to an iPod with earbuds.

SYLVIE unceremoniously paints AUNT CHUCK's toenails.)

AUNT CHUCK (*practicing per iPod, loudly*). “Buongiorno!”
(*Listens, repeats.*) “Buongiorno!” (*Listens, repeats.*)
“Come stai?” (*Listens, repeats.*) “Come stai?”

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “It is illegal to be a prostitute in Siena if your name is Mary.”

SYLVIE. Good to know.

(AUNT CHUCK rips out the earbuds.)

AUNT CHUCK. What?

SYLVIE. It's illegal to be a prostitute in Siena if your name is Mary.

(SYLVIE continues painting AUNT CHUCK's toenails.)

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “An Italian town near Naples once outlawed the act of DEATH until the town built a new cemetery.”

AUNT CHUCK (*per iPod*). “*Molto bene, grazie, e tu?*”
(*Listens, repeats.*) “*Molto bene, grazie, e tu?*”

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In Florence there is a medical condition caused from being overcome by the beauty of Italian art.”

AUNT CHUCK (*per iPod*). “*Io mi chiamo Aunt Chuck.*”
(*Vacillating.*) Charles. Aunt Chuck. (*With more flourish.*)
“*Io mi chiamo Charles!*” (*More “Italian.”*) “Charles!” (*To SYLVIE.*) How do you say “Charles”?

SYLVIE. Stop moving your toes.

HELEN (*absorbed in the book*). Ah! “VENICE is the city of invention ... giving the world everything from opera to bleached hair to roof terraces.”

AUNT CHUCK (*to SYLVIE*). How do you say “Charles” in Italian?

SYLVIE (*flat*). Charles.

AUNT CHUCK (*bad Italian accent*). Charles!

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “... platform shoes and assembly lines and italics—and mirrors!”

SYLVIE. Who calls you

“Charles”? Nobody calls AUNT CHUCK. Charles is
you “Charles.” my name—

SYLVIE. “Charles.” “Charles.” (*Dismissive.*) No.

AUNT CHUCK. No what?

SYLVIE. I don’t like it, it’s weird—

AUNT CHUCK. What’s wrong with “Charles?”

SYLVIE. What’s wrong with “Aunt Chuck?”

AUNT CHUCK. It isn’t my real name.

SYLVIE. It is to me.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In 1902 when the Campanile in Piazza San Marco collapsed into rubble, the only fatality was a cat who happened to be named after Casanova’s dog.”

SYLVIE. “Charles.” (*Disturbed.*) Weird, don’t like it.

AUNT CHUCK. Stop saying it’s weird.

SYLVIE. Stop moving your toes.

(*HELEN is drawn to the window, opens the shutters and looks out at the rain.*)

AUNT CHUCK (*to SYLVIE*).

Just look it up—

look it up in that, that SYLVIE. OK, OK! Jeez.
google-thing.

(*SYLVIE types on her phone.*)

SYLVIE. I forget how bossy you are.

AUNT CHUCK. I just want to know how to say “Charles”
in Italian!

SYLVIE. “Aunt Chuck”—it’s you, it fits.

AUNT CHUCK. Maybe I left your dear old Aunt Chuck
back in Vermont. (*Darker.*) Back where he belongs.

(*HELEN clocks this.*)

SYLVIE (*reading from her phone*). Wait ... wait ... yup, got
it: “*Gettare.*”

AUNT CHUCK (*trying it out*). “*Gettare.*”

HELEN & SYLVIE. *Gettare!*

AUNT CHUCK. I like it. Does it mean “Charles”?

SYLVIE (*reading*). *Gettare*: a verb meaning “to throw” or
“to CHUCK.”

AUNT CHUCK (*with gusto*). *Io mi chiamo Gettare.*

(*SYLVIE kisses AUNT CHUCK, her tenderness disarming him.*)

HELEN. Mia ZIA Gettare!

(SYLVIE studies her phone, distracted.)

AUNT CHUCK. Is that a message from Kate?

SYLVIE. ...

(HELEN and AUNT CHUCK look at each other and clock SYLVIE's silence.)

AUNT CHUCK. Are you going to call your mother?

SYLVIE. Done.

AUNT CHUCK. When?

SYLVIE. Airport.

AUNT CHUCK. Oh.

SYLVIE. While you were having your meltdown about the luggage.

AUNT CHUCK. What a nightmare. *(Off HELEN's look.)*
Don't say it. *(To SYLVIE.)* You either.

SYLVIE. I didn't.

AUNT CHUCK. You thought it—

SYLVIE. I wasn't.

AUNT CHUCK. But you are now—

SYLVIE. Yeah, because you're talking about it!

AUNT CHUCK. Which reminds me of the tiff I had with your mother the other day.

SYLVIE *(laughing)*. Who uses the word "tiff"? Why not just call it a fight?

AUNT CHUCK. Did your mother call it a fight?

SYLVIE. She didn't call it anything, I don't even know what you're talking about.

AUNT CHUCK. Because it wasn't a fight, it was a tiff.

SYLVIE. You mean like an argument—

AUNT CHUCK. No, I mean like a tiff.

SYLVIE. A disagreement—

AUNT CHUCK. A TIFF. Like the one we're having now!

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In 18th-century Europe, false beauty marks were all the rage—and in VENICE they were the language of amorous intrigue.”

AUNT CHUCK. How'd she sound?

SYLVIE. Mom?

AUNT CHUCK. On the phone.

SYLVIE. OK. I guess. She's working on her book. For real this time.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark on the nose, called the *sfrontata*, meant the lady was feeling bold.”

AUNT CHUCK. She tell you anything about it? About her book?

SYLVIE. She didn't want to talk about it which was all she wanted to talk about: how she didn't want to talk about it.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark on the corner of the eye, the *passionata*, meant the lady was burning with passion ... ”

SYLVIE. You never said what your fight was about, with Mom. Your tiff.

HELEN. Books-on-tape.

SYLVIE. What's a “tape”?

AUNT CHUCK. A tape!

A DVD, audiobook,
whatever you want to
call it!

SYLVIE (*laughing*). Hey,
hey, hey ... I'm teasing.

AUNT CHUCK. Oh. (...) If you listen to a book on tape do you have the right to say you've read the book?

SYLVIE. What do you mean?

HELEN. That's it.

SYLVIE. That's what? That was the tiff?

AUNT CHUCK. That was the pre-tiff.

SYLVIE. Wow.

AUNT CHUCK. I say listening to a book on tape isn't the same as actually *reading* the book and your mother called me a snob—

SYLVIE. I gotta agree with Mom on this one—

AUNT CHUCK. Which I took as a compliment.

SYLVIE. Oh God!

AUNT CHUCK. And THAT was what our tiff was about—the fact that I consider being called a snob a kind of compliment.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark worn on a dimple was called the *civetta*—and implied that she was feeling flirtatious.”

AUNT CHUCK. What time is it back home?

SYLVIE. It's still yesterday.

(*AUNT CHUCK restlessly paces.*)

HELEN. “And when a Venetian woman placed the beauty mark by the corner of her mouth, she was ready for anything: it was the *assassina*.”

(*HELEN digs in her purse.*)

AUNT CHUCK (*practicing per iPod, tensely*). “*Mi scusi, io non parlo italiano ...*” (*Frustrated.*) Why would I want to say “I don't speak Italian” when the entire point is TO SPEAK ITALIAN???

(*AUNT CHUCK tears out the earbuds and goes to the window, looks out at the downpour.*)

HELEN produces a compact mirror from her purse, begins carefully drawing a beauty mark at the corner of her mouth.)

AUNT CHUCK (*cont'd*). Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain ...

HELEN (*genuine*). Isn't it wonderful?

(The storm seems to have suddenly moved inside the room.)

AUNT CHUCK. OK. I think we've all been terrifically good sports—you most of all, Helen—which is admittedly impressive for all kinds of reasons but also highly irritating since any complaining from me or Sylvie would only seem petty now considering how you've mysteriously met every conceivable DISASTER with complete and annoying cheerfulness.

HELEN (*bright and cheerful*). Charles, please! Shut up!

(HELEN puts the finishing touches on her new beauty mark.)

AUNT CHUCK. What are you doing? What is she doing?

HELEN. When a Venetian woman places a beauty mark by the corner of her mouth it means she is ready for anything: it is the *assassina*.

AUNT CHUCK. It sounds like you're calling yourself an assassin. (*To SYLVIE.*) Look up "assassina"—

HELEN. It's a metaphor!

AUNT CHUCK. "Charming accommodations featuring unique frescoes, antique furnishings and paintings by Venetian artists ... ???"

HELEN. ...

AUNT CHUCK. That was the description! Not to mention we had a reservation, a RESERVATION for three rooms! Three SEPARATE rooms, paid in full AND confirmed.

HELEN. ...

AUNT CHUCK. Sylvie and I want to change hotels!

HELEN. Fine.

SYLVIE. I never said that.

HELEN. Let me know where you end up.

SYLVIE. Grandmama—

HELEN. We can all have lunch sometime.

SYLVIE. I never said anything about wanting to change hotels—

AUNT CHUCK. Helen, be honest: this place looks nothing like the photos—

HELEN. Of course not! It's the middle of the night and we're without electricity!

AUNT CHUCK. Sylvie, back me up.

SYLVIE. I am not your swing vote.

(HELEN throws open the shutters again and one of the handles comes off in her hand.)

HELEN. Shit! So maybe the *Palazzo della Fortuna* is a little rough around the edges—

AUNT CHUCK. Your optimism is killing me! It is ASSASSINATING me in ways I have never been assassinated. *Assassina!*

HELEN. Where is your sense of adventure?

We're in Venice!

AUNT CHUCK. Yes, which just seems, I'm very sorry to say—old and dark and run down.

HELEN. It's Venice!

AUNT CHUCK. And it's raining—

It's theater! The night is its muse, the rain its soliloquy—listening to it gives us time—

... Muse?

... Soliloquy?

Time???

HELEN. TIME to adjust to all this beauty—

AUNT CHUCK. This is not beauty—

HELEN. TIME to remember our dreams, to reset our HEARTS.

AUNT CHUCK. OK, OK, now you're just spewing purple bullshit.

HELEN. You look pale, Chuck.

AUNT CHUCK. I'm always pale around purple-spewing *assassin*as.

HELEN. Seriously. People
have been known to pass
out from being overcome
by the beauty of Italy—

AUNT CHUCK. "Reset our
hearts???" Really?
(*To SYLVIE.*) You heard
her, right?

HELEN. It's a medical condition called the Stendhal Syndrome.

AUNT CHUCK. The what???

HELEN. The Stendhal Syndrome, which is caused from being
overcome by too much beauty.

AUNT CHUCK. What beauty???

HELEN (*very real*). What beauty?

AUNT CHUCK. Seriously.

HELEN. We're in Venice.

AUNT CHUCK. Yes. We arrived late, it hasn't stopped
raining, and we've seen nothing but the inside of this hotel
which looks nothing like the photos on the internet—

SYLVIE. You do look a little pale.

AUNT CHUCK. I live in Vermont! Everyone's pale in Vermont.

HELEN. Sylvie's right.

AUNT CHUCK. And this is what? Some kind of intervention?

HELEN. Hallucinating, hysteria and general bitchiness are
just a few of its symptoms.

Miranda

Miranda premiered at Illusion Theater in Minneapolis on January 28, 2017.

CAST:

Miranda..... Carolyn Pool
Rose / Lauren Beth Gilleland
John / Reed..... Steve Hendrickson
Dr. Al-AgbhariDelta Giordano
Shahid / Waiter..... Ricky Morisseau

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Producing DirectorsMichael H. Robins, Bonnie Morris
Director Michael Robins
Scenic Designer Dean Holzman
Lighting Designer Mike Wangen
Sound & Video DesignerC. Andrew Mayer
Costume Designer Barb Portinga
Properties Designer Sara Salisbury
Composer Miriam Gerberg
Stage Manager Rachael Rhoades.

In a revised script, *Miranda* opened at Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis on March 31, 2017.

CAST:

Miranda Jennifer Coombs
Rose / Lauren Mary Beth Fisher
John / Reed.....Torrey Hanson
Dr. Al-AgbhariArya Daire
Shahid / Waiter.....Ninos Baba

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Executive Artistic DirectorJanet Allen
Managing Director Suzanne Sweeney
Director Henry Godinez
Scenic Designer Ann Sheffield
Costume Designer Linda Pisano
Lighting Designer Alexander Ridgers
Sound Designer Andrew Hopson
Composer Gustavo Leone
Projection Designer..... Chris Berchild
DramaturgRichard J Roberts
Casting, Chicago Claire Simon
Stage ManagerJoel Grynheim.

Miranda

CHARACTERS

Five actors play:

MIRANDA: American, in her late 30s.

ROSE: American (Louisiana), in her 50s.

JOHN: British, in his 60s.

DR. AL-AGBHARI: Arab, in her 40s.

REED: American, in his 60s.

SHAHID: Arab teenager, 16 or 17.

LAUREN: American, in her 50s.

WAITER: a young man in Amman, Jordan.

NOTE: The actors playing John, Rose and Shahid should also play Reed, Lauren and the Waiter, respectively.

PLACE

Mostly in Aden, Yemen.

TIME

2014-2015. Not so long ago.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Patti Weber, Deborah Pierce, Fadia Thabet, Antoine Mefleh, Mohammed Al Ameri and others.

Miranda

PART 1

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(A hotel bar in Amman, Jordan.

Recently.

JOHN, ROSE and MIRANDA are there.)

JOHN. ... in some of the better hotels in Dubai, yes, absolutely; and your chances go up considerably at the nightclubs with a pretty girl at your side—

ROSE. All of Bangladesh is hopelessly dry, it's very strictly enforced—

JOHN. But even in Dubai if you're caught slurring the wrong word or taking a drunken tumble on the wrong street, you'll find your arse in the clink. Go fourteen kilometers up the road to Sharjah and it's officially banned, unavailable, does not exist.

ROSE. Saudi Arabia is dry, Libya is dry—

JOHN. You would not believe all the ways that Libya has changed. Libya! Head-spinning. At least when Kadafi was still around you could get a decent drink in Tripoli.

ROSE. He once gave me the greatest interview—Kadafi—and Lord, what a flirt. Would you listen to us? Nostalgic for Kadafi ... ! We really have been in the Middle East too long. *(To MIRANDA.)* Have you ever worked in Libya?

MIRANDA *(lying)*. No.

(...)

JOHN. Not a single blessed drop of anything but a lot of oil in all of Saudi Arabia which frankly just makes you want to drink more.

ROSE. John!

JOHN. It wasn't only me, honestly, nobody seemed happy there because at the end of the day you cannot drink oil. Am I not right? And let's not even make mention of Kuwait. Kuwait City—completely dry.

ROSE. Except for the diplomatic compounds—where it's legal, of course.

JOHN. But who wants to be legally locked away 24/7 with a bunch of legless diplomats?

ROSE. Not all diplomats are drunks, John.

Don't be a hypocrite.

Honestly!

JOHN. It isn't civilized—

that's all I'm saying. Here, at least a man can sit in a bar and have a drink with his lovely bride. And their long lost lovely friend.

(They all clink glasses.)

MIRANDA. What made you finally do it? *(Off their looks.)* Get married, I mean.

ROSE. Oh, shocking, I know. But marriage is one of the few things I've never tried. And the older you get, honey, the harder it is to shock yourself. What about you? Ever get married?

MIRANDA *(lying)*. Not even close.

ROSE. Well tell us every little thing. We're only here until it all settles down again in Damascus. It'll only be a day or two, and then they'll give us the OK to go back, it's not

like we haven't been through this a dozen times. Syria is an interesting place to work—but I've always had more of a feeling for Jordan, it's just more relaxed here in Amman—something about it makes me feel like I'm back home in Baton Rouge.

(MIRANDA laughs, which pleases ROSE.)

ROSE *(cont'd)*. Where have you been all these years? You just up and disappeared on us. We have really missed you, haven't we, John?

(JOHN finishes his drink and gestures to a waiter.)

JOHN *(to ROSE)*. Lovey?

(ROSE nods, another drink.)

ROSE. I like your hair this way. It's different, right? The color?—It suits you.

JOHN. Sure you won't join us?

(MIRANDA waves him away.)

MIRANDA. The cheese stands alone.

ROSE. When did you stop?

MIRANDA. Few years ago.

JOHN. So you haven't, really.

MIRANDA. Excuse me?

JOHN. People who stop drinking never reference it as “a few years ago.”

MIRANDA *(direct)*. Two years, eleven months, twenty-six days and nineteen hours.

(A waiter brings fresh drinks for JOHN and ROSE.)

JOHN. Do you go to meetings?

ROSE (*eyerolling*). John! MIRANDA (*laughing*). You Heavens! mean AA? No.

MIRANDA. The only thing “AA” stands for in the Middle East is “Anti-American.” And as you were saying before, alcohol is technically illegal in most places, which means it’s technically impossible to be an alcoholic.

JOHN (*drinking*). What a bloody relief. Cheers.

ROSE (*wise*). And around and around we go.

MIRANDA. I stopped drinking the night we finally took out bin Laden.

(As soon as she says it, MIRANDA wishes she hadn't.)

JOHN. Bloody hell. Seems that would have been the perfect time to START drinking.

ROSE. Well *I'm* impressed—and not a bit surprised. You always did things your own way and I admire that. How long ago was Tunisia—?

JOHN. Now if Saudi Arabia was dry, then Tunisia was deliciously WET—

ROSE. How many years ago—?

JOHN. At least back then it was, anyway.

ROSE (*to MIRANDA*). Do you remember the day we met—in Tunis? At the Embassy? You were one of the few Americans we liked back then. Isn't that right, John?

JOHN. That was a happy time.

ROSE. Seemed like most of our friends in Tunisia were Italians and good Lord they knew how to eat and drink. And smoke. Always high as a cat's back. I loved them for their lack of intrigue.

JOHN. I think the Italians felt at home in Tunisia because the Romans had already been there, you know, in Tunisia, back in Roman times—

ROSE. John, the Romans weren't Italian back then, no one was Italian "back in Roman times"—

JOHN. Technicality, darling. You're shitting on my hypothesis. And there's something so bloody disturbing about a great ancient city like Carthage surviving all those wars only to become a modern-day suburb. That's an awful kind of surrender. Oh how the mighty have fallen.

ROSE. Have you been back? (...) Dana?

(MIRANDA is distracted.)

ROSE *(cont'd)*. Dana?

MIRANDA. Sorry, what?

(MIRANDA's attention drifts away again—intently, as though she suspects something is out of place.)

In another scene and another time: an Arab woman, DR. AL-AGBHARI, vies for MIRANDA's attention.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Susanna?

(From the hotel bar.)

ROSE. Dana?

----->

(MIRANDA is drawn to a medical exam room where she joins DR. AL-AGBHARI, who wears a hijab and writes notes in a folder.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. And how are you sleeping, Susanna?

MIRANDA. Fine.

(DR. AL-AGBHARI looks up from her notes. MIRANDA returns her gaze.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI places a stethoscope on MIRANDA's chest.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. A deep breath, please.

MIRANDA. Why do doctors do that? I mean, it's beating, right? Obviously?

(DR. AL-AGBHARI places stethoscope on MIRANDA's back.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Another deep breath. What brings you here?

MIRANDA. Work.

DR. AL-AGBHARI. No, I meant what brings you *here*—today. Once more.

(MIRANDA takes another deep breath.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI (*cont'd*). The heart is a most interesting organ. In my experience, it cannot keep secrets. Medically speaking.

(MIRANDA watches DR. AL-AGBHARI, who continues to examine MIRANDA's body.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI (*cont'd*). You must believe in your work very much, to be in Yemen—now.

MIRANDA. I suppose we're all trying to save the world in our own ways.

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Maybe. But here, saving the world is a luxury. The simple things are no longer simple. This is my country's long childhood come to an end. But what can we expect from a city that sits inside a volcano?

(From the hotel bar.)

ROSE *(to MIRANDA)*. The Italians—remember? Dana?

(MIRANDA is pulled back to the hotel bar.)

----->

ROSE *(cont'd)*. The Italians would all speak French to the Tunisians, who claimed they didn't understand English except when everybody was talking about American television—what was that TV show we were all watching back then?

(None of them can remember.)

JOHN. I've always said that American television is much improved when people talk about it in French. Or don't talk about it at all.

ROSE. Remember our place in Sidi Bou Said? Oooo! Gorgeous, right there on the sea.

JOHN. And the commute into Tunis—easy-peasy lemon-squeezy.

ROSE. It's where he fell in love with the fava bean. It's a fucking fetish, really.

JOHN. 'Tis true. There's little I wouldn't do for a fava bean. Never knew how much I could love them until we lived in Sidi Bou Said.

(From the medical exam room.)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. But what can we expect from a city that sits inside a volcano? Mm?

----->

(MIRANDA is with DR. AL-AGBHARI.)

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DR. AL-AGBHARI (*cont'd*). Why did you come to see me, Susanna?

MIRANDA. As I said before, I'm new—to the city, to Aden—and I'm the type who likes to figure it all out. I like order, I like knowing where I am ... the markets, the doctors, the volcanoes ...

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Do you have reason to believe you're pregnant?

MIRANDA. No.

DR. AL-AGBHARI (*direct*). Did something happen? Did someone hurt you?

MIRANDA (*thinking about it; finally*). No.

DR. AL-AGBHARI. All of my patients are women. I would like to believe their hearts feel safe with me. Do you understand?

(*MIRANDA clocks this.*)

DR. AL-AGBHARI (*cont'd*). Yemen is a country of many secrets but no mysteries. At least none we talk about.

MIRANDA. But that makes it sound quite mysterious.

(*They look at one another.*)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Based on my examination and the little you've chosen to tell me, it is my professional opinion that there is nothing more I can do for you. I sincerely hope your stay in Aden is a pleasant one, Susanna.

(*DR. AL-AGBHARI gathers her things to leave.*)

MIRANDA. What about your personal opinion?

DR. AL-AGBHARI (*puzzled*). I have no personal opinion.

MIRANDA. None?

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Not about you, I do not know you.

MIRANDA. That's true. (*More for herself.*) Proof, gotta have proof ...

(*DR. AL-AGBHARI looks up from writing a final note.*)

MIRANDA (*cont'd*). Sorry, something my father always said.

(*A sudden, powerful, silent flash of light on ROSE and JOHN at the hotel bar in Amman.*)

MIRANDA (*cont'd*). I do feel dizzy sometimes. At night my heart races. And I'm not sleeping.

DR. AL-AGBHARI. I can give you something to help you sleep.

(*From the hotel bar.*)

ROSE. Dana?

(*MIRANDA starts to go.*)

DR. AL-AGBHARI. Susanna?

(*From the hotel bar.*)

ROSE. Dana?

----->

(*MIRANDA turns and is back at the hotel bar months earlier with ROSE and JOHN.*)

MIRANDA. Sorry?

ROSE (*teasing*). Well I guess you never were one for chit-chat.

MIRANDA. I'm listening.

(ROSE laughs.)

MIRANDA *(cont'd)*. I was. I am! I'm listening. *E.R.*

ROSE. What?

MIRANDA. The TV show everyone was always talking about in Tunisia. It was *E.R.*

(MIRANDA reaches out and touches ROSE's hand.

A great flash of light.

A sudden loud explosion.

Then deep darkness.

Sirens.

The WAITER steps out of the smoke and wreckage.)

WAITER. *Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:*

In following him, I follow but myself;

Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,

But seeming so, for my peculiar end:

For when my outward action doth demonstrate

The native act and figure of my heart

In compliment extern, 'tis not long after

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve

For daws to peck at:

(In Arabic.) Ana lestu man ana.

(In English.) I am not what I am.

(Danger settles, lingers.

The WAITER is gone, like a shadow disappearing.

----->

An office in Aden, Yemen.

*Purposefully nondescript, makeshift, messy.
Piles and piles and stacks of BOOKS, everywhere.*

Late night.

*REED—Sean Connery and Daniel Craig rolled into one
secret agent man; the weary, less debonair American
version—shaken not stirred.*

Rapid-fire, rote.)

REED. Name?

MIRANDA (*quickly*). Susanna Jones. Born May 31st.

REED. Year?

MIRANDA. None of your business.

REED. What year?

MIRANDA. 1980 in Sacramento fuck you California.

REED. Nice.

MIRANDA. Moved around as a kid because my parents were free spirits, dropped out of college to join the Peace Corps where I discovered my affinity for using theater to build relationships with locals and empower them with the art of storytelling, and why does Susanna's life have to sound like a fucking profile on Craigslist?

(MIRANDA impatiently flips through a binder of papers.)

MIRANDA (*cont'd*). How do they explain my Arabic? Rosetta Stone??

REED. Save the dramatics for being Susanna. In your hands, I have a hunch she's the type. What brings you to Yemen?

MIRANDA. Work.

REED. What kind of work?

MIRANDA. An international group that works with young people using the arts to explore collaboration and negotiation as models—as MICRO-models of peace.