

Absinthe, Bourbon, Vodka and Saki

By

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To The Man at the Dream Centre, Allison and Chris

*When he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine*

WS

Cast – **Kennedy** London F55
Parker Saltzman* M15
Jake* M15
Jack London* M15

(*Parker, Jake and Jack are played by the same actor)

Time - Present

Setting - The artist salon and “a classroom at the facility.”

(The setting can be stark and minimal or luxurious. It should go from full to empty. Ideally the set would either be on a revolve or designed in such a way that when she is in the facility the salon can be divested of her possessions over time. Wherever she is, “Paris”, “PEI”, “Japan” etc. there would be a slight reflection of this whether it is with lights or a few well-chosen objects. If lights are needed for the transition from scenes, green vine gobos grow more as the play progresses.)

Scene 1 (Absinthe in Paris)
Scene 2 The Facility
Scene 3 (Bourbon in New Orleans)
Scene 4 The Facility
Scene 5 (Potato vodka on Prince Edward Island)
Scene 6 The Facility
Scene 7 (Saki in Yoshino-cho Japan)

Note: If the cigars are used they can not be the fake ones...

Scene I. Absinthe, The Artist Salon. (Paris)

(A cluttered Salon with objects d’art, paintings, books. Kennedy is wearing a simple black dress which could be described as French couture with period statement jewelry. She has a box and is packing up books, perhaps YA novels. The box full, she goes to the record player and drops the needle onto a record that plays Edith Piaf singing *Ne Me Quitte Pas*. She takes a specially designed absinthe glass and pours the green drink to the ounce level. Next she places a slotted spoon across the glass and places three sugar cubes on it. Then she takes a bottle that has a spout to control the flow and drips the water over the sugar. Multitasking she picks up a pen with her other hand and starts writing.)

(There is a knock on the door.)

Kennedy (Calls out) It’s open.

(Enter Parker, Kennedy is still concentrating on her drink and doesn’t look up)

Parker Hi, I’m here to see Ken.

(She laughs)

Kennedy You must be Parker. (She puts down the pen, still dripping water over the sugar)

Parker Yes. Is Ken here?

Kennedy Kennedy London.

(She extends her hand and there is awkward shake, she is still dripping water)

Parker Oh!

Kennedy You didn’t know who you were meeting? I’m going to go out on a limb and say you’ve never read or seen my plays.

Parker My Dad set this up.

Kennedy Yes, I’m very familiar with your father, hockey team owner with a stadium and a university wing named after him.

(The dripping is finished, and she stirs the last granules with her spoon.)

Parker No, I can’t get you hockey tickets.

Kennedy I don’t want them.

Parker You don't? Usually that's the first thing people ask for when they know who my dad is.

Kennedy No, my kid had early morning practices - that was enough.

Parker You don't like hockey?

Kennedy Not enough to watch it. (beat) I don't see a notebook or writing implement.

Parker I can, er, take notes on my phone.

 (Her resulting look stops him, she hands him a red coil notebook and pen)

 Thanks.

Kennedy What a lazy generation you are.

Parker I'm here out of school time, how is that lazy?

Kennedy Because you want to be taught. You don't want to learn. You want to consume.

Parker I don't want to eat or buy anything-

Kennedy No, you want to consume this. (Indicating the space, the back and forth between them) Why are you here?

Parker To learn-

Kennedy Hmm...

Parker I thought I wanted to write a play.

Kennedy You thought, or you wanted to? Past tense?

Parker Well not if you're going to insult me.

Kennedy I insult you? You show up unprepared. You insult me. You insult Zeus and Melpomene and Thalia.

Parker I don't know who those last three are.

Kennedy Of course you don't.

Parker Well.... You're the teacher, teach me.

- Kennedy Why would I teach you something you can Google? That’s just an answer to a question. This isn’t how this works.
- Parker Your students aren’t allowed to ask questions?
- Kennedy Don’t be asinine, of course, but not about that.
- Parker Not about (He looks down to read) Zeus and Melpmisomething and Thalia?
- (She sighs and goes to the liquor cart to return the green absinthe.)
- Parker You don’t think I’m bright?
- Kennedy No.
- Parker I get good grades.
- Kennedy That has nothing to do with being bright.
- Parker Excuse me, I thought all those A’s on my report card meant-
- Kennedy That’s part of the problem you think A’s denote... they are only testament to the information you have absorbed and regurgitated onto exam sheets with the uninspired essay.
- Parker Why is it uninspired?
- Kennedy Why did you write it?
- Parker ?
- Kennedy Because you were asked to. How is that inspirational? You were asked to write, only to indicate that you had a passing awareness of some kind of thought, presented by a mediocre teacher in the school of The Academy of Insert King or Queen Name Here.
- Parker Well on the planet I live on, that’s how it works.
- Kennedy We do not live on the same planet. In the same time zone...you do not live at all...
- Parker (Indicated the same back and forth motion with his hand)
- Kennedy (Amused, shakes head) Listen to what I’m telling you. Really listen. Write it down and later carve it in wood or stone if you have to. Read it every day

until you understand the words. One does not learn about life in at the Preparatory School for Pomp and Circumstance...

Parkers That's not the name of my school, it's called-

Kennedy Irrelevant.

Parker It's the top school in-

Kennedy Irrelevant! Don't you do a class in "drama"

Parker I don't have drama as an elective...

Kennedy That clunk you just heard was my jaw dropping to the floor.

Parker My father says that while he pays for my education, he chooses the electives. This semester I have law 104 and Government Studies.

Kennedy (Softens) But you would take drama if you could.

Parker (Hesitates) Yes.

Kennedy Don't lie to me. Ever. You can swear, you can talk about politics and religion and sex. You can show up drunk, naked, mentally disturbed, break into song, international sign language or interpretive dance but you must NEVER lie to me.

Parker I would take Film Studies.

Kennedy Better.

Parker I love movies, not at home but at the Cineplex, with recliners the over salted popcorn and overpriced candy.

Kennedy You lost me with recliner but one point each for the adjectives "over salted, overpriced".

Parker (sighs)

Kennedy And, you are here...

Parker Because you have all the answers, the wisdom to pass on. My father doesn't know any film writers to pay personally, so he asked you because he is on the board of the theatre where they did your play recently.

Kennedy And, did you see my play?

Parker (Goes to lie, thinks better of it) No.

Kennedy Good!

Parker Good? I thought you were going to yell at me because I didn't see your play. I would have lied to make you feel good but then if you asked me questions about it I wouldn't be able to answer.

Kennedy Good.

Parker I don't understand you. Don't you want people to see your plays?

Kennedy Not that one.

Parker Isn't it a good one?

Kennedy What? No, of course it's not good. It's brilliant. It's the most perfect play I have ever carved, it is an oil worthy of MoMA, it is a symphony with not one note amiss. I worked on that play for... ever.

Parker But?

Kennedy It was butchered.

Parker You didn't like the way they did it?

Kennedy The way they did it? – you mean the production.

Parker But it's the biggest theatre company in this city, even in this part of the county. My father doesn't sit on boards of small companies.

Kennedy Slaughtered.

Parkers Oh! Did you get bad reviews?

Kennedy Not particularly.

Parker But people didn't come.

Kennedy No. It sold out the end of its run.

Parker You didn't like the actors?

Kennedys They were all competent.

Parkers Competent but not brilliant?

Kennedy They couldn't be brilliant because of the narcissistic, syphilitic
boil of a director.

Parker Oh, you didn't like what they did?

Kennedy Understatement.

Parker Why?

Kennedy I presented them the finest three Michelin star repast and they poured it into a
Cuisinart and dripped the resulting sludge on to the cracked plates of starving
diners. *Cuisnart!* I feel the bile moving upwards. Let us not dwell.

Parker (Genuinely) I'm sorry they did a bad production of your play. I thought
because it was the biggest theatre they would do the best job. I guess not.

Kennedy The best theatre isn't always found on the biggest stage, with the highest
production budget. In fact, it most often isn't. You have to know where to
hunt, truffles are often buried. You must roust them out like the boar
with the well-developed snout. You could drop a 'happy meal' in the woods in
Tuscany and a boar would step on it on his quest for the truffle. Let you
develop that snout.

Parker Good theatre is in Tuscany?

Kennedy NO! In the unexpected, in the black box, sometimes on the Fringe.

Parker Not Broadway? My father says he will take me if I write to your
satisfaction. I'd rather go on the MGM studios tour.

Kennedy That would be just like (Shudders) Disneyland.

Parker (Happily) Yes!

Kennedy How appalling.

Parker. I've never been to the theatre

Kennedy (Slow turn) I beg your pardon?

Parker I've never been to the theatre. Well, some actors came to our school once
and did a thing.

Kennedy A thing?

- Parker Yes.
- Kennedy The School of Moneyed Uniforms never piled you into a bus to see theatre?
- Parker In grade ten they went to Romeo and Juliet, but I had an orthodontist appointment.
- Kennedy You missed seeing Shakespeare to get your braces tightened?
- Parker Yes. But my best friend Tazz said it wasn't that good.
- Kennedy Wasn't that good...
- Parker But, I still saw it. I saw the movie on my i-pad.
- Kennedy I'm sure it was exactly the same experience.
- Parker (Missing the sarcasm) Yes. But I still want to learn how to write a play.
- Kennedy That's absurd! You want to be a chef and you've never eaten at a restaurant.
- Parker But a chef knows food. I know food. Words. I know words.
- Kennedy (Mimicking) "Words. I know words, I know all the words, nobody knows words like I do" First of all... You. Know. Nothing. Words are just... bricks. You think a brick layer knows how to build a cathedral? You think a wanna be chef succeeds because he takes nourishment and turns it into shit? First of all, I don't even know if you know the difference between nourishment and food. You strike me as the sort that keeps drive-thrus in business. And secondly, you think this is about writing? You think these sessions are about writing! It's not about writing! We are not creating literature. This is architecture. We are creating blueprints for *others* to build their New York skyscrapers, their 17th century Villas, their monuments, their broken shacks.
- Parker I thought we were writing plays.
- Kennedy Wrong. We are creating blueprints. They create the play.
- Parker The actors?
- Kennedys Actors! You think what a play needs most, are actors?

Parker Yes!

Kennedy Dear god, no. And I say that as an atheist. The most important thing that a play needs is not an actor, not a set, not costumes, not props, not even a theatre. A play needs an audience.

Parker Don't all plays have an audience?

Kennedy Not even close.

Parkers I think- I don't know- I guess not all of them get made.

Kennedy You think?

Parker A few.

Kennedy (laughs) A few, aren't you cute?

Kennedy You really must leave now.

Parker But we haven't used up the whole hour.

Kennedy It feels like months since you appeared. Can't you just get a book or something? Scratch that, I don't mean a book, god forbid you should crack one of those archaic devices... isn't there some sort of web tutorial you could do? I'm sure there's a YouTube version – how to write a play in 15 minutes or less.

Parker I told you my father paid...

Kennedy Your father didn't pay with money.

Parker Well if he hasn't, he will e-transfer you later. You know who he is, he's good for it.

Kennedy I didn't agree to this for money.

Parker Well, you don't want me here. I assumed it's for the money.

Kennedy You assume wrong. In theatre we often trade goods and services, it works out well and it pleases those who are anarchists.

Parker Are you an anarchist?

Kennedy Dear god, no.

Parker And you say that as an atheist. Aren't atheists and anarchists the same thing?

Kennedy What are they teaching you at the Academy of St Martin in the Fields?

Parker That's not its name and you know it, you're just making fun.

Kennedy One doesn't have to answer every question when asked.

Parker So, you don't need the money. (Looks around doubtfully) You're rich too?

Kennedy Yes, but not with money.

 (Parker shakes his head)

 I asked your father for one of his connections.

Parker (Understanding now) He is well-connected. Did you want a connection to someone in New York so that you can get your plays on there?

Kennedy No!

Parker Then who? I'm sure you know more theatre people than him.

Kennedy Well of course I do. He's in finance.

Parker Not always, he was a lawyer.

Kennedy Of course he was. And before that a rocket scientist or a doctor?

Parker You're making fun of him. I don't mind.

Kennedy I don't mean to. My beef isn't with him per se...

Parker Anyway this is how I ended up here in your living room.

Kennedy This is only a living room because it is where I live. Please do not refer to this space as such.

Parker What do you call it?

Kennedy Not that! You can call it, the study, the library, the art gallery...

Parker But what do you call it?

Kennedy The salon.

Parker Okay.

Kennedy I thought that when I said “salon”, you’d silently preface it with “Hair”. This is an artist salon. (An accent starts to creep in) This salon is in Paris, down the street from the Moulin Rouge, next to the Chat Noir! Here men in uniform are not permitted to enter, no military, no priests - only atheists and artists. Artists and writers and whores, oh my! A place where we can congregate and drink absinthe and smoke cigars and do other unmentionable substances to fuel us and bond us and make life bearable. Do you do unmentionable substances?

Parker No.

Kennedy It gives us a telescope with which to view the world. Or a dragon’s eye where the images are fractured, resplendent and repeated like a dizzy kaleidoscope. This is where jazz plays, where swaths of velvet and brocade cascade, where spangled diamonds are made of paste, (all the best ones are,) where scandalous dancers bedecked in pink ostrich feathers can-can and flash. Where politics are bandied about with philosophy by Negroes and queers...

Parker I don’t think we say the N word anymore.

Kennedy (Great outburst laugh, dropping the accent) You think Negro is the N word. Aren’t you cute?

Parker I’m not supposed to answer every question.

Kennedy Look he learns!

Parker I thought you said I couldn’t learn by being taught.

Kennedy You can’t learn most things, playwriting especially. You can’t learn how to write a play in classroom. The whole idea is ridiculous.

Parker So where?

Kennedy You think it’s a “where”?

Parker (Unsure) How then?

Kennedy Ha!

Parker (Challenging) How did you learn then?

Kennedy By doing of course.

Parker You had no teachers?

Kennedy Of course I had teachers, I had the best teachers. I have Shakespeare...

Parker I'm pretty sure you didn't know Shakespeare.

Kennedy Of course I know him and Sheridan and Shaw and Shaffer and Simon.
(Beat) Truly if you want to be great you had better change your name to something that starts with an S.

Parker Student.

 (Pause. Kennedy lights a slim cigar)

Kennedy Zeus had two daughters, Melpomene was the goddess of tragedy and Thalia the goddess of comedy. Muses. They are those cute little masks that people who aren't in theatre, but want to be, wear on T-shirts or necklaces or get tattooed on their arms.

Parker Mythology. I never studied Greek mythology.

Kennedy I never implied that you did.

Parker But thank you for teaching me something. That's the first thing that I learned. I'll write it down.

Kennedy (Appalled) The first thing?

Parker And the blueprint thing.

Kennedy Blueprint thing.

Parker Yes. (He is writing)

Kennedy Let me ask you a question.

Parker I don't think my answer will please you, but you can try.

Kennedy Why?

Parker Why what?

Kennedy Don't answer with a question.

Parker ...?

Kennedy Why do you want to write a play?

Parker Well, two reasons.

Kennedy I'm spellbound.

Parker I thought it would be fun.

Kennedy Fun! You think writing is fun?

Parker Writing isn't fun?

Kennedy Dear god, no!

Parker If it's not fun why do you do it?

Kennedy I have no choice.

Parker Of course you do.

Kennedy Let me think for a moment. Let me imagine a faraway place in a make-believe land where I have a choice.... nope, still can't. Don't you think for one second if I had a choice, I would choose this? Nobody *chooses* this. It doesn't make sense. I write stories for adults to act out for other adults in public places. That barely makes sense to me and I've been doing it for 50 years.

Parkers But you're 55 I checked before coming here.

Kennedy Aren't you the diligent researcher. What's the second reason?

Parker The second-

Kennedy Yes, you said there were two reasons you wanted to write a play.

Parker Become a playwright, yes-

Kennedy Be. Come. A. Play. *wright*?

Parker Yes. Captain. Kirk.

Kennedy You think a person who writes a play becomes a playwright?

Parker I guess I was wrong again.

Kennedy I've been writing for a hundred years and I only became a playwright five years ago.

Parker I don't understand.

Kennedy The second reason...!?

Parker Oh, I want to write for the movies or at least television and I thought I'd start off easy, learning to write a play.

Kennedy I've heard enough, get out.

Parker (Beat) But you owe my father six hours....

Kennedy No. In any court of law in any civilized country in the world, they would know that for what you paid, you've already gotten your money's worth.

Parker But, I don't know how to write a play yet. You haven't told me.

(Kennedy grinds out cigar and goes to the absinthe bottle)

Kennedy Tell me Aristotle, what do you want to write about?

Parker Well, I thought....

Kennedy (Puts up hand) No. Wait until I've had my first sip. (Does so without effect.)

Parker I thought....

Kennedy Wait. I'm going to need to be sitting for this. (Makes a show of fluffing the pillows and settling down) You may proceed.

Parker. Well the one thing I am an expert on-

Kennedy You're an expert in something! Oh, the joy, the anticipation. Make a note in your little coil book. This, this is what they call suspense.

(He is unsure whether to write it down or not)

Go on, I'm rapt, sitting on the edge of my proverbial seat. Proceed.

Parker I'm an expert in my own life. I thought I'd write about my own life.

Kennedy (Laughs out loud) Well we're just burning through your curriculum like (Snaps fingers) Like....?

Parker Wildfire?

Kennedy Cliché fire. That was an example of comedy, followed by an example of cliché.

Parker What was?

Kennedy Oh did you miss it? I said, “what are you an expert on?” and your line was “my life”. That is comedy. Set up and punch.

Parker But it’s not funny.

Kennedy It was. Did you not hear the faint underlying ‘Wha wha’ after your response?

Parker ‘Wha wha’?

Kennedy ‘Wha wha’ like in early Saturday morning cartoons when the roadrunner subverts the coyote for the millionth time.

Parker What?

Kennedy Oh. You really don’t get it do you? You don’t understand and here I was being all teachery, trying to reach out and connect using a little Warner Brothers bon mot.

Parker Who are the Warner brothers?

Kennedy I was a hundred and I’m aging by the minute.

Parker Let’s get back to my life.

Kennedy Yes. Let’s!

Parker Okay.

Kennedy But, first write that down in your notebook. “Yes let’s” that’s the perfect answer that one actor gives another in the art of improv. Do you know about improv?

Parker I think I saw it on TV.

Kennedy Oh, if only there were theatres you could go to-

Parker Yes! We’ve established that I’ve never been to the theatre.

Kennedy Two points for using the word established. Three syllables. But sadly, only worth two points.

Parker Can you teach me anything without making fun of me?

Kennedy Doubtful.

Parker Isn't that bullying?

Kennedy If I whip you with your ignorance, you can always disarm me.

Parker I am an expert in my own life.

Kennedy No you're not.

Parker Yes. I am.

Kennedy And I respond with "Oh, no you're not!" This is the beginning of a pantomime repartee. Write it down, write it down. You say one thing and I say the other and the audience joins in...

Parker I have no idea what you're talking about.

Kennedy Oh yes you do!

Parker Oh no I don't!

Kennedy Perfect, write it down.

Parker Write down what?

Kennedy The. Pantomime. Reference.

Parker What's? Pantomime?

Kennedy Oh, you're killing me. I'm going to be found dead tonight right here on this carpet...

Parker What's? Pantomime?

Kennedy It's a genre.

Parker What's a genre?

- Kennedy My corpse rotting and melting into the fibers of the cheap Turkish knock off...
- Parker At least tell me how to spell them and I'll look them up on my phone.
- Kennedy At home, later, but there are no cell phones in my class.
- Parker (Lying) It's not – (Thinks better of it and makes a great show of turning it off.)
- Kennedy Pantomime is an old English show-
- Parker So they don't do it anymore. No wonder I haven't heard of it. I'm not a hundred like you.
- Kennedy Don't be rude, I'm teaching you something, Pantomime. The original, Roman mime, in which performers expressed meaning through gestures, accompanied by music... in this case P-A-N-T-O-M-I-M-E, is a show. It's the only show that's fake and honest.
- Parker (Takes out his pen) Yes?
- Kennedy Fake because it's based on fairytales and honest because it's fun for the whole family. Now, normally that is a lie. Any show that tells you it's fun for the whole family, is blatantly a lie. What entertains a three-year-old can't possibly entertain me. But in the best Pantos, that's the shortened version, Panto, the script operates on two levels. Everything operates best on two levels-
- Parkers Platforms?
- Kennedy Bones becoming evident through the skin...
- Parkers Stop with the death thing already.
- Kennedy Death thing – you mean analogy A-N-A-L -O-G-Y.
- Parker Anal with an O-G-Y at the end. This had better be a real word.
- Kennedy Of course it's a real word. Playwrights don't make up words... no that's a compete lie. We make up words all the time. Shakespeare made up millions. Did you know that? You have heard of Shakespeare or are you a zlobberbust?
- Parker Yes, I've heard of Shakespeare, but I don't want to write like *that*.

- Kennedy (Laughs) In a million years, typewriters and monkey references aside, you are safe. You will never write like Shakespeare.
- Parker (Knows he has been insulted, looks down at his notes) You said there were two levels in a P A N T O M I M E.
- Kennedy The first, a simple fairy tale like *Jack and the Beanstalk* with ogres and singing harps and a boy who buys magic beans from a man with a horse, which is two men dressed up as a horse, who poops coconuts.
- (Parker laughs)
- The second level, the script works at a different understanding, at the level of the adult. There are thinly veiled references to current politics and the state of affairs and there is the use of the double entendre.
- Parker Dooble what?
- Kennedy Double entendre. Double meaning. Somewhere off in the distance a rooster crows. The child is delighted in the recognition of the animal sound. ‘Baa’ is for lamb, ‘woof’ is for dog, ‘cock a doodle doo’ is for rooster. Meanwhile the princess on stage turns to the prince and says “Sire, your cock rises early in the morning.”
- Parker (embarrassed) Oh, I see.
- Kennedy Fun for the whole family. And there is cross dressing and clown and breaking the fourth-
- Parker Fourth what?
- Kennedy Wall. Direct address.
- Parker I know what the words mean. I just don’t know what you mean.
- Kennedy (Sighs) If this were a stage and I was here by the cocktail bar and you sitting there all mournfully on the divan and let’s say unbeknownst to us there is an audience down there. If this wall here is stage left, this one wall upstage is another, and stage right is the third wall, then the imaginary line that divides the audience from the stage, the reality from the fantasy, is called the fourth wall. So, I could go over to that fourth wall and directly address the audience, I could look out at them and say, “Well now, what do you think of our scholar here?” Now, if I ask that rhetorically they know they don’t have to answer but if I actually make eye contact and engage them, thus begins audience participation.

Parker Like in the Panto!

(Clutching her heart in mock surprise)

Kennedy Oh my god. It's alive! The monster. It lives!

Parker Hey!

Kennedy If you're offended it means there's a slim chance you got the reference.

Parker I did. Frank...instein.

Kennedy Oh my god, a comeback! But I'd rather be Stein. Gertrude Stein to be exact. But a rose is a rose is a rose by any other name. My little creation! I'm all a twitter. And if you think that has anything to do with tweeting...

(There is another pause. Parker picks up his pen again)

You strike me as the kind of person that thinks plays ought to be read.

Parker They shouldn't be read?

Kennedy Dear god, no. They are meant to be seen!

Parker I don't see the difference.

Kennedy Of course you don't. (Lights another cigar)

Parker Are you allowed to smoke in here?

Kennedy Who would disallow me? Now go. You have homework.

Parker You want me to write something for next week?

Kennedy I want you to research and make a list of possible theatre genres and I want you TO GO TO THE THEATRE and don't come back until you have.

Scene II. The facility.

(The room is empty except for a table, two chairs and a white board. With his back to the audience with his head down on his arms on the desk is the boy, Jake. He has a black hoodie. Kennedy enters.)

Kennedy Hi. I'm... (Puts out her hand and it isn't returned) You don't care. Look, to you I'm just some person, a teacher. Some people have a lot of baggage about teachers, even the word, it puts people on the defensive and conjures up all sorts of memories of trauma in grade six. I get it. But in this room, I am not an authority figure. We are equals ... Alright. I can leave anytime I want, and you're stuck here but...

(He doesn't lift his head)

But I'm not a church lady or do gooder if that helps... I'm a person, a professional writer...

I usually teach adult ed. All the, mostly ladies, who sign up want to be there. They've paid money. And you didn't sign up, you haven't paid money and you don't want to be here.

(Pause)

Well, I mostly teach adults. I have this one kid right now, nice kid but he thinks he's six hours away from writing a screenplay, going to Hollywood, seeing his movie made and getting accolades to prove his father wrong.

Look, I got selected for this pilot project. If this goes well, they will introduce creative writing to the rehab program. Creative writing has been proven effective in... never mind. Not important.

(Pause)

Look, I know all the other guys are at hockey and you're here with me. I'm sorry your treatment is mandated but surely there are worse things than being in here with me?

(Pause)

I know this is rough, this is the last thing you probably want, and I know you just came out of detox. That's gotta be hell. I get it. Really.

(He lifts his head)

I'm thinking that there are only two rules.

(The head goes down again as she writes on the white board)

1. Handwriting, spelling and grammar don't count

I only care about content, *what* you write.

And **2. This is a censorship free zone.**

You can write *whatever* you want.

(He adjusts to a more comfortable sleeping position, dropping his head back down onto his arms on the table)

(Pause)

Possibly I didn't think this through. How many days since you got out of detox?

(He holds up one finger)

Right. So, you're not really ready for this.

How are you feeling?

(The hand comes out again the middle finger is raised)

Right.

While I appreciate the communication, how about you write something on the board if you don't want to talk to me.

Whatever you want.

Look, I'm not going anywhere, you write something on the board and I'll leave early.

Anything.

(He goes to the board snatching up a black pen and writes **I hate this.**)

That's a start.

(Beat, he looks at her and the writes, **I hate U.** Seeing it has no effect on her he sits back down)

Now, I know that line of dialogue isn't related to me because how can you hate me? We've never met. You don't know enough to hate me yet. So, this is your opus. Okay. Your first creative writing piece. It could be anything, a poem, a novel or an essay but my favorite are plays. And this is quite brilliant. You've actually mastered the first rule of playwriting. Conflict!

(Takes another colour and goes to write)

What shall we call this character?

(Pause)

This is the first line of dialogue. Very strong.

(Pause)

Let's call him Joe. Although that's a slippery slope. I once improvised a scene with a bunch of kids in a Christian school. I called the characters Joe and Mary. Didn't even think about it. I put them in the back seat of a Studebaker making out, then she shot him... the look of horror on their faces... I wasn't asked back.

(Pause)

And I wasn't even wearing my "Devout atheist T-shirt"

(Pause)

Let's call the second character (Beat) **Jack**

(She writes the name on the board)

And in response to Joes' line, Jack says...?

(Pause)

Jack says?

(He goes to the board and writes **Fuck U**)

Okay! Terrific.

(He writes **Fuck U** four more times underneath and sits back down.)

Now we have two choices. We can edit in the final draft in which the last five fuck yous are redundant or we can punctuate...)

(Adds punctuation making it into to dialogue that reads)

(As she's writing)

And I know I said spelling doesn't count, but it's my Achilles heel.

Joe **I hate this. I hate you.**

Jack **Fuck... you.**

Joe **Fuck you?**

Italics for emphasis

Jack **Fuck *you!***

Or brackets for intent

Joe (playfully suggestively) *Fuck you?*

Or the addition of action in brackets

Jack (acquiescing, kisses him) *Fuck you.*

(Jake takes the board eraser and erases it not looking at the board but directly at her.)

Well, first drafts can be tough.

Scene III. Bourbon, The salon (New Orleans)

(Kennedy is sorting through Jazz CDs. Billie Holiday is playing *I'll never be the same*. Kennedy wears a beautiful shawl with a fringe that she draws around herself. Parker walks in.)

Parker Here, I brought you a chocolate filled croissant from the French bakery for you and your salon.

Kennedy That's very kind but I can't eat baked goods since I have a nut allergy.

Parker I would die if I couldn't eat Reese's Pieces.

Kennedy And I would die if I did.

Parker Fine. I'll have to eat all of them as we look out at the Seine...

Kennedy You can eat them as we are in the "Crescent" City.

Parker The City of Lights...

Kennedy One point for reference but we are in an artist studio in the Big Easy.

Parker ...?

Kennedy If you listen you can just hear the marching band, not from the gaucheness of the Mardi Gras but the somber jazz of the funeral procession. (A Jazz funeral band plays *Lily of the Valley*) Listen as they wind their way to Lafayette Cemetery with the above ground, rusty ass crosses and broken angels. (A southern accent creeps in.) This here is the French Quarter, a little way down from Preservation Hall over on Bayou Street up from Pal's Lounge. Not a bar for tourists and hurricanes but a bar without pretension, just good bourbon. If you go out to my balcony and look over the lacey wrought iron you can see off in the distance the Mississippi and an ol' paddle wheeler, The Creole Queen. Adjust the drapes to the sunlight. It's mighty hot out there and this ceiling fan is creaky. We should be sitting in the shade of one of the oak trees, where Spanish moss clings to the branches like the ghosts of the past. Or we could take the streetcar to courtyard behind Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo. We could sit under the banana trees and drink mint juleps. Virgin ones for you. And you can read my fortune with green, gilt edged tarot cards. Why it's almost too hot to wear my shawl. It's handmade silk and was bequeathed to me by the late Tennessee Williams, worn by Blanche DuBois in the very first production in 1947...

Parker There's a label that says made in China.

Kennedy (Undeterred) Madame Wu Yin was brought in as a designer on the silks of course, it bears her label.

Parker I thought you said we weren't to lie.

Kennedy I never lie, and I abhor liars. I create, I fantasize, I exaggerate for effect and I wax poetic, but I never lie.

Parker I went to the theatre.

Kennedy Heaven and saints and all its glory be!

Parker Are you going to talk like this for the entire time?

Kennedy (Mock innocence) Like what?

Parker With the fake accent.

Kennedy (dropping it) Tell me about the theatre kid.

Parker It was called *Lady Cat Killer and her Minions from Space*.

Kennedy I told you to go to theatre!

Parker It was in a theatre.

Kennedy Just because something is in a theatre it doesn't make it theatre. If your boy scout leader gave a lecture on civics would that be theatre? Or if Jennifer and Chad had their nuptials on stage would that make it theatre? You did not see theatre. You saw a semi improvised cabaret show-

Parker It had a story and everything.

Kennedy Oooo and everything. Was the everything tight sparkly costumes, bedecked writhing young things that stirred your nether regions, or was it the melancholic solo of the drag queen, with drippy mascara on her cheeks or the sound effects of the laser shoot out?

Parker You saw it!

Kennedy The answer to that is "no, I didn't" or "yes, I have, a thousand times" take your pick.

Parker It had actors...

Kennedy It had performers!

Parker There's a difference?

Kennedy There's a difference?!

Parker Why do you repeat everything I say?

Kennedy Incredulity or dramatic effect, your choice.

Parker So what should I see?

Kennedy My dear if you want to be a playwright, here's a radical thought, maybe, just maybe, you should see a play.

Parker Okay. But I have a busy week, finals are coming, and I have basketball.

Kennedy Don't do me any favors. Don't go because I tell you to go.

Parker YOU JUST TOLD ME TO GO.

Kennedy Lower your voice, Jackson the trumpet player who lives downstairs and plays all night needs his sleep.

Parker Does he play Jazz in New Orleans?

Kennedy (Delighted he is playing) Why yes he does! And it's not pronounced New Or Leans it's pronounced Naw Lans.

Parker Nor Lands.

Kennedy I want you to go to theatre because *you* want to go to theatre.

Parker I go to the movies.

Kennedy I don't teach screenwriting.

Parker Isn't it sorta the same?

Kennedy Dear god, no.

Parker And you say that as an atheist.

Kennedy (Smiles) In cinema they do two things very well that theatre can not.

Parker (Gets out his note book) Are you going to tell me, or do I have to Google later?

Kennedy The close up and action adventure.

Parker (Writing it down) Okay.

Kennedy The camera can pull focus. Close up of a tear rolling down a cheek. This can be very effective when strategically placed in a narrative, not gratuitously or for any kind of show.

Parker I get it. On stage not everybody can see the tear.

Kennedy Of course they can see it but just not necessarily with their eyes.

Parker Huh?

Kennedy The actor conveys a tear. Whether one rolls down his cheek is almost immaterial past the 6th row. In theatre the audience is asked not to consume passively, but to engage, actively participate with their imaginations. So, if a character says, biting his lip "Daddy, do we really have to put Buttons down?", the audience *can see* the tear from the front row to the second balcony.

Parker Or see a paddle boat called the Creole Queen from a balcony.

(Kennedy smiles)

And action adventure?

Kennedy Oh, that genre never translates well onto stage, though god knows people try. You always end up with some poor actor running in place or fighting a revolve. It's worst when they mime getting into cars with pretend steering wheels and rolling around the stage on office chairs. It's patently ridiculous and often ends in laughter from the audience.

Parker Isn't that okay, if it's a comedy?

Kennedy I just said it was action adventure! (Beat) Let's talk about genres. It's as good a place to start writing a play as any. It will tell you about your canvas and how big it is...

Parker You think I'm an art student?

Kennedy So many comebacks, so little time... Sometimes people hand me straight lines like that and I can't decide if it's a setup for a joke or deserving of a withering retort. Sometimes there are just too many options and it feels like by brain's going to pop. I open my mouth, and nothing comes out and I look like an imbecile. (Demonstrates) I want to clarify afterwards, I'm not an imbecile, I just periodically suffer from retort overload or L'esprit de L'escalier

Parker Always with the French, double whatever...

Kennedy Staircase wit, thinking of the perfect retort after leaving the room and ascending the stairs. That's how most of us actually started writing plays...Where was I?

Parkers Genres.

Kennedy In order for us to discuss this properly we would have to go back to ancient Rome with Aristotle and work our way to the present day.

Parker Well we can't go to Rome because apparently, we're in Nor Lands

Kennedy I asked you to make a list.

Parker I'd have to turn my phone on for the complete list.

Kennedy Tell me what you remember. That's true learning, when the stuff goes from the screen to the brain.

Parker Thriller, comedy, drama, er science fiction, musicals, fantasy.

Kennedy And, if I said “Agatha Christie” you’d say....?

Parker Who’s that?

Kennedy (Big sigh, thinks) Scooby Doo?

Parker Oh, mystery!

Kennedy How many types of comedy are there?

Parker I don’t know, funny and not funny?

Kennedy Spoof, farce, sit com, satire...

Parker Oh, oh is that like the pie in the face stuff?

Kennedy That is slapstick, an element of comedy. It doesn’t have its own genre per se. Same with black humor-

Parker Black humor?

Kennedy No, not that. An ambulance is called to the scene of a horrendous car accident. A car has slid off the road and is on fire. Passersby pull the man out of the car and drag him back up to the road. The ambulance arrives, careens on the same patch of ice and runs over the man, kills him dead.

Parker (Laughs)

Kennedy You just laughed at the death of an innocent man. (Beat) Whatever comedy sub-genre, if you have set up and punch you’ll do okay.

Parker (Writing it down) Setup and punch?

Kennedy If I had said a man was killed when he was run over by an ambulance, who had previously slipped on the same ice that caused his car to go into the ditch and catch on fire.

Parker So it depends on the word order.

Kennedy Playwriting in its simplest forms is only about the way that you organize words.

Parker Or make up words, you Schtumble you.

- Kennedy 27 points but minus 25 for the insult.
- Parker I'm still two ahead. I can add them to 2 for over-salted and overpriced, 2 for established and one for City of Lights. Seven.
- Kennedy Thank goodness for metrics. How would we know you were progressing?
- Parker At school we use rubrics.
- Kennedy We do not use rubrics for playwriting.
- Parker How do you measure what's good without rubrics? Reviews? (New idea) Awards!
- Kennedy Time.
- Parker How long they are?
- Kennedy How long they last.
- Parker Same.
- Kennedy Different. How long they last is a measure of success because it speaks to genius. The *Romeo and Juliet* that you missed seeing for your appointment with Dr. This Is North America And Success Is Measured on Appearance, And In This Case Straight White Teeth. (It's a long name but he gets it all on the business cards.) The aforementioned *Romeo and Juliet*, R & J as they have come to be known, is as timeless and relevant as it was when it was written, when....?
- Parker 18...?
- Kennedy 1597. Actually, that's the year it was published, we actually don't know when he quilled it. You're not taking drama, so you must have studied it in Language Arts or some other trendy name for English. You're in grade eleven now, what will it be this year?
- Parker Next semester is Macbeth.
- Kennedy Less sex but more gore. I think you'll like it.
- Parker I don't like plays like that. The teacher makes us read it out loud in class but to be honest most of us don't know what we're saying and we end up watching the movie. Why don't we do new plays?

Kennedy It's quite true nowadays we don't have any kings, prime ministers or presidents who lie, cheat, steal or murder to get ahead.

Parkers Except-

Kennedy Exactly!

Parker Fine.

Kennedy Time. Less.

Parker So good plays deal with topics that are always true?

Kennedy There is nothing new under the sun. There are many different stories on the same themes. Sometimes there are many different takes on exactly the same plot. Take rom coms for example.

Parkers Rom coms?

Kennedy Romantic comedies. There is only one plot. Person gets person, person loses person, person gets person back again.

Parkers That's not true what about... no.... oh! Fuck, that is true.

Kennedy One point for fuck. Two points for doing the analysis to find out that it is.

Parker What if they don't get the person in the end?

Kennedy Then it's a hybrid genre. It's rom com mixed with tragedy. You know about tragedy?

Parker Yes! It's the sad face on the masks. Thalia?

Kennedy Melpomene.

Parker (Shrugs) I had a 50/50 shot.

Kennedy What do we know about tragedy?

Parker Bad things happen. It's tragic.

Kennedy Bad things happen in comedies and drama. What makes it a tragedy?

Parker They die at the end?

- Kennedy Sometimes but not always. The hallmark of a tragedy is that the protagonist, you know what a protagonist is...?
- Parker Of course. The hero. The antagonist is the villain.
- Kennedy Very good. The protagonist fails at their goal. They want something, a person, a place, a thing... and they don't get it. Now a long time ago people thought you were fated to have bad luck or you were deserving because you were marked by the gods, but we don't believe that anymore because...?
- Parker You don't believe-
- Kennedy Psychotherapy. There are no bad or undeserving people there are only people who are caught in unfortunate circumstances. Now there are some exceptions that people make. One cannot be born with a tragic flaw that causes their downfall, but one might be born, for example, with the gene that contributes to the start of the disease of alcoholism. I might take a drink, (Does) every day but not become an alcoholic but a person who carries the gene, takes a drink, and the gene gets switched on. It's genetic, he can't escape. He is triggered and so begins the spiral down, drunken binges, loss of relationships, lies, getting fired from a job they love, loss of interest in hobbies and simple pleasures, resulting in animalistic cravings. A monster is born that can not be kept sated. Sometimes a cross addiction is activated, prescription pills or the like. And how does it end? It ends the way all tragedies do, with loss, pain and death.
- Parker I had a friend whose parents put him in a program. He's doing okay now.
- Kennedy Well good for him. Maybe his tragedy is that he can't have champagne at his wedding or enjoy a cool beer at a baseball game, or have a cocktail after the show, or (switches back to her accent) or a bourbon on a hot day in the French Quarter. (Fans self)
- Parker It's minus 10 outside.
- Kennedy Then it's minus 10 points for introducing reality where it doesn't belong. Go along now, I'm bored with you.
- Parker So next week, after I've seen a real play?
- Kennedy Yes. And you'll do a report. Don't walk in here all namby pamby and say "Yes it was a show about a guy who did this thing, but first he had to meet so and so and then this happened and so forth." I don't want a rambling review. I want analysis. Who is the protagonist? What is their

goal? What do they want? What is the conflict? You know about the types of conflict from studying novel in grade ten right?

Parker Oh man versus man, man versus himself, and man versus nature.

Kennedy Yes, person versus person, person versus self and person versus their environment, which by the way can include other people in that environment but not secondary characters: stock characters like waiters or soldiers or sales people... you will identify the conflicts and you will – write this down! You figure out how motivated the protagonist is to achieve their goal. The obstacles to the goal, the tactics and lastly the stakes.

Parker Steaks?

Kennedy Not rib eyes and T-bones, what are the consequences of the protagonist not reaching their goals? If the goal is to ...give me a goal.

Parker Have a glass of coke.

Kennedy Have a glass of coke. Good.

(Parker is surprised the answer is good)

What if they are a recovering anorexic and this is a symbol of the first beverage consumed without barfing after treatment. Drama. What if the protagonist is going into insulin shock and needs the sugar desperately and doesn't get it, dies.

Parker Tragedy, born with a fatal medical flaw, that does them in, in the end.

Kennedy What if the poison is hiding in the coke and gets drunk?

Parker Thriller.

Kennedy Or? Scooby?

Parker Mystery!

Kennedy What if the person drinks the coke pretending all the time that it's a very valuable liquor to impress people and gets found out?

Parker Comedy.

Kennedy What if they all break into song extolling the virtues of fizzy beverages?

Parker Musical.

Kennedy What if the coke is being used to propel spaceships?

Parker Sci fi.

Kennedy What if the coke is drunk by unicorns?

Parker Fantasy.

Kennedy What if people sing about how coke is made?

Parker ...?

Kennedy Interpretive theatre. What if it's the story of Cinderella and the kids in the audience think the characters are talking about pop but they are really joking about coke, cocaine?

Parker Panto!

Kennedy What if two people are waiting by a tree for a delivery of coke that never comes?

Parker ...?

Kennedy Absurdist – that's for another day. (Accent) Now I must depart, it's time for my po' boy.

Parker Because you've had it with the rich one?

Kennedy Wha Wha.

Scene IV. The Facility.

Kennedy So last week went well huh? ... We can continue free forming on the board... We can do more lines?

(The head comes up)

I meant we can write lines back and forth

(The head goes back down again)

I'll start. I'll give you a writing prompt.

That will make it easier.

(She writes) **Jim What would you do with a million dollars?**

Here, now you can make up a name and write underneath.

(Pause)

Or you could write a name you already know, Superman... I'd say a famous actor name or martial artist or hockey player... but I'm really bad at this game.

Or you could write something else

(Offers the pen)

(Pause)

Or draw. Draw something. I don't care. Art is art.

(He takes the black pen and draws the back of a fist with the middle finger extended.)

Expressive.

Simple, effective.

Could be a logo for something...

But if you think it's going to stop me from coming here it's not going to work.

It seems thematic with your last work.

I'm sensing a theme.

I It is rather trite though, overused.

Look, you can't make me go away and you can't shock me.

Try again.

Try harder.

(He goes to the board)

(He writes) **U R a dirty cunt**

Better.

Words! Well almost all words.

Could you write out the words?

He adds the letters **YO** in front

Better, thank you. Except I don't know whether the character is saying.

“Yo! You are a dirty cunt “or “You're a dirty cunt.”

(Pause)

I'm going to go with the contraction.

Which in this case is (she corrects it to) **You're**

I know, I know, I'm sorry I shouldn't have corrected your grammar.
That's one of the first rules.

I guess we're both rule breakers

(He mock bangs his head against the table)

Scene V. Vodka. The Artist Studio. (Prince Edward Island)

(Kennedy wears a little black hat. It has a little half veil, when worn with the dress it almost looks funeral. She takes off the hat and starts to wrap it in tissue paper and returns it to a hat box but there is something else in the box... she pulls out a Guns and Roses t-shirt. She smells it. Then she puts it on over her little black funeral dress. She pushes the cd player or maybe she just thinks she does. At an incredibly loud volume the first licks of *Sweet Child of Mine* plays. Rocker style she takes a long drink of the vodka straight from the bottle. Parker enters)

Parker I SUSPECT WE'RE NOT IN NAW LANDS ANYMORE.

Kennedy I CAN'T HEAR YOU.

Parker WHERE ARE WE?

Kennedy CAN'T YOU HEAR THE GULLS?

Parker (indicates obviously not)
(she turns off the music there is a faint call of gulls)
I bought nut free beignets!

Kennedy How kind.

Parker And we're eating these where?

Kennedy Can you not hear the gulls?

Parker Er, I need more...

Kennedy Look out the window at the cliffs. There is a racket of gulls and cormorants, even a puffin or two.

Parker I don't detect a Scottish accent, so I'm going to go with Canada. Nova Scotia?

Kennedy Close, Prince Edward Island, but not on the nasty touristy side. We are on the Acadian side. You follow the North Cape Coastal Drive to where we are and if you look out the window you can see the-

Parker Beach-

Kennedy Cove, but to your left is the-

Parker Lighthouse?

Kennedy Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church-

Parker Why are you interested in a church?

Kennedy I love grandeur and they throw a nice funeral.

Parker Did you go to a funeral there?

Kennedy This one is neo Gothic, it has the warmth of the red brick and two white spires that pierce the sky.

We are in the artist studio of this white house and before you say it, there are no green gables here.

Parker I wasn't going to say that.

- Kennedy It is off season and the waves are savage, the sky pewter. If the rain lets up, this afternoon I'm going to the beach to paint. The sand is such a rich copper. There are patches of seaweed and white shells everywhere. Jean Claude keeps the beach pristine. He collects the drift wood and recycles all the plastics, so it's always photo ready for the few tourists that migrate away from Charlottetown and the cult of the red head.
- Parker (By the window looking out) Yes, I see Jean Claude down there. His beret is a bit-
- Kennedy Stereotypical?
- Parker Faded. But he must have to wash it a lot because of all the bird poop that falls on it.
- Kennedy Naturellement.
- Parker I went there when I was eight. We went to the Ann of Green Gables house. I had the red cordial, but we didn't see the play...
- Kennedy Heaven forbid.
- Parker So Paris, the French Quarter and now French Acadia, I'm noting a pattern Oui?
- Kennedy Three points for speaking another language. I have a vegetarian tortierre in the oven for lunch. Do you smell the fall vegetables, butternut squash, onions and potatoes? It's served with the finest PEI Potato vodka. You can have a cordial.
- Parker Ah! C'est bon, magnifique, merveilleux!
- Kennedy Don't push your luck.
- Parker Are you a psychic?
- Kennedy There's no such thing. No such thing as connecting to the dead, or ghosts...
- Parker Why do you have a crystal ball?
- Kennedy It's a paperweight.
- Parker ?
- Kennedy It's a weight that holds down paper...
- Parker Why would you need one of those?

Kennedy Those are for the days you want to write with the window open with a breeze...

Parker From the days when you used to write with feathers? Well, you're old. (Pause) I googled you.

Kennedy So you know my body of work.

Parker The obituary came up. I'm sorry about your son.

Kennedy Did you see theatre this week?

Parker I went to the University.

Kennedy Oh dear.

Parker What "Oh, dear" I thought you wanted me to see "proper theatre".

Kennedy It was a classic I take it, and not some horrible MFA student's earnest attempt?

Parker I don't know...

Kennedy Start at the beginning. Who was the protagonist?

Parker I don't know. I narrowed it down to Vladimir or Estrogen.

Kennedy Estragon.

Parker You were wrong.

Kennedy I was?

Parker Not every protagonist has a goal. These two were just waiting, there was just talking. They were both hungry and this other guy showed up with this man dog thing but not the guy they were waiting for. But there was no climax, no dénouement, nothing, just talking and waiting! It was long. Tazz said maybe it was a three act play and they didn't do the third act.

Kennedy I wasn't wrong. You are just too young for this play.

Parker The actors playing it were teenagers!

Kennedy (A shudder) L'horreur!

- Parker There was no violence, well a little but not R rated and no sex or nudity.
- Kennedy I take it you were disappointed.
- Parker There. Was. No. Plot. How am I supposed to learn about plot if there isn't one? Or maybe you don't need a plot, you just need two people sitting around chatting!
- Kennedy You *always* need a plot! And playwrights don't write conversation they write dramatic dialogue.
- Parker What's the difference?
- Kennedy One is just people talking, "What time does the bus come? Three minutes after four. It's a nice day today isn't it? Better now that the snow melted..." that is conversation. It isn't dialogue unless, and write this down, it reveals character and forwards the plot, OR the audience knows more than the characters. The power of omniscience.
- Parker What?
- Kennedy If the audience knows that the first guy has killed his wife but doesn't know that the avenging husband is stalking him at the bus stop, then poof, it becomes dramatic dialogue. Same if the audience knows that there is a bomb in the suitcase that the one man holds, poof suspense. It doesn't matter what they blither on about, the focus is elsewhere. Get it? Suspense, drama, horror-
- Parker So the suspense was what was going to happen when Godot shows up? But he doesn't!
- Kennedy That's why you're too young. You think it's call and response, hypothesis and confirmation, ask and receive? Sometimes you don't get. You don't always get to know the answer. You don't get to know! You don't know the ending.
- Parker Because he didn't write one.
- Kennedy There. Was. An. Ending.
- Parker Because the show finished, there wasn't an ending (air quotes) *per se*.
- Kennedy It's not a drama, it's absurdist. You don't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes you just might find...? (realizes he doesn't know the reference) never mind.

- Parker So in absurdist theatre you can break the rules?
- Kennedy Only for effect. It isn't about lazy playwriting, Beckett wasn't being too lazy to write an ending. It was designed that way.
- Parker To frustrate the audience?
- Kennedy Whatever you feel at the end, is what the play was about.
- Parker That doesn't make sense.
- Kennedy There are paintings, oils that hang in art galleries and you look at them and you say, "Oh it's a barn with a robin, I wonder if that pickup truck colour will clash with the drapes?" Not this, this is modern art, abstract, expressionism. Like a Rothko. I see corn fields and sky and the anxiety of death and you see three colour blocks of yellow, blue and red.
- Parker What if the painter just painted stripes?
- Kennedy Picasso knew how to paint perfect photo like paintings, but he chose to do cubism because he wanted to change your perceptions about what art can be. It was a revolt in its time, now it's just quaint and we needed to move on to have more conversations. So, we moved to soup cans and balloon dogs and dead cow installations and cans of feces.
- Parker Oooo gross.
- Kennedy A valid response.
- Parker So my response is, what is important in *Waiting for Godot*? I thought it was boring.
- Kennedy Of course you did.
- Parker Because I'm too young to get it. Wait, is Godot God?
- Kennedy No.
- Parker No because the playwright didn't make Godot God or no because you're an atheist and you think there is no god?
- Kennedy Both.
- Parker But-

Kennedy By the way, I don't think there is no god. I know there isn't.

Parker (Pause) What if there's nothing to get? What did you get out of it? You saw it obviously.

Kennedy 47 times.

Parkers I didn't think it was good enough to see once - that's obsessive.

Kennedy I was the stage manager, that was the length of the run.

Parker So you weren't always a playwright?

Kennedy I was always a playwright. I was just a playwright who stage managed.

Parker (Sarcastically) You were born a playwright?

Kennedy (Sincerely) Yes. It's my curse. I can't be anything but, it's my POV on the world.

Parker (Weary) POV?

Kennedy Point of view. To use a more cinematic term, it's my lens on the world. I see everything from that point. You are a character, you wear your costume, this is a set...

Parker It can't be because we are having a conversation and you said plays only have dramatic dialogue that reveals character and forwards the plot.

Kennedy (A little impressed) Ah, but it is? You have a goal?

Parker To write a screenplay and work in Hollywood.

Kennedy What is your motivation? How strong is it?

Parker High. I'm here on my own time...

Kennedy What are your obstacles?

Parker I was going to say "You" but that would be rude.

Kennedy I was going to say yourself but that would be rude too. Truthful, but still cruel. Tactics?

Parker To come here, go to theatre, write a play, adapt it for the screen, send it to Hollywood.

- Kennedy Optimism mixed with naivety, the elixir of youth! Stakes?
- Parker I have to get my movie produced or else my father won't pay for my education to go to film school. There's one in Vancouver. He won't pay and I'll have to go to Uni and become a lawyer like him.
- Kennedy Very high stakes indeed. A play for your soul.
- Parker Or, I'll have to pay for my own way. And I'll have to get a job waitering like Tazz and never –oh never mind.
- Kennedy What?
- Parker I'll end up managing a restaurant and getting married and watching other people's movies.
- Kennedy And you'll always be waiting for the fame and fortune that never comes. And you will know this is your life. One day you know, you and Tazz will talk about it under a dead tree.
- Parker (Gets it)
- (Pause. Parker eats a beignet, she drinks from the bottle of PEI vodka, they drink and munch in silence.)
- So, if I'm the protagonist, does that make you the antagonist?
- Kennedy Only in your play. In my play I'm the protagonist and you're the antagonist.
- Parker So it depends on your POV. (Beat) But the antagonist must have a goal as well, even if it's only to defeat the good guy, or take over the world with evil plans or put the student through uncomfortable silences.
- Kennedy` Of course the antagonist has a goal.
- Parker You don't care about fame or fortune. What do you want besides not having your play directed by syphilitic narcissists?
- Kennedy Syphilitic narcissist? 10 points.
- Parker What. Do. You. Want?
- Kennedy Only to write my plays.

Parker Bullshit.

Kennedy ...?

Parker You want people to read your plays!

Kennedy My art only exists in the breath of actors.

Parker Don't change the subject. What do you want?

Kennedy Only to teach you, to pass on the mantle-

Parker I call bullshit again.

Kennedy Tis true.

Parker You said we weren't to lie. If I can't lie why is it okay for you? You aren't teaching me for money. What was the connection you needed from my father?

Kennedy That's private.

Parker I could ask my father and he'd tell me.

Kennedy I only wanted a connection to teach some classes.

Parker You're well known, you probably have a good résumé.

Kennedy Probably?

Parker So why did you need my father?

Kennedy I wanted to teach in a non-conventional setting.

Parker I'll ask him...

Kennedy It's a mandated, rehab facility for recovering addicts. They can go there pending their trials. If they do well, they get a lesser sentence.

Parker You're telling me that all those men are doing drugs and committing crime because they are thwarted screenwriters and playwrights?

Kennedy Thwarted! 100 points!

Parker I read it on line looking up "tragedy". But still, I don't get it. Those people want to learn playwriting less than I do... and you hate teaching me.

Kennedy I don't hate teaching you.

Parker You tolerate me. But I still don't get it.

Kennedy You're right, they don't all want to learn playwriting. But some may. It's just a pilot project. If I can make inroads with one client-patient-

Parker But why? You could teach people who want to learn.

Kennedy Maybe I need a challenge.

Parker I'm not buying it. Was it one particular person?

Kennedy Class dismissed.

Parker We haven't even eaten our snack yet. And I haven't told you all my news. (Eats) I'm always starving after school. I've been up since 5:00. My drama teacher said I could only volunteer on the school production if I read the play! And I did. I could have watched the movie but ta da. I read the play and now I'm the assistant stage manager.

Kennedy Congratulations. And what does an ASM do?

Parker Stuff.

Kennedy And now for the big question.

Parker How will I tell my father that I'm going to have to drop debate to go to rehearsals?

Kennedy Oh, the suspense. What's the play?

Parker You won't like it.

Kennedy Hmmm let's see. High school.... *Our Town*?

Parker You won't like it.

Kennedy *The Crucible*?

Parker *West Side Story*.

Kennedy Oh.

Parker I know, it's a musical.

Kennedy There's nothing wrong with musicals. Some of the best plays ever written are musicals. I'm amused because you were so adamant that you hated Shakespeare and ironically (Irony write this down) it's what you ended up working on your first show.

Parker Er, no. I forget the playwrights but for sure it isn't Shakespeare. I read it... (Gets it suddenly) It's R & J!

Kennedy (applauds)

Parker (Jewish accent) What no points?

Kennedy Bernstein and Sondheim!

Parkers Sounds like a law firm. Wa wa.

Kennedy Banter! There's nothing more I can teach you! Once you've learned how to write banter, you can write anything.

Parker (Beat) I have started to write a play. But I don't want to show it to you.

Kennedy Quite right, a fetus isn't improved by showing it the light of day.

Parker Tazz says maybe we could act it out and put it on for the school or the Fringe.

Kennedy Yes, I think you should do exactly that.

Parker You said I'd learn by doing. You'll come?

Kennedy Write it before you invite your audience.

Parker What are you writing?

Kennedy None of your business.

Parker (grabbing a page from her desk)

*Fee Fie Foe Fam
I smell the blood of a Canadian
Be he sick or full of dread
I'll grind his bones when he is dead*

*Fam Fee Fie Foe
Stick a needle in your toe*

*Foe Fam Fee Fie
Stick a needle in your eye*

*Fie Foe Fam Fee
Or hang yourself while you OD*

(looks at her) *Jack and the Beanstalk?* It's a bit dark for a panto.

Kennedy It's an allegory and I'll thank you not to snoop.

Parker But, I care what you write. And you care. You care about playwrights... You care about artists...

Kennedy Way too much.

Parker ...and you care about art. More than family?

(pause)

Kennedy Maybe. People say "what is life without art" but seriously what *is* life without art?

Parker Technology and sports?

Kennedy Who needs that?

Parker I like them.

Kennedy There is however theatre in everything.

Parker Not sports! Not hockey!

Kennedy In Hockey there is blocking, props and the costumes! So ugly. So garish! Men will buy the most ridiculous shirts that would embarrass the Ice Capades.

Parker What should they wear? Brocade and pink feathers?

Kennedy It might add an element of interest to the game. Let's see football with men in stilettos. Let's see how they play. Let's see how it changes the game. Nike stilettos. It could work. Let's change all the costumes, hell even the props- basketball played with a Christmas pudding.

Parker You have to get baskets before it disintegrates.

Kennedy Disintegrates four syllables.

- Parker Points?
- Kennedy Two.
- Parker Hockey could be played with umbrellas when you get a penalty you have to play with it open. In golf instead of golf balls, balls made of glass paperweights.
- Kennedy They might shatter at the first drive.
- Parkers You're supposed to say "yes and..." Yes and the caddies will sweep up the shards with brushes shaped like putters and trays like bubble envelopes where the pieces get mailed to fans for keepsakes.
- Kennedy One hundred points.
- Parker One hundred?!
- Kennedy You came up with an original thought, write a play about that.
- Parker Is it fantasy or absurd?
- Kennedy It may be absurd but it's not necessarily absurdist. Absurdism is reflection on the post-apocalyptic world after world war- you don't seem to be paying attention.
- Parker Sorry, I was thinking about cricket with fish.
- Kennedy As opposed to fish with cricket, which probably wouldn't sell in the school cafeteria.
- Parker 50 points, you mentioned my school without making it in to a goofy name. (Beat) The other day in bio I started to think about germ theory with white cells attacking red cells, cell versus cell conflict with high stakes for the host. My teacher told me to stay focused. But I was focused.
- Kennedy With science you need to imagine a hypothesis before you can design the experiment that leads to a discovery. One must conceive of the invention before one invents. You can't have math with imagining Pi and physics is one of the most imaginative sciences-
- Parker It is? Not in my class.
- Kennedy Time, space, wave theory, parallel universes...
- Parker I don't think everything can be creative. My father is an accountant.

Kennedy Creative accounting ended up with the fall of Arthur Anderson and Enron and the sub-prime mortgage debacle. They shook the Dow and the bedrock of America.

Parker So one change in an accounting practice could lead to a man committing suicide. High stakes.

Kennedy The stock market is all rising action and falling action.

Parker Do you see everything as a play?

Kennedy Life is art, art is life.

Parker It changes your POV...

Kennedy So do you still want to write about your own life or will there be cricket and fish?

Parker But what kind of fish?

Kennedy Look who's been sparked! (Beat) Take that bag of books by the door when you go.

Parker What are they?

Kennedy I have curated a small sampling of some of the best plays ever written.

Parker There must be 20 plays here!

Kennedy You don't have to return them. They are a gift. Read them at your leisure.

Parker (Looking in the bag) Neil Simon and Peter Shaffer-

Kennedy It's pronounced Shaffer.

Parker Thank you. Have fun with your painting.

Kennedy ...?

Parker With Jean Claude down on the beach. See you next week.

Kennedy And, should you be so culinarily inclined, I will be teaching in Japan.

Parker I'll bring sushi.

Scene VI. The Facility.

Jake is sitting up alert. She enters and he takes the pen.

Kennedy Wow, you look decidedly healthier this week. Your face doesn't look as gaunt and your eyes don't look as... well now, is that a sparkle of enthusiasm?

(Hands him the pen)

What's your first line going to be?

(He writes **I know who U R**)

You know who I am. Did you do research or was it the fact I wrote Jack's name on the first day? I thought that might have given me away.

(Pause)

I guess I'm busted.

(Pause)

Yes. I'm Jack's mother. I don't know if he ever said...

Well, I had to pull a lot of strings to get here. I'm writing a play you see. I'm a playwright and it's about Jack and I have most of it done.

I've borrowed an allegory. In the play his name is Jack and I know that on the street they call the oxy-beans. So, the play is called *Jack and his Beanstalk*. The giant that chases him is his disease... never mind...

(She goes to the board and draws a horizontal line)

I know how the story starts, the exposition. Pretty happy family until-

(She draws a big dot at the end of the line)

Inciting incident - his Dad leaves. Jack blames his mother.

(She draws a long line, three times longer than the first one from the dot at a 45 degree angle. Up.)

Rising action, climbing the beanstalk. His Dad is too busy building his empire for him to live with, so he ends up with me. Guess how he feels about that? And after all the joint custody got worked out, he had some sleepovers with his dad on the weeks in the few times he was on the wagon. His dad spoils him, no bedtimes, no rules, eat junk, don't have to do your homework... and was the fie, foe, fun dad, and then instead of meeting the girl with the magic harp, he meets you, the guy who strums the Nirvana guitar. He runs away, he experiments with magic beans. Then he steals the golden goose, and the sacks of gold to support his giant of an addiction...

(She draws a big star at the end of the 45-degree line)

Climax - he gets arrested. He thinks he's going to jail. He's so scared.

It's my fault, he had a faulty gene pool. Once those genes get lit up there is no off switch... so it must be a tragedy.

(She draws a short line horizontally after the star)

The last scene is the group of trees outside behind the casino.

(She almost subconsciously draws a noose hanging from the end of the dénouement) His friend. The tree. The rope. Don't worry I fictionalized you. You are Jessie

(He shakes his head)

You tell me what you'd like. I don't really care. I care about the last scene. I've written it and re written it and 100 drafts later, I can't find the words. Every time I write it, it seems so wrong and I erase it or, scribble it out or set it on fire...

It's my last play you see. I just need to finish it and then...

So, I thought I'd come... research. The autopsy said he OD'ed before he could hang himself.

Listen, I'm glad he didn't die alone. For what it's worth I'm glad you were there. I hope you get clean and you do it for you, or for Jack and not just for the short term just reduced sentences on the B n Bs. I hope you make it.

But I'm not going to give you any big speech about getting clean. Because I've done *every* monologue. The begging, pleading, disappointed, shaming, angry, bribing, cheerleading. I did them all.

And since you were with him on his last night. I thought maybe-

(She just looks at him, he looks back)

I just need to know how it ends.

Can you give me something?

Anything?

Just one line.

Then, you can go back to recreational hockey.

I'll go away, and I'll never come back.

See, I've written his last line a thousand times and I don't know which one is right.

Would you write the last thing he said?

Or the last thing you remember, because I know you passed out beside him.

One line.

Please.

Just. One. Line.

(He goes to the board, carefully and neatly by the noose)

Do you have anymore beans?

(She reads it, laughs for a mille second)

Of course.

Scene VII. Saki, The Artist Salon. (Yoshino-cho, Japan)

(The space is almost empty. Kennedy wears a Japanese robe, it is embroidered and could be mistaken for a house coat. Parker enters, and bows to her)

Parker Konnichwa.

Kennedy Grasshopper.

Parker (Doesn't get the reference) Behold dragon rolls with avocado and yam.

Kennedy I'll get the chopsticks. Be careful of the teapot it's Ming Dynasty willow pattern.

Parker Are you having some?

Kennedy I'm having saki. Under that dome are Sakura Cherry Blossoms –King Yoko Jelly made with kanten powder, cherry blossoms and pink bean paste. (There is no dome)

Parker Na, I'm good. (Opens the dragon roll)

Kennedy You should expand your pallet.

Parker I brought food that includes seaweed... (looks around) It's getting really empty in here.

Kennedy I'm cultivating Zen minimalism.

Parker Only one picture left! Your son? Is he the one who died?

Kennedy Yes. Gunpowder tea?

Parker Sure. How?

Kennedy He was a drug addict.

Parker Oh, that's too bad. But I don't think we call them drug addicts anymore.

Kennedy Oh, what do we call them now?

Parker A person challenged by addiction. (Beat) What happened?

Kennedy He was a person challenged by addiction- and he died.

Parker Last night I saw a movie about all the old rockers who were at Woodstock who died. Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin-

Kennedy It's only salacious if you're a celebrity. Though that's other people. I don't care about celebrities

Parker What about Toulouse Lautrec and Rothko and Peter Shaffer?

Kennedy Those aren't celebrities, those are artists.

Parker I'm sorry about your son.

Kennedy Thank you.

Parker Do you want to talk about him? The grief counselor at school says we should always talk about the people who have passed.

Kennedy He didn't pass, he died.

Parker Tazz says you probably hang out with me because you miss him. We are almost the same age.

Kennedy Look out the window! The cherry blossom is blooming, the village is awash in pink petal confetti, sakura snow-

Parker Don't change the subject.

Kennedy If you look over the balcony of Mount Yoshino to where the pink and white lanterns hang-

Parker It's okay that you miss him.

Kennedy This kimono is made of blue and silver silk from-

Parker You don't have to go somewhere else. Here is okay.

Kennedy No, it's always better over there or in the future or somewhere else.

Parker You're auditioning new places?

Kennedy Clever!

Parker Are you going to move?

Kennedy Yes, I'm going to move.

Parker Where?

Kennedy On.

Parker You're going to move *on*?

Kennedy Don't repeat everything I say.

Parker I learnt that from you.

Kennedy Is that the only thing?

Parker No.

Kennedy It's time for *you* to move on, you know everything.

Parker I'm worried that if-

Kennedy What?

Parker If you don't have to follow through on your commitment of seeing me for one hour a week. (pause) You, you won't be here.

Kennedy I told you I'm moving.

Parker Every week I come there are less and less things in your apartment.

Kennedy It's Japanese. I Kon Married. I divested myself of my plays and my art. I don't hang on to things that don't give me joy anymore.

Parker (Pause) But you love your play collection and your art.

Kennedy I did.

Parker Where are you going that you don't need art?

(Long Pause)

You told me you'd come and see my play. So, I'm expecting you'll be here in the summer. Tazz and I got a place in the Fringe Festival!

Kennedy Really! That's quite a feat. It's a lotto system, most people don't get in the first time.

Parker Yes, well...

Kennedy Your father wrote a cheque...

Parker You said you'd come.

Kennedy Okay, I'll be there.

Parker You just lied to me! You don't lie.

Kennedy Sometimes rules have exceptions.

Parker You said you'd come.

Kennedy Rules are meant to be broken.

Parker That is a cliché! And you don't like clichés.

Kennedy Okay, I'll be there.

Parker Promise?

Kennedy

Parker Promise!

Kennedy I.....

Parker It's in a church basement. I know you're an atheist, but it's just the basement. You could pretend that it's ... I don't know somewhere else... San Francisco? Or a basement theatre off Broadway. Greenwich Village? You can play the role of the critic. You can wear a fake moustache, so that nobody will recognize you- And it looks like you've given away all your writing books. Huh. Your generation! Do I have to think of everything? (He rips out the pages he has written on in the red coil notebook and hands it back to her) Oh and you'll need a pen if you're going to take notes and write a review. (He hands her back the pen, she doesn't take it.) Where am I meeting you next week? (Beat) How about, Mars? We need a genre change up. You can see it from your balcony. You can't miss it. It's the fourth planet from the sun and the second smallest planet in the Solar System after Mercury.

Kennedy What *will* I wear?

Parker (Lightly) A regular space suit of course, do you want to die out there?

Kennedy (Beat) No. I'll meet you by the third crater from the left.

(pause)

That was cheesy.

Parker I like cheese.

Kennedy I think I gave away all my old beards and spirit glue.

Parker We'll get some more. And you'll wear a long brown coat and write all the mean things you hate about the play in it.

- Kennedy Why would I hate it?
- Parker Because it isn't Shakespeare or Shaffer or Simon or Sondheim.
- Kennedy What do you know about them?
- Parker I read Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park*. I like it!
- Kennedy You read a play of your own volition?
- Parker Over breakfast, at lunch, during break at rehearsal, on the weekend on the bus in the car, I read them all.
- Kennedy *All?*
- Parker *Death of a Salesman, The Crucible* that was a long one, *Children of a Lesser God*, I saw the movie of that years ago when we stayed in the ranch and the wi fi went out and we could only play DVDs. *Amadeus*, liked it, especially the ending. *Tinka's New Dress*- is that meant for actors or puppets? *Kill me Now* - eeew. *Noises Off*, funny stuff. *A Raisin in the Sun*, great. *Love Letters*, that was easy. All three Ibsens, that just about killed me. *The Normal Heart*, I'd like to see that. *Angels in America*, I'm not sure I understood it all, it was mixed genre wasn't it? *A Streetcar named Desire*, you talked about Williams and the Blanche before. And, *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?*...
- (She is stunned)
- Parker You remind me a bit of Martha. I think she was cray cray too.
- Kennedy Cray cray too?
- Parker That's the technical term for it.
- Kennedy I- I don't... (know what to say)
- Parker (Lightly) Though she had a pretend son. Yours was real.
- Kennedy Yes.
- Parker (pause) Now you just have a pretend student.
- Kennedy Shush don't ruin it.

Parker Two imaginary students, one you can give all your life wisdom and theatre tricks to and an imaginary student who was the pretend friend of your very real son Jack.

Kennedy You're mean.

Parker You're pathetic.

Kennedy Yes.

Parker You - the protagonist in your own sad story wants two things - to pass on your wisdom and find out her son's last words when he OD'ed. You weren't there at the end. You can't even imagine that can you? The needle, the tree, the belt.

Kennedy I can imagine it, I just don't want to.

Parker Well this is a fucking tragedy isn't it? Because your perky little eager student doesn't exist, and you'll NEVER find out what happened to Jack at the end. So, you don't get your goals, you don't get your happy ending. You have however accomplished cleaning out your place so that there isn't a big mess for whoever finds you. And you did polish off all the old liquor in the house. All the dregs that are left over in a liquor cabinet. Did all the absinthe, bourbon, vodka and saki dull the pain after you came back from the funeral?

Kennedy There is nothing that can dull the pain of losing your son.

Parker You lost him to his Dad, you lost him when he moved to PEI, you lost him to drugs and now you're going to lose him again.

Kennedy I will not lose him again. He will be gone, and I will be (beat) gone.

Parker Dead, say the word. I will be dead too.

Kennedy Dead.

Parker This is the inevitable conclusion isn't it?

Kennedy Yes.

Parker I'm supposed to make an exit now, right?

Kennedy Yes.

Parker Maybe I could immortalize *you* in *my* play

(she laughs)

(pause they look at one another)

If I leave I'm never coming back am I?

Kennedy No.

Parker So this is the climax.

Kennedy Smart.

Parker Smarter than the son you had.

Kennedy Enough.

Parker After I go through that door, I won't exist for you, will I?

Kennedy You served your purpose.

Parker And now you're going to kill me off.

Kennedy Don't be so dramatic. You never were to begin with.

Parker I'm Parker, the interested student you could pass all your wisdom onto. Parker, the name on the pen you were writing your final play *Jack and his Beanstalk* with. So much for inventive names. Why didn't you call me his name? The son who liked movies and hockey and lived with his dad and you hardly ever got to see, didn't give a shit about you or your precious theatre.

Kennedy Stop.

Parker (Turns around the only photo left in the apartment, it is of him) "Parker at age 15, forever, when he liked movies and hockey and had a friend called Tazz before the pills-

Kennedy I said stop.

Parker So I'm "Parker". I'm also "Jake the mysterious missing link" helping you find answers to questions you never knew.

Kennedy Well you kinda look like Jack.

Parker I don't kind of look like your son. I look exactly like him, don't I? Well I didn't become your perfect little student that you could pass your 'bon mots per se' onto.

Kennedy His father got him into rehab...

Parker He didn't last the first three days! He left. But they found him the next week. It wasn't enough to pass on your DNA, you had to pass on all your wisdom, all the things you cared about. But you never got that chance. And even if you'd been there he didn't give a shit about you or theatre and he never even saw one of your plays.

Kennedy Well he lived with his dad in PEI and had hockey...

Parker Lies! He didn't care about hockey! He only cared about himself and beans. And later a homeless addict. But you didn't want to bring that Jack back.

Kennedy A harmless fantasy...

Parker Another lie! You said you hate liars but you're a fine one, aren't you? You lie to yourself all the time. And you know what else you lie about?

Kennedy My drinking-

Parker Your drinking! Your junkie son, son of an alcoholic. Your gene pool with your absinthe and bourbon, vodka and saki, you make alcohol sound glamorous instead of just you emptying out the old liquor before the end. Your fantasy setting and alcoholic haze.

Kennedy Yes.

Parker But you cleaned out the apartment, drained the liquor nobody else drinks, what's left?

Kennedy Nothing. Nothing is left.

Parker You're pathetic.

Kennedy I just wanted-

Parker You don't get what you want. Ever. You wanted a fantasy re-do on your parenting and you wanted to know about the end.

Kennedy I was there when he took his first breath it seemed only right...

Parker And you'll NEVER know what it was like for him at the end. What he thought, what he said. Never.

Kennedy Can I tell you how sorry I am?

Parke It doesn't matter how sorry you are. He's dead. And you're all alone. You could have conjured up a Shakespearean ghost, but you don't believe in ghosts.

Kennedy No.

Parker And now you don't know what to do because you're an atheist and you don't believe in the afterlife, so there's no way you can ever be reunited is there?

Kennedy No.

Parker So how are you going to do it?

Kennedy You know everything I know.

Parker You should have kept the magic beans that his dealer gave you when you went to sprinkle his ashes on the North shore. But that would be-

Kennedy Too...

Parker Cliché? Yes.

Kennedy Yes.

Parker Now you have your own stash of magic beans.

Kennedy Yes.

Parker So what's it going to be? If I walk out that door I cease to exist, and you die. If you walk out of that door it means you leave me behind and you move on. Whether that's into a new life in Paris or New Orleans or Japan or the island he lived on, or just to the liquor store. Your choice.

(pause)

Kennedy I'm scared.

Parker I know.

Kennedy I...

Parker I know.

(pause)

So, what's it going to be?

(pause)

Kennedy Either way I'm going to miss you.

Parker (softly) I know

Kennedy You should probably go now.

(Parker walks slowly to the door. Turns around looks at her. Closes the door behind him.

Kennedy sits on the floor.

She reaches into her pocket and brings out a bag of Reese's pieces.

She opens the bag and pours a handful into her hand.

She looks at them.

She sniffs them and recoils at the smell.

She takes one and puts it in her mouth.

She chews, hating it.

She forces herself to swallow.

The door opens Jack enters

She sees him)

Kennedy (Her mouth and tongue thick, her heart cracking) Jack!

Jack *Fee Foe Fam Fie*
Get the needle else you die

(He watches her as she crawls on the floor to reach her purse on a stool

She can't reach it

Then she pulls on the handle and tips it over

She dumps the contents onto the floor the epi pen rolls away)

Fee Foe Fam Fie
Hurry now or it's bye bye

(She can't reach the pen.)

She can't get the container lid off the epi pen at first)

Foe Flee Fam Fie
Stick the needle in your thigh

(With great effort crawls to the epi pen

She struggles to remove the blue safety top, she takes it off with her teeth

And spits it out of her now swollen mouth

With herculean effort she plunges the needle into her thigh

She closes her eyes, he strokes her hair as

The lights come down.

END