

THE NIGHT SKY

A play by Lisa D'Amour

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TIME

Present

PLACE

New York City

CHARACTERS

Marcel – Mid 30's white man.

Jen – Early 30's white woman. Marcel's wife.

Morgan – Early 40's white man. Marcel's brother.

Amy – Early 30's white woman.

Julien – 23 year old African American man.

Anuk – 57 year old African American woman. Julien's mother.

The Apparition / Will / Sign Man – Mid 30's white man.

Gallery Owner/Man With Birdhouse Suitcase/Old Man/Man With I Pod/Voice of Interviewer – Mid 30's African American Man,

AUTHOR'S NOTE

While this play is set in the heart of New York city, the “base” set should be a series of tall, thick trees, such as one might find in Central Park. Other locations in the play should somehow emerge from this “forest”. Apartments are nestled in tree branches, an office connects to an outdoor café via a rope bridge hanging between trees, etcetera.

The visual art referenced in this play is inspired by the work of Vija Celmins, a contemporary painter and sculptor known for, among other things, finely detailed paintings and drawings of spider webs, oceans and the night sky.

This play was originally commissioned by Playwrights' Horizons, and has had readings Playwrights' Horizons, New Dramatists, The Playwrights Center and The Lark.

For Najeeulah Madyun and Larry Sarrat.

Before the audience lights dim:

Five or Six thick, tall trees. They should look ultra-real.

The sound of crickets, constant, perhaps a few bull frogs.

Perhaps the rustle of small animals running through the leaves.

The sound of a cab driving by.

The sound of several cabs driving by.

The sounds of the nighttime forest mix and morph with the sounds of the city.

As the audience lights dim:

Amy, appears in a long, flowing white nightgown She is feeling the texture of the trees.

Will leans against a tree, watching, from the shadows. We don't really see him.

Amy moves in and out of the trees, sometimes visible, sometimes not.

Marcel enters. He wears a nice business suit. He is barefoot, and sleepwalking. He moves his hands as though he is giving a speech, as though he is giving a speech to the trees.

He turns around: there is a long gray tail coming through a slit in the back of his pants, reaching down to the floor.

When we see Amy again, she wears deer antlers. She walks among the trees.

Anuk crosses the stage, in slippers, a T shirt, sweatpants and an open bathrobe. She has a crow's beak, a breast plate of black feathers. She scratches her feathers. And moves among the trees, perhaps searching for bugs with her beak.

Amy is gone from the stage.

We hear Morgan's cries from offstage "Julien! Julien!"

Marcel and Anuk are still on stage when Morgan enters. His clothes are disheveled. He's dirty, drunk and frisky. He's yelling "Come on, Motherfucker! Come on you homo!" He stumbles around the space.

We hear Amy's cries from off stage: "Will! Will I lost you!"

Jen enters, in nightgown, barefoot. Two long, graceful rabbit ears stretch back from her real ears. She is gathering nuts, which she piles in a pouch she has created in her skirt.

Will still leans against the tree. Morgan stumbles toward him, stopping maybe 5 feet away. Morgan sways and stares.

Will growls at him, kind of playfully, swiping at Morgan with imaginary claws. Will turns in a circle and disappears into a hole in the ground, feet first.

Morgan says: Woah.

Amy enters, now in party clothes, maybe a floor length dress and high boots.

Amy calls "Will?"

Morgan calls "Julien?"

Amy calls: "Will, no fair! Where are you!"

Morgan calls "Julien please, I'm a mess! Come here you big homo! Julien please!"

Julien appears. He is dressed simply and neatly, but his clothes are cheap. He watches Morgan for a moment.

A baby starts crying. Jen drops the nuts, they scatter on the floor. She walks in the direction of the baby crying, and exits the stage.

Anuk makes her way off stage.

A cell phone rings, and Marcel leaves the stage in the direction of the ring.

JULIEN
(To Morgan.)
Hey.

MORGAN
Oh my god.

The lights shift to suggest a "real" forest. The city sounds an ever present din, mixing with sounds of the night. Central Park, 2AM. We notice the remains of a picnic: a blanket, a half empty wine bottle, food.

Julien walks towards Morgan, slow and deliberate.

Morgan unbuckles his pants, helplessly turned on. In the shadows, Julien kneels in front of Morgan.

MORGAN

Oh my OK it's a nice night out.

Slower.

My head is full of cheese.

In line for pancakes, I couldn't remember if it was breakfast or dinner.

I asked for a pork chop and the volunteer just shook his head.

Fuck that volunteer.

A little faster please. Not that fast. There.

He sniffs.

I have a cold. Stop.

Julien stops. Morgan breathes in two deep breaths. Ah. Ah. Choo! He sneezes. Wipes his nose with the back of his hand.

OK.

Julien continues.

Uh the kitten I had when I was little

Had only three paws

Whatever happened to that kitty

Little kitty.

In the distance: a wolf howl. Huh?

Woah.

His attention is back on Julien.

I had a brother who had all the answers.

He would flap his arms like a bird to get the teachers attention

One time they tied him to his chair.

"Help your brother." They would say.

"He needs your help."

OK.

OK.

Amy enters, still drunk, trying to find Will.

AMY

Will is that -

MORGAN
Shit.

AMY
Oh.

Amy is paralyzed by the moment.

MORGAN
Shit shit shit.

Julien disengages. Morgan covers himself.

JULIEN
What the –

Julien turns around, sees Amy.

AMY
Oh my god.

Amy runs off. Julien turns in circles, as though looking for his keys.

JULIEN
Um...um...um....

MORGAN
Um...

JULIEN
Shit –

MORGAN
She she was drunk, She...she's gone.

Morgan and Julien share a moment of embarrassment.

JULIEN
I got walked in on once in high school. I got walked in on in -- get this --
The 3rd floor boys bathroom. In Bed Stuy. We was supposed to be at basketball practice,
and we got, well, huh, DISTRACTED. Me and the captain of the basketball team. I was
all like shakey but he was like: relax. I am the captain of the basketball team.

He touched my cheek and I thought:

The world is good.
I'm gonna do great things with my life.

Why people gotta flip out? Why can't people walk in on something like that and be like - Huh. Looka that. I've never seen that before, Let's all go out for a slice of pie. If Mr. Sylvester Williams, 9rd grade Social Studies teacher was more like that, I'd prob'ly be working in a high rise office building today. Making phone calls and drinking coffee out of a mug.

MORGAN
No, actually you wouldn't.

Julien is perturbed: he was trying to make Morgan feel better.

Marcel appears, in his office on the 34th floor of a Manhattan office building.

Well, you wouldn't.

Morgan finds a half empty bottle of wine.

Somebody left some wine.

He takes a swig.

You want some?

Julien's gotta go.

JULIEN
Thanks for my tour of the big white city.

MORGAN
Hey, hey.

Morgan takes his hand, tries to keep him from leaving.

You are something.

JULIEN
Meet me on the corner of Nostrand and Fulton. Tomorrow at five.

MORGAN
Nostrand?

JULIEN

Nostrand Avenue. In Brooklyn, homo. It's across the river. You can't see it from here.

MARCEL

Morgan you have 5 minutes.

MORGAN

Tomorrow at five.

JULIEN

Tomorrow at five.

Julien takes Morgan's hand, leans down as though he is going to kiss it. Morgan swoops down and kisses Julien on the mouth instead. Julien runs off.

Morgan turns towards the area where Marcel sits.

MARCEL

Morgan you have 4 minutes.

Morgan grabs a well-worn sports coat, picks up a tattered briefcase, and walks into Marcel's office, putting on the coat.

MORGAN

Little brother. Seems like yesterday, right? In our little bunk beds till we were way too big for bunk beds. Who got the best grades? Even though I didn't even try? Who got the best grades?

He looks out the window of Marcel's office.

Nice view.

Remember the time I made you cry in front of Betsy Harshbarger? Or when I made you shoplift gobstopper gumballs for my friends? These are the kind of events that sting while they are happening but later you realize that they bond you to a person. Pain binds people together. Also humiliation.

I am your brother.

I'm homeless.

I'm an addict.

I'm gay.

Marcel cringes just the slightest bit.

I'm irritable.

I'm outspoken.

Remember the time I made you hand wash my underwear so mom wouldn't know I had an accident? Ha ha. Now that's bonding

A pause during which Marcel shifts his weight.

Do you want me to get down on my knees?

I live in the park. I may be the only homeless left in the park. I refuse to be carted out to the Bronx. I'm not THAT homeless. I could stay with Stephen Duffy in his loft but who the fuck can stand Stephen Duffy and his plasto-styrene lumps of "art"?

Do you want me to get down on my knees?

A moment, then Morgan slides out his chair and gets down on his knees.

The copy room. It's all I ask for. The copy room. Or maybe the mail room.

He's pushing it.

The copy room. I won't let you down..

Jen appears in another space. She is holding the baby.

MARCEL

You can't live with us. We've got a brand new baby. You can't live with us.

MORGAN

I'll live in the park, then I'll find my own place.

MARCEL

In Manhattan?

MORGAN

Of course in Manhattan.

The brothers consider each other for a moment. Jen begins to sing softly to the baby. We hear a few lines, and the rest overlaps with Marcel's next speech.

JEN

The sun is in the sky
And the wolf is in the tree.
Looking down at baby
Shhhhhh now sleep.

The moon is in the water
And the tiger in the bush.
Gazing at the baby
Shhhhh now sleep.

We go underneath the quiet
Underneath the quiet
Underneath the quiet
Down we go down
Go Underneath the quiet
Underneath the quiet
Underneath the quiet
Shhhhh now sleep.

MORGAN
The copy room.
I'm saving your
paychecks.
I give you \$50, twice
A week, the rest you
save. You're going
to have savings,
Morgan, in the bank.
I want you cleaned up
and back here today.
this afternoon, 3pm
sharp got it?
I'm not fooling around.

Marcel's phone has been ringing. He picks it up as he gathers papers into a briefcase.

MORGAN
Little brother. Makin' it big.

JEN
(Hushed voice.)
Marcel is that you?

Somehow Marcel races from his office-in-the-trees to his apartment-in-the-trees.

MARCEL
I'm here, sorry I'm here -

JEN
Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

MARCEL
(Taking off his tie.)
OK, so big news!
They're actually talking to each other.
It's really happening.
It's real.

JEN
(Under her breath.)
Marcel.

JEN

Look. Just look. She's real.

Jen and Marcel look at their baby for a few seconds.

MARCEL

Are you sure?

To the baby.

Are you real?

JEN

Shhhhhh.

Jen leaves to put the baby to sleep. Marcel stretches, and does a few boxing moves.

MARCEL

Dialogue can happen. Consensus can happen. Compromise is necessary, but consensus is real.

Jen comes out of the baby's room. She's on task, looking for something.

JEN

It's awesome, puppyface but where's my bra. Not the nursing bra. I want my good old fashioned push-up-your-tits bra.

MARCEL

It's going to be amazing.

Marcel grabs Jen and picks her up off the floor, so they are face to face.

MARCEL

You. Are amazing.

A quick kiss.

JEN

Puppy I'm gonna be late.

MARCEL

Where are you going?

Jen rolls her eyes: she's told him a million times. She speaks as she walks into the bedroom.

JEN

She'll be hungry when she wakes up but I pumped and it's in the fridge. She's done some pretty cute things today! But she needs some Daddy time.

MARCEL

Did you get my shirts? I wore this one two days in a row and I felt like one of your clients.

Jen comes back out with her shirt off and her nursing bra on. She is still looking for her other bra.

JEN

Yes but barely because there's that wolf -

MARCEL

What?

Jen finds her bra in the couch or something during this speech.

JEN

You know that wolf and there were blockades and even the National Guard and for some reason people used it as an excuse to leave work EARLY – how is this here -- so the line for the drycleaner was around the block and Lucy is in the papoose SCREAMING and the old man in front of me turns and says “Little giiiiirl shhhhhh or ze WOLF iz going to EAT you.”

MARCEL

A wolf?

JEN

They showed it on the news like five times today.
Wandering up and down the West Side highway.
From some weird circussy thing that's here from maybe Serbia?
There was a glitch. A faulty latch.

MARCEL

And it's out there?

JEN

They stunned it on Canal Street with a you know stun gun.

Jen exits to their bedroom. She speaks from off stage.

MARCEL

Oh.

JEN

So your shirts are in the closet and the baby is fine. Uneaten. Oh in addition to your shirts look at this!

She comes out of the bedroom carrying a large-sized woven basket, close to three feet tall, with a woven, detachable lid.

Found it on the street. I'm going to clean it up and use it for dried flowers or maybe umbrellas.

MARCEL

Wow.

JEN

On the street!

She leaves it there and goes back into her room. Marcel is standing next to it, a little befuddled. He lifts up the lid, looks inside, puts the lid back on. He brushes his hands off on his pants: it was dusty and a little gross.

JEN

So you're good?

MARCEL

I'm good.

JEN

You boxed?

Marcel practices a few boxing moves.

MARCEL

At lunch.

JEN

Do you like the basket?

Marcel continues to box.

MARCEL

I think you should come tomorrow, Jen. After so much back and forth! I feel like a translator. But I feel good. I can go out there tomorrow and speak sincerely. I'm sincere, right? I mean what I say. I am saying this and I am meaning this. When I am saying these words, when I am speaking these words to you, I am sincere. I am. I am.

From offstage.

JEN

Yes but do you like the basket?

MARCEL

The what?

JEN

The basket I found on the street.

Marcel touches the basket. It's dusty.

MARCEL

Oh, yeah, it's a nice one but maybe a little gross.

JEN

I had to tug it to pry it loose.

MARCEL

What?

Maybe Jen stands in the door, mid-hair fixing. Or pokes her head out?

JEN

Someone left it in this little park over by the river. Sandwiched between two high rises. The whole thing is designed I think around these three old trees, I think they had to, the park people, I think the trees are historic. It was nestled way in the back, I had to kind of dig it out.

MARCEL

Jen!

JEN

What?

MARCEL

It was probably part of the park.

JEN

Marcel it's a basket.

MARCEL

And anyway you should be careful. People live in those parks. Weird people. Unstable people.

JEN

Yes but its such a nice basket.

Jen goes back into the room. Marcel lifts the lid, looks in the basket, puts the lid back on, brushes his hands on his pants.

MARCEL

Morgan came in to my office today.

JEN

(From off stage)

WHAT!

MARCEL

Morgan came into the –

Jen storms on stage, now in her pants but topless, holding the push up bra.

JEN

WE ARE NOT INTERACTING WITH MORGAN!

MARCEL

Honey, hold –

JEN

WE ARE NOT INTERACTING WITH MORGAN. Your brother is a fucking CRACK ADDICT. Yes? A CRACK ADDICT who fucked himself over and lost the job of a fucking lifetime because he would RATHER CRAWL UNDER A CAR WITH STRANGERS TO SMOKE CRACK than make half a million dollars at J.P. Morgan. He'd rather run up his credit cards AND OUR CREDIT CARDS for 25 fucking grand -

MARCEL

He's sick –

JEN

YES HE IS SICK! He is sick and he is an asshole and we HATE him -

MARCEL

I don't –

JEN

WE HATE HIM AND WE WILL NOT ASSOCIATE WITH HIM. MARCEL, THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM, HE CALLED ME A CUNT-FACED KYKE.

The baby starts to cry.

JEN
Shit.

MARCEL
Here, let me.

JEN
Shit.

MARCEL
Let me just, can I please just –

Marcel moves behind Jen and reaches around and cradles her breasts in his hands.

JEN
(Meaning to protest, but losing the impulse as she says his name.)
Marcel –

The baby cries.

Your hands are cold..

MARCEL
Shhh.

Imitating something Marcel said in what now seems like a prior life.

JEN
“Breast feeding is sexy.”

Marcel cradles her breasts for a moment.

JEN
I’m going to be late.

She moves away from Marcel and holds up the push up bra, looking at it as though it were a relic from another planet.

MARCEL
Where are you going?

Jen exits the room. Marcel looks at the basket. The baby cries.

Amy is sitting at the sidewalk tables at a café in the East Village. She is maybe texting.

We see Jen dressing quickly and rushing out the house with bags.

Marcel exits to the baby's room.

Anuk sits in a chair in her apartment in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The TV is on but she is asleep.

Julien walks up to her door, taking out his keys, quietly turning the lock and opening it.

He enters the apartment and closes the door quietly, and stands looking at Anuk.

The baby stops crying.

Jen runs up to the table where Amy sits. She carries several large shopping bags.

JEN

I'm so so so so -

AMY

No it's OK -

JEN

Really, it's just, I'm in like multitask hell -

AMY

You're fine, it's fine, you're here.

JEN

I'm here, yes -

AMY

You're here.

Beat.

Jenny Jen!

JEN

Amy-aims-to-please.

AMY
Oh god!

JEN
I know!

AMY
It's been too long, we're such dorks -

Marcel comes out with the baby, sits on the couch near the basket.
"Shushes" the baby. Amy points to two egg creams on the table.

I ordered us egg creams, we're having egg creams.

JEN
Oh my god yes!

AMY
Jen, you look so great!

JEN
Look at me I'm a walrus, I'm like a really really jiggly walrus.

AMY
No, no, no you've gotten sexier.

JEN
Really?

AMY
Oh my god yes! You wore all those turtlenecks --

JEN
I did? Maybe they were in style...

AMY
You are totally hot now.

JEN
Really?

AMY
So what's it like? Sit down! Do you love it? Do you feel good?

JEN
Yes! I'm tired! It's crazy!

AMY

It's like you have this thing, this creature, that suddenly needs you more than anybody else -

JEN

Yes!

AMY

And all those things you used to obsess about....your career, money -

JEN

God, yes -

AMY

Your 5 year plan it's like, poof, they're gone, because the world has suddenly focused in on this tiny, little helpless thing, wriggling in your hands.

JEN

Yes. Kind of. Yes. That's it.

AMY

That's what all my friends with babies say. Amazing. Astounding. And Martin, Martin's good with it?

Marcel pushes the basket a little bit away from him with his foot.

JEN

Um -

AMY

I want to see it! It must be what like 3 -

JEN

Almost 4 months. Crazy, right? It's insane. You'll see her. And yes Marcel is very good with her.

AMY

Ah! Marcel right Marcel. Marcel Marcel Marcel.

JEN

With Lucille. Lucy, for short.

AMY

After your grandmother!

JEN
Yeah.

In Anuk's space, Julien creeps across the room and exits into another room so we can't see him.

Marcel pushes the basket a little farther away with his foot.

JEN
So what's going on? You said you're working at that Gallery –

AMY
Yeah, whatever, yeah -

JEN
And you had that show in Bushwick....I think I got an email about it....

AMY
Yeah, but that was nothing. OH GOD it was nothing...I thought it was going to be something but it was really nothing so forget it. It's stupid.

JEN
It's totally incredible -

AMY
You think?

JEN
What you are doing -

AMY
I don't know –

JEN
No I mean really in college you said "I am becoming an artist" and you became an artist.

AMY
Yes, you're right, of course, but it's like, I've got all this WORK, this WORK that took a long time to MAKE but if you're not brave enough to take the JMZ way the fuck out to Myrtle Avenue --

JEN
They used to call it "Murder Avenue"

AMY

Exactly it's like if a sculpture
falls in the middle of the art
co-op does it make a sound?
I'm sorry
it's just a bad week
don't listen to me
OK I'm shutting up.

JEN

It's hard
No really, I KNOW
It's like -

Marcel brings the baby back to its room.

JEN

It's like, just before Lucille was born, I had this home-visit in Brooklyn, like way in,
when I was like, out to here.

She indicates the size of her belly.

And I'm in the fifth floor walk up of this woman who is raising four kids on her own and
she has a severe learning disability -

AMY

- Oh my god I don't know how you do it -

JEN

And I'm trying trying to talk to her....she's in this cigarette burned bathrobe at like
3pm....I can practically see her la-la-la....the TV is on in the back so I know the 13 year
old is NOT in school ...and we're talking and the two year old comes toddling in buck
naked and pees on the floor. I mean pisses right on the floor. And the mom says
something like "stop peeing on the floor" to the two year old and he sits right in the pee.
I pick the dripping kid and hand him over, and I open my mouth to say something and the
mom's like blinking at me, totally blank, and I did something I have never done before: I
walked out.

AMY

Wow.

JEN

I know.

AMY

Did you go back?

JEN

I didn't. I didn't go back.

Marcel comes back into the room. He looks at the basket. Maybe lifts up the lid one more time and looks inside.

AMY

Yeah, but at least you are DOING something OUT IN THE WORLD. You have a REAL INTERFACE. I float around in this hologram of scenesters. We go to the same bars and the same after parties and we rarely ENCOUNTER anyone outside of – pardon my french- our “milieu”. I was with this guy in the park the other night...as in like Central fucking Park at 2AM so ridiculous, we had had a million and a half drinks -

JEN

Wait, wait, wait! This guy? What guy.

AMY

Nothing, nobody.

JEN

Nobody?

AMY

He’s just this drummer, its not serious.

Marcel pushes the basket to the edge of the couch, out of his line of sight.

JEN

Is he cute?

AMY

He’s cute, for a drummer.

JEN

I want a drummer!

AMY

What?

JEN

No, I mean, of course not, I’m just living vicariously through your –

AMY

Through my random, mildly satisfying hookups with boy-men?

JEN

Exactly!

Marcel mixes himself a drink and sits on the couch drinking it.

AMY

No, trust me, no, really I need to hang around with more people like you. People who are like, living. Birthing. Not posing.

JEN

Look what I just bought.

Jen pulls out a large whip from the bag.

JEN

Scary, huh?

They both look.

AMY

I don't get it.

JEN

Well, its not for you to "get"

AMY

This is for you and and and

JEN

Marcel.

AMY

Oh. Um. OH.

JEN

Things are good. Things are totally great. I mean he's so sweet. We bought a place last year and we're finally, well basically settled in.

AMY

In Brooklyn?

JEN

Manhattan actually. Marcel's in real estate so we had an "in" -

AMY

Right -

JEN

I know, we're lucky, I know. It's surreal, actually. We bought new furniture for the first time in our lives. Nothing in our apartment is hand-me-down or thrift. Weird right? Well except for the grandmother-china. And the few little things in from the street. I can't help it – you know. They cry out to me like little orphans.

AMY

Right. Like the hand-chair.

JEN

Oh help me the hand-chair!

AMY

We were such spazzes. And now look at us we're all grown up.

JEN

And you live in Bed Stuy?

AMY

Do or Die. You'll have to come out.

JEN

I want to. Oh, also I brought you this.

She gives Amy the copy of the New York Post.

In Anuk's space, Julien comes back into the room. He carries a duffle bag. Has he changed his clothes?

AMY

Oh I saw this, this is great.

JEN

You should make a sculpture out of it.

AMY

The eyes are good. They're like "DON'T FUCK WITH ME I'M A WOLF".

Amy growls a fakey wolf growl.

JEN

Make it a sculpture.

AMY

Ha or maybe catch it and muzzle its mouth with rope and call it an installation.

JEN

No they caught it, it's caught.

AMY

Fucking idiot cops - they thought it was stunned but it was just fake sleeping. It totally got away. They say its dehydrated, though, and weak from the stun gun so it's probably dying under a bush somewhere.

Julien places a note gently on Anuk's lap, and leaves quietly. Anuk sleeps.

Pause.

Amy's phone rings. She silences it.

JEN

Drummer?

Amy kind of smiles and shugs.

AMY

He's just a phantom. He never anywhere he's supposed to be.

Their eyes both fall on the whip.

JEN

(Re: the whip.)

I was just walking past the store and I thought: I can walk in there and buy something. Nobody will stop me. In fact nobody will even blink.

Amy's phone beeps: A text.

You can look.

Beat. Then Amy groans and opens up her phone to read her text. Jen slides the whip into her bag.

AMY

(Yelling "at" the phone.)

FUCK YOU I JUST CAME FROM THERE NO!

Amy shuts the phone.

You're lucky, Jen.

JEN
I know.

AMY
You know shit I should go.

JEN
Yeah just go catch him, I was late -

AMY
No, no it's just the woman who is showing now at the gallery needs this thinner, this crazy hard-to-find paint thinner, and you've got to go way the fuck out to Corona to get it, to this little store in Queens run by the Italian man and his wife and I usually don't do this sort of thing but she is totally amazing and -

JEN
Go, go -

AMY
I think we're OK, right? We're OK.

JEN
Go. Be an artist.

Amy grabs her stuff and starts to go.

Do we start to hear Carribean music?

AMY
Come out to the 'hood.

JEN
I want to, I'll call....

Amy is gone. Jen sits, and sips her egg cream. Marcel leaves the space as well.

Do we see Amy in transit, somehow, until her next entrance?

Morgan enters another space, dressed in a suit. He stands up as straight as possible. Will enters. He is the mail clerk at Morgan's office: a middle aged alt-rocker with a terrible day job.

WILL
Morgan?

MORGAN

Yes.

WILL

Will. Welcome to the copy room.

He leads Morgan over to a counter top next to a copy machine. He shows Morgan how to collate. Morgan collates. Does Will watch for a while then leave?

Julien enters another space, He is at the corner of Nostrand and Fulton. There is an "A" subway stop there. A convenience store. A KFC. Charlie's Calypso City. Ali's Roti Shop. Julien sells cigarettes on that corner. Amy walks quickly up to the corner, winded, out of breath. She stops, looks around, waits.

JULIEN

(Calling out, Loud)

Newport, Newport!

Amy shifts her weight.

Newport, Newport!

Amy digs in her purse and gets out a compact.

Newport, Newport!

Amy checks her teeth in her compact. Amy looks down the street, looking for someone.

Newport, Newport!

Amy digs in her purse, checks the display on her cellphone, puts it back in her purse.

You OK, snowflake?

Snowflake. Snowflake.

AMY

Huh, I'm sorry, who, me?

JULIEN

Yeah. You. Snowflake.

Amy throws her head back and laughs, really loudly, to show she gets it, trying to be cool. She casually touches Julien's arm.

AMY

Snowflake. That's funny, snowflake.

Julien takes a half step away.

JULIEN

You OK?

AMY

I'm waiting for my boyfriend. Well, my friend. A friend who is a boy. Who is late.

JULIEN

Yeah, me too. What time is it?

AMY

5:30

JULIEN

Yeah, me too.

AMY

Dating in New York is like being in prison. How many guys have to fuck you in the ass before you learn to shut up and stay in your cell?

JULIEN

You really don't know what you're talking about.

AMY

I meant metaphorically. Metaphoric ass fucking.

JULIEN

You really don't know what you're talking about.

Newport, Newport!

The Sign Man enters Julien and Amy's space, wrapped in many clothes and wearing sunglasses so we cannot determine his race. He wears an enormous sandwich board, white with red and blue hand drawn letters, hand painted, that reads "BLACKS ARE BEING PUSHED FROM THE CITY TO THE GHETTOS, FROM THE GHETTOS TO OUTER SPACE MEANING BLACKS ARE BEING EXTERMINATED." He stands near Amy and Julien. Neither of them really takes notice.)

JULIEN
Newport, Newport!

AMY
What is that?

JULIEN
What is what?

AMY
“Newport, Newport.”

JULIEN
Girl, will you get your ASS back to Park Slope? It’s cigarettes, a brand of cigarettes.

AMY
OK, hey, listen, I was just, it’s not like I’m trying to right OK fine.

JULIEN
He ain’t showing up so why don’t you just leave. He never shows up, right?

Julien and Amy look at each other, a small face off.

AMY
So do you live around here?

JULIEN
No. I just work here sometimes.

AMY
Oh. I thought we might be neighbors.

JULIEN
Neighbors -

AMY
I live down the street, by the Franklin C stop.

JULIEN
Oh yeah, I know the place. The art co-op run by that alternative fuel motherfucker.

AMY
No I -

JULIEN

All you artists with your big, stinky shoes. And then 40 year olds with one pink kid. Or no, twins! Soon: this place'll be crawling with twins. Fuckin' canopy baby carriages with anti-lock brakes.

AMY

I live ACROSS from the Art Co Op.

Under her breath.

Asshole.

JULIEN

Y'all gotta yoga place down there yet?

AMY

I don't do yoga.

JULIEN

I asked, y'all gotta yoga place down there yet?

Pause. Pause.

AMY

Fulton and Classon. Clinton Hill Bikram.

JULIEN

Fulton and Classon! Shee, its worse than I thought.

He yells out, a fake announcement.

High alert, everybody! High alert!

AMY

Do I know you? Cause you know you look really familiar to me.

JULIEN

No, you don't know me.

Newport, Newport!

AMY

(Half under her breath.)

You don't know me, either.

JULIEN
DON'T push me, snow white.

AMY
Fuckin' deadbeat.

Amy and Julien lock eyes.

Amy's phone rings.

JULIEN
You better answer that. Might not call back.

Amy answers her phone.

AMY
Hello?

The Sign Man walks up to Julian. Amy talks on the phone.

Hey. Yeah, I'm here.

Julien sells cigarettes to the sign man.

No I'm not getting back on the train.
I'm not getting back on the train.
Will.
I'm not.
I'm not getting back on the train, Will.
I'M NOT GETTING BACK ON THE TRAIN.
Right.
Yes.
Tomorrow. 7ish.
I'll already be there.
Great. Absolutely. Good. No I'm not mad. Bye.

Amy hangs up. The sign man remains. Amy stares at Julien.

AMY
My name is Amy.

JULIEN
Pleased to meet you Amy.

Amy looks at Julien.

Anuk walks into her apartment, dressed in day clothes, an oversized T-shirt and a casual skirt.

AMY

So look. The gallery where I work has an art opening tomorrow night, in Soho. I would like to invite you as my guest.

JULIEN

Me?

AMY

You.

JULIEN

What kind of art is it?

AMY

She makes paintings of the night sky, to scale.

JULIEN

To scale.

AMY

That means paintings of the night sky that are the same size as the night sky.

JULIEN

I know what it means!

AMY

Alright –

JULIEN

That must be one really big gallery.

AMY

It's just sections. From photos. Sections of the night sky.

JULIEN

To hang on a wall.

AMY

To hang on a wall. For people to buy. For lots of money. Do you want to come?

JULIEN

Ahhhhhh....

AMY

Tomorrow. Come. Here.

Amy hands him a postcard. Anuk speaks from her apartment.

ANUK

Julien get in here.

AMY

You should come. Alright I'm late for my Vinyasa class –

Julien flashes her a look.

Gotcha.

Amy smiles and walks off. Julien looks at the postcard, then puts it in his pocket.

In the office space, Morgan continues to collate.

ANUK

You will not be running in and out of my house. You listening to me? JULIEN.

Julien high tails it into his mother's living room.

My toothpaste is MY toothpaste. My milk is MY milk. I raised you for 23 years and change and if you want to live here that is fine, but you gotta contribute, son, contribute like a grown man should. You a grown man, right Julien?

JULIEN

Momma –

(At the * Julien says "Momma, momma you don't have to tell them that" overlapping Anuk's words.)

ANUK

Don't momma me. I went down to the office to report for work training, and we was filling out the forms and they said "Do you have anyone living in your house" and I didn't say nothing and then they said "Ma'am,, do you have anyone living with you that is contributing to the household income." And I said "Not really" and they said "That is not a good answer" and I said "My son lives with me sometimes," * and they said "is Sometimes more than 4 days a week." And I said no, oh no, he just stays here every now and again. He's busy. He's in school. And they started asking me questions about your income, and I told them that you have none, because you are in school, and I know that I don't have to tell them NONE of this, but I hate to feel like I am a LIAR, Julien, I hate that. You still in school, Julien? At the technical college?

JULIEN

I'm still in school.

ANUK

As long as you not selling cigarettes. I couldn't stand that, when you was selling cigarettes on the street. Where you get those cigarettes from anyway? You gotta be in school.

JULIEN

I am in school.

ANUK

Or you going to wind up like me. 57 years old, and afraid to go outside. Not going out there, those people crazy out there. Too much time on their hands.

JULIEN

You fine around here during the daytime, momma. People know you.

ANUK

People don't know nothin'. They walk around here like they think they know. "I need me a car. I need me a fifth of whiskey". When what they really need is to keep they hands busy. Shut up and work. I worked in that factory for years. Sewing life jackets. Back when you could walk up to a place and say "I need some work" and they would say "Well what can you do?" And you'd say "I can sew". Don't ask for no high school diploma, don't ask for no work experience profile. 12 years, stitchin' life jackets. You know where I come from, son. Don't gimme that face you gotta hear these things.

Julien and Anuk speak together.

JULIEN AND ANUK

I got shipped here from South Carolina when I was 10 –

ANUK

SHUT UP!

Julien shuts up.

I was raised in the fields. In the fields. I dug potatoes. I pulled carrots. I picked corn and yes, the other "C" word too. But I can't tell nobody that can I cause they'll fall over, like to spit out their juice, think I'm talking crazy cause that stuff's like a movie, like ancient history. And here I am.

1964. 1964 mama sent me, her youngest, to New York. 1964 my momma and two of my brothers were still living in that falling down wooden house next to the man who owned

the farm. Said I was going to New York to live with my aunt and get some education
And even then I didn't get one. Life jackets.

JULIEN

I know that mama.

ANUK

That's why you, boy. That's why you need to stay in school.

ANUK

My back is hurting today. That's why I paged you. Chest is tight. All we got is milk in the house, and a few radishes. I was thinking I would send you to Key Food to get some lunchmeat or maybe some potted meat. I don't like going out in this neighborhood no more.

Do you think, Julien, do you think its possible that there could be a wolf come scratchin' on my back window at night? Now hear me out.

For two nights now I sat straight up out of the middle of my sleep cause I heard this: Scratch scratch scratch. Stop. Scratch scratch scratch. Stop. And then someone panting like a big dog. I thought it was a rat until I heard that panting. Down South we had this dog that my daddy said was part wolf, and we'd chain it to the porch when we was at work. In the evenings, it would play with us, real rough like, and it would gobble up our extra fat-back, chew up our pecans, right through the shell. Then one day that dog cracked open half the pecans we were supposed to turn over to the owner, and when the owner found out he went and got his gun that was the end of that wolf-dog.

As Anuk keeps talking, Julien takes the gun out of his pocket and places it on the table. He looks at it. Anuk keeps talking. She either doesn't see the gun, or is ignoring it.

I was on the train the other day, staring front but I could see out the corner of my eye this woman looking at me, this young pretty white girl, staring, really, she thought I was asleep cause my eyes were half closed like this. And she was looking and looking and then I realized I was wearing my stockings with the holes in them and my old man work shoes and my T-shirt for Superbowl 36 and I thought: What must she think of me? How many kids does she think I have? Probably a lot, I bet she thinks. What does she think of the scar on my lip? Does she think my husband gave it to me, or that maybe I got mugged real bad on the street. What would she do if I walked up to her and said "My name is Anuk. I was born Nettie Willems on a farm in South Carolina. My mouth got this way because a tooth grew in backwards when I was little. Split my lip in two. My name is Anuk, now, cause my past husband was muslim.

And I have one son, named Julien.

Young lady, what is your name?" What do you think she would say? Don't matter, cause she got off, and I kept riding.

Julien puts away the gun.

The main thing is, you gotta stay in school.

Marcel appears, among the trees, practicing his speech. His tail is visible.

JULIEN
I know, momma.

ANUK
I don't care if you drink a little, I don't care that you're gay.

JULIEN
I know momma.

Jen appears, gathering nuts into her nightgown. Her long rabbit ears stretch down behind her head.

ANUK
But I do care that you are able to take care of yourself. And not be lonely. Are you lonely?

JULIEN
No momma.

ANUK
Some people who are lonely eat too much. Potato Chips and cupcakes. There was this man out in Canarsie they found him dead shot himself in the head and his whole apartment was filled up with Ho Ho's, floor to ceiling, some eaten, some not.

JULIEN
(Laughing a little, in spite of himself.)
Alright, momma.

ANUK
I don't want that to be you.

JULIEN
I'll go to the store.

Morgan has finished collating. He stumbles into the trees, taking off his jacket.

Amy appears, wearing her deer antlers. She walks among the trees, occasionally reaching up, grabbing a leaf with her hand and eating it.

ANUK

You need money?

JULIEN

I got it.

ANUK

I'll boil water for tea. If you see that wolf bop its nose for me. That's what we used to do to that dog. Bop its nose and tell 'em I ain't got no pecans or carrots or fatback so it should just let me sleep, go bother somebody else.

LIGHTS SHIFT: THE FOREST

Julien walks out into the trees. At first he seems like he is going to the store. Then it seems like he is walking through the forest, taking in the sights, randomly picking up leaves and flowers.

Morgan falls by a tree, and find a big quart of bad gin. He starts chugging it.

Anuk puts on her beak and reveals her breast plate of feathers. She walks among the trees.

Marcel is again giving his speech. His tail is visible through the slit in his pants.

Jen takes off her nightgown. She is wearing some kind of leather bodice. She now picks up the whip. She cracks the whip.

Anuk says: I believe that the diversity of my experience will be a great asset to your company.

Morgan is rolling around on the ground, reaching his hands inside his pants clumsily. He rolls into Julien.

Julien says: Morgan?

Morgan says: You don't see this. You can't see this.

Julien turns around and reaches out his hand, filled with leaves. Amy is there. She eats the leaves out of his hand.

Julien says: See?

Jen cracks the whip. Amy startles, backs up from Julien.

Julien says: no wait, come back.

Morgan howls drunkenly at the moon.

A baby cries.

Marcel says: Jen wake up.

Jen says: I'm busy.

Marcel says: Jen -

Anuk says: I believe that the diversity of my experience will be a great asset to your company.

Jen cracks the whip. Amy runs off stage.

Anuk wanders off stage.

Marcel touches Jen's arm.

Jen "wakes up"

Marcel says: Jen, you're naked.

Jen says: What?

Marcel says: You're naked. In the living room. You were moving your hands.

Will appears, walking into the copy room with a paper cup of coffee: 8:30 AM in the copy room.

Morgan stumbles out of the trees and into the copy room.

Morgan and Will in the copy room.

WILL
Morgan?

MORGAN
One moment, please.

Morgan falls over.

WILL

Dude get it together. You gotta get it together. Come on.

Will tries to pick Morgan up but he is really wasted, dead weight.

What are you on?

MORGAN

I'm hypoglycemic.

WILL

You are not hypoglycemic, man.

MORGAN

I'm hyperthyroid. I'm dyslexic. It fucks with my white blood cell count. My sugars.

WILL

(Laughing a little.)

Dude.

Will props Morgan up against the copier. He looks around and finds an open can of coke.

Julien sits down at the table with Anuk.

Marcel appears, in his office, dressed for work. He is practicing a speech.

WILL

Here drink this.

Will puts the coke can to Morgan's lips.

Wasted.

MORGAN

You see Will, nobody does what I do. They all say they want to do it, but everyone is too scared. Do you want to fuck me in the ass, Will?

WILL

Dude –

MORGAN

Do you want to suck my cock? Do you want to disappoint your corporate superiors by choosing to smoke crack and watch some fat stoned hooker dance naked on your couch instead of going to the board meeting, the board meeting where you were supposed to give the presentation? Do you want to bite my ass, Will? Bite my ass.

WILL

Hey, hey HEY!

MORGAN

I'm burning up. I can't breathe. I can't breathe!

Morgan starts frantically pulling at his tie and shirt. He is unbuttoning his shirt and unzipping his pants at the same time. Will looks around. They're in the copy room, for christ's sake.

WILL

Dude –

Will runs to the phone, dials a few numbers.

Get Marcel down here, now.

Will tries to keep Morgan from undressing.

Keep your clothes on. You don't want to do this.

Marcel's phone rings. He picks it up. He listens, hangs up the phone and exits. Morgan continues to undress.

MORGAN

I think you know what I am talking about: keep your job. Don't seek adventure. Don't overachieve. Don't Think Outside the Box. Don't surprise yourself.

Morgan has stripped down to his boxers.

WILL

Don't take off your boxers.

MORGAN

Don't have a sense of humor. Don't think about doing good deeds. Don't think that if you just keep looking that maybe you really will find true love. Don't think about malaria or sweatshops or open sewers or genocide. Just get to work on time, alright? The copies look so nice when they come out of the machine. And then there's the coffee break. Right? Thank the union for the coffee break.

Morgan takes off his boxers.

WILL
Aw, man!

MORGAN
(Shivers.)
It's cold.

WILL
Don't pee. Please don't pee. Don't you fucking pee. OK you're peeing. You're peeing on the floor.

Morgan looks at Will.

MORGAN
Help.

WILL
Sorry man, that's it. There's no place for you anymore.

Marcel walks in.

WILL
He's all yours.

Will exits.

MARCEL
Are you trying to kill me?

MORGAN
No, no, its just that there is this head that keeps coming out of the copy machine. It keeps poking out and sticking its tongue out at me.

Morgan sticks his tongue out, makes the face that the copy machine is making.

Marcel leaves the office, moving towards his apartment.

MARCEL
Get dressed.

MORGAN
Where are we going?

Marcel stands in his apartment.

MARCEL

Get in here now or you will never be invited in again.

MORGAN

OK, OK...

Morgan scrambles to put his pants on, and follows Marcel.

END OF EXCERPT