

BLUE

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by

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## CHARACTERS

JAY/A: A man in his mid 20s

JOSIE/B: A woman in her mid 20s

CHARLOTTE/C: A woman who is 19 years old.

MARIE/D: A woman who is 20 years old.

COLLINS/E: A woman in her 50s.

VERN/F: A man in his 60s.

## NOTES:

“/” indicates overlapping dialogue

“-“ indicates a line cut short by the next one

Piano plays instrumentals from “Blue” by Joni Mitchell

The speed of the play is about 1.5x the speed of conversations in reality.

Scene transitions are fast but distinct.

## SCENE 1

*Piano plays softly. Lights up on a door and JOSIE with luggage. JOSIE knocks.*

Josie: Jay! Open the door! JAY! I know you're home!

*Lights remain dim. JAY opens the door.*

Jay: Hello?

Josie: Hi!

*JOSIE pushes through and enters the living room.*

Jay: Josie? ... What are you doing here?

*JOSIE turns to look at JAY.*

Josie: It's good to see you.

*She hugs him hard. JAY is surprised by the contact.*

Jay: Jose-

Josie: Can I stay here for a little?

Jay: Uh-

Josie: Just like a couple days?

Jay: Where's Mark?

Josie: He didn't come it's just me.

Jay: What's going on?

Josie: Something really weird happened and I need your help.

Jay: Did he... do something to you?

Josie: No oh my god no!

Jay: So, what happened?

Josie: Well. I didn't recognize him.

*Beat.*

Jay: Who?

Josie: Mark!

Jay: What?

Josie: Mark! So. He comes home late from work last night and I'm already home and I heard the door open and close and footsteps and his voice, which I know is his voice now, but I honestly couldn't tell then. It sounded like a stranger was calling my name. He said "Josie?" because you know he walked into a dark apartment and I was supposed to be there. I mean I was there.

Anyway. I was so scared. There was a strange man walking through my home! So, I, I reached for something to defend myself with.

Jay: What the hell?

Josie: I didn't know it was him! And Mark keeps his manuscript on the desk in our room so that's what I picked up.

Jay: You were going to kill your fiancé with his own book?

Josie: I wasn't going to kill him! Just like stun him? I didn't know it was him.

Jay: Uh-huh.

Josie: So, he turned on the light in the bedroom to me with his raised manuscript in my hands. And he started laughing, thank god. And I started laughing. And after I saw his face I knew it was him.

Jay: Okay...

Josie: But then today he called me, and I didn't recognize his voice again. *How'd you get my*

*number, I said, who are you, I got really mad. And then when he texted me that he was coming home tonight I knew I couldn't see him again. What if this was the time I forgot his face. So, I left and here I am.*

*JAY thinks about this for a minute.*

Jay: Okay.

*Long pause.*

*JAY starts getting blankets and pillows out of a cupboard. Sand falls out of the cupboard with the blankets. Maybe JAY notices it. JAY holds the pillows and blankets.*

Jay: It's late.

Josie: You said that/ already.

Jay: You can stay in the guest room it's down/ that hallway.

Josie: Jay, I know where/ the guest room is

Jay: Oh right. Yeah. It's just been...OK, goodnight!

*JAY drops the pillows and blankets next to JOSIE on the couch.*

Josie: But/shouldn't

Jay: Get some rest.

*JAY leaves. Piano stops. JOSIE alone sitting on the couch.*

Josie: Night, Jay!

*Lights out.*

## SCENE 2

*Somewhere else. MARIE enters. CHARLOTTE follows behind her. CHARLOTTE is holding a blank piece of paper.*

Marie: No. Nope. No. No.

Charlotte: Come on. Please?

Marie: NO

*MARIE exists. CHARLOTTE follows.*

*From offstage:*

Marie: No way.

Charlotte: It's really important!

Marie: It's really not happening!

*MARIE enters. CHARLOTTE follows.*

Charlotte: Please?

Marie: No.

Charlotte: Well why not?

*MARIE stops moving.*

Marie: Because fuck him. That's why.

Charlotte: Marie that's a little harsh.

Marie: I'm not helping.

Charlotte: Because...?

Marie: Cause then, you know, he gets away with it.

Charlotte: Well he isn't exactly here to reap the benefits...

Marie: Oh, stop it. You know you're doing him a favor.

Charlotte: I am not!

Marie: Treated us like crap our whole lives and here we are-

Charlotte: We're not-

Marie: Look at you you're really going to do it!

Charlotte: Well of course-

Marie: He isn't even alive anymore and he still has his-

Charlotte: Stop!

Marie: You know it's true. It's why you can't write it.

Charlotte: I will.

Marie: That's just a blank piece of paper.

Charlotte: I will.

Marie: When? Charlotte? When? It's tomorrow! God he's such an asshole.

Charlotte: Yeah, he is.

Marie: I'm sorry, what?

*Beat.*

Charlotte: Yeah. He is.

Marie: Wait a sec-

Charlotte: What do you want me to say? I was there too. He was terrible... When I heard that

he... I didn't mind it so much. I thought *he can never hurt*...I thought...You know what, I thought, *good*. And I didn't feel sad.

Marie: Then why would you want-

Charlotte: Well this isn't for him.

Marie: Um. I'm pretty sure it is.

Charlotte: Okay yes fine it's a little bit for him but I really think people need to grieve and I don't know maybe this will help them that's all I'm thinking. It could help because then people wouldn't be angry like you're angry right now look at you you're so angry and shaking...

Marie: I am *not* shaking.

Charlotte: You'll just stay like this if you're spending all your time thinking of new ways to be mad at him. He's still got us. He can't have us. And we can't let him have us anymore.

*Beat.*

Marie: Okay.

Charlotte: Okay?

### SCENE 3

*JOSIE walks into the living room. JAY follows behind her.*

Josie: No. Nope. No. No. You're not getting it.

Jay: What's there to get?

Josie: I'm losing my mind!

Jay: You're forgetful.

Josie: Okay fine yes at first, I was being forgetful.

Jay: Well...

Josie: Well it's more than that now!

Jay: I just think a lot of this is normal...Like not remembering stuff from college that feels okay to me it's been a few years...

Josie: Right. Well. Yes. So, I mean *that* part may be normal.

Jay: So...

Josie: So, it's starts small! Like all things! Like all potentially really bad things! Like one day I forget a doctors' appointment and if I started the yoga pose with my right leg or my left. And then I start to forget my friends! Not that I'm forgetting my friends. But what they sound like.

That's the first bit that went and I feel like I'll forget the rest. Like on day I'll wake up and everything will be...I don't know...blank?

Jay: That's a little bit of an overreaction, don't you think?

Josie: Well what's happening then?

Jay: I mean, it's just. I think it may just be a stress response.

Josie: What's the stressor Jay? Kids? Old age?

Jay: Work?

Josie: Yes, artists these days have it real bad. It's practically heart surgery.

Jay: But so far, it's just voices.

Josie: Voices, yes.

Jay: But faces are fine.

Josie: Right now, but you never know –

Jay: And the date today?

Josie: [*insert date of performance*]

Jay: Sounds good to me.

*A moment.*

Jay: And...financially you're-

Josie: It's not stress!

Jay: Okay!

*Lights out.*

#### SCENE 4

*Somewhere different.*

A: July 8th 2013

B: Walked the dog. He died two years later.

A: January 30th 2008.

B: Sharpened 23 pencils. I was preparing for the SAT that weekend.

A: August 27th 2014.

B: Tripped on 3rd street. Caught myself. Someone to my left laughed.

A: October 13th 2003.

B: Went to the funeral of my middle school English teacher. Mrs. Shelly.

A: June 5th 2016.

B: Some guy behind me on the train from Ridgewood, New Jersey to Penn Station, NY coughed into my hair. I still hate that guy.

### SCENE 5

*Lights up on JAY running around trying to find something. JOSIE cleans up after him, following just a few steps behind. They speak over each other, sometimes at the same time.*

Jay: Josie, have you seen my keys?

Josie: I went to see that doctor yesterday.

Jay: Good. Ugh I always/ leave them right there.

Josie: He cut our time short. He said, “drink tea” and “get some sleep” and I think he said “write it down” but I’m not sure what “it” he was referring to...and then his assistant escorted me out.

Jay: Maybe they’re/ in the kitchen.

Josie: I’ve never been escorted/ out before. Or at least I don’t think I’ve been. Have I?

Jay: No why would they be in the kitchen.

Josie: It was very rude/ actually.

Jay: Sure.

Josie: Just, you know. Being/ dismissed.

Jay: Yep.

Josie: People not taking/ this seriously-

Jay: They could still/ be in the ca-

Josie: JAY!

Jay: What?

Josie: Listen to me! I’m dying!

Jay: You’re...?

*JAY stops and turns to look over at JOSIE.*

Jay: You look fine.

Josie: I’m losing my mind.

Jay: You look *fine*.

Josie: Am I supposed to look crazy?



Jay: Well not necessarily...

Josie: My head is broken!

Jay: Your head is not "broken". Jose, I have to go to work.

Josie: Do you think it was all the weed I smoked in college?

Jay: You took two hits from Jason's bong and left for home to watch reruns of the Bachelorette.

Josie: Oh yeah.

Jay: Wouldn't call that "all the weed".

Josie: Enough though! Maybe! Could have killed the right brain cells just that one time.

Jay: Um no.

Josie: Like there are a couple special cells in charge of memory something like specialized neurons which memorize things like the Mona Lisa and maybe those were the ones the marijuana went after.

Jay: Please never call it that/again.

Josie: But that's/ what it's called.

Jay: Also, there aren't like two brain cells that deal with memory alone.

Josie: See! I didn't know that! You're helping already.

Jay: I have to go.

*JAY begins to gather up all his stuff.*

Josie: I'm dying that's what it is. This is what happens first your mind goes and then your body and then you're DUST. Dust. Little tiny specks of nothingness. Dots. I'm going to be a dot. My brain is ALREADY A DOT/

Jay: You're/ fine

Josie: I'M A MINDLESS DOT.

Jay: Alright. Okay I'm leaving now.

Josie: Fine, go. When you return I shall *benomore*.

Jay: Call Mom today?

Josie: Maybe.

*Beat.*

Josie: Where was the last place you had them?

Jay: What?

Josie: Your keys.

Jay: Right.

Josie: Well, where was the last place you had them?

Jay: That never works.

*JAY leaves. JOSIE cleans up quietly. She finds a flower pot full of sand and dumps it out on the ground. Jay's keys fall out with the sand. JOSIE spends a little time thinking about this. Lights out.*

### SCENE 6

*Piano plays softly. CHARLOTTE sits down, brushes some sand off the table, and starts to write. She scratches everything out and writes again.*

*MARIE begins fiddling around in the room, organizing, cleaning everything, changing every couple of seconds. CHARLOTTE says most of the lines to herself.*

*MARIE mimics CHARLOTTE's tone of voice.*

*MARIE reads over Charlotte's shoulder.*

Marie: "Today we mourn"

Charlotte: His was a cherished life

Marie: He didn't think so because he wasted it on whiskey and cocaine

Charlotte: He was always there for us

Marie: Even after we filed a restraining order against him

Charlotte: He supported us

Marie: When he was picking us up to throw us in the car

Charlotte: He was needed.

Marie: Hm.

Charlotte: Okay enough. Either help me or shut up.

*MARIE shrugs.*

Marie: I don't think I can help.

Charlotte: Fine then shut up.

Marie: Wow.

Charlotte: This is hard for me too okay?

Marie: I just can't think of something good, you know?

Charlotte: Sure, you can. He was...he was um...dedicated?

Marie: Dedicated?

Charlotte: Yes. He was dedicated. He never missed work.

Marie: That's not really-

Charlotte: It's fine.

Marie: He was thoughtful?

Charlotte: He was?

Marie: Well he thought about himself tons.

Charlotte: Okay.

Marie: Okay. What now?

Charlotte: A memory?

Marie: What?

Charlotte: Well we can't just list adjectives.

Marie: Why not? That was going fine.

Charlotte: We can think of something. There must be some time...

Marie: He took us to the park or the mall or the beach? No.

Charlotte: We went to Brighton once!

Marie: By accident because Dad fell asleep on the train and didn't let us off at the right stop.

Charlotte: We still saw the beach!

Marie: From the train window!

Charlotte: You are no help.

Marie: Okay. I think I have an idea.

Charlotte: Well I thought the Brighton one was pretty good...

*Piano stops.*

Marie: We can just make a memory up!

*Lights out.*

## SCENE 7

*Lights up on living room with JOSIE and JAY.*

Josie: I CAN'T JUST MAKE ONE UP!

Jay: Well don't ask me for my help if you're just going to yell at me.

Josie: That's not how it works!

Jay: Just fill in the blanks! Some blanks. Like if you can't remember the color of the house just call it yellow and get on with it. Colors don't matter as much...

Josie: What if I'm talking to someone who was there and *isn't* dying?

Jay: You're not dying. And you can also just ask them to fill in the blanks for you.

Josie: No. I can't. Then it isn't true.

Jay: Okay fine. I'm just trying to help you sort this out.

Josie: Sort this out?

Jay: This, this thing that's going on.

*JAY waves his hands around in a gesture towards the "thing".*

Josie: Oh.

*Pause.*

Jay: Look, do whatever you need to do. Take whatever break you need. But you have to get back to your life – your job!

Josie: I can't remember *sounds*, Jay. What kind of musician can't remember *sounds*?

Jay: Alright you have a point.

Josie: And something is wrong with me.

Jay: Okay.

Josie: Really. Something is wrong with me!

Jay: Okay! I heard you. Just calm down.

Josie: Calm down? Oh, I get it. This is all in Josie's head anyway, she's just making shit up or something she's just not making sense like how she sometimes does. She's just *stressed*.

Jay: Well it is in your head!

*JOSIE takes a deep breath.*

Josie: What?

Jay: I'm just saying. I don't know. Maybe this will go away...

Josie: You're not listening to me. It's getting worse.

Jay: Oh, I've been listening. Doctor's appointments and CT scans and therapists and they're all coming up empty. No physical damage, no pattern of the memory loss. Strange as it is, there

isn't any trace of it...I mean, it seems like...

Josie: It seems like what, Jay? I left my fiancé because I'm tense. I'm here asking for help from my little brother because it's *fun*.

Jay: No-

Josie: I should just calm down. Sit a while. Read a book call a parent this will go away.

Jay: Maybe-

Josie: I'm not going to just get better all of a sudden.

Jay: What about writing it down?

Josie: What down?

Jay: Everything. Writing everything down.

Josie: Hmm.

Jay: I don't know. Maybe that's a bad idea.

Josie: No that may work.

Jay: Really?

Josie: Well it's worth a try.

*JOSIE exits. JAY brushes some sand off the couch before sitting down.*

## SCENE 8

*MARIE and CHARLOTTE in the kitchen.*

Marie: We make it up. We fake it.

Charlotte: Um.

Marie: Okay, hear me out. Let's start with a date, like in time, and an age we were, and a place we go, and... I don't know. We just put dad there.

Charlotte: I don't think we can do that.

Marie: Who's going to check?

Charlotte: But like...is that even allowed?

Marie: People needs closure and we're not giving them that by being honest.

Charlotte: What if mom-

Marie: She won't care. She won't even notice.

Charlotte: She loved him!

Marie: Of course she did, Char.

Charlotte: Yeah

Marie: It was probably Stockholm Syndrome.

Charlotte: Marie!!

Marie: Right. So, we were six.

### SCENE 9

*Somewhere different.*

C: 17<sup>th</sup> decimal in pi?

D: 3

C: World's most deadly snake?

D: Belcher's sea snake. Its venom is 100 times more toxic than any other snake's in the world.

C: Who won the 1988 World Series?

D: The LA Dogers.

C: Last words of President Tyler?

D: "Perhaps it is best."

### SCENE 11

*JOSIE is sitting with a computer typing quickly then deleting quickly then typing quickly again etc. JAY walks in with his lunch. He sits down to eat and is making a lot of noise with his food.*

Josie: Shhhh

*JAY continues to be noisy.*

Josie: SHHH

*JAY stops for a second, looks at JOSIE who keeps typing and retyping and then returns to eating his food.*

Josie: Stop it. You're so loud.

Jay: So are you.

Josie: Well what I'm doing is important.

Jay: Food is fuel. What could be more important than that?

*Pause*

Jay: Fine. What are you doing?

Josie: I'm writing it down.

Jay: Oh.

Josie: There's a lot to go through you know.

Jay: Like of life? Um. Yeah, Jose.

*Pause. JOSIE glares at JAY for a second. He continues to make noise.*

Josie: Alright since you're here anyway I'm working my way backwards and I'm stuck on this one part. Do you remember when you visited me at school and I didn't have anything planned because I'd had a really crazy week and then all my favorite places were closed when you got there so we kind of didn't know what to do.

Jay: Yeah. Plan B was to hike but all of a sudden it started raining.

Josie: Wait I thought we just didn't feel like going anymore?

Jay: No, it stormed. Big storm. Sandy? Carl? Frieda?

Josie: There was never a storm called Frieda.

Jay: There should have been.

Josie: Jay, focus. So, we decide to take my crappy black Subar-

Jay: Wait wasn't your car red?

Josie: No, my roommate's car was red. Did we take her car?

Jay: Maybe we took the train. To the beach, right? Brighton?

Josie: Yeah yeah and it was beautiful out we were so lucky!

Jay: Yeah lots of waves too. And the water was-

Josie: So cold/ very cold.

Jay: So/warm.

Josie: Wait. Wasn't it like March?

Jay: June?

Josie: Well fuck.

Jay: Just leave that part out.

Josie: I can't do that! That's not the point!

Jay: Okay, okay.

Josie: Was there a sandcastle involved?

Jay: I feel like every beach story has a sand/ castle involved.

Josie: But does ours?

Jay: I kind of remember one?

Josie: Maybe that's good enough?

*JAY eats a little more and JOSIE stops typing and watches him until he looks up and sees her staring. JAY motions to his food.*

Jay: Do you want me to take this somewhere else?

Josie: No.

*JAY continues to eat and JOSIE stops typing.*

Jay: Are you done?

Josie: No. I'm thinking.

Jay: Okay.

*JOSIE looks up as if trying to remember, or learn, or stretch her neck.*

Jay: I thought it was just voices.

*JAY motions to the laptop.*

Josie: Well this is just in case.

*Pause.*

Jay: Let's do another.

*Lights out.*

## SCENE 12

*Piano begins to play softly. COLLINS searching through her desk. She speaks both to herself and the audience.*

Collins: I know I put them down somewhere. It's so cliché to lose keys. I put them on that huge ugly chain just so that this wouldn't happen. Maybe I should check my bag again.

*VERN walks in.*

Collins: Have you seen my keys?

Vern: Sorry?

Collins: You know, big red chain?



Vern: No. I'll help you in a minute just let me sit a while.

*VERN sits and holds his head with his hands.*

Collins: Fine. I'll just keep throwing papers around.

Vern: It's been a long day, Collins.

Collins: They're all long days.

*Pause. COLLINS sniffs the air.*

Collins: You're smoking again.

Vern: Well I-

Collins: I hate it when you smoke.

Vern: I know.

Collins: It does something to you.

Vern: Yes.

Collins: Makes you all-

Vern: Yes, I know.

*COLLINS starts now to clean up the papers. Every so often, she brushes sand off of the table.*

Vern: Fine.

Collins: What?

Vern: That'd be fine.

Collins: What would be fine, Vern?

Vern: Lunch.

Collins: What?

Vern: Yes.

Collins: What did I just say?

Vern: You hate it when I smoke.

Collins: What happened to you today?

*COLLINS notices VERN cradling his head.*

Collins: Do you have a headache?

Vern: I bumped my head a little.

Collins: You *what*?

Vern: My head. I went down to get...I stood back up. I don't know...it hurts. Huh.

Collins: My god.

Vern: I'm okay.

Collins: We're going to the hospital.

Vern: Why?

Collins: Because you hit your head, Vern!

Vern: No, I didn't.

Collins: Get up.

Vern: No, I need to rest I think.

Collins: You need a doctor.

*COLLINS helps lift VERN out of his chair and walks him to the door with her right arm. Her left arm grabs their coats and her purse. They get to the door.*

Collins: Shit.

Vern: Hm?

Collins: I lost my keys.

Vern: Well, where was the last place you had them?

Collins: That never works.

*Lights out. Piano stops playing.*

### SCENE 13

*This scene is dimly lit. JOSIE is in the living room reading under a single lamp. The sound of a car pulling up, engine shutting off, door opening and closing. Someone tries to open the door. He knocks.*

Jay: Jose! Hey I'm home!

*JOSIE is terrified. She does not recognize his voice. She looks at the door.*

Jay: Josie! Wake up! It's really cold out.

*JOSIE searches around the room. JAY is mumbling something outside the door. He knocks again.*

Jay: Ok. Not cool, Jose.

*Sounds of JAY patting down all his pockets then the sound of keys opening the door. JOSIE picks up the lamp and holds it like a baseball bat. JAY opens the door.*

Josie: Stay back! Don't come any closer!

Jay: Jose it's me!

Josie: I said don't come any closer!

*JAY walks into the light hoping JOSIE will see him and recognize his face.*

Jay: Okay, okay but look at me a second. Look at me!

*JOSIE does, she does not register his face.*

Josie: I said GET OUT. I'm calling the police.

*JOSIE looks around and grabs her phone with one hand.*

Jay: Jo/se.

Josie: GET OUT!

*JAY backs away from her as JOSIE waves the lamp threateningly.*

Jay: Jose...

Josie: Out.

*JAY backs out the door. Sounds of a car door opening and closing, the engine starting, and a car driving away. JOSIE double-locks the door and puts the lamp down but she is shaking, and the lamp falls and breaks open. It is filled with sand that pours out onto the floor. JOSIE sits on the floor and begins to collect the sand in her hands. Lights out.*

#### SCENE 14

*Somewhere different.*

A: January 7<sup>th</sup> 1999.

C: We watched Bill Clinton's Senate impeachment trial on TV.

A: November 24<sup>th</sup> 2013.

C: Early snow storm in D.C. Roads were too dangerous to drive all week.

A: March 10<sup>th</sup> 1998.

C: Sat Shiva for our neighbor's cat. They were strange people.

A: June 21<sup>st</sup> 2008.

C: Took my first ferry to Manhattan. I thought, how ugly it looks during the day.

#### SCENE 15

*Daytime. JOSIE is laying on the couch when JAY opens the front door slowly. The pieces of the broken lamp are on the side table next to JOSIE.*

Jay: Jose?

*JOSIE looks up at him.*

Josie: Jay? You ok?

Jay: Wait. So, you recognize me?

Josie: Yes. Stop walking so slow. You're freaking me out.

Jay: Last night...

Josie: Yeah, I had a weird dream someone tried to break in.

Jay: I did.

Josie: What? Why would you need to break in you live here?

Jay: Because you... Jose you didn't know who I was...

Josie: What?

Jay: You...um...

*JOSIE stands up and looks around the room, mentally retracing her "dream".*

Josie: Oh my god.

Jay: It's okay!

Josie: No no no no no.

Jay: But you're seeing me now! And you /know it's me! So-

Josie: No no no no.

Jay: Jose!

Josie: I-

Jay: It's okay.

Josie: No no no.

*JOSIE looks to leave but realizes she doesn't have anywhere to go. JAY stands and walks over to her.*

Jay: We're going to figure this out. Come on sit down.

*JOSIE is trembling. JAY's arms tremble with her as he leads her back to the couch and sits her down next to him.*

Jay: Okay okay. Take a deep breath.

*JOSIE takes a deep breath.*

Jay: Talk to me. Just talk to me. Walk me through it. What have you been forgetting recently?

Josie: Um. So, it started with voices... you know that...and now it's.... it's faces too...I guess... and well I'm really having a hard time with colors right now. I get the basics, the reds... I

remember really strong reds. It's the tricky stuff like light shades of green. Like I don't remember my bedroom from when we were kids. So, I think it was green. Or yellow.... Maybe it was blue...

*Pause.*

Josie: Shh. Don't interrupt me.

*Pause*

Josie: What was I saying before?

*Pause*

Josie: Oh yes. The house had large white walls. Victorian. Leaf shapes as the upper trim. There was an entry way right when you walked in the front door. Blue front door. Baby's eyes blue. Blind-optimism kind of blue. The floor was a light wood, European Aspen. It was always cold, I was always barefoot. Really long toes. Finger-toes they said. The salon was to the right. It was large and open with two big windows. They ran all the way from the ceiling to the floor. Longer than me. Longer than you and me. Longer than all of us put together.

Jay: Jose?

Josie: Yes?

Jay: What are you talking about?

Josie: I don't know.

Jay: That's okay.

Josie: Yeah...

*JAY takes a moment lost in thought.*

Jay: I think it was green.

Josie: What was?

Jay: Your room in Connecticut.

Josie: Maybe that's it.

## SCENE 16

*Kitchen. MARIE sits down next to CHARLOTTE at the table.*

Marie: Go on write!

Charlotte: Fine. "We were six". Now what?

Marie: We go to the beach with dad?

Charlotte: I feel like we need details.

Marie: We make a sandcastle?

Charlotte: Really?

Marie: You're the writer! I just come up with the ideas! I'm the idea-guy.

Charlotte: You're an idiot

Marie: Yes! But one with lots of ideas!

Charlotte: Okay then details!

Marie: Um. Okay. Dad woke us up in the morning to tell us we were skipping school.

Charlotte: That's great! What if we got on the train still in our PJs?

Marie: Yes! And dad had packed this big lunch. With all our favorite foods.

Charlotte: Oooh ones that mom never let us eat!

Marie: Yeah like really shitty gummy stuff. What was that rope thing you liked?

Charlotte: Oh my god nerds rope? YES. That was there.

Marie: Okay so super-dad plays hooky with us and buys us candy?

Charlotte: Hmm but he can't be all that.

Marie: What if he forgot to do something?

Charlotte: He never called the school?

Marie: He didn't bring any money?

Charlotte: Both?

Marie: Little more realistic in case we have some true Harry fans in the audience.

Charlotte: Okay so the school doesn't know where we are.

Marie: But we're on like this insane sugar high by the time we get to the beach.

*CHARLOTTE stands and sets up tea and cups for the two of them but when she pours, sand comes out of the kettle. It fills up the cups. She stops pouring when the sand overflows onto the table.*

Charlotte: And we don't have swimsuits,

Marie: And you're like so not going in the water without one,

Charlotte: But you run straight in because you had NO fear as a kid.

Marie: No, I was scared of some things.

*A moment.*

Marie: Alright whatever we digress.  
Charlotte: What happens next?  
Marie: Sandcastle?  
Charlotte: Hmm dad and I make one while you swim?  
Marie: That works. Like chronologically.  
Charlotte: And you come back to us all shivering.  
Marie: The water was like March cold.  
Charlotte: So, we bury you in sand,  
Marie: Cause dad forgot towels too,  
Charlotte: And we just sit there and watch the water.

*Long pause. Marie and Charlotte gaze out above the audience.*

Marie: It was beautiful.  
Charlotte: Yeah.  
Marie: Just horizon.  
Charlotte: And the sun starts to set,  
Marie: And I finally pull myself up out of the sand,  
Charlotte: And we just giggle and chase dad around,  
Marie: Until he gives up,  
Charlotte: and lets us tackle him.  
Marie: That was a good day.  
Charlotte: Yeah.  
Marie: Really good.  
Charlotte: Yeah.

Marie  
It feels like yesterday

Charlotte  
I should write it down

Maries  
What?

Charlotte  
What?

Marie

I said we should write it down.

Charlotte

It feels like yesterday

Charlotte: I'll write it down.

Marie: Okay.

### SCENE 17

*Somewhere different.*

B: How high is Mount Everest?

D: 29.129 feet. Above sea water.

B: Largest Jellyfish species?

D: Cyanea capillata. Also known as the "Lion's Mane" Jellyfish.

B: Capital of Zimbabwe?

D: Harare.

B: Likelihood of dying via skydiving accident?

D: 0.0007%

B: Who was the cutest boy in your 7th grade class?

D: Tommy Weaver. He was blonde and had dark green eyes and he always wore this faded red sweatshirt. Nike or something. Bad teeth. But good smile. We danced to Chris brown's "Forever" at the Winter Wonderland Social.

### SCENE 18

*JOSIE and JAY are together in the living room. JOSIE is laying on the couch on her phone. JAY is reading a book. There is a pile of sand next to JOSIE. JOSIE reads from her phone.*

Josie: There was this guy with a brain problem where he didn't have long-term memories. He could only remember like the five minutes he was living in. After that his memories just disappear.

Jay: Oh?

Josie: He always recognized his wife though. Like just his wife.

Jay: Alright.



Josie: And he could still play the piano. Piano and wife.

Jay: Hmm.

*Beat. JAY looks up from his book.*

Jay: I think screens are bad for the brain.

Josie: I thought just the eyes?

Jay: Same thing.

*JOSIE thinks about this and then puts her phone down.*

Josie: Okay, anything else?

Jay: You're supposed to eat Jellyfish.

Josie: What?

Jay: It's supposed to help with memory. I read it somewhere.

Josie: Where would I even find Jellyfish?

Jay: I don't know. Look it up?

Josie: Screens are bad for the brain.

Jay: Touché.

*JOSIE sits up.*

Josie: So, I've been thinking.

Jay: Yes?

Josie: That the house was actually yellow but I remember it as blue.

Jay: Yeah it's yellow in all the photos.

Josie: But when we don't have photos what do we do, cross-reference with each other?

Jay: Yeah.

Josie: That's not an exact science.

Jay: No. It isn't. I think maybe what you're dealing with is retrieval.

Josie: What does that mean?

*JAY thinks for a minute.*

Jay: So, like if I were teaching a lesson on it I'd start with, "Memory is a process of encoding and storing". We experience something, learn a new word, eat a banana for the first time, and we encode the experience into our neurons and send the information back into the depths of our brains for safe keeping until we need it again. Like to remember answers for a test. Or that time we went to the beach.

Josie: Okay.

Jay: But things can change all along the way and I think something happened to your retrieval.

Josie: Well what if it happened during the storing.

Jay: What?

Josie: If things can change along the way then why not in another place.

Jay: I mean yeah, I guess that could be happening.

Josie: Right!

*JOSIE uses the sand piles to make a sandcastle.*

Jay: But no, I think what it is, is you're pulling the memories out all wrong.

Josie: Then what about the sounds?

Jay: That would be a storage problem. Probably? Yeah. Probably.

Josie: So, what you're saying is that not only can things go wrong at any point but that there's no way of knowing at which point something has gone wrong.

Jay: I guess so? I'm trying to say that there is interference that we can't help-

Josie: Because of what happens along the way.

Jay: So, a little of those changes are normal. I mean, by nature of a being a part of the process we are changing it. It's the Wave-Duality Theory. Matter changes its behavior if there's an observer. It chooses what form to be in when we're watching.

Josie: When we're/ watching?

Jay: So, by being involved with the process we affect our memory. We check on Schrödinger's Cat. Even by just retrieving a memory. Or storage, you're right.

Josie: I guess/that means there's nothing we can do.

Jay: So, there's /nothing you can do. Whether deliberate or otherwise, you're changing what happened. Or what you think happened, or if something happened.

Josie: Um.

Jay: I think that was just a breakthrough!

*JOSIE gives up on the sandcastle. They're both a little devastated. JOSIE eventually looks over at JAY who is lost in thought.*

Josie: What?

Jay: That wasn't helpful was it?

Josie: No.

Jay: That's what I thought.

Josie: So, we just mess it all up. All of us.

Jay: Not on purpose!

Josie: But we do.

Jay: Yeah.

Josie: Well! That'll bother me!

### SCENE 19

*Piano plays softly. COLLINS is making coffee, sand pours out of a French press into the cup that she hands VERN. VERN looks inside the cup and then puts it down.*

Collins: Tell me about work.

Vern: It's fine.

Collins: Any interesting patients?

Vern: No.

Collins: Nothing to report?

Vern: No.

Collins: Well what are you thinking about then?

Vern: If you must know, the accident.

Collins: Vern-

Vern: It was the last time I hit my head, you know.

Collins: I know.

Vern: And this time...when I ...it just came back...but all in pieces.

Collins: Don't do this/ to yourself.

Vern: I can't remember the color/ of the light.

Collins: We told the police it was green. It was green, Vern.

Vern: I don't remember. I remember the hit though. Crunch. Thud.

Collins: We've been over this/ She was the one who made the mistake /Running a red so late at night.

Vern: But I remember thinking of slowing down/ maybe that means the light was yellow/ I can't

stop thinking about it.

Collins: This is the bump talking. You know what happened. You were perfectly fine.

Vern: They never tested/ for-

Collins: You hadn't had a drink yet/ you always have your drink right when you get home.

Vern: I'm not sure about the light/still.

Collins: It was green, Vern. It has to have been green. Or yellow.

Vern: Yellow.

Collins: Yellow would be fine. But it wasn't/ red.

Vern: Because if it was red...

Collins: No. I remember when you called you said, it was green. It was green.

Vern: Hmm.

Collins: It was green.

*VERN begins to hold and shake his head.*

Vern: Hm.

Collins: You couldn't have done anything differently.

Vern: No.

Collins: There weren't any charges anyway.

Vern: Yes.

Collins: Right. So. Enough of that then.

Vern: My head hurts.

Collins: It's been ages I don't even think about it anymore.

Vern: Mmm.

*VERN puts his fingers to his temples and bends his head down. He starts to hum, at first in agreement and then to his own tune.*

Collins: Running a red so late at night-

Vern: Mmm.

Collins: Silly -

Vern: Mmm.

Collins: Vern?

Vern: Mmm.

Collins: Vern! Are you alright?

Vern: The house had large white walls. Victorian. Leaf shapes as the upper trim. There was an entry way right when you walked in the front door. Blue front door. Baby's eyes blue. Blind-optimism kind of blue? The floor was a light wood, European Aspen. It was always cold, I was always barefoot. Really long toes. Finger-toes they said. The salon was to the ...to the right? It was large and open with two big windows. They ran all the way from the ceiling to the floor. Longer than me. Longer than you and me. Longer than all of us put together.

*Piano stops.*

Collins: Vern!

Vern: Yes?

Collins: What are you talking about?

Vern: I put them in the flower pot.

Collins: What?

Vern: The keys.

*Lights out.*

## SCENE 20

*Lights up on CHARLOTTE and MARIE back in the kitchen. CHARLOTTE is pouring sand onto the kitchen table, in whatever manner. The sand could have come from bowls, or drawers. CHARLOTTE gets water from the tap and fills the bowl with it. She brings the bowl to the table and uses the water to build a sandcastle on the kitchen table as the scene goes on.*

Charlotte: They'll like it.

Marie: Yeah.

*MARIE helps with the castle a little bit. Pats down some sand.*

Charlotte: We had the rest of the candy on the way back didn't we?

Marie: What?

Charlotte: I ate my nerds rope and you had your peach rings

Marie: Wait a sec-

*MARIE stops helping.*

Charlotte: And we told stories about the other people on the train one was that guy in the red sweater-

Marie: Char?

Charlotte: -we decided he was famous or something.

Marie: I don't/ think-

Charlotte: And we played/ cards when we got home. And listened to music.

Marie: Charlotte...

Charlotte: "Blue", right? We listened, and we danced. Cause mom wasn't back yet and we didn't want to go back to school.

Marie: Char stop it.

Charlotte: We just listened and danced...

Marie: Oh no.

Charlotte: What a good day.

*Lights out.*

## SCENE 21

*Somewhere different.*

C: How many planes are flying above us right now?

D: An average of 28,500 commercial, 27,000 private flights, 24,500 air taxis, 5,000 military, and 2,000 air cargo flights.

E: When was the last recorded use of the guillotine?

F: September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1977.

A: What are the seven "sins" of memory?

B: transience, blocking, suggestibility, bias, persistence, and misattribution

C: That's six.

B: Oh.

A: ...

C: ...

D: ...

E: ...

F: ...

B: Absent-mindedness.

SCENE 22

*VERN is sitting in a room surrounded by piles of sand. JOSIE walks in and sits in a big chair across from him.*

Vern: Hello Josie.

Josie: Hey Doctor V. I only have thirty minutes today if that's okay? Jay and I are going to dinner tonight. To...uh...I forget what it's called. Huh. Of course, I do.

Vern: So, you're remembering Jay well?

Josie: Well after... we tried that code word thing you taught me. It works. I say, "March cold" he says "June warm" and I know it's him. So yeah.

Vern: Good. Well we're nowhere closer to the source of your...forgetting, but we will continue to focus on the... symptoms, if you will.

Josie: Yeah. It would have been easier though.

Vern: What?

Josie: To say it was a bump or something.

Vern: Hmm.

*VERN raises his hands to his temples.*

Josie: Are you OK Dr. V?

Vern: Mmm?

Josie: Vern?

Vern: Mmm yes.

Josie: So, um... some things have been coming back to me which is good!

Vern: People?

Josie: Well no. Not as useful as people...

Vern: Go on.

*JOSIE stands and walks, remembering with movement.*

Josie: Okay so I think over Thanksgiving one year, I was at my mom's house sitting with her in the kitchen she was making something that no one but me was gonna eat, like unsweetened apple sauce, I don't remember. Anyway, we had a record on. You know Joni Mitchell's "Blue" right?

Vern: Yes.

Josie: And at some point, we'd both started singing along. Maybe at the same time. I don't know. I thought of it the other day...and I still remember all the words to "Carey".

*JOSIE sings. VERN dances.*

“Maybe I'll go to Amsterdam/Or maybe I'll go to Rome/And rent me a grand piano and put some flowers 'round my room”.

*JOSIE continues to hum the song while she gets out a shovel and pail and begins to shovel the sand around her into the pail.*

Vern: Green.

*JOSIE stops humming.*

Josie: No, “Blue”, Dr. V.

Vern: Right. Blue.

*Beat.*

Vern: All the words?

Josie: All of them. Of all the important things I need to remember.

Vern: Hmm.

*VERN notices JOSIE shoveling.*

Vern: What are you doing?

Josie: I'm writing it down.

Vern: What down?

Josie: Everything. I'm writing everything down.

Vern: You're writing everything down.

*VERN gets up and helps JOSIE collect the sand. They begin to hum. They work together for an uncomfortable while then they stop working and stop humming, one after the other, and look around at all the sand that is left. It is covering every inch of the stage. Almost as if, by trying to clean it up, they had been adding more instead.*

## SCENE N

*Somewhere not so different. Actors must stomp through the sand to find their places.*

A: Which animal has the best memory?

E: Other than humans, dolphins. They remember the whistles of old friends.

B: Why are blueberries a superfood?

D: They are linked with a longer lifespan, slower signs of aging in the brain, reduced risk of



cancer and protection against heart disease. They also taste good.

F: Why do we get old?

C: We don't know. We think it's because we live so unusually long that evolution hasn't yet weeded out the cell mutations that make us age. So. We have too much time to live and too little time to change.

A: When was your first dream about dying?

B: I was twelve and I felt a million hands grabbing at me until I was shredded up like paper.

*End play.*