

# ALMOST, MAINE

by John Cariani

2M, 2W (doubling, flexible casting)

On a cold, clear, moonless night in the middle of winter, all is not quite what it seems in the remote, mythical town of Almost, Maine. As the northern lights hover in the star-filled sky above, Almost's residents find themselves falling in and out of love in unexpected and often hilarious ways. Knees are bruised. Hearts are broken. But the bruises heal, and the hearts mend — almost — in this delightful midwinter night's dream.

*"ALMOST, MAINE is a series of nine amiably absurdist vignettes about love, with a touch of good-natured magic realism ... witty, romantic, unsentimental. A beautifully structured play, with nifty surprise endings (most but not all of them happy)."*

—The New York Times

*"Sweet, poignant, and witty. Nearly perfect. ALMOST, MAINE's charm is real. [It] packs wit, earns its laughs and, like love, surprises you."*

—New York Daily News

*"Mega-hit ALMOST, MAINE lands somewhere between Norman Rockwell and Our Town. Unabashedly unhip. There is no pretense of an edge here — the show offers a sweetness and decency that's become rare at the theater. At this point, it's a welcome breath of fresh air."*

—New York Post

Also by John Cariani

cul-de-sac  
LAST GAS  
LOVE/SICK

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

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BY JOHN CARIANI

★ Second Revised Edition

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*Loewer*



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*for Northern Maine and the people who live there*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It takes more people than I ever imagined to make a play. Below is an incomplete list — acknowledging all the help I got from family, friends, and colleagues as I made *Almost, Maine*. Omissions are inadvertent, and I apologize for them.

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

### On the text:

Please read and consider the stage directions carefully. They are a part of the play, and many are crucial to telling the story.

### On overlapping dialogue:

*Almost, Maine* employs a lot of very specific overlapping dialogue. You'll often see this symbol: //. It will appear in the middle of a character's line, and it indicates the point where the next speaker should begin their next line. This "railroad tracks" method can be hard to work out on the written page, so you will also see this symbol: >. It will appear at the end of a line that is not a complete thought. It simply means that the person speaking should continue speaking through to the end of the thought, which will be continued in their next line.

### On place:

Almost, Maine, is not a coastal town. It is nowhere near the ocean. And ... it doesn't exist. It is a mythical composite of several Northern Maine towns. Were it to exist, Almost would be located in the remote heart of Aroostook County, the sparsely populated northernmost county in Maine. It would occupy unorganized territory that is officially designated as Township Thirteen, Range Seven, or T13-R7. It is far away from things. (See the map at the back of this volume.) Potato farms dominate the landscape, and the expansive North Maine Woods are to the west. *National Geographic* once printed something to this effect: "They call Montana 'Big Sky Country.' Well ... 'they' haven't seen Northern Maine."

Winters in Almost, Maine, are long, cold, and snowy. It usually feels like winter up there from October to May.

### On the northern lights:

The northern lights are brilliant, ribbon-like, otherworldly displays of light. Northern Mainers are fortunate: They live just inside an area in which the northern lights regularly appear. Growing up, I remember being treated to a northern lights show at least once a year.

The northern lights occur when atoms become "excited." During solar storms, electrons are sent streaming towards the Earth. As these electrons enter the Earth's atmosphere, they strike atoms, "exciting" them — charging them by knocking out an electron.

When this happens to enough atoms, the brilliant light display that is the aurora borealis hovers and streaks across the sky. When the aurora fades, it's because the affected atoms have returned to their grounded state. *Almost, Maine* is a play about people who are normally very grounded but who have become very excited by love ... and other extraordinary occurrences.

### On time:

The plot of each scene in *Almost, Maine* climaxes with some sort of "magical moment." I have this notion that the magical moments in all of the scenes are happening at exactly the same time — as the clock strikes nine — and that these magical moments and the northern lights are giving rise to one another.

### On the people:

The people of Almost, Maine, are not simpletons. They are not hicks or rednecks. They are not quaint, quirky eccentrics. They don't wear funny clothes and funny hats. They don't have funny Maine accents. They are not "Down Easterns." They don't wear galoshes and rain hats. They don't say, "Ayuh." They are not fishermen or lobstermen.

The people of Almost, Maine, are ordinary people. They work hard for a living. They are extremely dignified. They are honest and true. They are not cynical. They are not sarcastic. They are not glib. But this does not mean that they're dumb. They're very smart. They just take time to wonder about things. They speak simply, honestly, truly, and from the heart. They are never precious about what they say or do.

### On cast size and age:

*Almost, Maine* is a play for four actors. In my mind, these actors should be in their late twenties or into their thirties. However, I have seen the play done beautifully by four actors who were in their forties.

*Almost, Maine* is also a play for as many as nineteen actors.

In the original published version of *Almost, Maine*, "They Fell" was a scene for two men. Transport Group's 2014 revival production was the first to present the male and female versions of "They Fell" in rotating repertory. The female version of "They Fell" immediately follows the male version in this volume. You are free to present either version, or both versions in rotating repertory. Rotating repertory is my preference — it's more fun!

**On presenting *Almost, Maine*:**

If you are involved in a production of *Almost, Maine*, please refer to the notes section in the back of this volume.

Original music composed for *Almost, Maine* by Julian Fleisher is available for licensing through Dramatists Play Service. Please visit the *Almost, Maine* page on [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com) for more information regarding the ordering and use of the original music.

Please keep in mind that “cute” will kill this play. *Almost, Maine* is inherently pretty sweet. There is no need to sentimentalize the material. Just ... let it be what it is — a play about real people who are really, truly, honestly dealing with one of the toughest things there is to deal with in life: love.

Thank you for reading. Thank you for doing my play. Thanks for believing in a place like *Almost, Maine*.

—John Cariani

The first Off-Broadway revival of *ALMOST, MAINE* was produced by Transport Group (Jack Cummings III, Artistic Director; Lori Fineman, Executive Director), opening on January 21, 2014. It was directed by Jack Cummings III; the set design was by Sandra Goldmark; the lighting design was by R. Lee Kennedy; the costume design was by Kathryn Rohe; the incidental music was composed by Tom Kochan; and the production stage manager was Theresa Flanagan. The cast was as follows:

PETE/JIMMY/STEVE/RANDY/DAVE ..... John Cariani  
GINETTE/SANDRINE/GAYLE  
DEENA/HOPE ..... Kelly McAndrew  
GLORY/WAITRESS/MARVALYN/  
SHELLY/MARCI/RHONDA ..... Donna Lynne Champlin  
EAST/LENDALL/CHAD/PHIL/MAN ..... Kevin Isola

Note: This production was the first to present the male and female versions of “They Fell” in rotating rep. The female version of “They Fell” premiered at the Tennessee Women’s Theatre Project (Maryanna Clarke, Artistic Director) in 2008.

*ALMOST, MAINE* was originally produced in New York by Jack Thomas/Bulldog Theatrical and Bruce Payne at the Daryl Roth Theatre, New York City, opening on January 12, 2006. It was directed by Gabriel Barre; the set design was by James Youmans; the lighting design was by Jeff Croiter; the costume design was by Pamela Scofield; the incidental music was by Julian Fleisher; and the production stage manager was Karyn Meek. The cast was as follows:

PETE/STEVE/LENDALL/RANDY/MAN ..... Todd Cerveris  
GINETTE/GLORY/WAITRESS/  
GAYLE/HOPE ..... Finnerty Steeves  
EAST/JIMMY/CHAD/PHIL/DAVE ..... Justin Hagan  
SANDRINE/MARVALYN/  
MARCI/RHONDA ..... Miriam Shor

The professional premiere of ALMOST, MAINE was produced by Portland Stage Company (Anita Stewart, Artistic Director; Tami Ramaker, Managing Director) in Portland, Maine, opening on October 29, 2004. It was directed by Gabriel Barre; the set design was by James Youmans; the lighting design was by Tim Hunter; the costume design was by Pamela Scofield; the incidental music was by Julian Fleisher; and the production stage manager was Myles C. Hatch. The cast was as follows:

PETE/STEVE/LENDALL/RANDY/MAN ..... Larry Nathanson  
GINETTE/GLORY/GAYLE/HOPE ..... Wendy Stetson  
EAST/STEVE/CHAD/PHIL/DAVE ..... Justin Hagan  
WOMAN/MARVALYN/MARCI/RHONDA ..... Ibi Janko

ALMOST, MAINE was developed by the Cape Cod Theatre Project (Andy Polk, Artistic Director) in 2002.

## PLACE

Various locales in Almost, Maine,  
a small town in Northern Maine that doesn't quite exist.

## TIME

The present.  
Everything takes place at nine o'clock  
on a cold, clear, moonless, slightly surreal Friday night  
in the middle of the deepest part of a Northern Maine winter.

## SCENE BREAKDOWN

### PROLOGUE

#### ACT ONE

Scene 1: Her Heart  
Scene 2: Sad and Glad  
Scene 3: This Hurts  
Scene 4: Getting It Back

### INTERLOGUE

#### ACT TWO

Scene 5: They Fell  
Scene 6: Where It Went  
Scene 7: Story of Hope  
Scene 8: Seeing the Thing

### EPILOGUE

## CHARACTERS

### Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue

PETE and GINETTE,  
who have been dating for a little while.

### Scene 1: Her Heart

EAST, a repairman,  
and GLORY, a hiker.

### Scene 2: Sad and Glad

JIMMY, a heating and cooling guy;  
SANDRINE, his ex-girlfriend;  
a no-nonsense WAITRESS.

### Scene 3: This Hurts

MARVALYN,  
a woman who is very good at protecting herself,  
and STEVE,  
an open, kind fellow whose brother protects him.

### Scene 4: Getting It Back

GAYLE and LENDALL,  
longtime girlfriend and boyfriend.

### They Fell

RANDY and CHAD, two "County boys."  
*or*  
DEENA and SHELLY, two "County girls."

### Where It Went

PHIL, a working man,  
and his hard-working wife, MARCI.

### Story of Hope

HOPE, who has traveled the world,  
and a MAN, who has not.

### Seeing the Thing

RHONDA, a tough woman,  
and DAVE, the not-so-tough man who loves her.

*"... the sentimental person thinks things will last —  
the romantic person has a desperate confidence that  
they won't."*

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

*Almost, Maine* is for romantics — not sentimentalists.

# ALMOST, MAINE

## PROLOGUE

*Music. It is a clear, cold Friday night in the middle of winter in a small mythical town in Northern Maine called Almost, Maine. Lights up on Pete and Ginette sitting on a bench in Pete's yard, looking at the stars. They are not sitting close to each other at all. Pete is sitting on the stage right end of the bench; Ginette, on the stage left end of the bench. Music fades. Long beat of Pete and Ginette looking at the stars, occasionally looking at each other, and, often, of Ginette looking at Pete looking at the stars. Finally:*

GINETTE. Pete, I — ... *(Beat. She's about to say, "I love you.")*

PETE. What?

GINETTE. *(Can't quite do it.)* I just — am having a nice time, Pete.

PETE. I'm glad, Ginette.

GINETTE. I always do with you.

PETE. I'm glad. *(He and Ginette enjoy this moment together. There's nothing else to say, so ... back to the stars.)*

GINETTE. *(Still can't say what she really wants to say, so this comes tumbling out.)* And the stars are just—...! I didn't know you knew all that stuff! // After all this time, I didn't know you knew all that!

PETE. Well, it's not — ... It's just stuff my dad taught me ... *(Beat. There's nothing else to say, so ... back to the stars. Beat.)*

GINETTE. *(Turns to Pete.)* Pete — ...

PETE. *(Turning to Ginette.)* Yeah?

GINETTE. I love you. *(Beat. Pete just stares at her. Beat. Pete looks away from her. Beat. And does not respond. Beat. She takes in Pete's reaction, deflates, and then looks away from him, trying to figure out what has happened. We now have two very uncomfortable people.)*

*Pete is dealing with what she has just said to him. She is dealing with Pete's response — or lack thereof — to what she has just said. Big ... long ... pause. Finally, there's nothing else for Pete to say but the truth, which is:)*

PETE. I ... love you, too.

GINETTE. Oh!! *(Huge relief! She and Pete feel JOY! She shivers — a happy kind of shiver.)*

PETE. Oh, are you cold? // Wanna go inside?

GINETTE. No, no! No! I just wanna sit. Like this. Close. *(She and Pete shouldn't be close to each other at all — but for them, it's close.)* I feel so close to you tonight. *(Little beat.)* It's nice to be close to you, Pete. *(Gets closer to Pete.)* It's safe. *(Gets closer to Pete again.)* I like being close. Like this. *(Little beat.)* I mean, I can think of other ... ways ... of being close to you *(They enjoy this innuendo sweetly, truly — Pete probably can't believe that she brought this up, but he's probably pretty happy that she did.)*, but that's not — that's not — ... I like this right now. This kind of close. Right next to you. *(Gets even closer to him, leans right up against him. Beat.)* You know, right now, I think I'm about as close to you as I can possibly be. *(She is truly content.)*

PETE. *(Beat. Honestly discovering.)* Well ... not really.

GINETTE. What?

PETE. *(Simply and truly figuring this out.)* Not really. I mean, if you think about it in a different way, you're not really close to me at all. You're really actually about as far away from me as you can possibly be. I mean, if you think about it, technically — if you're assuming the world is round, like a ball — *(Gathering snow to make a snowball for a visual.)* like a snowball — the farthest away you can be from somebody is if you're sitting right next to them. See, if I'm here *(Points out a place on the snowball that represents himself.)*, and you're here *(Points out a place on the snowball that represents Ginette, and it's right next to him — practically the same place he just pointed to.)*, then ... *(He now demonstrates that if you go around the world the OTHER way — all the way around the world the OTHER way, EQUATORLALLY [not pole to pole] — that he and Ginette are actually as far away from each other as they can possibly be. Little beat.)* That's far.

GINETTE. *(Takes this in. What on earth does Pete mean?)* Yeah. *(Beat. Disheartened, she moves away from Pete, sliding all the way back to the other end of the bench. She doesn't feel like being "close" anymore.)*

PETE. *(Takes this in. His "interesting thought" seems to have moved the evening's proceedings in a direction he didn't intend. Then, trying to save the evening, hopeful:)* But ... now you're closer. *(Because she actually is closer, the way he just described it.)*

GINETTE. *(Puzzled.)* Yeah. *(Gets up and starts to leave. What else is there to do? After she takes barely a step or two, Pete stops her with:)*

PETE. And closer ... *(Ginette stops. She turns and looks at him, then turns back and starts to leave, but, as she takes a couple steps away from him, he interrupts her with:)* And closer and closer ... *(Ginette stops again. She turns and looks at him, then turns back, and starts to leave again, but, as she takes a few steps away from him, Pete again interrupts her with:)* And closer and closer and closer ... *(Ginette stops and looks at him again. She is trying to figure out what's going on, what he is saying. She looks at him, she looks off left, looks at him again, looks off left again. And then ... Ginette leaves, taking step after step. With every single step she takes, he calls to her:)* ... and closer and closer and closer ... *(Eventually, Ginette is gone, exiting stage left, with Pete still calling, "... and closer," with every single step she takes. Unfortunately, with every step she takes, Ginette is getting farther and farther away from Pete. This is not necessarily what Pete intended, and his "closer"s trail off. Beat. Pete looks at his snowball. He looks back to where Ginette has exited. What has he done? Transition. Option 1: Lights fade on Pete sitting on the bench. Option 2: Pete rises and follows Ginette, uncertainly, looking to see where she went ... and makes his way offstage. Whatever option you choose, we begin ... )*



## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

#### HER HEART

*A woman appears, standing in the front yard of an old farmhouse in Almost, Maine. Music fades. The woman is clutching a small brown paper grocery bag to her chest. She is looking up at the sky. A porch light comes on. We hear a screen door open and slam as a man enters. He watches the woman for a while. He is wearing a big warm coat over plaid pajamas and untied boots.*

MAN. Hello.

WOMAN. *(To him.)* Hello. *(Resumes looking to the sky.)*

MAN. I thought I saw someone. *(Little beat.)* I was about to go to bed. I saw you from my window ... *(Beat.)* Can I—? ... Is there something I can do for you?

WOMAN. *(To him.)* Oh, no. I'm just here to see the northern lights. *(Back to the sky.)*

MAN. *(Takes this in.)* Okay. Okay. It's just — it's awful late and you're in my yard ...

WOMAN. Oh, I hope you don't mind! I'll only be here tonight. I'll see them tonight. The northern lights. And then I'll be gone. I hope you don't mind —

MAN. *(Looking out.)* Is that your tent? *(The tent should be seen by them — not by the audience.)*

WOMAN. Yes.

MAN. You've pitched a tent ... >

WOMAN. So I have a place to sleep, >

MAN. in my yard ...

WOMAN. after I see them, I hope you don't mind.,

MAN. Well, it's not that I —

WOMAN. Do you mind?

MAN. Well, I don't know if —

WOMAN. Oh, no, I think you mind!

MAN. No, it's not that I mind —

WOMAN. No, you do! You *do!* Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't think you would! I didn't think — . You see, it says in your brochure >

MAN. My brochure?

WOMAN. that people from Maine wouldn't mind. It says *(Pulling out a brochure about Maine tourism.)* that people from Maine are different, that they live life "the way life *should* be," and that, "in the tradition of their brethren in rural northern climes, like Scandinavia," they'll let people who are complete strangers, like cross-country skiers and bikers and hikers, camp out in their yard, if they need to, for nothing, they'll just let you. \*I'm a hiker. Is it true? >

MAN. Well —

WOMAN. That they'll just let you stay in their yards if you need to? 'Cause I need to. Camp out. 'Cause I'm where I need to be. This is the farthest I've ever traveled — I'm from a part of the country that's a little closer to things — never been this far north before, or east, and did you know that Maine is the only state in the country that's attached to only one other state?!

MAN. Um —

WOMAN. It is!! *(Taking in all the open space.)* Feels like the end of the world, and here I am at the end of the world, and I have nowhere to go, so I was counting on staying here, unless it's not true, I mean, *is* it true? >

MAN. Well —

WOMAN. Would you let a hiker who was where she needed to be just camp out in your yard for free? >

MAN. Well —

WOMAN. I mean, if a person really needed to? >

MAN. Well —

WOMAN. Reallyreally needed to?

MAN. Well, if a person really needed to, sure, but —

WOMAN. *(Huge relief!)* Oh, I'm so glad, then!! Thank you!! *(Goes to the man, throws her arms open, and hugs him. In the hug, the bag gets squished between their bodies. When they part, the man is holding her bag. The exchange of the bag is almost imperceptible to both her and the*

\* If you ever go to Maine by car, via Interstate 95, you will be greeted by a sign erected by the Maine Office of Tourism that reads, "Maine: The Way Life Should Be."

man, and to the audience. Immediately after hugging the man, she resumes looking intently for the northern lights. Beat. Then, realizing she doesn't have her bag:) Oh, my gosh! (Realizing that the man has her bag.) I need that!

MAN. Oh. Here. (He gives it back.)

WOMAN. Thank you. (Resumes looking to the sky.)

MAN. Sure. (Beat.) Okay — . Okay ... (Beat. Weird.) So you're just lookin' for a place to see the northern lights from?

WOMAN. Yeah. Just tonight.

MAN. Well, you know, you might not see 'em tonight, 'cause // you never really know if —

WOMAN. Oh, no. I'll see them. Because I'm in a good place: Your latitude is good. And this is the right time: Solar activity is at an eleven-year peak. Everything's in order. And, boy, you have good sky for it. (Taking in the sky.) There's lots of sky here.

MAN. Used to be a potato farm.

WOMAN. I was gonna say — no trees in the way. And it's flat! Makes for a big sky!

MAN. Yeah.

WOMAN. So — you're a farmer?

MAN. No. Used to be a farm. I'm a repairman.

WOMAN. Oh.

MAN. Fix things.

WOMAN. Oh. (Laughs.)

MAN. What?

WOMAN. You're not a lobster man.

MAN. No ...

WOMAN. I guess I thought that everyone from Maine was a lobster man and talked in that funny ... way like they do in Maine, and you don't talk that way.

MAN. Nope. You're not Down East. You're up north. And this is how we talk up north, pretty much.

WOMAN. Oh.

MAN. Plus, ocean's a couple hundred miles away. Be an awful long ride to work if I was a lobsterman.

WOMAN. (Enjoying him.) Yeah. Well, anyway, thank you. Thank you for letting me stay. I've had a bad enough time of things lately not to be given a bad time here — (The man, inexplicably drawn to her, kisses the woman. When they break, the bag has exchanged clutches imperceptibly — the man has it. And now we have two stunned people.)

MAN. Oh ...

WOMAN. (Trying to figure out what just happened.) Um ...

MAN. Oh.

WOMAN. Um ...

MAN. Oh, boy.

WOMAN. Um ...

MAN. I'm sorry. I just — ... I think I love you.

WOMAN. Really.

MAN. (Perplexed.) Yeah. I saw you from my window and ... I love you.

WOMAN. Well ... — that's very nice — ... but there's something I think you should know: I'm not here for that.

MAN. Oh, no! I didn't think you were!

WOMAN. I'm here to pay my respects. To my husband.

MAN. Oh —

WOMAN. Yeah: My husband. Wes. I just wanted to say goodbye to him, 'cause he died recently. On Tuesday, actually. And, see, the northern lights — did you know this? — the northern lights are really the torches that the recently departed carry with them so they can find their way to heaven, and, see, it takes three days for a soul to make its way home, to heaven, and this is Friday! This is the third day, so, you see, I will see them, the northern lights, because they're him: He'll be carrying one of the torches. And, see, I didn't leave things well with him, so I was just hoping I could come here and say goodbye to him and not be bothered, but what you did there just a second ago, that bothered me, I think, and I'm not here for that, so maybe I should go // and find another yard —

MAN. No! No! I'm sorry if I — ... if I've behaved in a way that I shouldn't have —

WOMAN. (Preparing to leave.) No, // I think —

MAN. No! I really don't know what happened.

WOMAN. Well, I do, I know what happened!

MAN. I'm not the kind of person who does things like that. Please. Don't go. Just — do what you need to do. I won't bother you. Maybe just ... consider what I did a very warm Maine welcome.

WOMAN. (Stopping, charmed.) All right. All right. (Beat.) I'm — . My name's Glory.

MAN. I'm East.

GLORY. Huh?

EAST. (*He is used to explaining.*) For Easton. It's the name of the town — little ways that way — where I was born. Mess-up on the birth certificate ... "a son, *Easton*, born on this sixth day of January, [*Insert appropriate year.*] in the town of Matthew, Maine" ... instead of the other way around ...

GLORY. (*Amused.*) Aw, I'm sorry ... >

EAST. Naw ...

GLORY. So, (*Referring to the place.*) Easton! >

EAST. Yeah —

GLORY. Yeah! I passed through near there on my way here, and, by the way, (*Scanning the horizon.*) where is "here?" Where am I? I couldn't find it on my map.

EAST. Um ... Almost.

GLORY. What?

EAST. You're in unorganized territory. Township Thirteen, Range Seven. (*Glory checks her map.*) It's not gonna be on your map, 'cause it's not an actual town, technically.

GLORY. What // do you mean —

EAST. See, to be a town, you gotta get organized. And we never got around to gettin' organized, so ... we're just Almost.

GLORY. Oh ... (*They enjoy this. Beat. She now deals with the fact that she is missing her bag. She was clutching it to her chest, and now it's gone. This should upset her so much that it seems like it affects her breathing.*) Oh! Oh!

EAST. What? What's wrong?

GLORY. (*Seeming to be having trouble breathing.*) My heart!

EAST. What? Are you // okay?

GLORY. My heart! (*Seeing that East has her bag, pointing to the bag.*)

EAST. What?

GLORY. You have my heart!

EAST. I—?

GLORY. In that bag!, It's in that bag! >

EAST. Oh.

GLORY. Please give it back, // please! It's my heart! I need it! Please!

EAST. Okay, okay, okay. (*Gives Glory the bag.*)

GLORY. Thank you. (*Her breathing normalizes.*)

EAST. You're welcome. (*A long beat while he considers what he has just heard.*) I'm sorry, did you just say that ... your heart is in that bag?, Is that what you just said?, That // your heart—...?

GLORY. Yes.

EAST. (*Considers.*) It's heavy.

GLORY. Yes.

EAST. (*Beat.*) Why is it in that bag?

GLORY. It's how I carry it around.

EAST. Why?

GLORY. It's broken.

EAST. What happened?

GLORY. Wes broke it.

EAST. Your husband?

GLORY. Yeah. He went away.

EAST. Oh.

GLORY. With someone else.

EAST. Oh, I'm sorry.

GLORY. Yeah. And when he did that, I felt like my heart would break. And that's exactly what happened. It broke: hardened up and cracked in two. Hurt so bad, I had to go to the hospital, and when I got there, they told me they were gonna have to take it out. And when they took it out, they dropped it on the floor, and it broke into nineteen pieces. Slate. (*Gently shakes the bag, which should be filled with small pieces of slate — they make a great sound when shaken. A heart is the size of its owner's fist.*) It turned to slate. (*Beat. Looks back up at the sky.*)

EAST. (*Takes this in. Beat. His only response to what she has just told him is:*) Great for roofing. (*Glory just looks at him. Beat. Then:*) Wait a second, how do you breathe? If your heart is in that bag, how are you *alive*?

GLORY. (*Indicating the heart that's now in her chest.*) Artificial ...

EAST. Really.

GLORY. Yeah. 'Cause my real one's broken.

EAST. Then — why do you carry it around with you?

GLORY. It's my *heart*.

EAST. But it's broken.

GLORY. Yeah.

EAST. 'Cause your husband left you.

GLORY. Yeah.

EAST. Well, why are you paying your respects to him if he left you?

GLORY. Because that's what you do when a person dies, you pay them respects —

EAST. But he left you, >

GLORY. Yeah, but —

EAST. and it seems to me that a man who leaves somebody doesn't deserve any respects.  
GLORY. (*Deflecting.*) Well, I just didn't leave things well with him, >  
EAST. (*Pressing.*) What do you mean? —  
GLORY. and I need to apologize to him.  
EAST. But he *left* you! >  
GLORY. I know, but I —  
EAST. Why should you apologize?  
GLORY. Because!  
EAST. Because why?!?  
GLORY. Because I killed him!! (*Everything stops.*)  
EAST. Oh ... (*Backs off a bit.*)  
GLORY. And I'd like to apologize. (*Beat. Then, an admission:*) See, he had come to visit me when I was in recovery from when they put my artificial heart in — I was almost better — I was just about to go home, too — and he said he wanted me back. And I said, "Wes, I have a new heart now. I'm sorry. It doesn't want *you* back." And that just killed him.  
EAST. (*Relief.*) Oh. But it didn't kill him — *you* didn't *kill* him —  
GLORY. Yes, I did! Because he got so sad that my new heart didn't want him back that he just tore outta the hospital, and ... an ambulance that was comin' in from an emergency didn't see him, and just ... took him right out, and if I'd have been able to take him back, >  
EAST. Glory —  
GLORY. he wouldn't have torn outta there like that >  
EAST. Glory!  
GLORY. and been just taken out like that, and so, I just feel that, for closure, the right thing to do is — (*Inexplicably drawn to her, East kisses Glory. When she pulls away, East has her heart again. She takes it back.*) Please don't do that anymore.  
EAST. Why?, I love you!  
GLORY. Well, don't.  
EAST. Why?  
GLORY. Because I won't be able to love you back: I have a heart that can pump my blood and that's all. The one that does the other stuff is broken. It doesn't work anymore. (*Again, inexplicably drawn to her, East deliberately kisses Glory. She pulls away. East has her heart again. Beat. She grabs it from him. East grabs it right back.*)  
EAST. Please let me have this.  
GLORY. (*Desperately trying to get her heart back.*) No! It's mine!

EAST. (*Keeping her heart. Please make this game of keep-away convincing.*) I can fix it!  
GLORY. I don't know if I want you to!  
EAST. Glory—!  
GLORY. (*Going after her heart.*) East, please give that back to me!  
EAST. (*Keeping Glory's heart.*) But, it's broken. >  
GLORY. Please—!  
EAST. It's no good like this.  
GLORY. But, it's my heart, East!  
EAST. Yes, it is. And I believe *I* have it! (*This stops Glory. Beat.*) And I can fix it. (*Little beat.*) I'm a repairman. I repair things. It's what I do. (*Beat. Crouches, gently places the bag on the ground, and starts to open it in order to examine its contents. Music. As he opens the bag, music fades in, and the northern lights appear — in front of Glory, above Glory, on the field of stars behind Glory. Glory sees them ... and they're a thing of wonder.*)  
GLORY. Oh! Oh, wow! Oh, wow! Oh, they're so beautiful ... (*Calling up to the sky remembering who they are.*) Oh! Oh! — Wes!! Wes!! Goodbye! I'm so sorry! ... Goodbye, Wes! (*And the northern lights — and Wes — are gone. Glory turns to East, who has taken a little piece of her heart out of the bag and is examining it. Music out. Then, in the clear — and she may be aware of how strange this is:*) Hello, East. (*Music resumes. East looks at Glory ... and maybe brings her heart to his workshop to begin repairing it. Glory follows. Transition into Scene 2 ...*)

## Scene 2

### SAD AND GLAD

*Jimmy appears, sitting alone at a table in a back corner of Almost's local hang-out, the Moose Paddy. He is nursing a couple of Buds. Music fades. Sandrine enters. She is coming from the ladies' room and is cheerily heading back to her friends who are up front. She passes Jimmy. Jimmy sees Sandrine and stops her.*

JIMMY. Sandrine!

SANDRINE. Hm? (*Beat. This is a bit awkward — awful, actually. Then, overcompensating:*) Jimmy!

JIMMY. (*A little too excited.*) Hey!

SANDRINE. Hey!

JIMMY. Hey!!

SANDRINE. Hey!! (*Jimmy hugs her. She doesn't really take the hug or hug him back.*)

JIMMY and SANDRINE. Heyyyy!!!

JIMMY. How you doin'???

SANDRINE. Doin' pretty good! How are you doin'???

JIMMY. I'm doin' good, doin' good! How are you doin'???

SANDRINE. I'm good!, Doin' good — great! How are you?

JIMMY. Great, great! How are ya?

SANDRINE. Great, // great!

JIMMY. Oh, that's great!

SANDRINE. Yeah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Yeah!

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. That's great!

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. You look great!

SANDRINE. Oh ...

JIMMY. You look great.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

JIMMY. You do. You look so great.

SANDRINE. Thanks, Jimmy.

JIMMY. So pretty. So pretty.

SANDRINE. Thaaaaanks. (*Awful beat.*)

JIMMY. Here, have a seat.

SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy, I can't —

JIMMY. Aw, come on, I haven't seen you in ... well, *months*.

SANDRINE. Yeah.

JIMMY. And months and months and months and months and months and months and *months*. How does that happen? Live in the same town as someone and never see 'em?

SANDRINE. I don't know.

JIMMY. I mean, I haven't seen you since that night before that morning when I woke up and you were just gone.

SANDRINE. Yeah, I, uh ... —

WAITRESS. (*Blasting in.*) Look at you two, tucked away in the corner over here! Lucky I found ya! (*Referring to Jimmy's couple of Buds.*) Is the man and his lovely lady ready for another round?

JIMMY. Sure, we'll —

SANDRINE. No! We're not together.

JIMMY. Well, we could —

SANDRINE. We're all set, thanks.

JIMMY. Well maybe we could —

SANDRINE. All set!

JIMMY. Yeah.

WAITRESS. Okay. Well, holler if you need anything.

SANDRINE. Thanks.

WAITRESS. No really — you gotta holler. It's busy up front! (*Exits.*)

SANDRINE. Okay.

JIMMY. Okay.

WAITRESS. Okay!

JIMMY. (*Fishing.*) So ... ya here with anybody, or—?

SANDRINE. Yeah, the girls.

JIMMY. Oh.

SANDRINE. We're, uh — ... (*Covering.*) Girls' night! We're in the front. (*Starts to go.*) Actually, I just had to use the ladies' room, so I should get back to // them.

JIMMY. (*Stopping her.*) Aw, but I haven't seen ya! They'll survive without ya for a minute or two! So, what's been — here — (*Offering her a seat.*) — what's been goin' on?, Whatcha been up to?  
SANDRINE. (*Giving in, sitting.*) Well —  
JIMMY. Did you know that I took over Dad's business?  
SANDRINE. Yeah, that's great ...  
JIMMY. I run it now. >  
SANDRINE. I heard that.  
JIMMY. I'm runnin' it! >  
SANDRINE. Heard that.  
JIMMY. Runnin' the business! >  
SANDRINE. Congratula >  
JIMMY. Runnin' the whole show, >  
SANDRINE. tions! Good for you!, Good for you.  
JIMMY. the whole shebang — thanks — yeah! We still do heating and cooling, >  
SANDRINE. Yeah?  
JIMMY. and we've expanded, too: We do rugs now. We shampoo 'em.  
SANDRINE. Oh.  
JIMMY. It's a lotta work. A lotta work. I'm on call a lot: weekends, holidays, you name it, 'cause, you know, your heat goes, people die, it's serious.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Yeah. Like, I do Thanksgivin', Christmas, 'cause I let the guys who work for me, like, East helps with repairs sometimes, I let 'em have the day off so they can be with their families since I'm all alone this year.  
SANDRINE. Oh.  
JIMMY. Yeah. (*Driving the point home.*) I really don't have anybody anymore, really. My brother and sister got canned, so they left town, and >  
SANDRINE. Right —  
JIMMY. Mom and Dad retired, headed south.  
SANDRINE. Yeah, I heard that.  
JIMMY. Vermont.  
SANDRINE. Oh.  
JIMMY. Yeah, winters there are a lot easier. And then — I don't know if you heard, but ... then Spot went and died on me.  
SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy, I didn't know that!  
JIMMY. Yeah. He was old, it was his time. (*Little beat.*) He was a good fish, though. (*Seriously sad about Spot, trying to recover.*) But, so,

like I said, I really don't have anybody anymore, really ... but, so, um, I was wonderin' — would you like to come over? It'd be fun! Catch up, hang out...?  
SANDRINE. Oh, Jimmy —  
WAITRESS. (*Blasting in.*) And I forgot to tell ya — don't forget: Friday night special at the Moose Paddy: Drink free if you're sad. So, if you're sad, or if you two little lovebirds are ready for another coupla Buds or somethin', you just let me know, all right?  
SANDRINE. No, we're —  
JIMMY. Okay!  
SANDRINE. Okay.  
WAITRESS. Okay! (*Exits.*)  
JIMMY. So what d'ya say? Wanna come on over, for fun? —  
SANDRINE. No, Jimmy. I can't. I can't. (*Getting up to leave.*) I really gotta get back with the girls.  
JIMMY. Naw —  
SANDRINE. (*Forceful, but kind.*) Yeah, Jimmy, yeah. I gotta. 'Cause, see ... oh, gosh, I've been meanin' to tell you this for a while: There's a guy, Jimmy. I've got a guy.  
JIMMY. (*Huge blow. But he's tough.*) Oh.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Well ... good for you. Gettin' yourself out there again.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Movin' on ...  
SANDRINE. Yeah, well, actually, Jimmy, it's more than me just gettin' myself out there and movin' on. Um ... this is my ... bachelorette party. (*Beat. Then, off his blank look:*) I'm gettin' married.  
JIMMY. (*Huger blow.*) Oh.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Wow.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Wow.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. Wow.  
SANDRINE. Yeah.  
JIMMY. (*Devastated.*) Wow. That's — ... Thought you said you weren't gonna do that. Get married. Thought it wasn't for you, you told me. (*Beat.*) Guess it just wasn't for you with me. (*Beat.*) So, who's ... who's the lucky guy?



SANDRINE. Martin Laferriere. You know him? The uh —  
 JIMMY. The ranger guy, over in Ashland!  
 SANDRINE. Yeah, yeah, yeah!  
 JIMMY. Wow!  
 SANDRINE. Yeah.  
 JIMMY. He's a legend! Legendary. I mean, if you're lost on a mountain in Maine, he's the guy you want lookin' for ya!  
 SANDRINE. Yeah.  
 JIMMY. I mean, if you're lost out there in this big bad northern world, Martin Laferriere's the guy you want to have go out there and find ya!  
 SANDRINE. Yeah.  
 JIMMY. And he ... found you.  
 SANDRINE. Yeah. I'm sorry I never told you — I actually thought you woulda known, I thought you would have heard ...  
 JIMMY. How would I have heard?  
 SANDRINE. Well, you know ... people talk.  
 JIMMY. Not about things they know you don't wanna hear, they don't. And I gotta be honest with you: That's not somethin' I woulda wanted to hear. *(Beat.)* So ... when's the big event?  
 SANDRINE. Um ... tomorrow!  
 JIMMY. Really.  
 SANDRINE. Yup!  
 JIMMY. Well then ... *(Downs his Bud and tries to wave down the waitress. As he does so, his unbuttoned sleeve slides up his arm a little. He hollers.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(Not wanting Jimmy to draw attention to them.)* What are you doin'?  
 JIMMY. *(Going towards the front — where the waitress has exited and where the bachelorette party is.)* Gettin' our waitress — she said holler — *(Calling to waitress.)* HEY! *(To Sandrine.)* What's her name?  
 SANDRINE. I don't know, she's new // here.  
 JIMMY. *(To waitress.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(Doesn't want the girls to see her with Jimmy!)* What are you doin'?  
 JIMMY. We gotta celebrate! You got found! And you deserve it! He's quite a guy.  
 SANDRINE. Aw, Jimmy.  
 JIMMY. And so are you.

SANDRINE. *(That was the nicest thing a guy like Jimmy could say to a girl.)* Jimmy ...  
 JIMMY. *(Arm raised, hollering to waitress.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(Protesting.)* Jimmy! *(Then, noticing a black marking on Jimmy's forearm.)* Jimmy! — whoa — hey! What's that?  
 JIMMY. *(To Sandrine.)* What?  
 SANDRINE. *(Referring to the black marking.)* That.  
 JIMMY. *(Covering the mark, using his other arm to wave down the waitress. To Sandrine.)* Oh, nothin' — tattoo — *(To waitress.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(What?!?)*  
 JIMMY. *(To Sandrine.)* Tattoo, *(To waitress.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(Intrigued.)* What — when did you get that?  
 JIMMY. *(To Sandrine.)* Um ... After you left, *(To waitress.)* HEY!  
 SANDRINE. *(Intrigued, going for his tattooed forearm.)* Jimmy! Well — what's it of, what's it say?  
 JIMMY. *(To Sandrine.)* Nothin', nothin', *(To waitress.)* hey-hey-HEY! *(Sandrine grabs his arm.)* N-n-no!  
 SANDRINE. *(Pushes Jimmy's sleeve up and takes a beat as she reads, on the inside of his forearm, in big, bold letters.)* "Villian." *(Rhymes with "Jillian.")*  
 JIMMY. Villain.  
 SANDRINE. Who's Villian?  
 JIMMY. Villain. It's supposed to say, "villain."  
 SANDRINE. What?  
 JIMMY. It's supposed to say, "villain."  
 SANDRINE. Well, it doesn't say, "villain." It says, "Villian."  
 JIMMY. I know, I spelled it wrong — >  
 SANDRINE. What?!?  
 JIMMY. They spelled it wrong. It says, "Villian," but it's supposed to say, "villain."  
 SANDRINE. Well, why is it supposed to say, "villain?" Why would you want a tattoo that says, "villain?"  
 JIMMY. 'Cause ...  
 SANDRINE. 'Cause why?  
 JIMMY. Just 'cause.  
 SANDRINE. Just 'cause why?  
 JIMMY. Just 'cause ... when a guy's got a girl like you ... Well, I just think that losin' a girl like you, drivin' a girl like you away >  
 SANDRINE. Jimmy, you didn't drive me away —  
 JIMMY. is just plain criminal., It's criminal!, It's villainy! And it should be punished! So I punished myself, I marked myself a villain

so girls would stay away so I'd never have to go through what I went through with you, again — can I kiss you?

SANDRINE. *(Not mean.)* No. *(Jimmy tries to kiss her. She doesn't allow it. Awful beat. Then, referring to Jimmy's tattoo.)* You can get that undone, you know.

JIMMY. Yeah. *(Beat.)*

SANDRINE. I gotta head. *(Goes.)*

JIMMY. Yeah. *(Then, stopping Sandrine.)* Hey, I'm — ... *(Sandrine stops, turns to him. Beat.)* I'm glad you got found.

SANDRINE. Thanks, Jimmy. *(Goes back to her bachelorette party — and is welcomed back heartily. We hear this. Jimmy hears this. He is alone, sad, and stuck there. Beat.)*

WAITRESS. *(Entering.)* Hey! Sorry! You were wavin' me down. I saw you, but it's so busy in the front! There's this bachelorette party: those girls! Good thing it's not, "Drink free if you're glad," 'cause those girls are wicked glad. Gosh — had to fight my way through to find you, but I did it! I found ya! So: What d'ya need?, What can I do ya for? Another Bud?

JIMMY. Um, I'm okay, I'm good, thanks ... *(He's sad, looking off to where Sandrine went.)*

WAITRESS. *(Looks off to where Sandrine went ... sees the empty chair ... looks back to where Sandrine went ... puts the pieces together.)*

Oh, pal ... Um ... Um ... Well, remember, like I said, Moose Paddy special: Drinks are free if you're sad. Okay? Just tell me you're sad, and you'll drink free. *(Beat.)* Just say the word. Let me know. 'Cause I know from sad, and you're lookin' pretty sad. *(No response from Jimmy. He's just sad.)* Okay. Well, my name's Villian, if you need anything. *(Note to the actress playing Villian: The next line may be used if you feel you need it for clarity. It's just a back-up, in case you feel the first mention of your name isn't heard, or if the audience is slow to catch on. Use it if you need it, don't if you don't — up to you.)* Just ask for Villian. *(Goes.)*

JIMMY. *(Beat. Her name registers. He calls to her.)* Villian?!!

VILLIAN. *(Stops.)* Yeah?

JIMMY. Hi.

VILLIAN. Hi.

JIMMY. I'm not sad. I just would like another Bud.

VILLIAN. All right! *(Goes.)*

JIMMY. *(Making sure her name is actually Villian.)* Villian!!!

VILLIAN. *(Stopping.)* Yeah?!?

JIMMY. I'm glad you found me.

VILLIAN. Aw ... *(Leaving, to herself.)* "I'm glad you found me," that's adorable ... *(Music. Jimmy is dumbfounded. He deals with his tattooed forearm in some way. And we transition into Scene 3 ...)*

### Scene 3

#### THIS HURTS

*A woman appears. She is finishing up ironing a man's clothes in the laundry room of Ma Dudley's Boarding House in Almost, Maine. A man appears, sitting on a bench in the laundry room. The woman starts folding the man's shirt she was ironing but thinks better of it, and instead, deliberately crumples it and throws it into her laundry basket. She picks up the iron and wraps the cord around it, preparing to put it away. As she does so, she burns herself on it.*

WOMAN. Ow! Dammit! *(The man takes note of this and writes "iron" in a composition book labeled THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU. Meanwhile, the woman has exited to return the iron to its proper place. She returns to deal with the ironing board, which also must be returned to its proper place — the same place she just brought the iron. After folding up the ironing board, she turns to exit and accidentally wallops the man in the head with the ironing board, knocking him off the bench he was sitting on.)* Oh, no!, I'm sorry!, I'm sorry! Oh ... I didn't see you!, Are you okay?!?

MAN. *(Unfazed.)* Yeah.

WOMAN. No you're not!! I smashed you with the ironing board, I wasn't even looking! Are you hurt?

MAN. *(Calmly resituating himself on the bench.)* No.

WOMAN. Oh, you must be!! I just *smashed* you!, Where did I get you?

MAN. In the head.

WOMAN. In the head?!?, Oh, *(Going to him.)* come here!, Are you okay?

MAN. Is there any blood?  
WOMAN. No.  
MAN. Any discoloration?  
WOMAN. No.  
MAN. Then I'm okay.  
WOMAN. Well, I'm gonna go get you some ice.  
MAN. No. I can't feel things like that.  
WOMAN. Like what?  
MAN. Like when I get smashed in the head with an ironing board.  
I don't get hurt.  
WOMAN. What?  
MAN. I can't feel pain.  
WOMAN. Oh, Jeezum Crow, what the hell have I done to you? >  
MAN. Nothin'.  
WOMAN. You're talkin' loopy., Listen to you, goin' on about not being able to feel pain., That's delusional., I've knocked the sense right outta ya!  
MAN. No, I'm okay.  
WOMAN. Shh! Listen: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You're hurt. You just took a good shot right to the head, and that's serious.  
MAN. No, it's not serious. I don't think an ironing board could really hurt your head, 'cause, see, (*Forcing his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book on her.*) ironing boards aren't on my list of things that can hurt you, >  
WOMAN. (*Dealing with his book.*) What is—?  
MAN. plus, there's no blood or discoloration from where I got hit, so ... >  
WOMAN. Well, you can be hurt and not be bleeding or bruised —  
MAN. And my list is pretty reliable, 'cause my brother Paul is helping me make it, and I can prove it to you: See, I bet if I took this ironing board, (*Gets the ironing board.*) like this, and hit you with it, that it wouldn't hurt you. (*Smashes her in the head with the ironing board.*) See?, // That didn't hurt.  
WOMAN. OW!! (*Scrambling to get away from him.*)  
MAN. Oh!  
WOMAN. Ow! What the hell was that?! // Why did you do that?  
MAN. Oh! I'm sorry. // Did that hurt?  
WOMAN. God!  
MAN. Oh, it did, didn't it?  
WOMAN. Ow!

MAN. Oh, I didn't think it would 'cause, see, ironing boards are not on my list of things that can hurt you, but, gosh, maybe they should be on my list, because —  
WOMAN. What are you talkin' about?  
MAN. I have a list of things that can hurt you — my brother Paul is helping me make it — and ironing boards aren't on it.  
WOMAN. Well, that ironing board hurt me.  
MAN. Yeah.  
WOMAN. So you should add it to your list.  
MAN. Yeah. (*Beat. Adds "ironing boards" to his THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book, then picks up another composition book labeled THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF.*) Should I be afraid of ironing boards?  
WOMAN. Well, if someone swings it at your head and wallops you with it, yes ...  
MAN. Well, it's not — ... I have a list of things to be afraid of, too, and ironing boards are not on this list either.  
WOMAN. Well they shouldn't be, really.  
MAN. No?  
WOMAN. No, you shouldn't be afraid of ironing boards.  
MAN. No?  
WOMAN. No.  
MAN. But they can hurt you.  
WOMAN. Yeah.  
MAN. So I should be afraid of them.  
WOMAN. No.  
MAN. So I shouldn't be afraid of them?  
WOMAN. Right.  
MAN. But they can hurt me.  
WOMAN. Well, if they're used the way you used it, yeah.  
MAN. Oh-oh-oh! So, they're kind of like the opposite of God!  
WOMAN. What?  
MAN. Well, ironing boards can hurt me, but I shouldn't be afraid of them, but God, my brother Paul says, God won't hurt me, but I should fear him.  
WOMAN. I guess.  
MAN. Boy, this is getting very complicated.  
WOMAN. What is?  
MAN. This business of learning what hurts, what doesn't hurt, what to be afraid of, what not to be afraid of.

WOMAN. Are you sure you're okay?, // You're just goin' on and on about crazy stuff —

MAN. Oh, yeah, yeah, see, I have congenital analgesia, he thinks. Some // people —

WOMAN. What?

MAN. Congenital analgesia.

WOMAN. Who thinks?

MAN. My brother Paul. Some people call it hereditary sensory neuropathy type four, but ... it just means I can't feel pain. You can hit me if you want to, to see!

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Go ahead., It won't hurt., See? (*Hits his head with the book.*)

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See? (*Hits his head again.*)

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. See? (*Hits his head again.*)

WOMAN. OW!

MAN. Go ahead. (*Offers her the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book so she can hit him with it.*)

WOMAN. No!

MAN. Come on!

WOMAN. No!!

MAN. Come on!

WOMAN. NO!!

MAN. Okay. You don't have to. Most people don't. Hit me. Most people just go away. You can go away, too, if you want to. That's what most people do when I tell them about myself. My brother Paul says I just shouldn't tell people about myself, because I scare them, (*Referring to his THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF book so he can show her.*) so I've actually recently put "myself" on my list of things to be afraid of, but — (*Her curiosity getting the better of her, the woman comes up from behind him and wallops him on the back of the head with the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book.*)

WOMAN. Oh, my gosh! I'm sorry! // Oh, my gosh! I just clocked you! >

MAN. You hit me! Most people go away, but you hit me!

WOMAN. I had to see [what would happen]! But — are you okay?

MAN. Yeah, I don't feel // pain!

WOMAN. ... Don't feel pain, right, of course you're okay! — but — are you sure?

MAN. Well, is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

WOMAN. Well, buddy, you can be hurt and not even look like it.

MAN. But —

WOMAN. Trust me. There are things that hurt you that make you bruised and bloody, and there are things that hurt you that don't make you bruised and bloody, and ... they all hurt. (*Beat. Then, giving him back the THINGS THAT CAN HURT YOU book.*) I'm Marvalyn.

MAN. I'm Steve. I live on the third floor. Room 11.

MARVALYN. (*Deflecting.*) I live with my boyfriend, Eric. I love him very much.

STEVE. Yeah. We saw you move in.

MARVALYN. Yeah. Our roof collapsed from all the snow in December. We're just here until we can get our feet back on the ground.

STEVE. Oh. Well, that's good, 'cause that's what Ma Dudley says her boarding house is. A place where people can live until they get their feet back on the ground. My brother Paul says we've been trying to get our feet back on the ground our whole lives.

MARVALYN. Oh.

STEVE. Yeah, it takes some people longer to do that than others ...

MARVALYN. Yeah. (*Beat.*)

STEVE. You guys are loud.

MARVALYN. Huh?

STEVE. You and Eric. You yell and bang. We're right below you.

MARVALYN. Oh. Sorry about that. We're goin' through a rough patch. Happens. Sorry. (*Beat. Then, changing the subject.*) What is it like?

STEVE. What?

MARVALYN. To not feel pain.

STEVE. I don't know. I don't know what it's like to hurt, so ... I don't know. I don't really feel.

MARVALYN. Is this ... how you were born?

STEVE. Yeah. I don't have fully developed pain sensors. They're immature, my brother Paul says //, and because they're immature —

MARVALYN. How does he know that?

STEVE. Oh, he reads, >

MARVALYN. But —

STEVE. and because they're immature, my development as a human being has been retarded, he says, >  
MARVALYN. But —  
STEVE. but he teaches me what hurts, though.  
MARVALYN. Why??  
STEVE. So I won't ruin myself. I have to know what hurts, so I know when to be afraid. See, my mind can't tell me when to be afraid, 'cause my body doesn't know what being hurt is, so I have to memorize what might hurt.  
MARVALYN. Okay ...  
STEVE. And I have to memorize what to be afraid of. (*Showing Marvalyn items in his THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF book.*) Things like bears. And guns and knives. And fire. And fear — I should fear fear itself — , and pretty girls ...  
MARVALYN. Pretty girls?  
STEVE. (*Thinks Marvalyn is pretty.*) Yeah.  
MARVALYN. Why should you be afraid of pretty girls?  
STEVE. Well, 'cause my brother Paul says they can hurt you 'cause they make you love them. >  
MARVALYN. What?!?  
STEVE. And that's something I'm supposed to be afraid of, too — love — but Paul says that I'm really lucky, 'cause I'll probably never have to deal with love, because I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities as a result of the congenital analgesia.  
MARVALYN. Wait, what do you mean you're never gonna have to deal with love //, why —  
STEVE. 'Cause I'm never gonna know what it feels like, Paul says.  
MARVALYN. Well, how does he know that?  
STEVE. 'Cause it hurts.  
MARVALYN. It shouldn't.  
STEVE. And, plus, I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities.  
MARVALYN. You know what, a lot of people do. (*Kisses Steve. At first it's just her kissing him, but, eventually, he participates, and she breaks away.*) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Are you all right? Are you okay?  
STEVE. (*Doesn't quite know how to respond. He hasn't learned about this. Then, maybe feeling his lips, and resorting to his usual way of answering this question.*) Well ... is there any blood?  
MARVALYN. No ...

STEVE. Any discoloration?  
MARVALYN. No.  
STEVE. Then I'm all right. (*Is he?*)  
MARVALYN. Yeah. You are. (*Beat.*) I'm so sorry I did that. It's just — ... You're just very sweet.  
STEVE. (*Trying to make sense of what just happened.*) But ... you have a boyfriend and you love him very much.  
MARVALYN. (*Begins gathering her stuff.*) Yes I do. And yes I do.  
STEVE. And you just kissed me.  
MARVALYN. Yes I did.  
STEVE. And it's Friday night, and you're doing your laundry.  
MARVALYN. Yes I am.  
STEVE. And people who are in love with each other, they don't kiss other people and do their laundry on Friday nights, I've learned that. People who are in love with each other, they go to the Moose Paddy on Friday nights, or they go dancing together, or they go skating. And they kiss each other. They don't kiss other people — you know what? I don't think that's love, // what you and your boyfriend have —  
MARVALYN. (*Deflecting, preparing to leave.*) I've been down here longer than I said I would be, and he doesn't like that.  
STEVE. Who?  
MARVALYN. My boyfriend.  
STEVE. Who you love very much.  
MARVALYN. Yes.  
STEVE. Even though you kissed me?  
MARVALYN. Yes.  
STEVE. Wow, I'm going to have to talk to my brother Paul about this —  
MARVALYN. No! Don't talk to your brother Paul about this! Tell him to stop teaching you.  
STEVE. What?  
MARVALYN. Whatever he's teaching you. Tell him to stop. What he's teaching you ... isn't something you wanna know.  
STEVE. But I have to learn from him —  
MARVALYN. Look: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You need to go to a doctor and not have your brother read whatever it is he reads.  
STEVE. But —  
MARVALYN. You know what, I gotta go.  
STEVE. (*Sits down on the bench.*) Right. You gotta go. You're — you're leaving. I knew you would. That's what people do.



MARVALYN. No, I just have to — . I told you, Eric // doesn't like it if —

STEVE. Your boyfriend?

MARVALYN. Yeah, he doesn't like it if I'm down here longer than I said I'd be, and I've been down here longer than I said I'd be — *(On this line, she picks up the ironing board. Then, as she goes to put it away, she accidentally swings it around and hits Steve in the head, just as she did at the beginning of the scene. Steve gets knocked off the bench.)*

STEVE. OW!

MARVALYN. Oh! I'm sorry!

STEVE. OW!

MARVALYN. I'm so sorry!, Are you all right? I can't believe I just did that to you again!

STEVE. OW!!

MARVALYN. *(Goes to help him, stops short.)* Wait — : What did you just say?

STEVE. *(As he rubs his head, he realizes what he just said. Beat. He looks at Marvalyn and tells her plainly:)* Ow. *(Music. Steve and Marvalyn just look at each other. Utter uncertainty. This is scary — because who knows what's next? Transition into Scene 4 ... )*

#### Scene 4

### GETTING IT BACK

*Music fades. We hear someone — Gayle — pounding on a door. We are in the living room of a small home in Almost, Maine. It is furnished with a comfortable chair and end table.*

GAYLE. *(Offstage.)* Lendall! *(Listens for a response. More pounding.)* Lendall! *(More pounding. She listens for a response.)* Lendall!!! *(Lendall has been woken up. Maybe he was asleep in bed and enters; maybe he was asleep in the chair. Either way, he's up now. He goes to answer the door. She continues to pound on the door.)*

LENDALL. Okay! Gayle! Shhh! I'm comin', I'm comin'!

GAYLE. *(Offstage.)* Lendall!

LENDALL. Hey, hey, hey! Shh!, Come on!, I'm comin', I'm comin'! *(Exits to answer the door.)*

GAYLE. *(Entering, blowing by Lendall.)* Lendall —

LENDALL. *(Following Gayle, concerned.)* What's the matter?, What's goin' on? *(Beat. Gayle is stewing.)* What?!

GAYLE. *(Has been in a bit of a state, but collects herself.)* I want it back.

LENDALL. *(Not understanding.)* What?

GAYLE. I want it back.

LENDALL. What [do you want back]?

GAYLE. All the love I gave to you?, I want it back.

LENDALL. *(Little beat.)* What?

GAYLE. Now.

LENDALL. *(Little beat.)* I don't understand —

GAYLE. I've got yours in the car.

LENDALL. What???

GAYLE. All the love you gave to me?, I've got it in the car.

LENDALL. What are you talkin' about?

GAYLE. I don't want it anymore.

LENDALL. Why?

GAYLE. I've made a decision: We're done.

LENDALL. What?! —

GAYLE. We're done. I've decided. And, so, I've brought all the love you gave to me back to you. It's the right thing to do.

LENDALL. *(Bewildered.)* Um, I —

GAYLE. It's in the car.

LENDALL. You said. *(Beat. He's kind of paralyzed trying to figure this out.)*

GAYLE. *(Waiting for Lendall to take some action and go get the love.)* I can get it for you, or ... you can get it.

LENDALL. Well, I don't want it back. I don't need it —

GAYLE. Well, I don't want it! What am I supposed to do with all of it, now that I don't want it?

LENDALL. Well, I don't know ...

GAYLE. Well, under the circumstances, // it doesn't seem right for me to keep it, so I'm gonna give it back. *(She leaves.)*

LENDALL. Under what circumstances? *(Calling to Gayle.)* Gayle — What are—? I don't understand what — ... What are you doing?



GAYLE. (*Offstage.*) I told you. I'm getting all the love you gave to me, and I'm giving it back to you.

LENDALL. (*Calling to Gayle.*) Well, I'm not sure I want it — whoa! Need help?

GAYLE. Nope. I got it. It's not heavy. (*Returns with an enormous bunch of HUGE bags full of love. The bags should be filled with batting, foam, and/or pillow stuffing. She dumps the bags on the floor.*) Here you go.

LENDALL. (*Truly puzzled, referring to the bags of love.*) And this is...?

GAYLE. (*Exiting.*) All the love you gave me, yeah.

LENDALL. Wow. (*Beat.*) That's a lot.

GAYLE. (*Returning with more bags of love.*) Yeah. (*Exits.*)

LENDALL. Whole lot.

GAYLE. (*Offstage.*) Yeah. (*Returns with even more bags of love. There is now an ENORMOUS pile of love in Lendall's living room.*)

LENDALL. Wow. What the heck am I gonna do with all this? I mean ... I don't know if I have room.

GAYLE. (*Upset.*) Well, I guess you'll have to find a place for it, won't you? And now, I think it's only fair for you to give me mine back because ... I want it back. (*Beat.*) All the love I gave to you?

LENDALL. Yeah?

GAYLE. I want it back. (*Beat.*) So go get it. (*Beat. Lendall doesn't move. He's probably trying to figure out what is happening and why it's happening.*) Lendall, go get it. (*Beat. Lendall still doesn't move.*) Please. (*Beat. Lendall still doesn't move.*) Now!!!

LENDALL. (*A little shaken, a little at a loss.*) Okay. (*Exits. Gayle sits in the chair and waits. She's still in a state. Long beat. He returns ... with a teeny-tiny little bag — a little red pouch — and places it on a little table next to the chair. They look at the little bag. The little bag should be between him and Gayle. And Gayle should be between the many bags of love and the little bag of love.*)

GAYLE. What is that?

LENDALL. (*It's obvious — it's exactly what Gayle asked for.*) It's all the love you gave me.

GAYLE. That's...? That is *not* — . There is no way — ... That is *not* — . (*Mortified.*) Is that all I gave you?

LENDALL. It's all I could find ...

GAYLE. Oh. Okay. (*Taking in the little bag ... and then all the big bags.*) Okay. (*And she's crying.*)

LENDALL. Gayle — . What's goin' on, here?

GAYLE. I told you: We're done.

LENDALL. Why do you keep sayin' that?

GAYLE. Because — . (*This is hard to say, but it has to be said.*) Because when I asked you if you ever thought we were gonna get married — remember when I asked you that? (*Lendall doesn't seem to want to remember.*) In December? ... It was snowing?

LENDALL. (*But he remembers.*) Yeah.

GAYLE. Yeah, well, when I asked you ... *that*, you got so ... *quiet*. And everybody said that that right there // shoulda told me everything.

LENDALL. Everybody *who*?

GAYLE. Everybody!

LENDALL. Who?

GAYLE. ... Marvalyn >

LENDALL. *Marvalyn*?!? Marvalyn said that, like she's an expert?

GAYLE. said — yes, Marvalyn, yes, said that how quiet you got was all I needed to know, and she's right: You don't love me.

LENDALL. What—? Gayle, no!

GAYLE. Shh! And I've been trying to fix that., I've tried to *make* you love me by giving you every bit of love I had, and now ... I don't have any love for *me* left, and that's ... that's not good for a person ... and ... that's why I want all the love I gave you back, because I wanna bring it with me.

LENDALL. Where are you going?

GAYLE. I need to get away from things.

LENDALL. What—? What things?! There aren't any things in this town to get away from!

GAYLE. Yes there are: You!

LENDALL. Me?

GAYLE. Yes. *You* are the things in this town I need to get away from because I have to think and start over, and so: All the love I gave to you? I want it back, in case I need it. Because I can't very well go around giving *your* love — 'cause that's all I have right now, is the love *you* gave *me* — I can't very well go around giving *your* love to other guys, 'cause // that just doesn't seem right —

LENDALL. Other *guys*? There are other guys?!?

GAYLE. No, not yet, but I'm assuming there will be.

LENDALL. Gayle —

GAYLE. Shh!!! So I think — . I think that, since I know now that you're not ready to do what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time (*i.e., get married*), I think we're gonna be done, >

LENDALL. Why? Gayle—!

GAYLE. and so, I think the best thing we can do, now, is just return the love we gave to each other, and call it ... *(Taking in the bags — the pathetic one that contains the love she gave Lendell and the awesome several that contain the love Lendell gave her.)* ... even. *(It's not "even" at all.)* Oh, Jeezum Crow, is that really all the love I gave you, Lendall? I mean, I thought — . I mean, what kind of person am I if this is all the love I gave y — ... No ... n-n-no! *(Fiercely.)* I know I gave you more than that, Lendall, I know it! *(Thinks. Collects herself. New attack.)* Did you lose it?

LENDALL. What?!! // No, Gayle! No!

GAYLE. Did you *lose* it, Lendall?!? 'Cause I know I gave you more than that, and I think you're pulling something on me, and this is not a good time to be pulling something on me!

LENDALL. I'm not. Pulling something on you. I wouldn't do that to you ... Just — I think — ... Gosh — ... *(Not mean, just at a loss.)* I think maybe you should just take what you came for, and I guess I'll see you later. *(This is pretty final. He exits into the rest of the house.)*

GAYLE. *(Realizing the finality of this all.)* Lendall. Lendall ... *(Now she is at a loss. But this is what she wants. She looks at the little bag, takes it, and is about to leave. But curiosity stops her. She opens the bag and examines what's inside. Calling to him.)* Lendall — what is this? I don't [understand] — ... This isn't [all the love I gave you] — ... Lendall: What is this?

LENDALL. *(Little beat, from off.)* It's a ring, Gayle.

GAYLE. What?

LENDALL. *(Returning.)* It's a ring.

GAYLE. What? Well, what the—? *(She takes what is in the bag out of the bag.)* This isn't — . This is *not* — ... *(Realizes it's a ring box.)* Oh, Lendall, this is a ring! Is this a ... *ring*? A ring that you give to someone you've been with for quite a long time when you want to let them know that you're ready for what comes next for people who have been together for quite a long time...?

LENDALL. Yup.

GAYLE. Oh. Oh. *(Beat.)* But ... all the love I gave to you? Where is it?

LENDALL. *(Referring to the ring.)* It's right there, Gayle.

GAYLE. But —

LENDALL. It's right there.

GAYLE. But —

LENDALL. It *is*! That's it! Right there! There was so much of it — you gave me so much, over the years —

GAYLE. *(Taking it to him.)* Eleven.

LENDALL. — over the eleven // years —

GAYLE. *Eleven, yeah!*

LENDALL. — yeah, you gave me so much ... that I didn't know what to do with it all. I had to put some in the garage, some in the shed. I asked my dad if he had any suggestions what to do with it all, and he said, "You got a ring yet?" I said, "No." And he said, "Get her one. It's time. When there's that much of that stuff comin' in, that's about the only place you can put it." *(Beat.)* He said it'd all fit [in the ring]. *(Beat.)* And he was right. *(Beat. They look at the ring. Then, simply.)* That thing is a lot bigger than it looks. *(Beat.)* So ... there it is. All the love you gave me. Just not in the same ... form as when you gave it.

GAYLE. Yeah. *(Beat.)*

LENDALL. You still want it back?

GAYLE. Yes. I do.

LENDALL. Well, then ... take it.

GAYLE. *(Starts to open the box — but then, referring to all the bags of love, says.)* Can I keep all that?

LENDALL. It's yours.

GAYLE. Thank you. *(Just stares at the ring box.)* Lendall — ... You didn't have to get me a ring. That's not what I was asking —

LENDALL. Yes I did. It was time. And it's honorable.

GAYLE. *(Opens the box.)* Well ... it's very beautiful. *(Beat.)* Lendall — ... I'm so sorry. It's just — it's a Friday night, and I was sittin' home all by myself — we didn't even go out or anything, and I started thinkin' that that's just not right, and —

LENDALL. Shh. *(Into a kiss. And a hug. Things are far from okay. How will these two ever recount the story of how they got engaged? Lights fade on him and Gayle hugging — two small people in love — and in a little pain — underneath a big, spectacular, starlit northern night sky. Maybe Gayle can't help but take a good look at that ring.)*

## End of Act One

*Intermission. Eventually, we move to what I'm calling the ...*

## INTERLOGUE

### Option 1

*After intermission: music. Lights up on Pete, from the Prologue — exactly where we left him: sitting on his bench, with his snowball, looking off left to where Ginette exited. After a beat, he looks at his snowball. He again looks off to where Ginette exited and ponders the consequences of his theory on being "close" as the lights ... slowly ... fade. Transition ... and we begin ...*

### Option 2

*Shortly after intermission begins, Pete, from the Prologue, appears stage left — exactly where we left him: looking off left to where Ginette exited, occasionally looking at his snowball, and always pondering the consequences of his theory of what it means to be "close." He eventually makes his way back to his seat on the bench, all the while focused on where Ginette went. When the intermission is over, the Interlogue continues. Pete sits in silence, looking off to where Ginette exited, and occasionally looking at his snowball. After some time, he gets up, and slowly moves toward where Ginette exited. Music. Eventually Pete makes his way offstage. Transition ... and we begin ...*

## ACT TWO

### Scene 5

## THEY FELL

### (Male Version)

*Randy and Chad — two "Aroostook County boys" (these guys are one hundred percent "guy") appear. Music fades. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. They're probably drinkin' some beers — Natural Lite, if you can get it. They're in mid-conversation.*

CHAD. I believe you, I'm just sayin' —  
RANDY. It was *bad*, Chad. *Bad!*  
CHAD. I hear ya, b//ut —  
RANDY. But you're not *listenin'*, // Chad: It was bad! >  
CHAD. No, *you're* not listenin', 'cause >  
RANDY. Real bad ...  
CHAD. (*Topping Randy.*) I'm tryin' to tell you that I had a pretty bad time *myself!!!*  
RANDY. (*Taking this in, then.*) No. There's no way! —  
CHAD. It was pretty bad, Randy.  
RANDY. Really.  
CHAD. Yeah.  
RANDY. Okay ... go. [Let's hear it.]  
CHAD. (*This is a little painful.*) She — ... She said she didn't like the way I smelled.  
RANDY. What?  
CHAD. Sally told me she didn't like the way I smelled. Never has.  
RANDY. (*Taking this in.*) Sally Dunleavy told you that she didn't // like the way—...?  
CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. When?

CHAD. When I picked her up. She got in the truck — we were backin' outta her driveway — and all of a sudden, she starts breathin' hard and asked me to stop, and she got outta the truck and said she was sorry, but she couldn't go out with me because she didn't like the way I smelled, never had! >

RANDY. What?

CHAD. Said she thought she was gonna be able to overlook it — the way that I smelled — but that that wasn't gonna be possible after all, and she slammed the door on me and left me sittin' right there in her driveway.

RANDY. (*Taking this in.*) 'Cause she didn't like the way you smelled?

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Well what kinda—...? (*Beat.*) I don't mind the way you smell.

CHAD. Thanks.

RANDY. Jeez.

CHAD. Yeah ... (*Beat.*) Told you it was bad.

RANDY. More than bad, Chad. That's sad.

CHAD. Yeah. (*Beat.*) So, I'm guessin' I'm the big winner tonight, huh? So ... I get to pick tomorrow, and I pick bowlin'. We'll go bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, and just hang out.

RANDY. (*Looks at Chad. Beat.*) I didn't say you're the big winner.

CHAD. What?

RANDY. Did I say you're the big winner?

CHAD. No —

RANDY. No. All that's pretty sad, Chad, and bad, but you didn't win.

CHAD. What do you mean?

RANDY. You didn't win.

CHAD. You can beat bein' told you smelled bad?

RANDY. Yeah.

CHAD. Well, then ... [*Let's hear it.*]

RANDY. (*This is tough to share.*) Mine's face broke.

CHAD. What?

RANDY. Her face broke.

CHAD. (*Taking this in.*) Her—?

RANDY. Only get one chance with a girl like Yvonne LaFrance, and her face broke. (*Beat.*) Told you it was bad. (*Beat.*)

CHAD. How did her face break?

RANDY. When we were dancin'.

CHAD. *Dancin'? (These guys don't dance.)*

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. Why were you *dancin'?*!

RANDY. 'Cause that's what she wanted to do! On our date. So I took her. Took her dancin' down to the rec center. You pay, then you get a lesson, then you dance all night. They teach "together dancing" — how to dance together — and we learned that thing where you throw the girl up and over, and, Yvonne — well, she's pretty small ... and I'm pretty strong. And I threw her up and over, and, well ... I threw her ... *over ... over.* (*Beat.*) And she landed on her face. (*Beat.*) And it broke. (*Beat.*) Had to take her to the emergency room. (*Long beat. Then, finally:*)

CHAD. That's a drive.

RANDY. Thirty-eight miles.

CHAD. Yup.

RANDY. (*Disgusted.*) And she *cried!*

CHAD. Hate that.

RANDY. Whole way! *Then* asked me to call her old boyfriend to come get her!

CHAD. Ooh.

RANDY. He did! Asked me to "please leave." (*Beat.*) He's small as she is. (*They laugh. Beat. Chad laughs.*) What?

CHAD. That's just — pretty bad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. And sad.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. So ... I guess you win.

RANDY. Yup.

CHAD. That right there might make you the big winner of all time!

RANDY. Yup!

CHAD. "Baddest-date-guy" of all time!

RANDY. Yup!

CHAD. Congratulations!

RANDY. Thank you! (*Beat.*)

CHAD. So what do you pick tomorrow?

RANDY. Bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

CHAD. Good. (*They drink their beers simultaneously. Beat. He laughs.*)

RANDY. What?

CHAD. (*Sitting.*) I don't know. Just sometimes ... I don't know why I bother goin' "out." I don't like it, Randy. I hate it. I hate goin' out on these dates. I mean, why do I wanna spend my Friday night with some girl I might *maybe* like, when I could be spendin' it hangin' out with someone I *know* I like, like you, you know?

RANDY. Yeah.

CHAD. I mean ... that was rough tonight. In the middle of Sally tellin' me how she didn't like the way I smelled ... I got real sad, >

RANDY. Aw, buddy ...

CHAD. and all I could think about was how not much in this world makes me feel good or makes much sense anymore, and I got really scared, 'cause there's gotta be something that makes you feel good or at least makes sense in this world, or what's the point, right? >

RANDY. Yeah ...

CHAD. But then I kinda came out of bein' sad and actually felt okay, 'cause I realized that there *is* one thing in this world that makes me feel really good and that *does* make sense, and it's you. (*Everything stops. He isn't quite sure what he has just said. Randy isn't quite sure what he has just heard. Long, long beat of these guys sorting out what was just said and heard.*)

RANDY. (*Escaping the discomfort.*) Well, I'm gonna head. (*Starts to leave.*) >

CHAD. Yeah ...

RANDY. (*Deflecting throughout the following.*) I gotta work in the mornin' ...

CHAD. Well, I'm just supervisin' first shift at the mill, so I can pick you up anytime after three —

RANDY. Oh, I don't know, Chad: Me and Lendall, we got a long day tomorrow — we're still catchin' up, fixin' roofs from all the snow in December., Gotta do Marvalyn and Eric's, and —

CHAD. Well, four // or five? Six or seven?

RANDY. Prob'ly busy all day., I don't know when we'll be // done.

CHAD. Well, you just // say when —

RANDY. I don't know — I don't know — I don't know — // so —

CHAD. Well, I'll be ready // whenever you want me to come pick ya up —

RANDY. (*Putting a stop to this — he wants outta there.*) Hey-hey-HEY!!: I'll see ya later!

CHAD. Yeah.

RANDY. Yeah. (*Leaves.*)

CHAD. Yeah-yeah-yeah ... (*Watches Randy go. Then:*) Hey, Randy! — (*Randy stops, turns to Chad, and they make eye contact, and suddenly, Chad falls down on the ground. This should be a crumple to the ground. Love is often described, after all, as making people weak in the knees. A slow crumple is best. Knees — shoulder — face. Note: Eye contact is what makes the guys fall.*)

RANDY. (*Rushing back, seeing Chad on the ground.*) Whoa! Chad! You okay?

CHAD. Yeah ...

RANDY. What the — ... Here ... (*Helps Chad up.*)

CHAD. Thanks. Umm ...

RANDY. What was that? You okay? What just happened there?

CHAD. (*Trying to figure this out.*) Umm ... I just fell ...

RANDY. Well, I figured that out ...

CHAD. No — ... I just — . (*Beat.*) I think I just ... fell in love with you there, Randy. (*Makes eye contact with Randy as he says this and crumples to the ground again.*)

RANDY. CHAD.

Chad! Whoa ...

CHAD. (*On the ground, face-planted.*) Yup. (*Getting up.*) That's what that was. Me falling in love with you ... (*Makes eye contact with Randy and crumples to the ground again.*)

RANDY. Chad: What are you doin'? Come on, get up! (*Gets Chad up, roughly.*)

CHAD. No-no-no, Randy — (*As he rises, he makes eye contact with Randy and immediately crumples to the ground again.*)

RANDY. (*Fiercely.*) Would you cut that out?!

CHAD. (*Fiercely, right back, and from the ground.*) Well, I can't help it!! It just kinda came over me!! I've fallen in love with ya, here!!

RANDY. (*Takes this in. Confused, scared. Long beat. Then:*) Chad: I'm your best buddy in the whole world ... and I don't quite know what you're doin' or what you're goin' on about ... but (*Furious and dangerous.*) — what the heck is your problem?!? What the heck are you doin'?!? Jeezum Crow, you're my best friend!

CHAD. Yeah —

RANDY. Yeah! And that's a thing you don't mess with! And you messed with it! And you don't *do* that! (*Starts to go but stops — not done yet.*) 'Cause, you know somethin', you're about the only thing that feels really good and makes sense in this world to me, too, and then you go and foul it up by doin' *this* (*i.e., falling down*)



and tellin' me *that* (i.e., *that you're in love with me*), and now it just doesn't make any sense at all! And it doesn't feel good! (*Starts to go again but stops — still not done yet.*) You've done a real number on a good thing, here, buddy, 'cause we're friends, and there's a line when you're friends that you can't cross! And you crossed it! (*And then, Randy, who should be on the opposite side of the stage from Chad, far away from him, makes eye contact with Chad and falls down, crumpling to the ground. Beat. Randy and Chad look at each other from the ground. A moment of realization. This is about as scary — and wonderful — as it gets. Now — the guys are far away from each other, and all they want to do is get to each other, so they go to get up — in order to get to each other. When they are upright, they look to each other — but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again. This is weird. They scramble to get up again and look to each other — but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again. They desperately want to get to each other, so — in a bit of a frenzy, to try to "beat" the falls — they try to get up ... but as soon as their eyes meet, they fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down. Finally, the falling frenzy settles ... and Randy and Chad are no closer to each other than they were when they started. They just look at each other. It's all scary and thrilling and unknown. Music. Transition into Scene 6 ...*)

## Scene 5

## THEY FELL

## (Female Version)

*Deena and Shelly — two "Aroostook County girls" — appear. They are hanging out in a potato field in Almost, Maine. They're probably drinkin' some beers — Natural Lite, if you can get it. They're in mid-conversation.*

SHELLY. I believe you, Deen, I'm just sayin' —

DEENA. It was bad, Shell. Bad.

SHELLY. I hear ya, b//ut —

DEENA. But you're not *listenin'*, // Shelly: It was bad! >

SHELLY. No, *you're* not *listenin'*, 'cause >

DEENA. Real bad, *historical*-bad!

SHELLY. (*Topping Deena.*) I'm tryin' to tell you that I had a pretty bad time *myself*!!!

DEENA. (*Taking this in, then:*) No. There's no way! —

SHELLY: It was pretty bad, Deena.

DEENA. Really.

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. Okay ... go. [Ler's hear it.]

SHELLY. (*This is a little painful.*) He — ... He said he didn't like the way I smelled.

DEENA. What?

SHELLY. Todd told me he didn't like the way I smelled. Never has.

DEENA. (*Taking this in.*) Todd Dunleavy told you that he didn't // like the way—...?

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. When?

SHELLY. When he picked me up. I got in his truck, we were backin' outta my driveway — and all of a sudden, he starts breathin' hard, hyper-hyper- (*Searches for "ventilating"*) // breathing —

DEENA. -ventilating.



SHELLY. -ventilating, yeah, and he stops, and he got outta the truck and says he's sorry, but he couldn't go out with me 'cause he didn't like the way I smelled, never had!

DEENA. What, never had? When has he smelled you before?

SHELLY. I don't know, *around* [town]?

DEENA. Well, jeez!

SHELLY. Anyway, he said he thought he was gonna be able to *overlook* it — the way that I smelled — but that that wasn't gonna be possible after all, because he couldn't breathe, somethin' about allergic, >

DEENA. Allergic?

SHELLY. and he said it wasn't *me* — it wasn't *me!* — it was somethin' about "the women" and the // lengths we go to —

DEENA. What?, "The women?!"

SHELLY. Yeah, and the lengths we go to to // smell nice, >

DEENA. The "*lengths*" we—?

SHELLY. and he said that whatever it is I use to smell nice >

DEENA. Oh!, Your *perfume!*

SHELLY. just doesn't — yeah — just doesn't smell very nice to him, no offense, and he slammed the door on me and left me sittin' right there in my driveway. In his truck.

DEENA. (*Taking this in.*) 'Cause he didn't like the way you smelled???

SHELLY. Yeah.

DEENA. Wait, you don't even use any kind of scent, do you?

SHELLY. No! // No!

DEENA. Well, what the—? (*Little beat.*) I don't mind the way you smell. >

SHELLY. Thanks.

DEENA. Matter of fact, I think you smell great.

SHELLY. Thanks. (*Beat.*) Anyway, he said he'd come back and pick his truck up tomorrow and would I mind please rolling down the windows for him to air it out overnight.

DEENA. What? There's nothin' to air out! >

SHELLY. I know.

DEENA. Todd has issues!

SHELLY. Yeah. (*Little beat. Suddenly Deena starts to leave, with purpose.*) What are you doin'?

DEENA. Doin' somethin' to his truck.

SHELLY. Deen!

DEENA. (*Grabbing Shelly.*) We're doin' somethin' to his truck. >

SHELLY. Deen —

DEENA. You're too nice! Time to get mean! We're doin' somethin' to his truck!

SHELLY. Deen! >

DEENA. We are!

SHELLY. We're not doin' nothin' to his truck! Relax.

DEENA. Jerk. He should be so lucky, gettin' to go out with you.

SHELLY. Nah.

DEENA. Yeah!

SHELLY. Anyway: Pretty bad, huh?

DEENA. Yeah. And a little sad, too.

SHELLY. Yeah. (*Beat.*) So, I'm guessin' that I'm the big winner tonight, huh?, And so I get to pick tomorrow, and I pick bowlin'. We'll go bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, couple of beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.

DEENA. (*Looks at Shelly. Beat.*) I didn't say you're the big winner.

SHELLY. What?

DEENA. Did I say you're the big winner?

SHELLY. No, but —

DEENA. No. All that's pretty sad, Shell, and bad, but you didn't win.

SHELLY. What do you mean?

DEENA. You didn't win.

SHELLY. You can beat being told that you smelled bad?

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Really.

DEENA. Yeah.

SHELLY. Well, then: (*Giving Deena the floor.*)

DEENA. Mine's face broke.

SHELLY. What?

DEENA. His face broke.

SHELLY. (*Taking this in.*) His—?

DEENA. Face broke, yeah. (*Little beat.*) Told you it was bad. (*Beat.*)

SHELLY. How did his ... face break?

DEENA. When we were dancin'.

SHELLY. *Dancin'*? Darren LeMans took you dancin'?!?!

DEENA. Yeah ...

SHELLY. Down to the rec center?!?

DEENA. Yeah ...

SHELLY. Oh, that's nice! // That's nice! >

DEENA. Yeah ...

SHELLY. What a good guy! >  
DEENA. Yeah ...  
SHELLY. I wouldn't have expected that from him!, Wish someone'd take me dancin'!  
DEENA. Yeah ...  
SHELLY. Musta been so fun!  
DEENA. Well, yeah, kinda. Till his face broke.  
SHELLY. What happened?  
DEENA. Well, we did that thing they have where you pay, you get a lesson, and you dance all night. They teach "together dancing" — how to dance together.  
SHELLY. Aww, that's nice!, That's fun!  
DEENA. Yeah, and we learned that thing where you throw the girl up and over and ... well, Darren was havin' a hard time figuring out the move — how to do it — and it's so *easy*, and so I thought maybe it'd help him get his part if — once through — we switched ... and, well, Darren's not a very big guy. I mean, he's little. Little, little man.  
SHELLY. He is, isn't he?  
DEENA. Yeah. Never really realized it before. He sounds taller on the phone.  
SHELLY. He does!  
DEENA. Yeah, so — anyway — we *switched* so I could show him how to do his part ... and, well, I'm pretty strong, and ... he's just *small* —  
SHELLY. He really *is*, isn't he?  
DEENA. Yeah — and I threw him up and over ... and, well, I threw him *over* — over. And ... he landed on his face. (*Little beat.*) And it broke. (*Little beat.*) Ocular — orbital — bone fracture.  
SHELLY. Oh. (*Beat.*)  
DEENA. Had to take him to the emergency room. (*Long beat. Then, finally:*)  
SHELLY. That's a drive.  
DEENA. Thirty-eight miles.  
SHELLY. Yup.  
DEENA. (*Disgusted.*) And he *cried*.  
SHELLY. Oh ...  
DEENA. The whole way. Asked me to call his *mom* to come get him!  
SHELLY. Seriously?!  
DEENA. Yeah. And she *did*. Asked me to "please leave."  
SHELLY. (*Laughter.*) Aw, Deen, I'm sorry!  
DEENA. It's all right. He was a lousy dancer.

SHELLY. Most of 'em are.  
DEENA. Yeah. (*They laugh. Beat. She falls into sadness. Shelly laughs.*) What?  
SHELLY. That's just — pretty bad.  
DEENA. Yup.  
SHELLY. And sad.  
DEENA. Yup. So ... I'm guessin' I win!  
SHELLY. Oh — yeah — no question, no question! That right there might make you the big winner of all time!  
DEENA. Yup!  
SHELLY. "Baddest-date-girl" of all time!  
DEENA. Yup!  
SHELLY. Congratulations!  
DEENA. Thank you!  
SHELLY. So what do you pick tomorrow?  
DEENA. Bowlin', supper at the Snowmobile Club, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy, hang out.  
SHELLY. Sounds good. (*Beat. Sadness. She laughs.*)  
DEENA. What?  
SHELLY. Oh, Deen, I don't know. Just sometimes ... I don't know why I bother goin' "out." I mean — I know *why* — it's 'cause you gotta go out, but I am scared 'cause I've been *goin'* out and nothin's *comin'* of it, you know?, And I feel like I'm runnin' outta chances, >  
DEENA. Don't say that., Don't say that —  
SHELLY. and lately I've been wonderin' why I even have to bother ... *goin'* out. I mean — I don't like it, Deena. I hate it. I hate goin' out on these *dates*. I mean, why do I wanna spend my Friday night hangin' out with some guy I might *maybe* like, when I could be spendin' it hangin' out with someone I *know* I like, like you, you know? >  
DEENA. Yeah.  
SHELLY. I mean ... that was rough tonight. In the middle of Todd tellin' me how he didn't like the way I smelled — I mean, he doesn't smell all that great!  
DEENA. Not many of 'em do!  
SHELLY. Yeah!, And, well, anyway, I got so sad.  
DEENA. Aw, but it wasn't you!, // It wasn't you!  
SHELLY. I know., I know., But after he said *that*, all I could think about was how not much in this world makes me feel good lately or makes much sense anymore ... And I got really scared, Deen,

'cause there's gotta be somethin' — at this stage of the game — there's gotta be somethin' that makes you feel good or at least makes sense in this world, or what's the point, right?

DEENA. Yeah ...

SHELLY. But then I kinda came out of feeling sad and I actually felt okay, 'cause I realized that there *is* somethin' at this stage of the game, there *is* one thing in this world that makes me feel really good and that *does* make sense — and it's you., It's always been you. *(Little beat. What just flew out of her mouth?)*

DEENA. Huh?

SHELLY. *(Trying to cover.)* Nothin'. *(But it's too late. Everything stops. She isn't quite sure what she has just said. Deena isn't quite sure what she has just heard. Long, long beat of these women sorting out what was just said and heard.)*

DEENA. *(Escaping the discomfort.)* Okay well, I should get goin' home, Shell. The cats get lonely. *(Starts to leave.)*

SHELLY. Yeah ... Well, I'm only goin' into the mill early tomorrow — just got some maintenance issues to resolve — and I bet I'll be done before noon, so I can pick you up lunchtime? >

DEENA. Yeah — no — I don't think —

SHELLY. Oh! They got the craft fair goin' at church!, Maybe we could hit that before // bowlin' —

DEENA. Oh, I don't know, 'cause, you know what?, I kinda forgot, Shell: I've got a big day tomorrow. >

SHELLY. Well —

DEENA. I gotta be up at the crack o' crack to open the salon: We're doin' Sandrine St. Pierre's wedding tomorrow, doin' the bride's hair and the bridesmaids' hair and the moms' hair and all the makeup and the nails, and I might // not be up for anything afterwards —

SHELLY. Well, // I'll come get ya whenever you're done, like we planned —

DEENA. Mmm ... prob'ly gonna be busy all day., We might have to do touch-ups for the wedding pictures — I don't know when we'll be // done, you know? >

SHELLY. Well, we could skip bowlin' and just do supper at the Snowmobile Club —

DEENA. And I'm gonna be really exhausted, so, I don't know — I don't know — I don't know — // so —

SHELLY. Well, I'll be ready whenever // you want me to come pick ya up —

DEENA. Hey, hey, Shell: Maybe we oughtta just give it a couple days and see when we both have the time and we'll make a plan, okay?

SHELLY. Well, the craft fair's only // this weekend, so —

DEENA. Yeah — you know what?, You know what?, You know what, Shell?: I'm gonna head. *(Beat.)* Okay?

SHELLY. Okay.

DEENA. Okay?

SHELLY. Okay.

DEENA. Okay!

SHELLY. Okay!

DEENA. *(Leaving.)* Bye!

SHELLY. Bye! *(Watches Deena go. Then:)* Hey, Deena—! *(Deena stops, and Deena and Shelly make eye contact, and suddenly, Shelly falls down on the ground. This should be a crumple to the ground. Love is often described, after all, as making people weak in the knees. A slow crumple is best. Knees — shoulder — face. Note: Eye contact is what makes the women fall.)*

DEENA. *(Rushing back, taking a moment to process, seeing Shelly on the ground.)* Shell, hey! What [happened] —? You okay?

SHELLY. Yeah ...

DEENA. What the — ... Here ... *(Helps Shelly up.)*

SHELLY. Thanks. Umm ...

DEENA. What was that? You okay? What just happened there?

SHELLY. *(Trying to figure this out.)* Umm ... I just fell ...

DEENA. Well, I know, I saw ...

SHELLY. No — ... I just — . *(Beat.)* I think I just ... fell in love with you, there, Deena. *(Shelly makes eye contact with Deena as she says this and crumples to the ground again.)*

DEENA.

SHELLY.

Shelly!

Oh, boy ...

SHELLY. *(On the ground, face-planted.)* Yup. *(Getting up.)* That's what that was. Me falling in love with you ... *(Makes eye contact with Deena and crumples to the ground again.)*

DEENA. Shelly: What are you doing? Come on, get up! *(Gets Shelly up.)*

SHELLY. No-no-no, Deena — *(As she rises, she makes eye contact with Deena and immediately crumples to the ground again.)*

DEENA. Would you cut that out!?

SHELLY. Well, I can't help it!! It just kinda came over me!! I've fallen in love with you, Deena!

DEENA. *(Takes this in. Confused, scared. Long beat. Then.)* Shelly: I'm your best friend in the whole world ... and I don't quite know what you're doin' or what you're goin' on about ... but — *(Angry.)* what are you talking about?!? What are you *saying*? Shell: You're my best friend, >

SHELLY. Yeah —

DEENA. and that's — ... I love that! But — I don't — . I mean — yeah, it's true: You're about the only thing that feels really good and makes sense in this world to me, too: You keep me from feelin' like I'm gonna become that crazy cat lady — but now, what you've *done* *(i.e., fallen down)* and what you've *said*, *(i.e., that you've fallen in love with me)* well, it makes me feel for sure like I'm gonna become that crazy cat lady 'cause me-and-my-best-friend-in-the-whole-wide-world doesn't make sense at all right now. And that doesn't feel good. And I think I'm really mad at you! 'Cause you can't go back! Once it's out there you can't take it back, something like that, and now it's just hanging there, and what do you MEAN? We're *friends!* >

SHELLY. Yeah ...

DEENA. Best friends!, and there's a line when you're friends that you can't cross! And you crossed it! *(And then, Deena, who should be on the opposite side of the stage from Shelly, far away from her, makes eye contact with Shelly and falls down, crumpling to the ground. Beat. Deena and Shelly look at each other from the ground. A moment of realization. This is about as scary — and wonderful — as it gets. Now — the women are far away from each other, and all they want to do is get to each other, so they go to get up — in order to get to each other. When they are upright, they look to each other — but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again. This is weird. They scramble to get up again and look to each other — but as soon as their eyes meet, they crumple to the ground again. They desperately want to get to each other, so — in a bit of a frenzy, to try to "beat" the falls — they try to get up ... but as soon as their eyes meet, they fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down; they get up, eyes meet, fall down. Finally, the falling frenzy settles ... and Deena and Shelly are no closer to each other than they were when they started. They just look at each other. It's all scary and thrilling and unknown. Music. Transition into Scene 6 ... )*

## Scene 6

### WHERE IT WENT

*Phil and Marci appear as music fades. They have just been ice-skating on Echo Pond in Almost, Maine. They are undoing their skates and putting on their boots or shoes. Phil has hockey skates, Marci has figure skates. Marci has one shoe on, one skate on. Note: Marci should be wearing a winter shoe — like one of those "suede" winter shoes or a winter hiking shoe — not a boot. Beat.*

PHIL. It still feels like you're mad.

MARCI. *(Undoing her skate.)* I'm not mad!, // I just said I wish >

PHIL. But you were, you *are*: >

MARCI. you'd pay more attention lately.

PHIL. You're mad.

MARCI. I'm not mad! I was having fun, I thought. I had fun tonight. Did you?

PHIL. Yeah.

MARCI. Good. *(Smiles, continues to undo her skates. She is puzzled by something. Beat.)*

PHIL. *(Continuing his defense.)* I mean, I was late because [*"Chad" or "Shelly" \**] called me in to the mill. I had to work. I need the hours.

MARCI. *(Looking for something.)* I'm not mad at you, Phil, you had to work, // I get it.

PHIL. I did!

MARCI. *(Now actively looking for something.)* Phil, where's my shoe?

PHIL. What?

MARCI. Where's my shoe?, I can't find it.

PHIL. Well, it's gotta be here ...

MARCI. Where is it?!? *(They look for her shoe. Beat.)* Is this you being funny?

PHIL. No.

\* Use the name of the character from the version of "They Fell" that was performed.

MARCI. 'Cause it's not funny. >  
PHIL. I —  
MARCI. It's cold out here!  
PHIL. Well, you're the one that wanted to go skating!  
MARCI. Phil!  
PHIL. (*Angry — a bit of an explosion.*) We'll find it! It's gotta be here! (*Beat.*)  
MARCI. I'm not mad. I was never mad. (*Re-lacing her skate — too cold for stocking feet. Beat.*) I was disappointed. But now I'm // done.  
PHIL. Marce! —  
MARCI. I had fun tonight! Skating! I thought it would be fun! >  
PHIL. It was —  
MARCI. Forget all the ... stuff. Get us away from the kids, get us back to where we used to be. We went skating ... first time you kissed me, on a Friday night just like this one. 'Member? Right here ... (*Touches Phil in some way — maybe rubs his back.*) Echo Pond —  
PHIL. (*Shaking off Marci's touch.*) I know where we are. Where the heck is your shoe? Maybe it's — (*Going off to look for it.*) — maybe it's in the car. Did you—? Where'd you put your skates on, out here or in the car? (*We hear him open and close the doors and trunk of the car.*)  
MARCI. (*Dealing with the fact that Phil shrugged her off.*) I put them on with you. Right here. (*Beat. Looks to the sky for answers.*)  
PHIL. (*Returning.*) Well, it's // not in the car —  
MARCI. (*Sees a shooting star.*) Oh-oh-oh!!! Sh-sh-sh! Shooting star, shooting star! (*Closes her eyes and makes a wish.*)  
PHIL. Wha — // Where, where?!? (*Looks for it.*)  
MARCI. (*Eyes closed.*) Shh!! I'm wishing, I'm wishing!  
PHIL. (*Keeps looking, and then.*) Oh, I missed it.  
MARCI. (*Just looks at Phil.*) Yeah, you did.  
PHIL. What's that supposed to mean?  
MARCI. (*Busies herself with re-lacing her skate or looking for her shoe.*) Nothin' — it's just ... not really all that surprising >  
PHIL. What?  
MARCI. that you didn't see it.  
PHIL. What?  
MARCI. The shooting star.  
PHIL. Why?  
MARCI. You don't pay attention, Phil. (*Beat.*)  
PHIL. See, when you say things like that, I feel like you're still mad.

MARCI. I'm not.  
PHIL. Marce —  
MARCI. I wasn't mad, (*Frustrated about a lot more than her missing shoe.*) WHERE is my shoe?!?! Gosh, maybe it *is* in the car. (*Going off to the car to look for her other shoe.*) I mean, >  
PHIL. It's not in the car ...  
MARCI. I have one shoe on already. (*From offstage.*) I know I didn't put my skates on in the car, 'cause the shoe I have on was out there. I changed out there, didn't I? With you? Phil? (*Phil doesn't answer. He's sad, trying to sort out what's going with him and his wife. From offstage.*) Phil? I put my shoes right next to yours after we put our skates on, but it's not ... there ... This is the weirdest thing. (*Returning.*) It's not in the car. I mean, I'm not gonna put one skate on in the car, the other one on out here — (*Sees how sad Phil is.*) What's wrong?  
PHIL. (*Covering.*) Huh? Oh. I'm ... makin' a wish of my own. On a regular one.  
MARCI. Oh.  
PHIL. (*A peace offering.*) Wanna wish on it with me?  
MARCI. Yeah. Yeah, that'd be nice. Which one?  
PHIL. Umm ... see Hedgehog Mountain?  
MARCI. Uh-huh.  
PHIL. Straight up, right above it.  
MARCI. The bright one?  
PHIL. Yeah.  
MARCI. That one?  
PHIL. Yeah.  
MARCI. Right there?  
PHIL. Yeah.  
MARCI. Phil.  
PHIL. Yeah?  
MARCI. That's a planet.  
PHIL. What?  
MARCI. That's a planet. You're wishing on a planet.  
PHIL. That's a—?  
MARCI. Yeah, >  
PHIL. Well, how do you know?  
MARCI. and it's (*Sings.*) " ... when you wish upon a *star*," not " ... when you wish upon a *planet* // or *Saturn* — "  
PHIL. I know, I know! How do you know?



MARCI. Said on the weather, Phil. Saturn's the brightest object in the sky this month. It'll be sitting right above Hedgehog Mountain over the next bunch of weeks. They've been sayin' it on the weather all week. And your wish is never gonna come true if you're wishing on a planet.

PHIL. Well —

MARCI. You gotta pay attention.

PHIL. Why do you keep sayin' that?

MARCI. What?

PHIL. That I gotta pay attention?

MARCI. 'Cause you don't.

PHIL. What are you talkin' about? —

MARCI. Phil: Happy Anniversary. *(Beat.)*

PHIL. Huh?

MARCI. Happy Anniversary. That's what I'm talkin' about. *(Beat.)*

PHIL. I'm — . *(Can't quite say he's sorry. Beat. Then, instead of apologizing.)* I knew you were mad.

MARCI. I'm not mad, // Phil!

PHIL. You're mad at me, and pretty soon, outta nowhere, it's gonna get ugly. >

MARCI. Phil, I'm not mad, I'm —

PHIL. I mean, Marce: I'm *sorry*!! I know I missed some things, but I gotta work! I gotta take a double when [*"Chad" or "Shelly"*] needs me at the mill! [*"He's" or "She's"*] helpin' me — *us* — out, you know, // offering me the overtime!

MARCI. I know, I know —

PHIL. No, you *don't* know: Me workin' is for *us*, and the kids, and it's a lot sometimes, and it messes me up!

MARCI. Phil! I'm not mad about you workin'. You gotta work. I understand that. What I don't understand is why I'm lonely, Phil.

I got a husband and a coupla great kids. And I'm lonely. *(Beat.)* You just — ... you don't pay attention anymore. You go away.

And I don't know where you go, but you go somewhere where you can't pay attention, and you miss your son's first varsity hockey game, and // you forget Missy's birthday and >

PHIL. Hockey equipment costs money!

MARCI. *(Furious.)* you forget your *anniversary*! I mean, I brought you here hoping you'd remember about us. But you didn't. And that makes me so *mad* I don't know what to do anymore ... *(Beat.)*

PHIL. You *lie*.

MARCI. What?

PHIL. You lie so bad.

MARCI. What?

PHIL. *(Seething.)* You're mad at me. But you don't *tell* me — even when I ask you over and over —

MARCI. Because *you* wouldn't // pay attention if I *did* tell you —

PHIL. *(Exploding. This should be ugly.)* No! No! No! Because *you* don't know how to tell me what you feel like about me, so I never know where I am, where I stand! Maybe that's why I go away! So I can know where I am for a *second*! And you know what?, It's lonely there too, where I go. And you sent me there. You went away a long time before I did. And now all's you do is lie.

MARCI. I don't lie!

PHIL. *(Explosive and ugly.)* Yes you do! You say you're not mad, but you're mad! You say you have fun, but you didn't! You didn't have fun tonight, did you?

MARCI. No.

PHIL. But you kept sayin' you did.

MARCI. I didn't. I didn't have fun, Phil. I don't have fun with you anymore. *(Beat.)* Did you?

PHIL. No. I had a rotten, lousy time. *(Beat.)*

MARCI. Well, then ... *(Little beat.)* what are we doin'? What are we waiting for? *(Beat. And then ... a shoe that looks exactly like Marci's other shoe drops from the sky, right between Marci and Phil. Beat. Marci and Phil survey the sky, trying to figure out what just happened. They look at the shoe ... back up at the sky ... back to the shoe. What the heck just happened? Phil checks the sky once more as he tentatively retrieves the shoe and gives it to Marci. Marci puts her shoe on. Beat. She gets up. Beat. She then takes the car keys out of her pocket, exits, and we hear her start the car and drive away. Phil is alone. A shooting star cuts across the night sky on the field of stars. Phil sees it. Transition into Scene 7 ... )*



## Scene 7

### STORY OF HOPE

*A well-dressed, stylish woman appears. Music fades. She carries a suitcase and a purse. She approaches the front porch of a modest home in Almost, Maine. She knocks on the door or rings the doorbell.*

MAN. *(From offstage.)* Just a minute ... *(The lights come on in the house, and then a porch light comes on. A short or thin man — or a man who is not the man he used to be — answers the door a bit cautiously. People don't drop by at nine o'clock at night in Almost, Maine. The man stops cold. He knows this woman.)*

WOMAN. *(Fast and furious, so absorbed by what she has to say and by what she has come to do that she really doesn't take in or look at the man.)* I know this isn't going to be very easy, but I was just out there all alone in the world, and I got so scared, because all I could think about was how I had no place in this world, but then I just outta nowhere realized that there was one place in this world that I did have, and that was with you, so I flew, and I took a taxi to get to you, I just had to come see you, *(Finally really looking at the man.)* thank God you're — ... *(The man is not who she thought he'd be.)* Oh — ... Wait — ... I'm sorry! You're not — ... I'm — ... *(Checking to make sure she's at the right place.)* This is the house — ... I'm so sorry! ... Does Daniel Harding live here?, I'm looking for Daniel Harding.

MAN. You're // looking for —

WOMAN. Looking for Daniel Harding, yeah. He lives here. I thought. But ... *(Off the man's confused state.)* Ooooh ... he doesn't, does he? Oooh. I am so sorry! *(Gathers her bags, preparing to leave, trying to make light.)* I'm so embarrassed! "Who is this woman and what is she doing here?" *(Laughs. The man doesn't. Beat.)* I just honestly thought he'd be here. I always thought he'd be here. Always. *(Beat.)* Do you know him? Big guy, big tall guy. Played basketball, all-Eastern Maine, center? *Strong.* Do you know him? // Hockey, too? >

*(If the actor playing the man is not short, but thin or average, please use these lines: "Do you know him? Big guy, big strong guy. Wrestled? Heavyweight? All-Eastern Maine? Strong? Do you know him? // Played hockey, too? He was just wild and crazy!" If the actor is bald or balding, try adding, "Lots of crazy hair? Do you know him?")*

MAN. Well ...

WOMAN. Oh, don't even answer that. That was — . I know that's a horrible question to ask a person who lives in a small town, as if everybody in small towns knows everybody else., Argh!, I can't believe I asked that. I don't live here anymore, but when I did, I hated it when people assumed I knew everybody in town just because it was small. It was worse than when they'd ask if we had " ... plumbing way up there?", 'cause, you know, people in small towns really don't know each other any better than they do in big towns, you know that? I mean, you know who you know, and you don't know who you don't know, just like anywhere else. *(Beat.)* I'm so sorry to have bothered you. I was just so sure — . When his parents passed away, he kept the house, I heard. He lived here. He stayed here, I thought. He was one of the ones who stayed. *(Beat.)* I didn't stay. I went away.

MAN. Most people do.

WOMAN. Yeah. And I guess he did too. I never thought he would. I guess I lost track ... You gotta hold onto people or you lose 'em. Wish there was something you could keep 'em in *(Trying to make light, she "looks for him" in her purse.)* for when you need 'em ... *(She "finds him.")* Oh, there he is!, Perfect! *(Laughs. No response from the man. Beat. She starts to go, stops.)* Boy it's cold. I forgot.

MAN. Yeah. *(Beat.)*

WOMAN. *(Starts to go. Stops.)* I can't believe — ... I took a taxi here. From Bangor. To see him.

MAN. *(Beat.)* That's far.

WOMAN. Yeah.

MAN. That's a hundred and sixty-three miles.

WOMAN. Yeah. This place is a little farther away from things than I remember.

MAN. Why did you do that?

WOMAN. Because I could only fly as close as Bangor, and I needed to get to him as fast as I could.

MAN. Why?

WOMAN. Because I want to answer a question he asked me.

IAN. Oh?

WOMAN. The last time I saw him, he asked me a very important question, and I didn't answer it, and that's just not a very nice thing to do to a person.

IAN. Well, that's bein' a little hard on yourself, don't you th//ink?

WOMAN. He asked me to marry him.

IAN. Oh. *(Beat.)* And you ...

WOMAN. Didn't answer him. No. *(The man whistles.)* Yeah. And that's why I'm here. To answer him. *(Beat. Then, realizing she probably ought to defend herself.)* I mean, I didn't answer him in the first place because I didn't *have* an answer at the time. I mean, I was going to college, and then ... the *night* before I'm about to go off into the world to do what I hope and dream, he asks me, "Will you marry me?" I mean, come on! I was leaving in the morning ... What was I supposed to do?

IAN. I don't know.

WOMAN. *(Defending herself.)* I mean, I *told* him I'd have to think about it, that I'd think it over overnight and that I'd be back before the sun came up with an answer. And then I left. I left him standing right ... *(Where the man is standing.)* ... there ... and then ... I didn't make it back with an answer before the sun came up or ... at all.

IAN. That sounds like an answer to me.

WOMAN. No! That wasn't my answer! I just ... went off into the world, and that's not an answer, and I think — ... *(Little beat.)*

IAN. What?

WOMAN. I think he thought I'd say, "Yes."

IAN. Well, a guy's probably not gonna ask a girl that question unless he thinks she's gonna say, "Yes."

WOMAN. I know, and ... I'm afraid he probably waited up all night, hoping for me to come by, and I just want to tell him that I know now that you just can't do a thing like not answer a question like the one he asked me., You can't do that to a person. Especially to someone you love.

IAN. *(Taking this in.)* You loved him?

WOMAN. Well — . I don't know if — . I mean, we were kids. *(She considers. Then, honest and true:)* Yes. I did. I do. *(Beat.)* I feel like I dashed his hopes and dreams.

IAN. *(This speech is not an attack. It's more of a rumination — one that doesn't do much to make the woman feel better.)* Oh, come on.

You give yourself too much credit. He was young. That's all you need to get your hopes dashed: Be young. And everybody starts out young, so ... everybody gets their hopes dashed. And besides ... I don't think you really *dashed* his hopes. 'Cause if you *dash* somebody's hopes — well that's ... kind of a *nice* way to let 'em down, 'cause it *hurts* ... but it's quick. If you'd have said no, *that* woulda been dashing his hopes. *(Beat. Maybe a little pointed here.)* But you didn't say no. You said nothin'. You just didn't answer him. At all. And that's ... killin' hope the long, slow, painful way, 'cause it's still there, just hangin' on, never really goes away. And that's ... kinda like givin' somebody a little less air to breathe. Every day. Till they die.

WOMAN. *(Taking in this very unhelpful information.)* Yeah ... *(Beat. Then, at a loss:)* Okay. Well ... thank you.

IAN. For what?

WOMAN. *(Considers; then, honestly:)* I don't know. *(Starts to leave.)*

IAN. *(After a beat.)* Good-bye, Hope.

HOPE. Good-bye. *(Stopping.)* Argh!, I'm so sorry to have bothered you ... It's just, I was all alone out there in the world with no place in it, and I realized what I'd done — ... Wait ... *(Realization.)* You called me Hope. How did you know my name? *(The man gently presents himself — maybe removes his glasses — and the woman recognizes him: He's Daniel Harding.)* Danny?!!

DANIEL. Hello, Hope.

HOPE. *(In a bit of a spin.)* Danny ... I didn't // rec — >

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. I didn't // rec — >

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. I didn't even // recognize you!

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. You're so —

DANIEL. I know.

HOPE. Small. *(Note: if the actor playing Daniel is not small or thin, don't say, "Small." Simply imply: "Different.")*

DANIEL. Yeah. I, uh, lost a lotta hope. That'll do a number on you. *(Long beat. They don't hug. Or greet each other physically. It should be awful.)*

HOPE. Danny: I'm so sorry I // never —

DANIEL. Shh ... It's okay. 'Cause, you know somethin'? You're early.

HOPE. What?

DANIEL. You're early! You said you'd be back with an answer to my question before the sun came up, and Jeezum Crow, the sun's not even close to being up yet! It only went down a few hours ago. Look how early you are! That's good of you. *(Beat. They enjoy his goodness.)* So ... a taxi all the way from Bangor???

HOPE. Yup.

DANIEL. To tell me...? *(Hope is about to say, "Yes," when she is interrupted by:)*

SUZETTE. *(From offstage.)* Honey? Dan? Hon? Who's there?

DANIEL. *(Beat.)* Just somebody ... needs directions.

SUZETTE. It's awful late for directions.

DANIEL. Yeah — Suzette, listen ... *(Beat.)* ... I'll be right in.

SUZETTE. Okay ... *(Beat.)*

DANIEL. I — ...

HOPE. What?

DANIEL. *(Simple — not precious.)* I hope you find it, Hope. Your place in this world. *(Beat.)* Bye.

HOPE. Goodbye, Danny. *(Danny goes inside. Hope lingers — she is at a loss. She starts to go; she stops; and, finally, after all these years, she answers Danny. She knows he won't hear her. It wouldn't matter even if he could. But she answers him anyway.)* Yes. *(Beat. Then, smaller and to herself:)* Yes. *(Hope starts to go. Maybe she turns back — and the porch light goes out. Music. Transition into Scene 8 ...)*

## Scene 8

### SEEING THE THING

*Dave and Rhonda appear. They have been snowmobiling and are wearing full snowmobile regalia. Music fades. Dave and Rhonda enter the winterized porch of Rhonda's small home, a shack in the woods in Almost, Maine. They kick the snow off their boots before entering, and they remove their helmets and gloves as they enter. Dave carries a present — a wrapped painting.*

RHONDA. *(Not comfortable with having Dave in her house. This is a first.)* Okay. This is it. You're in. You're inside.

DAVE. This is the porch. *(He'd like to go further inside.)*

RHONDA. It's winterized. *(This is as far as Dave's getting. Beat.)*

So, Dave: *What?!* What do you gotta do in here that you couldn't do outside?

DAVE. Well, I got somethin', here, for ya, here. *(Presents his wrapped gift, creating "awkward present moment #1.")*

RHONDA. What's this?

DAVE. It's — . It's — . It's — . *(Changing the subject, explosively dispelling the tension.)* Boy, that was fun tonight, Rhonda! >

RHONDA. Yeah!, Was!

DAVE. I mean, twenty miles out there, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. beans and franks at the Snowmobile Club, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. twenty miles back, coupla beers at the Moose Paddy!

RHONDA. Awesome!

DAVE. Yeah!, And, boy, you flew on your new sled, // man!

RHONDA. It's a Polaris, man!

DAVE. I know, and you whupped my butt!

RHONDA. Yeah! That's what you get for ridin' an Arctic Car!\*  
Ya get yer butt whupped! And I whupped it!

\* Polaris and Arctic Car are competing snowmobile brands.

DAVE. I know!  
 RHONDA. Whipped your butt! >  
 DAVE. I know!  
 RHONDA. Whipped it! >  
 DAVE. I know!  
 RHONDA. Whipped your butt, Arctic Cat-Man!!  
 DAVE. I know!, I know!, I'm not // sayin' ya didn't!  
 RHONDA. You're not beatin' the Snowmobile Association's snowmobiler of the year, you know!  
 DAVE. I know ...  
 RHONDA. (*Settling down.*) That was fun. (*Beat. Everything stops again. They look at the wrapped gift. Call this "awkward present moment #2."*)  
 DAVE. So, this is, um ... Well, we been ... together now —  
 RHONDA. (*Scoffing.*) Together?  
 DAVE. Well —  
 RHONDA. Together?? What are you talkin' about, "together"??  
 DAVE. Well, we been friends for quite a few years // now, and, well —  
 RHONDA. You gertin' all girl on me?  
 DAVE. — *shh!* — and — and — and — ... And, here. (*Forces his gift on Rhonda.*)  
 RHONDA. (*These two don't give each other presents.*) What are you doin' here, bud?  
 DAVE. Open it.  
 RHONDA. "Together." Hmm. I don't know about this ...  
 DAVE. Just open it. (*Rhonda opens the present downstage center. The present — a wrapped canvas painting — must be opened in such a way that the audience cannot see what it is. Once Rhonda opens it, she props the painting up against a crate or in a chair — still so the audience can't see it. Beat.*)  
 RHONDA. What is it?  
 DAVE. What do you mean, what is it? Can't you ... see what // it is —  
 RHONDA. It's a picture ...  
 DAVE. Yeah ...  
 RHONDA. A paintin'.  
 DAVE. Yeah.  
 RHONDA. Where'd you get this? It looks homemade.  
 DAVE. What do you mean, it looks homemade?

RHONDA. Looks like someone really painted it.  
 DAVE. Well, someone really *did* paint it.  
 RHONDA. (*Realizing.*) Did you paint this?  
 DAVE. Yeah.  
 RHONDA. For me?  
 DAVE. Yeah.  
 RHONDA. Oh ... (*Has no idea what it is, what to make of it.*) Why?!?  
 DAVE. Well — ... (*Painted it because he thinks the whole world of Rhonda.*)  
 RHONDA. I mean ... thank you!! Thank you., Thanks., Thanks.  
 DAVE. There you go!, That's what people say!, There you go! You're welcome ...  
 RHONDA. (*Sitting in chair, center, staring at her painting.*) So, Dave ... I didn't know you painted.  
 DAVE. Yeah. This is — ... (*Turns his painting right side up — Rhonda propped it up wrong.*) I'm takin' adult ed art. At nights. Merle Haslem over at the high school's teachin' it — it's real good. And this is my version of one of those stare-at-it-until-you-see-the-thing things. Ever seen one of these? Some of the old painters did it with dots. They called it — ... (*Searches for, but can't quite come up with, "pointillism."*) ... somethin' ... but I did it with a buncha little blocks of colors, see, and if you just look at the little blocks of colors, it's just a bunch of little blocks of colors, but if you step back and look at the whole thing, it's not just a bunch of little blocks of colors: It's a picture of something.  
 RHONDA. Picture of what?  
 DAVE. I'm not gonna tell you, you have to figure it out.  
 RHONDA. Oh, come on, Dave!  
 DAVE. No, it takes a little time — it can be a little frustrating.  
 RHONDA. Well, why would you give me somethin' that's gonna frustrate?!?  
 DAVE. No, no, no, I just mean you gotta not *try* to look for anything, that's what'll frustrate you. You gotta just *kinda* look at it, so it doesn't *know* you're lookin' at it.  
 RHONDA. What're you talkin' about?  
 DAVE. Well ... you gotta trick it! You gotta trick it. (*Demonstrates "tricking it" — steals glances at it as he walks by it.*) Trick it! (*More demonstrations.*) See? Trick it!, Trick it! You gotta trick it! Gotta not let it know. And hopefully you'll eventually see what it is. It's a

common thing, it's somethin' everybody knows. (*Rhonda tries "trickin' it" a few times, like Dave did. This "trickin' it" business should be pretty darn funny.*) There ya go, there ya go!

RHONDA. (*Gives up on "trickin' it."*) This is stupid. I don't see anything.

DAVE. No, you were doin' good!

RHONDA. Dave!

DAVE. All right, all right, then, do this: Do what you usually do around the house at night, and check it out real casual-like, (*Demonstrating checking it out real casual-like.*) and —

RHONDA. I usually have a Bud and talk to you on the phone.

DAVE. Well, do that. Where's the kitchen? (*Starting into the house.*) // I'll get you a Bud, and you can talk to me —

RHONDA. (*Stopping Dave — doesn't want him going inside.*)

N-n-n-n-no! >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. I'm outta Bud. Only got Natty Lite.

DAVE. (*Starting back into the house.*) All right, I'll get you a Natty Lite, // and you can have your beer and talk to me —

RHONDA. (*Stopping Dave.*) N-n-no!

DAVE. Why not? Come on, let's go inside and get us a coupla beers! >

RHONDA. No! (*Back to the painting.*) We gotta trick this thing, right? (*Starts "trickin' it."*) See? I'm trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it! Trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it!

DAVE. It's what people who've known each other for a long time do. *Come on!! Hey!!! (Putting a stop to Rhonda's "trickin' it" routine.)*

*Quit it!!* How many years I know ya?, I come all the way out here every Friday night, and I never been inside your house for beers?! That's not natural. It's unnatural, // Rhonda! So let's do what's the natural thing to do and go inside and have some beers—!

RHONDA. I don't care what it is, I gotta trick this thing. Hey! Hey-hey-hey, DAVE!! Quit runnin' your suck!! I gotta look! At this thing! (*Sits; stares straight at the painting, which frustrates Dave.*)

DAVE. You're doin' it wrong!

RHONDA. Shh!

DAVE. You gotta trick it, you gotta trick it! —

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, Okay, okay!! I got somethin'!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah: Roadkill.

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Roadkill. Dead raccoon in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What? No! That's not what it is! —

RHONDA. Okay, deer. Dead bloody deer // in the middle of the road —

DAVE. What?!? No!! Rhonda! It's not // a dead deer in the middle of the road!!

RHONDA: Okay, moose. >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Dead bloody moose in the middle of the road.

DAVE. RHONDA!!! No!!! No!!! That's not somethin' I'd wanna paint!!! // That's not even close to what it is! Dead moose?!? Come on!!!

RHONDA. Well, that's what I see!, I don't know what it is!, Don't get mad!, Jeezum Crow!

DAVE. You don't see what it is?!?

RHONDA. No!

DAVE. Well, can I give you a hint?

RHONDA. Yeah! (*Dave kisses her right on the lips. That's the hint. She immediately gets up/pulls away. Then, angry/flustered.*) What are you doin'?!? (*Little beat.*) What was that?!? Why did you do that?!?

DAVE. 'Cause I was giving you a hint — ...

RHONDA. Well, don't ever do that again. *Ever!* And GET OUTTA HERE!!! (*Storms off into the house. Beat.*)

DAVE. (*Gathering his things. To himself:*) Jeezum Crow ... (*Starts to go; stops; then, exploding:*) HEY, RHONDA!!

RHONDA. (*From offstage.*) WHAT?!?

DAVE. YOU REALLY ARE WHAT THEY SAY!!

RHONDA. WHAT? WHAT DO THEY SAY?!?

DAVE. THAT YOU'RE A LITTLE HUNG UP, THERE!!!

RHONDA. (*Re-entering forcefully.*) Who says that?!?

DAVE. (*Retreating — Rhonda's tough.*) Everybody.

RHONDA. (*Continuing to advance.*) Everybody who?

DAVE. (*Retreating.*) Everybody, Rhonda. It's what people in town say!

RHONDA. When?

DAVE. When they're talkin'! They say that you're a little hung up, there, so I gotta be a little persistent, there, they say, and, boy, they were right!

RHONDA. Who says?

DAVE. (*Tough question to answer, 'cause these are their best buds.*) Suzette.

RHONDA. Suzette?



DAVE. Yeah, and Dan ...

RHONDA. (*Disbelief.*) Suzette and Dan *Harding* say that I'm a little hung up, there, and that you gotta be a little persistent, there...???

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. Well, who else?

DAVE. Marci ...

RHONDA. *Marci!?!?*

DAVE. Yeah, and Phil, // and — >

RHONDA. Marci and *Phil!?!?* —

DAVE. yeah — and [*"Randy and Chad"* or *"Deena and Shelly"* \*], and >

RHONDA. [*"Randy and Chad"* or *"Deena and Shelly"*]?!? —

DAVE. Lendall and Gayle, and >

RHONDA. *Gayle?* —

DAVE. Marvalyn and Eric, and >

RHONDA. Marvalyn...?

DAVE. and Jimmy, and Sandrine, and *East!*

RHONDA. *East??*

DAVE. Yeah. And that's just to name a few ...

RHONDA. (*Deeply, deeply hurt.*) Well, why would they—...? I love those guys. I'm good to those guys. Why would they say that about me? That's talkin' about me. That's mean.

DAVE. No — . I don't think they're bein' mean, Rhonda. I think they said that to me about you to kinda warn me what I was gettin' myself into with you. 'Cause they like you. And me. Us. They're rootin' for us, Rhonda.

RHONDA. Who's rootin' for us?

DAVE. Everybody! East and Gayle and Lendall and [*"Randy and Chad"* or *"Deena and Shelly"*] —

RHONDA. Well, they never told me that, that they're "rootin'" fer us —

DAVE. Well, that's 'cause you're a little hung up, there, Rhonda! (*Beat. He has touched a nerve.*) Just — ... I'm sorry if I made you mad. I don't know what I did wrong. I just gave you a kiss. I mean ... why not give me one back? It's the polite thing to do, you know: Get a kiss/give a kiss, very fair. Just ... give me a kiss, Rhonda. (*Beat.*)

RHONDA. I don't know how. (*Little beat.*)

DAVE. (*Confused.*) What?

RHONDA. I don't know how. I've never done it before.

\* Use the names of the characters from the version of "They Fell" that was performed.

DAVE. What do you mean?

RHONDA. I won arm-wrestling at every Winter Carnival from fifth grade on, and I work in plywood at Bushey's Lumber Mill, and that's not what most men wanna ... want.

DAVE. Oh, now, where do you get that?

RHONDA. From *everybody*.

DAVE. Well then ... you got it wrong, Rhonda, 'cause, I gotta tell ya, there's a lotta guys that take good long looks at you! (*Beat.*) Holy Cow: So, you never — . (*Realization.*) You never ... have [been with anybody] ...?

RHONDA. No.

DAVE. Well, gosh. I think that's kinda neat. (*Beat.*) You know what?, Do me a favor: Try givin' me a kiss and see what happens. And I'm not gonna make fun of you or nothin' bad like that, I promise ...

RHONDA. No ... No ... Let's do the this: (*Going back to her chair so she can work on the painting.*) Is it apples? Cherries? Big open-faced strawberry rhubarb pie — (*Dave kisses her. For a while. He gently breaks the kiss and checks on her. She's okay. Looks like she liked it this time. They are gazing into each other's eyes. She is overwhelmed and breaks the gaze to collect herself ... and happens to see the painting ... and is finally able to see what Dave has painted for her.*) Oh, Dave! (*Maybe she gives Dave a good shove.*) I see it! It's a — . I see it. It's — ... (*Getting up from her chair.*) It's nice. That's really nice. It's good. You're good at this!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah.

DAVE. (*Kisses Rhonda.*) And you are very good at *this* ...

RHONDA. (*Kisses Dave hard.*) I thought it'd be hard! (*Kisses Dave again, fast and hard.*) And it's not!!! (*Kisses Dave again, fast and hard.*) At all ... (*Kisses Dave again.*) And I feel like I wanna do it for a long time, but I also feel like I wanna do somethin' else ... *next* — (*Dying to know what's next.*) But I don't know what that is! (*Little beat.*)

DAVE. I do. (*Shows Rhonda what they might wanna do next ... by unzipping her Polaris snowmobile jacket and taking it off of her. Then he encourages her to unzip his Arctic Cat snowmobile jacket ... which she does. Dave rips off his jacket. He then takes off his boots — Rhonda helps. Dave helps Rhonda with her boots. Dave pulls Rhonda's snowmobile pants off. Then takes his off. And then Rhonda and Dave start to take off layer after layer after layer [at least five layers total —*



*the more layers the better — and funnier!] of snowmobile and/or winter clothes, which they do more and more rapidly and with more and more intention until it's a bit of a frenzy, and we end up with two people from Northern Maine facing each other wearing only their long-johns ... and a great big pile of winter clothes on the floor between them. Beat. They're dying for each other.)*

DAVE. You wanna know what comes next-next?

RHONDA. Yeah.

DAVE. Why don't we go inside ... and I'll show you ...

RHONDA. Well, how long is it gonna take?

DAVE. Well ... it could take all night. Maybe longer ...

RHONDA. Well, wait! *(Music out.)* We're workin' tomorrow, first shift.

DAVE. *(Beat. Oh, no. Then:)* Says who? *(Beat.)*

RHONDA. You mean ... call in? We're callin' in?!? *(Music fades back up. This is a very exciting idea — because these people never call in!)* We're callin' in!!! We're callin' [*"Chad" or "Shelly"*]!! 'Cause you and me? We're not working first shift or *any* shift tomorrow!! *(Kisses Dave and sends him into the house.)* You get yourself *inside*, there, Mister Arctic Cat-Man, and you show me what's *next!*

DAVE. *(Exiting into the house.)* All right! *(Rhonda takes in the painting. A beat of joy. Then, from inside:)* Hey, Rhonda! *(Snapped out of her reverie, Rhonda heads inside. As she does so, she quickly, casually, and in an un-stagey way grabs the painting so that we can finally all see what it is — A HEART — and brings it inside. Music. Transition into ... )*

## EPILOGUE

### Option 1

*Music. Lights up on Pete — exactly where we left him: sitting on his bench, with his snowball, looking off left to where Ginette exited. He looks at his snowball, contemplating what has transpired this evening. Eventually he gets up, taking his snowball with him, and goes toward where Ginette exited to see if he can see her. Where did she go? Maybe defeat creeps in. Beat. And then ... Ginette slowly enters from the other side of the stage, stage right. This should be ... miraculous. She stops and takes Pete in. She slowly makes her way to the bench. Pete turns — maybe giving up, about to leave — and sees Ginette. He stops cold. He looks off to where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He looks back to Ginette. And then asks nonverbally, using the snowball, if she's been all the way around the world ... and she nods, "Yes." She's been all the way around the world and she's back. She's "close" again. Pete wonders how this can be true. Ginette sits down on the bench, where Pete was sitting in the Prologue and Interlogue. Pete sits where Ginette was sitting in the Prologue. Ginette looks out into the night sky. Maybe it starts to snow. If it does, they take in the snow. Pete looks at Ginette ... and then up and out into the sky. And it all ... begins ... again.*

*Lights fade to black.*

## PROPERTY LIST

### Option 2

*Pete appears stage left — exactly where we left him: looking off left to where Ginette exited, occasionally looking at his snowball, and always pondering the consequences of his theory of what it means to be “close.” He eventually makes his way back to the bench. He sits where Ginette was sitting in the Prologue, all the while keeping his focus on where Ginette went. And then ... Ginette slowly enters from the other side of the stage, stage right. She stops — and sees Pete looking for her. She makes her way to the bench. Once she reaches the bench, she stops. Pete rises — maybe giving up and about to leave — and sees Ginette. He stops cold. He looks off to where Ginette exited in the Prologue. He looks back to where Ginette is now. He then asks nonverbally, using the snowball, if she’s been all the way around the world ... and she nods, “Yes.” She’s been all the way around the world, and she’s back. She’s “close” again. Pete wonders how this can be true. Ginette sits down on the bench, where Pete was sitting in the Prologue and Interlogue. Pete sits where Ginette was sitting in the Prologue. Ginette looks up into the night sky. Maybe it starts to snow. If it does, they take in the snow. Pete looks at Ginette ... and then up and out into the sky. And it all ... begins ... again.*

*Lights fade to black.*

### End of Play

Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue:  
Snowball

Scene 1: Her Heart:

Small brown paper grocery bag with 19 small pieces of slate  
Maine travel brochure

Scene 2: Sad and Glad:

Two bottles of Budweiser  
Tray

Scene 3: This Hurts:

Man’s shirt  
Ironing board  
Iron  
Laundry basket with folded laundry  
2 composition books  
Pencil

Scene 4: Getting It Back:

Large cloth bags or sacks filled with batting, foam, or pillow stuffing  
Small pouch with ring box (and ring) inside

Scene 5: They Fell:

2 cans of Natural Lite beer

Scene 6: Where It Went:

Men’s hockey skates  
Women’s figure skates  
Winter shoe

Scene 7: Story of Hope:

Purse  
Suitcase

Scene 8: Seeing the Thing:

Wrapped painting

## SOUND EFFECTS

### Scene 1: Her Heart:

Screen door opening and slamming

### Scene 2: Sad and Glad:

Bar activity

Bachelorette party noise

### Scene 4: Getting It Back:

Pounding on door

Door opening and closing

Car doors opening and closing

### Scene 6: Where It Went:

Car door opening and closing

Car starting and leaving

### Scene 7: Story of Hope:

Car approaching, idling, and leaving

Doorbell

Fancy-shoed footsteps in snow

Door opening and closing

### Scene 8: Seeing the Thing:

Snowmobiles approaching and parking

## NOTES FOR DIRECTORS

### On programs:

If — in your program or playbill — you plan to include a list of the characters appearing in each scene, please do the following:

Please list the waitress from “Sad and Glad” as “Waitress.”

Please list the man in “Story of Hope” as “Man.”

Please do *not* list Suzette from “Story of Hope” at all.

If you are performing both versions of “They Fell” in repertory, please list both casts.

### On casting:

*Almost, Maine* is a play for character actors — actors who look like real people.

The actor who plays the man in “Story of Hope” should be short or thin. This is crucial to the magic of the story. “Story of Hope” is a story of loss, and a physical manifestation of loss in the man is key — lost height (again, this is best!), lost weight — because this man is literally half the man he used to be because he has lost so much hope. You’ll be surprised by how magical and heartbreaking and funny this scene is when the physical manifestation of the man’s loss is crystal clear. If the actor playing the man is not noticeably short or small, please find a way to make him a shadow of what he once was. I think it would work just fine if he were once wild and crazy and is now ... not.

### On the Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue:

The Prologue, Interlogue, and Epilogue can help audiences understand that all of the action in *Almost, Maine* is taking place at the same moment. They anchor the play in time. The idea is that — while all of the other scenes are happening — Pete is sitting on this bench and wondering where Ginette went. Is she testing his theory of what it is to be “close?” Or did she just leave?

If you use Option 1, Pete will be discovered on the bench in the Interlogue and in the Epilogue. This requires the use of blackouts. The audience should not see the actor who plays Pete making his way to the bench. He should simply appear exactly where they last saw him. I have learned that this is tricky to accomplish. Often there’s a low-light scramble of the actor playing Pete trying to get into place. So ...

... We created Option 2 for the recent Off-Broadway revival of the play. The idea is that, at the end of the Prologue, Pete is left sitting on the bench, pondering. He then wanders off a bit towards where Ginette exited ... as Glory appears for "Her Heart."

The Interlogue is a continuation of this action. We see Pete exactly where we last saw him — stage left, wondering where Ginette went, then making his way back to the bench, then sitting back down and pondering. Then, at the end of the Interlogue, he again wanders off towards where Ginette exited ... as Chad and Randy or Deena and Shelly appear for "They Fell."

The Epilogue is a continuation of the Interlogue. We see Pete exactly where we last saw him — wondering where Ginette went and then making his way back to the bench. He sits and ponders ... and then ... Ginette returns!

Whichever option you choose, please remember that the Interlogue should pick up *exactly* where the Prologue left off, and the Epilogue should pick up *exactly* where the Interlogue left off.

In the Prologue, please honor that long opening beat. When Ginette leaves, please follow the stage directions closely. They are the actors' "lines."

Don't be afraid to take time in these sequences, and please practice taking that time in rehearsal.

If done properly, the Epilogue can lift *Almost, Maine* one dramatic notch higher than the end of "Seeing the Thing." Ginette's return should be huge and rousing and epic and glorious. She has walked all the way around the world in an instant ... and that is miraculous.

#### **On the physical business in "This Hurts":**

The ironing board hits should be as real as can be, as surprising as can be, and as simple as can be. Marvalyn should always "operate" the ironing board with both hands. The key to hitting Steve is in the pivot. Marvalyn should choose a point upon which to pivot as she simply turns to go and put the ironing board away. The momentum of her turn will generate enough speed to make for a pretty great wallop of Steve. It works best if Steve has his back to the audience and Marvalyn hits him on the crown of the head, sending Steve tumbling downstage off the bench. This way, the actor playing Steve can see the hit coming and can control it.

Don't pad the ironing board too much. The flat top of an ironing board is not solid metal — it's mesh-like, so it really doesn't hurt. And there are moving metal parts on the board's underside, which make a great sound when the board hits something like a human head. Padding dampens the sound. Safety first — yes — but getting hit in the head with an ironing board is not as painful as it seems!

Composition books work well for Steve, because they make a great sound when he hits himself on the head, and they don't actually hurt!

#### **On structure:**

*Almost, Maine* is unique in that it is composed of nine complete tales, each of which begins, climaxes, and ends. Each tale is its own unique emotional nut to crack. Serve each one well and individually. If the parts are well done, the sum of the parts will be well done and effective, and the natural progression of the scenes will fuel the overall arc of the play.

#### **On transitions:**

The transitions between each scene in *Almost, Maine* must not slow the play down. Keep them as short as possible. This can best be accomplished when there isn't much stuff to clear or set up between scenes.

In many of the productions I've seen, the transitions are blackouts, and the northern lights appear. And this works. But ... blackouts create stops. And stops allow audiences to disengage slightly. So I think the best way to do *Almost, Maine* is without blackouts.

The most recent Off-Broadway revival was a blackout-free affair, thanks to director Jack Cummings III. When one scene ended, the lights would change (the northern lights flickered), music would establish, and the scene would dissolve ... as the next scene materialized. This did not muddle the endings of the scenes. It simply kept the play moving forward as a whole.

#### **On the ending of each scene:**

Please note that the endings of the individual scenes in *Almost, Maine* are crucial. They're not easy, happy endings. They're not endings at all, actually. They are complex, fragile, and sometimes awful suspensions, fraught with uncertainty.

I do think that, at the close of each scene in the play, the characters are about to experience joy. Great joy. But not just yet — not in what I've written. In what I've written, the lights fade on the moment of change. And change is hard and confusing and uncertain. So don't cheat. Don't skip those uncertain, scary, trepidatious feelings. Don't go straight to the joy. The real, unmitigated joy happens after these scenes end. What the folks of *Almost* (and what the audience) experience at the end of these scenes is that moment just before the joy! It's there, bubbling under the surface, and I definitely think there's room for a hint of the joy to come. But — going straight to joy at the end of each scene is the corny, easy way to do this play. And nothing in this play should be corny. Or easy. Because love isn't easy in any of these scenes, especially in "Where It Went" and "Story of Hope". If you manage to keep the endings suspended and keep the audience almost happy, wanting for resolution and catharsis until the very end of the last scene of the play, you'll have done your job perfectly! Only at the end of the final scene in the play ("Seeing the Thing" — when the clothes come off!) does the audience get a true, cathartic "happy ending." Joy has to be earned, and I think only Rhonda and Dave have earned it. All of the other folks in this play have to wade through fear or sadness or pain before they get the joy! Make the audience wade with them! The "almost-happiness" of Scenes 1 – 5 and the bittersweetness — heck, bitterness — of Scenes 6 and 7 will make the end of Scene 8 wonderfully cathartic and deliriously joyful. (And, yes, the last scene of Act One has a pretty happy ending, but that whole scene is a fight — the consequences of which must be dealt with. And, yes, the Epilogue has a happy ending, too! But the joy there has been earned, because the Prologue ends in the utter uncertainty of a quiet, gentle disaster ... and Ginette's epic journey makes all well.)

#### **On language:**

I call the dialogue in *Almost, Maine* "quietly heightened." It's not particularly poetic. It's true to the way people talk. So please encourage your actors to talk the way people talk, not the way actors talk. And — although I don't think I've written poetic language — I think I have written poetic situations. This is the kind of poetry I like: poetry that is well disguised, poetry that sneaks up on an audience, poetry that surprises. Unexpected poetry gets people where it counts — in their hearts and souls.

#### **General note:**

I think *Almost, Maine* can best be described as a midwinter night's dream. Or as a romance. A really funny but really sad romance. It's been fun for me to watch audiences take in productions of *Almost, Maine*, because they think they're watching a simple realistic little comedy ... and then, all of a sudden, they're not. They're watching something that isn't simple or real or comic at all. Nothing is what it seems. And this surprises people. And it's wonderful to watch people get surprised. People laugh when they're surprised. They gasp. They make strange sounds. This should be your goal as you direct the play: Make the audience make noise. Make them laugh and gasp and mutter. Make them desperately wonder if what seems to be unfolding before their very eyes ... is actually unfolding before their very eyes! Keep them guessing. Stay ahead of them. Don't give them what they expect. Don't telegraph. Keep the surprises alive. If you don't succeed in this — then *Almost, Maine* will languish in corny sentimentality. And it will be bad. Because this play is almost bad. It toes the line. Don't let it be bad. Make it good. Great, even.

## NOTES FOR ACTORS

### On punctuation and pace:

I've addressed the // and > symbols in the notes section at the beginning of this volume. I just want to remind you that the overlaps are very specific. Please figure them out — accurately! Please remember that > just means GO! Don't stop for the other character's line; drive through to the end of the sentence or thought!

Sometimes you'll see commas after exclamation points or question marks:

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, Okay, okay!!

This is simply to encourage pace and keep things moving. Push through to the landing place — which is, in this case, the double exclamation point.

Sometimes you'll see lines in brackets like these [ ]. They shouldn't be spoken. They're just guides.

A dash ( — ) at the end of a line means that the next speaker cuts off the current speaker.

A dash followed by a period ( — . ) or a dash followed by an ellipsis ( — ... ) at the end of a line means that the person speaking cuts him/herself off with thought. The next character to speak does not do the cutting-off.

An ellipsis ( ... ) at the end of a line means that the thought trails off.

A dash followed by a period ( — . ) or a dash followed by an ellipsis ( — ... ) inside a line means that the person speaking cuts him/herself off with thought and then moves on.

Because pace is key to this play, keeping your lines of thought active is key, as is noting when the characters are actually listening to each other. Often you'll be playing people who aren't listening to each other. Explore that — the non-listening that happens when people are thinking, or are too busy talking. I think the big epiphanies come when people actually listen to and hear each other — and I think epiphanies are rather rare.

### On dialect:

Northern Mainers don't really have a distinctive dialect, though r's are pretty pronounced. Words like "sorry" or "forest" or "tomorrow"

are pronounced "SORE-ee," "FORE-est," and "to-MORE-ow." The "or" sound is the key. That's about all I'd do with dialect — because the Maine dialect most people know of is a coastal thing, and Almost, Maine, is far from the ocean. It's not "Down East," so please don't do "Down East." Please — just talk. And hit your r's a little harder than you normally might.

### Pronunciation guide:

Aroostook County — Maine county where Almost is located  
"uh-ROO-stick"

Bangor — Maine city, 163 miles from Almost  
"BANG-gore"

Polaris — snowmobile brand  
"pull-AIR-iss"

Jeezum Crow — a minced oath, like "cheese and rice"  
"JEE-zum CROW"

Surnames of some Almost, Maine residents:

Dunleavy — "DUN-luv-ee"

Laferriere — "la-FAIRY-AIR"

LaFrance — "la-FRANTS"

LeMans — "luh-MANZ"

### On language:

Please honor the beats — the quiet moments — in *Almost, Maine*. And make sure they are full and electric. This play must never feel ... slow. There's a buoyancy to the material. A lightness. And I think it's in the language. Find where the words come tumbling out of the characters' mouths. Find where the quiet moments are — where the words don't come so easy. Much is communicated in those quiet moments, and the play must continue to move forward inside them.

Please follow the stage directions very closely at the end of the Prologue, and in the Interlogue and Epilogue. Give the silences the same attention you give your spoken lines.

Please note that the characters from out of town (Glory and Hope) talk more, and faster, than the people of Almost — they have most of the play's monologues. They use words to cover, to protect themselves, to push people away.



**On characterization:**

Your job as an actor in these plays is to tell the stories. You're a storyteller. Don't worry too much about being a chameleon. Don't create caricatures. Sure, you want to create distinct characters — but trust the stories to do a lot of that work for you. Tell the stories, and allow the characters to come to life. This doesn't mean be lazy. It doesn't mean don't be outrageous. It doesn't mean don't be creative. It doesn't mean do nothing or be boring. It just means ... construct truthfully!

Remember: The people of Almost, Maine, are not quaint eccentrics. They are not hicks or rednecks (though Randy and Chad, Deena and Shelly, and Rhonda come pretty close). They are not simpletons — although they do have a special guilelessness. They're not quirky. They are ordinary people. It's their situations that are odd, extraordinary, and quirky.

My advice: Don't forget how much the people of *Almost, Maine* are hurting. Honor the ache, play the pain (keep most of it covered), and don't forget that *Almost, Maine* is a comedy. Sadness and pain are the funniest things in the world.

**NOTES FOR DESIGNERS****On creating place:**

Almost, Maine, is a quiet, remote, empty, sometimes lonely place. The people of Almost live uncluttered lives. Keep this in mind as you decide how much stuff you need to define the different locales of Almost, Maine. I think the less stuff the better. The bleaker the better — it will play nicely against the sweetness and (presumed) sentimentality of the play.

Please consider visiting [www.crownofmaine.com](http://www.crownofmaine.com) for terrific photos of Northern Maine. Look for links to photos by Ken Lamb and Paul Cyr.

And — here's something that I'm not sure anyone can do anything about, but it's always been on my mind. When people think of Maine, they think of lobster and the ocean. But Almost, Maine, is more like Minnesota — but the people aren't Midwestern. I've tried to make this clear as subtly as possible in the text — but it takes a lot more to break down a common misconception than a passing mention! Anything you can do to help people understand what and where this very special place is would be very much appreciated. (A map in the program might help with the "where" part.)

**On creating the northern lights:**

The northern lights are not complex and extravagant. They're clean lines of light — like ribbons or curtains. They can be white, yellow, green, red, blue, or purple, depending on what gas is being ionized. The most common color combinations are green and red. I believe ionized lower atmosphere oxygen makes the green color, and ionized upper atmosphere oxygen makes the red color. Red is rarer. But better for this play, I think. I've seen yellow, white, and green most frequently; red, occasionally; blue, once (most beautiful thing I've ever seen); purple, never. Whenever I've seen the northern lights, I've felt like they're alive. They move. And they are soundless — but when they appear, it feels like there's a humming in the air. This humming is sensed more than heard. Light and some sort of subtle sound might work to help capture the mystery or enhance the creation of the northern lights.

**On costumes:**

The people of *Almost, Maine*, wear simple and functional clothing. Simple, functional winter clothes ... are actually quite funny.

**On music:**

Interstitial music will play a big part in *Almost, Maine*. Julian Fleisher's music was written for the play, and it is available for licensing through Dramatists Play Service. You can find more information on ordering and licensing this music by going to the *Almost, Maine* page on [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com). I strongly encourage its use!

If you do use other music, try not to use music with lyrics. I think instrumental folk music is the way to go — stuff that features more guitar, hammer dulcimer, harmonica, fiddle, etc. Music with lyrics tends to provide an analysis of what has just happened — and I really want the stories to speak for themselves. Let the scenes be the songs.

**FACTS AND FIGURES****On Maine:**

Maine is the eastern-most and northeastern-most of the United States.

Maine is the only state in the country that borders only one other state.

Maine has 611 miles of international border with Canada, more than any other state except Alaska and Michigan.

Maine is about the same size as the rest of the New England states combined, with a total area of about 35,400 square miles. Although it comprises almost half of New England's total land area, Maine contains only 9% of New England's population.

Maine's unorganized territories make up more than half of the state's total land area.

Maine is the most sparsely populated state east of the Mississippi River. It has 1.3 million residents — 40 people per square mile. (Consider this: Vermont has 65 people per square mile, Massachusetts has 810, and New Jersey has 1,100.)

Maine's largest city is Portland, population 65,000. (Consider this: Greenwich, Connecticut, has 61,000 residents.) Only Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming have smaller "largest cities."

Maine is 90% woods — it is more forested than any other state in the country.

Maine has more moose per square mile than any other state.

Maine contains the northern terminus of the Appalachian Trail: Mt. Karahdin in Central Maine.

**On Aroostook County:**

Aroostook County is the largest county east of the Mississippi River, with a land area of 6,700 square miles. It is almost as big as Massachusetts, and it isn't that much smaller than New Hampshire or Vermont. Aroostook County is considerably larger than Connecticut (4,800 square miles) and Rhode Island (1,045 square miles) put together.

Aroostook County's population is about 72,000, making it one of the most sparsely populated counties east of the Mississippi River. (Connecticut and Rhode Island's combined population is 4.5 million.) Aroostook has about 11 people per square mile, making it about as densely populated as the Dakotas.

**On Almost, Maine (hypothetical):**

Almost, Maine, would be located in T13-R7, in the heart of Aroostook County. T13-R7 is some 75 miles northwest of the northern terminus of Interstate 95; some 120 miles north of Mt. Katahdin; some 200 miles northwest of the ocean (at its closest); some 300 miles north of Portland, Maine; and some 450 miles north of Boston, Massachusetts.

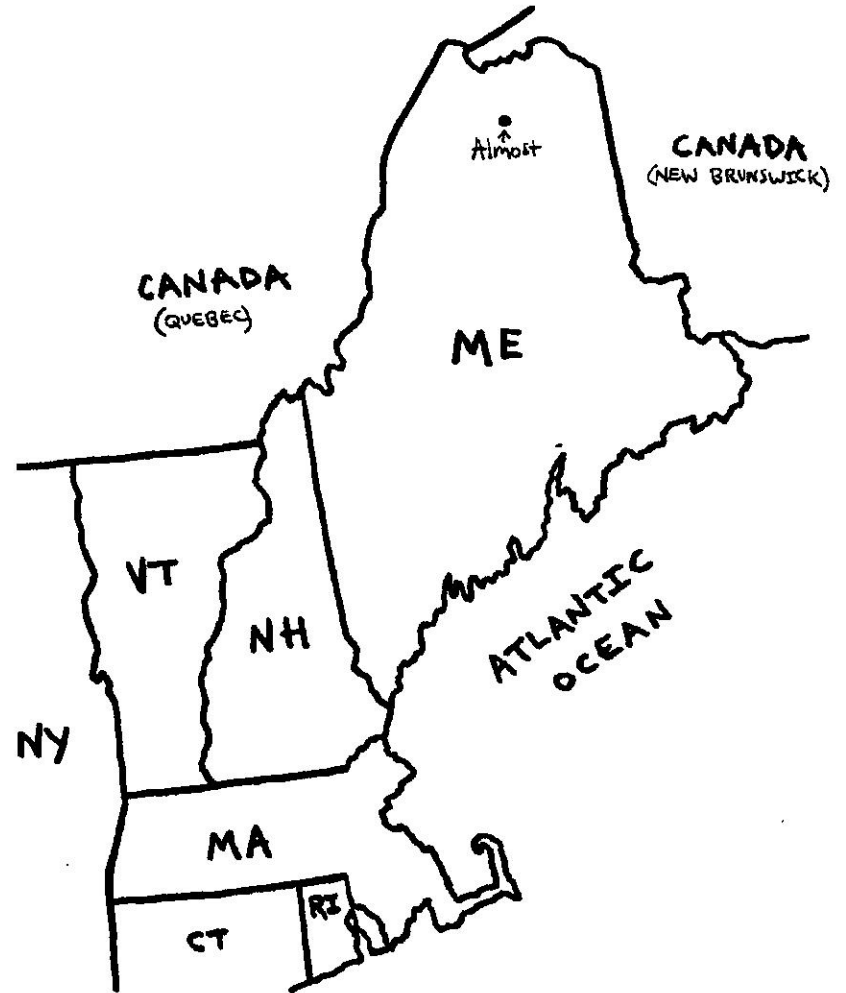
Population: probably about 300.

Median annual household income: probably about \$35,000.

Hours of daylight in mid-January: about 9.

Average January temperature: 9 degrees Fahrenheit.

Average annual snowfall: 115 inches. (Appropriate, then, that one of Maine's long-time senators was named Olympia Snowe. Senator Snowe. For real.)



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