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"Weather"
by Frank Moher

Act One

1:

(In the dark, a soundscape of extreme weather, starting low and building: rain, winds, fire, a few interspersed radio reports on flooding, heat waves, droughts. It crescendos with a thunderclap, as a light picks out PETER.)
PETER

(To audience.)

Weather. The weather. Everybody says the weather's going crazy these days. But nobody does anything about it. Well, I knew somebody who did something about it. Or . . . tried to. This, as they say, is his story.

Mine too.

2:

(CHRIS, in his basement suite, sits at a table intently shredding a styrofoam cup. He places the pieces in a bowl containing other shards of styrofoam. Once the cup's gone, he scoops some shards out of the bowl and holds them high in the air. He lets them flutter to the table. Seems pleased.)

PETER enters from the kitchen, carrying a box. He watches as CHRIS once again scoops up some styrofoam pieces and this time lets them fall to the floor.)

PETER

This, I take it, is some kind of strange housewarming ritual?

CHRIS

It's an experiment.

PETER

An experiment. Ah.

CHRIS

I've tried it with paper and cotton balls. But I think this going to be the best.

PETER

(Regarding the crap on the floor.)

I'll say.

CHRIS

I'll clean it up.

PETER

Hey, it's your place. You're twenty-five. Old enough to do whatever you want with -- consenting styrofoam cups.

(CHRIS smiles, begins to pick up the pieces. PETER turns to us.)

This is my son, Chris. He has schizophrenia. You're in for a number of surprises this evening, so I thought I'd get that one out of the way early. He's just moved into this place. If you could see it, you'd see --

(He looks around:)

Green walls, brown linoleum, bad painting of a ship in a storm. Down in the basement. The kind of mother-in-law suite you wouldn't keep your mother-in-law in.

(Back to CHRIS:)

So. You think you'll be happy here?

CHRIS

Am I supposed to be happy here?

PETER

Well, I'd rather you were happy than abjectly miserable.

CHRIS

It'll do. It's all right. I'd rather you'd checked me into the Pan Pacific, but as long as it's just for six months . . .

PETER

At least it's clean.

CHRIS

That is when "Water's Edge" is opening, right? In November?

PETER

That's the idea.

CHRIS

It better. That's when it starts raining for real and people can't sleep outside. Mind you, they say we might be in for another hot autumn this year. I hope so. Then maybe people might quit blaming all this weird weather on El Niño and realize -- something big is up. Something very, very big. Bigger than anyone even realizes.

(Pause.)

PETER

You ready to go?

CHRIS

Just about. I'm almost done this part.

(ELIZABETH is heard at the top of the stairs.)

ELIZABETH

Hello? Anybody down there?

(She descends the stairs, carrying another box. Sees PETER.)

Oh. Hi.

PETER

Hi.

ELIZABETH

I thought you'd be at work.

PETER

Chris and I have a tenants' committee meeting at three. I just came by to pick him up.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

(To CHRIS.)

Well here. I brought you some food. And some things you left at our place.

CHRIS

Thanks.

ELIZABETH

(To PETER.)

Have you met the landlord?

PETER

Yes.

ELIZABETH

He's a skinhead!

PETER

He's very polite, actually. He calls me, "sir."

(ELIZABETH sees what CHRIS is working on.)

ELIZABETH

Oh god. We're not into this again, are we?

CHRIS

Into what?

ELIZABETH

This -- "weather project."

(CHRIS slams down whatever he's working on.)

CHRIS

Y'know, it is awfully hard to work like this.

ELIZABETH

All right, I'm sorry.

CHRIS

Y'know, I'm not really sick anymore, Mother. You don't have to treat me like I am!

You two -- you two -- I mean, I just wish you could treat me with a little respect. Just respect what I'm doing.

ELIZABETH

Chris, I was just joking.

CHRIS

I mean there are lots of other people working on this same thing. I mean, scientists have been looking for years for better ways to predict the weather. So it's not just me. And I know you don't believe in it either, Dad, but at least you don't have to laugh at it.

PETER

I wasn't --

CHRIS

Yes you were, when you came in from the kitchen, I could see you, you were laughing!

I mean what if it worked?

Fuck.

(He quickly exits up the stairs.)

PETER

Actually, I kind of like his weather project.

ELIZABETH

You do?

PETER

At least he's not sitting around watching "Judge Judy."
He'll calm down.

ELIZABETH

He's right. I shouldn't have said anything.

PETER

He's just mad about -- you know.

ELIZABETH

"You know."

PETER

Right. You -- know.

ELIZABETH

That makes me feel a lot better. What I did was so awful it can't even be mentioned.

PETER

There was nothing awful about it.

ELIZABETH

I mean isn't he better off on his own, here? Isn't he?

PETER

Of course he is.

ELIZABETH

I mean it's almost like a crutch I think, coming back to live with Richard and me every time he gets out of hospital.

PETER

Plus you have Ava and Benny to think about.

ELIZABETH

Then why do I feel so guilty about it?

PETER

Lizzie. He's been talking about moving out on his own for years. You just gave him the push he needed.

ELIZABETH

At least you found him someplace clean.

PETER

And with a polite skinhead.

(He moves to massage her shoulders.)

It would help, however, if the Minister would come up with the money. You get hold of her?

ELIZABETH

Oh, yes. It's ridiculous. They're so fucking scared of their poll numbers right now, they can't think of anything else. I swear to god, I bust my ass for these people during elections, get them elected, handle their divorce cases after. And what do I get when I call up and ask if they might hurry the cheque along? "I'll look into it."

PETER

Whatever happened to patronage?

ELIZABETH

Exactly.

PETER

Well, I think we'll be all right. Besides, in my mind it's already finished. The roof garden. The hallways. The way the sun bounces off that blonde wood we're using. I can already see Chris living there.

(CHRIS returns.)

CHRIS

Okay, I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH

Look, Chris --

CHRIS

No no, I'm sorry, I shouldna took your head off like that. It's just, uh -- I get a little tense when I work. And I appreciate you bringing this stuff over. I don't know what I would have done without my --

(He takes something from the box.)

-- fake Balinese cat carving.

ELIZABETH

I know that's not yours. I thought you might just like to have it.

CHRIS

Great. Thanks. And, uh, Mom, you tell Ava I'm glad she's got my old room. But if she puts any Hanson posters up on the wall, I'll kill her.

ELIZABETH

She's into Marilyn Manson now.

CHRIS

That's better.

(Pause. They smile.)

PETER

Well hey, I know-- we got a few minutes.

(He picks up a tube nearby.)

Why don't I show you the latest drawings?

CHRIS

Oh, uh, hey, no Dad, I think we better get going.

ELIZABETH

I think so too.

PETER

No no, we got time.

CHRIS

Yeah yeah, we got time, Dad, but in a funny way -- we don't.

ELIZABETH

I'll walk you to your car.

CHRIS

I'll see you out there!

(He puts on a jacket, leaves.)

PETER

But I changed the washrooms.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure the washrooms are lovely, Peter. But you do tend to go on.

PETER

Oh.

(He slides the drawings back in their tube. ELIZABETH smiles.)

ELIZABETH

No sulking?

PETER

No sulking.

ELIZABETH

Good. See you at the next board meeting.

(She starts out.)

PETER

Lizzie.

(ELIZABETH stops, turns.)

I go on?

(ELIZABETH nods.)

Oh.

(ELIZABETH exits up the stairs. PETER looks to us.)

PETER

I once thought I was going to marry that woman. Mind you, I once thought a lot of things.

3.

(Stanley Park. The seawall. DREW, in his mime gear, begs invisible passersby for passing change. On the back of his jersey it says "Hope House.")

PETER walks into the scene. Watches DREW for a moment.)

PETER

Do you have to do that?

(DREW turns, mimes surprise.)

It really does irritate people, you know.

(DREW mimes sadness.)

Oh all right, they love it.

(Mimes happiness. Scuttles over to PETER, begs for change.)

You want something? Here.

(He kisses DREW. DREW is genuinely surprised. PETER looks to us.)

That was one of those surprises I told you about.

DREW

Hi. Uh, hi.

(He kisses him back.)

PETER

I thought you weren't supposed to talk.

DREW

Hm?

PETER

Mimes. When you're being a mime. You're not supposed to talk.

DREW

Oh, thaaaat. No that's just a, um, myth. No, we mimes love to talk. Talk, talk, talk. Can't shut us up.

PETER

Apparently.

DREW

Besides. Most people hate mimes. We like people who kiss us.
(They sit together.)

PETER

Meet Drew. My lover. Also a mime. That would make him my lover-mime. Used to be an actor, works at an AIDS hospice now. When he's not raising money for it by harrassing people in Stanley Park, which is where we are now, by the way.

DREW

(Scanning the ocean.)

Oh god! It is so beautiful out there.

PETER

Mm.

DREW

I used to come down here when we were doing The Scottish Play at the Playhouse. Get all that blood and gore out of my system. Sit here, watch the um um um sailboats go by. Lovely.

PETER

What is "The Scottish Play"?

DREW

Sssshhh.

(They sit there. Birds, passing voices. Distant traffic.)

How's the building?

(PETER just sighs.)

What? What? Spill.

PETER

Well it's bad enough the money's delayed. Now the contractor says we're gonna fall three weeks behind because the wood for the floors is delayed. I mean I chose this wood because it was cheap and easy to get and now it turns out it has to come from Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan. I

didn't even know they had wood in Saskatchewan. But we can't replace it with anything else because everything else is too expensive. And --

DREW

I get the idea.

PETER

-- then -- oh, I don't know -- the tenants' committee is saying the rooms have to be bigger but there also have to be more of them, and the architect side of me is saying it can't be done but the politically correct side of me is saying, "I'm just the architect, you're calling the shots" and meantime of course I'm going broke working on this project --

DREW

Hey.

PETER

What?

DREW

We are chilling now. We are not getting ourselves all worked up.

PETER

Oh. Right.

DREW

It's too nice for that. Besides. They do have trees in Saskatchewan. I was there once on a schools tour. I'm certain I saw some.

(YVONNE enters, in a worn overcoat.)

YVONNE

(Calling off to someone.)

All right, I'll see you there. Bring some blankets if you can!

(She starts to brush by. Doesn't see them.)

DREW

Hey, Yvonne.

YVONNE

Drew. Is that you?

DREW

Who else?

YVONNE

This looks like an outtake from some Fellini movie.

(Hand out to PETER.)

Peter, right?

PETER

(Doesn't recognize her.)

I -

YVONNE

Yvonne. We met for about two minutes at the last Christmas party. You were with Drew. Don't worry, it'll come back to you.

DREW

Yvonne volunteers down at Hope House, Peter.

YVONNE

Tell that asshole administrator of yours to get something decent to read in the library.

DREW

She's a counsellor, believe it or not. And, uh, Peter's designing the halfway house, Yvonne. The one down on, you know, Homer.

YVONNE

"Water's Edge"?

PETER

That's right.

YVONNE

Oh. Well, isn't that interesting. Nice name.

(Beat.)

PETER

Thanks.

(Pause. PETER senses something weird in the air.)

YVONNE

So you think that place is really going to help people, do you?

PETER

Well, not as many people as we'd like, Drew and I were just talking about that, but --

YVONNE

You don't think it's gonna be kinda like a -- zoo for crazy people?

(Beat.)

PETER

A what?

YVONNE

A zoo. Y'know, you stick em in there, feed em medications, then let em out in public every

once in a while to put on a show.

PETER

Oh, fuck.

YVONNE

Well?

PETER

Let's go, Drew.

DREW

Yvonne --

YVONNE

You don't think that's true?

PETER

No, funny thing, I don't think that's true. And frankly if I'm going to be insulted, I'd rather it was by somebody I knew a little better. So thanks, but --

YVONNE

It's not true the people there will have to take meds?

PETER

I don't know about that.

YVONNE

No? Well maybe you should find out.

PETER

What do you know about it?

DREW

Yvonne's a "Doctor" Yvonne, Petie. Psychiatrist.

YVONNE

Was. Lousy racket. Got out of it. Mostly because I saw a lot of well-intentioned people trying to help out a lot of crazy people and mostly making a mess of it.

DREW

Yvonne --

YVONNE

Especially with meds. Y'see, I run a little squat, Peter. An old abandoned house, don't ask me where, I won't tell ya. It's nothin to write home about. Lousy plumbing. No electricity. But at least the people there don't have drugs forced down their gullets every day.

PETER

I hardly think that's going to happen at "Water's Edge."

YVONNE

Uh huh.

PETER

And as the father of a schizophrenic son who's been in and out of hospital for ten years now, I think I may know just as much about the subject as you do, Doctor.

YVONNE

You have a kid?

DREW

It's a complicated world, Yvonne.

YVONNE

He's got schizophrenia? What's his name?

PETER

Chris. Reis --

YVONNE

Chris Reisler is your son?

DREW

You know him?

YVONNE

Oh hell, yes. He stayed with us at the squat for awhile. He'd had some argument with his Mom or something, he only stayed a few days.

Oh well that explains a great deal.

PETER

What does?

YVONNE

Well, frankly, Peter -- a lot of these people are staying with me to get away from their mothers and fathers.

PETER

That is preposterous.

YVONNE

If you say so.

PETER

I suppose you think we should just treat them all with sunshine and love.

YVONNE

Now there's an idea. I mean that other stuff is poison, Peter. Really. Poison. What these people need is clarity, and taking a pill doesn't give you clarity, it just fucks you up some more.

DREW

What if they're delusional, Yvonne?

YVONNE

Then they're delusional. You got a problem with that?

PETER

Maybe. Maybe if they're sitting next to me in a restaurant and --

YVONNE

Oh, well, hell, some people wouldn't want you two sitting next to em in a restaurant. Does that mean we should give you a pill to make you stop?

(Pause.)

PETER

Well. I don't think most people would agree with you.

YVONNE

Uh huh. Well. I'm used to that.

Still, I'm -- sorry to take your head off that way. I know not all parents are ogres. Chris seemed to think you're all right.

Anyway. I better get going.

(To DREW.)

You working days or nights this week?

DREW

Both.

YVONNE

I'll see you there.

(YVONNE starts off.)

PETER

Yvonne.

(YVONNE stops, turns.)

I'd like you to come see Water's Edge sometime. I'd like to show you around.

YVONNE

Oh, look, you don't have to -

PETER

No no, I'd like to. I think that'd be good.

I mean it's not much to look at right now . . . but I think I could make you see. The way I see it. The way I have it up here. The rooms. Bright. Airy. I mean I've gone to those dingy hotel rooms most people end up in and I said, whatever they've done here, we'll do the opposite. The common room. Where people can sit and argue about what TV show to watch, just like a real

family. The quiet room, up on the second floor, you know what that means? -- it means people can sit there and look out and see the harbour, you know how hard that is to do these days downtown?, but I figured out a way to do it. Sit and watch the cruise ships come floating in. And the balconies on some of the rooms, and the garden -- ! I mean -- I mean I just don't see how this can be a bad thing. And I'd like to show it to you sometime. If you think you'd like to see it.

(Pause.)

YVONNE

Well. Maybe I'll take you up on that sometime. See what we can arrange.

PETER

I mean, we could go there right now!

DREW

Peter, I think we should -

YVONNE

No, not right now. But sometime. I'll get in touch with you through Drew.

(Pause.)

PETER

Right.

Well I know. I'll go get us all an ice cream!

(He starts off.)

DREW

I don't want an ice cream.

PETER

I do!

(He is off. DREW looks to YVONNE.)

DREW

Nice work, Yvonne.

YVONNE

What?

DREW

Socially adept, as always. Remind me not to invite you to the next Christmas party.

(He starts away.)

YVONNE

Your friend okay?

DREW

What?

YVONNE

Your friend. Everything all right?

DREW

Of course everything's all right.

YVONNE

How long you known him?

DREW

Four years. Why?

YVONNE

He always like this?

DREW

He's excited about his building. Is there something wrong with that?

YVONNE

Well that depends.

DREW

On what?

YVONNE

Whether it's really as wonderful as he thinks it is, I guess.

I'll see you around.

(She goes. DREW stands there for a moment, considering. Exits after PETER.)

PETER returns. To us:)

PETER

So! Who's figured it out so far? Hands up. Good.

Yes, that's right, everybody's mad in this play. Either in the conventional sense or the medical sense. Except maybe for Drew. Which may be why I love him.

As for me, I'm just a little bit mad at this point. Unlike being pregnant, it is possible to be just a little bit mad. But it gets worse. Many "Lear-on-the-Heath" scenes to come.

What I have is different than what Chris or Tara, whom you haven't met yet, have. They have schizophrenia. I'm manic-depressive. Though I'm not sure it really matters. In either case, something creeps up behind you and grabs you by the throat and says, "I'm here." And everything is different after that.

I suppose I got from my mother. Who got it from her grandfather, who got it from -- well, you

get the idea. I can't be sure, really: my mother killed herself when I was thirteen, and in those days it was called being "overly sensitive."

Still, just because your mother was manic-depressive doesn't mean you have to be. Take my sister, for instance. Jane. Never met a day she didn't like. Can't figure out what my problem is. Mind you, she's obsessive-compulsive and spends two hours each day reorganizing her closets, but that's another story.

Back to this one. We're back at Chris's apartment, about a week later. This is when things start to get -- complex.

4.

(CHRIS is with TARA, who has a bruise under one eye. TARA is laughing at some story CHRIS has been telling.)

CHRIS

No no no really -- do you remember that guy? Used to steal the Smarties from the candy machine? Tom.

TARA

(Doesn't remember.)

No . . .

CHRIS

Tom!

TARA

No.

CHRIS

Don't you remember? He was double-jointed. And somehow he could get his hand right in their and steal whatever he wanted.

TARA

Tom!

CHRIS

Yeah, that's right. And it was always Smarties. Boy, did that guy like Smarties.

(PETER enters down the stairs, hurrying, carrying a white scale model of "Water's Edge.")

PETER

Hey, Chris, I got the new model, you gotta see, I --

(He sees TARA.)

Hi.

(TARA bolts from her chair, crawls

under the table.)

CHRIS

No no no Tara, it's all right, it's all right.

PETER

Who was that?

CHRIS

It's just Tara -- she's just --

(He looks under the table.)

Tara, it's all right, it's just my Dad, I should have warned you he might show up.

TARA

NOT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ESCALATOR!

CHRIS

Tara, I'm telling you, it's all right to come out.

(TARA pokes her head out. Looks to PETER.)

TARA

I don't know.

CHRIS

No, well you'll get to know him. It would just be better if you came out first.

(TARA emerges, sits, smooths her dress as if nothing has happened.)

Dad, as I said, this is Tara. Tara, this is --

TARA

(Extends her hand to PETER. Very politely:)

Oh. Hello.

PETER

Hello.

TARA

It's a great pleasure to meet you.

PETER

Same here.

CHRIS

Tara and I met in Riverview. She got out a little while ago.

(PETER studies TARA for a moment more. Then:)

PETER

So! You all ready to go?

CHRIS

I can't.

PETER

We have a meeting with the minister's assistant.

CHRIS

Yeah, I know, I --

(He looks to TARA.)

. . . can't.

PETER

I see. Well it's just they're expecting you. As head of the tenants' committee, they need to have you there.

CHRIS

I'll send a note.

PETER

No, Chris, they need you to okay the plans!

TARA

I'll just leave for a minute.

CHRIS

You don't have to leave, Tara.

TARA

(Heading for the kitchen.)

No, that's all right, I'll just -- go in here.

Nice meeting you.

PETER

Nice -- meeting you too.

(She regards them for a moment, goes.)

CHRIS

That was rude.

PETER

What was?

CHRIS

Making her go into the kitchen like that.

PETER

I didn't make her go into the kitchen.

CHRIS

She's very polite. She likes to do things properly. Believe me -- you made her go into the kitchen.

(He sits.)

PETER

Are you -- going out with her?

CHRIS

Meaning what?

PETER

I don't know. Are you -- dating her?

CHRIS

No, I'm not "dating" her. I'm not sleeping with her either, if that's what you're asking. She's just staying here. Just until she can find someplace of her own.

PETER

She's staying here?

CHRIS

Yeah, that's right.

PETER

She can't do that, Chris.

CHRIS

Yeah, well, she can't live in a box down by the water any more either. So I guess we don't have much choice.

(Pause.)

She got kicked out of Riverview last time they closed a bunch of beds. She was living in the Balmoral until a few days ago, until the manager tried to . . .

She wouldn't let him. That's how she got that black eye.

I found her living down by the water. She was living in a old wardrobe container. I saw this . . . pink piece of material sticking out. It looked kinda like curtains, I was gonna bring em back, put em up here. Turned out it was a corner of her housecoat. I recognized her right away. We were pretty good friends in Riverview. I was wonderin what happened to her.

Anyway, like I say, we're not sleeping together, so you can save the condom lecture.

PETER

I wasn't thinking about that.

CHRIS

You must be getting old.

PETER

I'm thinking she can't stay here, Chris.

CHRIS

Uh huh. Well you take her back down there.

PETER

I'm thinking if she stays here you'll probably both get kicked out!

It wasn't part of the deal. I told the guy, it'd just be you, just till the halfway house opens.

CHRIS

Who? Mr. Neo-Nazi upstairs?

PETER

Yes!

CHRIS

Yeah, well he's the one who's really crazy around here.

PETER

Exactly! You want him coming down here, deciding to do a few eugenics experiments?

CHRIS

So what do you want me to do?

PETER

I don't know, you --

CHRIS

Look, she has no place to go if I send her out of here. So I am not telling her to leave!

(TARA re-enters, angry.)

TARA

-- time to want not to leaving out --

CHRIS

Hey, Tara, I was just coming to get you.

TARA

(Brushing past him.)

No.

CHRIS

We were just --

TARA

(To PETER:)

NO! NOT SLEEPING WITH CHRIS! NO! I DON'T DO THAT!

(TARA moves to retrieve an old bag from the couch. She stuffs a few loose items of clothing in it.)

Not going here anyway.

CHRIS

Tara? Tara, what are you doing?

(Muttering to herself, TARA stuffs a napkin from the table in her bag, reconsiders, takes it out again, then starts towards the stairs.)

Tara, no, look, we were just arguing, you don't have to leave!

TARA

Don't you DON'T YOU--

(Swinging her bag at him.)

-- IS THIS A CAR? IS THIS A RIDE THAT IS GOING SOMEWHERE? IS IT? IS IT? WHY DON'T YOU ALL JUST GIVE UP?

(Pause.)

CHRIS

Tara . . . I wish you would stay and eat something first.

PETER

Tara . . . look . . . I should mind my own business. I had no right asking that. I apologize.

(Pause.)

TARA

I'm very religious. I believe in God.

PETER

I'm sure you do.

TARA

Sometimes I know that God is watching over me.

(PETER moves away, thoughtful.)

CHRIS

Well. Maybe we should get out of here for awhile, Tara.

TARA

Oh yes we could do that.

CHRIS

Leave Dad to stew.

(He gets a jacket. They prepare to go.)

PETER

Wait a minute. I know.

CHRIS

You know what, Dad?

PETER

I've got it. I know what we should do.

We'll get Tara into Water's Edge. Won't we. That's exactly what we'll do. I mean we've been talking about putting in those extra two rooms, so I'll put them in, and one of them can be for her.

CHRIS

Dad. There's a waiting list.

PETER

I know.

CHRIS

Well she can't just --

PETER

Then she can room with you, you two can have one of the doubles, I don't care that doesn't bother me a bit. And then when something opens up --

CHRIS

I don't think they're --

PETER

I'm just pointing out that the solution might be easier than we think!

(Pause.)

CHRIS

Well. Okay. If you say so.

PETER

I'll check into it.

CHRIS

I just . . . don't want to get Tara's hopes up too much.

Let's go outside.

(They exit. PETER stands there. A doubt seems to cross his mind. But it's quickly gone. He moves to the model, regards it.)

5.

(Light change. Music. Special on CHRIS.)

CHRIS

The idea behind my weather project is . . .

(Elsewhere, PETER ponders the model.)

You know how scientists say that the smallest disturbance one place can lead to a huge disturbance somewhere else? Like, for example, a butterfly opening its wings in Japan can cause a hurricane someplace else? Scientists say this. So I'm thinking . . . what if you could trace that hurricane back to its source?

(PETER takes up the model and crosses to a drafting table elsewhere.

Meantime, TARA has moved into the basement suite and begins to gather up furniture, or maybe odds and ends from Chris's weather project box, and build a tower out of it.)

Like, say, if you could determine what event caused a certain hurricane or heat wave or blizzard or flood . . . then you could start to predict it, see? You could start to watch for events like that, and know what was coming. And you could even stop it, see, by stopping the event that caused it. I don't mean, you know, we should kill all the butterflies in Japan or something . . . But you could predict it. You could predict the hurricane. Years in advance, you could warn people what was coming.

(PETER has taken the roof off the model and moves about pieces inside.

TARA continues to add to her tower.)

And I think people would like that. Because it's getting scary, man. You don't know what the weather's going to do these days. I mean, they say we should be worried about this earthquake, but I'm worried about the next snowstorm, you know what I mean? I'm worried about what that's going to do.

(Pause. TARA pushes over the tower.

It falls with a clatter. Pause.)

Anyway. That's the idea of it. That's what I'm attempting.

(PETER puts the roof back on, lifts the model up in his hands. Considers it. Light on model.)

6.

(PETER and DREW's condo. Just PETER, sitting in a sling-type chair, reading a newspaper.)

Oh my god.

PETER

What?

DREW
(Off.)

Unbelievable.

PETER

What is?

DREW

Your friend Yvonne. She's in the paper.

PETER

(PETER puts down the paper, looks to us.)

Our place. Condo. Above False Creek. If you were here -- well, you are here, but if you were really here -- you'd see: Drew's grandmother's old couch, halogen lamp with CD rack built in, poster of the Arts Club production of "Marvin's Room" --

(DREW enters. PETER indicates him.)

-- Drew. Without his makeup.

DREW

What's she doing in the paper?

(He takes the paper from PETER, reads.)

"Murderer Guilty On All Counts?"

PETER

Below that.

DREW

Phew.

(Looks.)

Oh my god.

PETER

That's the one.

(DREW scans the story for a moment more, looks to the audience.)

DREW

The gist of the story --

(To PETER:)

-- Do you mind?

PETER

Please. Go right ahead.

DREW

The gist of the story is that Yvonne and about five of the people from her, like, squat -- at least I assume that's where they're from -- showed up at the construction site with signs saying things like "Zoos Are For Animals".

PETER

Which will come as a surprise to the animal-rights activists. No doubt we can expect a counter-demonstration tomorrow.

DREW

(Back to PETER.)

Did you know about this?

PETER

No. But then I'm just the architect.

DREW

Oh well it's not so bad.

PETER

Not so bad?

DREW

Well it was just her and -- how many people?

PETER

Five.

DREW

Five.

PETER

Plus a newspaper reporter. Which means now it's on page B-3, and half a million people are reading about it.

DREW

I really wouldn't worry about it.

PETER

No?

DREW

No. The last thing Yvonne demonstrated against was um um um -- Expo 86. And that happened, didn't it?

PETER

Oh well hell, we'll just ignore it then shall we? And it'll all go away!

(He tosses the paper aside. Pause.)

DREW

Peter.

PETER

Mm.

DREW

You're all right, aren't you?

PETER

What do you mean?

DREW

You're all right. I mean, I know you're under a lot of pressure, and I know you're upset about Yvonne and her cohorts, but -- you do seem sort of uptight these days.

PETER

Oh please.

DREW

I mean I'm just asking.

PETER

I'm fine.

DREW

Because you did have that one time just after we met where you thought, you know, maybe you needed a vacation or something, and then it just passed and -- but you don't usually get so upset by things you read in the paper.

PETER

They don't usually involve projects I've been working on for two years!

I'm fine. I just need for this thing to get built and open and then everything's going to be okay. We can forget about Yvonne and Chris'll be taken care of and everything'll be fine. All right?

DREW

You don't think you should take a break from it for awhile?

(Pause.)

PETER

Ha. You're sweet. No, I can't take a break from it. But thanks for asking.

(Pause.)

DREW

Right.

Well I gotta get going. You wanna come down with me? We're playing Six Degrees of George Clooney tonight.

PETER

Be still my beating you-know-what.

DREW

No?

PETER

No.

DREW

Okay. I'll see you in the morning then. Tape "3rd Rock" for me!

(DREW exits. PETER sits there. Moves to where he threw the paper. Smooths it. Begins to read again.)

7.

(The building site. Sounds of construction, traffic nearby. PETER, ELIZABETH, YVONNE enter, wearing hardhats.)

PETER

-- And here we have the games room!

ELIZABETH

No halfway house is complete without one.

YVONNE

The games room, eh?

PETER

Well, games, meetings whatever.

YVONNE

That's what my place needs. A games room. I'll get to work on that -- just as soon as I fix the hole in the floor of the can.

Still, I have to say, it's awfully nice of you people to invite me down here. Officially, I mean. After all the things I said about you in paper.

ELIZABETH

And on the news.

YVONNE

And on the news, right.

ELIZABETH

And on your webpage.

YVONNE

You saw that, did you Mrs. Reisler?

ELIZABETH

Galt.

YVONNE

What?

ELIZABETH

Galt. I'm not married to Peter. We never were.

YVONNE

Oh.

ELIZABETH

And no, that's not the reason Chris is mentally ill --

YVONNE

I didn't say --

ELIZABETH

Oh I can see it behind your eyes. I see it behind a lot of peoples' eyes.

(Like a Viennese psychiatrist.)

"Aha! At last we have zee truth! Dysvfunctional family! Suddenly, it all makes zense!" But the fact is we were young, we were confused -- Peter a little more than I, perhaps -- and we had a baby. Whom we loved, and still love, and have loved continuously for twenty-five years now. We even like each other, don't we Peter?

PETER

Absolutely. In fact, if I was eighteen and sexually confused again --

YVONNE

I get the idea. Y'know Mrs. Galt, you and I could get along, I think.

ELIZABETH

Oh really?

YVONNE

You seem to hate psychiatrists as much as I do. But the fact is, I don't change my mind easily. That's because I took so long making it up. It might take more than a guided tour to budge me.

PETER

Like what? A scud missile?

(The women look to him.)

Sorry.

ELIZABETH

I don't really expect to budge you, Doctor. But I can hope, can't I? That's pretty much all I do, really. That and fund raise.

(To PETER.)

Should we show her the kitchen?

PETER

Right this way.

ELIZABETH

It looks more or less like the games room.

(CHRIS and TARA enter. TARA wears a hardhat, CHRIS doesn't. They're running, laughing.)

PETER

DON'T -- run around here. It's probably not a good idea.

ELIZABETH

Where's your hardhat, Chris?

CHRIS

Oh. It's uh -- oh, I don't know. Here, gimme yours.

(He swipes TARA's.)

TARA

(Still playful.)

No!

(CHRIS runs, TARA chases him.)

PETER

Chris.

CHRIS

Oh. Right. Sorry.

YVONNE

Here, take mine.

(She tosses her hardhat to him.)

You back on meds, Tara?

ELIZABETH

You know each other?

YVONNE

Oh yeah. Tara stayed with us, about the same time Chris did. You back on meds?

TARA

Oh yes, I think so. I mean -- yes.

YVONNE

That what you want?

CHRIS

She was having hallucinations --

YVONNE

I was asking Tara, Chris. That what you want?

TARA

-- Yes.

(Beat.)

YVONNE

Okay. Fine. Just as long as someone asked.

TARA

Besides, Chris's father is going to get me a place to live here. So I think pretty soon -- that'll be satisfactory.

ELIZABETH

What?

CHRIS

He's going to try to get you a place.

ELIZABETH

Did you tell her that?

PETER

Well -- yeah -- I mean, we're putting in the two extra rooms --

ELIZABETH

Oh, Jesus.

PETER

-- and if necessary they'll --

ELIZABETH

Oh Jesus, Peter, this project is about this close to going tits up! So maybe it's time we quit making promises!

(Pause.)

YVONNE

This is news? Or a rumour?

ELIZABETH

A bit of both. The fact is . . . the government is looking at a rather large deficit these days. And

the word of the moment is "cut."

PETER

They're going to cut our money?

ELIZABETH

They haven't said that. But I'm definitely hearing alarms.

CHRIS

They can't do that!

ELIZABETH

Oh yes they can.

CHRIS

It's half built! How could they shut it down now?

YVONNE

Simple. Cabinet meeting, quiet word to the deputy minister, siss-boom-bah. It takes years to make anything happen in government-land, but only about ten seconds to stop it.

(With a glance to ELIZABETH.)

Not that they're always wrong, mind you.

CHRIS

Well you're going to tell them, aren't you?

ELIZABETH

Tell them what?

CHRIS

That they can't do it. Tell them they can't shut it down!

PETER

I'll talk to them. It's probably nothing. I'll have a word with the minister myself.

CHRIS

And if that doesn't work?

PETER

Then I'll --

CHRIS

If she decides to ignore you, just like she ignores everybody else she doesn't wanna -

ELIZABETH

Look, Chris --

TARA

Oh I think she's gonna build it. I think she's going to say yes.

(Pause.)

ELIZABETH

We all hope so, Tara.

TARA

Oh I really she will.

(Pause.)

PETER

Look. Like I said. It's probably nothing. Ignore it and it'll go away. C'mon, Yvonne, I'll show you the --

YVONNE

No. I think I better go.

But look. Tara. I'll give you my card. Things don't work out here -- you call that number, okay? They'll tell you where we are. Okay?

(TARA takes the card. Nods.)

Okay. And you too Chris. Any time you want.

Thanks for the tour. I'd tip my hat, but I don't have one.

(YVONNE goes. Pause.)

ELIZABETH

We've got to go talk to her, Chris.

CHRIS

We do?

ELIZABETH

She's got the scent of blood now. It's a look lawyers get to know.

(She goes, CHRIS follows. PETER and TARA are suddenly left alone.)

PETER

Well!

TARA

Well.

PETER

Well. I guess we'll just have to wait here.

(He sits beside her. Pause.)

TARA

Chris says you're scared of me.

PETER

I am?

TARA

He says sometimes you're scared around people who are sicker than he is. He says everybody is.

PETER

Well, I -- suppose that might be true. Sometimes.

TARA

That's okay, cause I'm scared of you. When you come into the suite that day -- you scared me.

PETER

I'm sorry.

TARA

Not at all.

I'm sorry I got you into trouble, though.

PETER

When?

TARA

Just now. I shouldna told her about what you said.

PETER

Oh that. Well. She would have found out eventually, I guess.

TARA

I try to be polite, you see.

PETER

I've noticed that.

TARA

I think politeness is quite important. I wish more people would be polite.

I found that out when I watched *Gone With the Wind*. Somebody told me I should watch it cause that's where my name comes from. Tara. Like the house. So I did, and that's how I got interested in Vivien Leigh. She was polite. And then later I found out Vivien Leigh had some trouble with . . . mental problems too. And I thought, if she can be polite even though she had that problem, I can too.

You ever see that movie?

PETER

Only about ten times.

TARA

Once I stayed up all night just watching it over and over.

(Pause.)

PETER

Well sometimes I think I might have some . . . problems like that too.

TARA

You do?

PETER

Well, sometimes. Sometimes I don't see things as clearly as I used to. Sometimes I think . . . well I stop, and I realize, I don't know what I'm thinking. I'm not really thinking anything at all. I'm just -- all I am is feeling, just emotion, going around and round.

TARA

I don't feel like that.

PETER

No?

TARA

I think I'm thinkin all the time.

(Pause.)

PETER

And then I think . . . well, I don't think, but I worry that maybe that's why Chris is sick. Because of me. Not something I did, but . . . just because that's the way things work. And then I think I owe it to him to make it up somehow.

TARA

I don't think he thinks that.

PETER

No?

TARA

He says not to be afraid of you. He says you just worry too much.

PETER

Oh.

(Pause.)

TARA

But you are homosexual, aren't you?

PETER

. . . Yes. Is that a problem for you?

TARA

No.

PETER

Good.

TARA

Chris already told me that.

Oh jeez I shouldna asked that.

PETER

No, Tara, it's all right --

TARA

I can be just so rude sometimes! Sometimes I am not polite at all!

(Pause.)

This one time? . . . we was down at the beach . . . this was when I was at the hospital an he was there too . . . an, I dunno, I got separated from everybody somehow, an I went walking the wrong way? An I was tryna find where everybody was, when suddenly . . . I seen this man standin there, bare naked. Bare naked, with his bum ta me, just readin a newspaper. An I looked . . . an there were other people, all naked, lyin on towels or playin frisbee, or swimmin . . . an nobody seemed to care that they didn't have any clothes on. Whereas other places, like the hospital, if you took your clothes off everybody would yell and rush over and make you put em back on.

So I went over. I walked over to that other part of the beach, I even imagined that I was walkin across a little line in the sand. An I went by a big rock . . . an I took off my jeans an my blouse, an my panties . . . till I was completely bare naked! An I knew this wasn't appropriate behaviour, but somehow, down there -- it was! An there was a man painting a picture, he smiled at me, an I wasn't afraid, I wasn't even embarrassed.

An then I walked into the ocean . . . which I never did usually when I was down at the beach. There was something about it, I was scared of it, allas thinkin what might be down there that could swim up an bite me. But now I wasn't scared at all. An it was cold, an I could feel it risin up, past my ankles, my knees, my privates, my breasts . . . till I just stood there . . . just a head, floatin on the water, lookin inna shore, at all the pink an brown bodies on the sand.

An then everybody come runnin down the beach at me, they thought I was drownin, come runnin an pointin, Chris most of all. An I made em chase me, all through the water, an up onto the beach, kickin up sand, holdin my clothes out to me. An when he got to me, he turned around an made me put my clothes on, an he said that was rude, that was just about the rudest thing he'd ever seen anybody do. But I was just laughin n laughin, eh? Mind you that was before.

PETER

Before what?

Before I knew about Vivien Leigh.

TARA
(She smiles. PETER laughs.
Fade.)

8.

(The yard outside Chris's basement suite. PETER and TARA just leaving. CHRIS enters from another direction, calling to someone.)

CHRIS
Yeah, okay, we'll see you! Thanks very much!

PETER
Who were you talking to?

CHRIS
The skinhead.

TARA
You were?

CHRIS
Yeah. He's actually quite nice.

PETER
Well yes I know, but -- what were you talking to him about?

TARA
Oh I know.

CHRIS
Huh?

TARA
Me. Whether I can stay or not.

CHRIS
That's right.

PETER
And?

CHRIS
No prob.

PETER

Really?

CHRIS

No prob at all.

TARA

That's great!

PETER

What did you say to him?

CHRIS

I said I had a friend staying with me, and she needed a place to stay, and she'd be moving out when I did.

PETER

And he agreed to that?

CHRIS

Absolutely. Absolutely no problem at all.

Well, I did have to . . . tell him a few -- things about Tara and me.

TARA

Like what?

CHRIS

Well I told him we were both crazy.

PETER

He knew that.

CHRIS

He knew that about me. But I thought I should explain to him that Tara had -- luniosis terramania.

TARA

What's that?

CHRIS

I have no idea.

PETER

You told him that?

CHRIS

Yeah. And I told him that it was kinda like what that guy in "Silence of the Lambs" had, only worse, kind of like what that guy in "Silence of the Lambs" and that girl in "Urban Legends" had put together.

TARA

Chris!

CHRIS

(Laughing.)

And I told him I could ask you to leave if he really insisted, but I couldn't take responsibility for what might happen after that.

PETER

And he believed you?

CHRIS

Yeah. Then I gave him a few tics and grimaces and then everything seemed fine!

(Now PETER and TARA are laughing too.)

Y'know, on the whole, this disease is a shitty gig. But every once in awhile it has its advantages.

TARA

I can't believe you said that!

CHRIS

So we're fine till he actually meets you for real. Maybe you could take to carrying a large butcher knife with you when you leave the house.

(Pause.)

PETER

I wonder what he'd do if . . .

(Twitches.)

. . . he thought --

(Twitches. Goes bug-eyed.)

-- there were two crazy people living with you. Two --
psychopathic -- murderers --

(He pulls a pen from his
breast pocket, holds it
like a dagger.)

-- living just below him -- capable -- of doing anything -- at any moment!

(He stalks around the yard in
imitation of a B-movie madman.)

I think -- he might be -- a little upset. In fact, it's the kind of thing -- that might drive a landlord
-- CRAAAAAAAAAAAAAZZYYYYY!!!

(PETER runs off, screaming. Pause.

CHRIS and TARA look to each other.)

CHRIS

That is scary.

TARA

Very.

(They follow.)

9.

(In the dark, thunder.

CHRIS sits at the table in the basement suite, working on his weather project. It's not going well, though. He's trying to do something very delicate and it's not working. Finally, he throws it down in frustration.)

CHRIS

OH! I CANNOT DO THIS! WOULD SOMEBODY PLEASE JUST HAUL THIS AWAY AND BURN IT.

(TARA enters.)

TARA

Chris?

CHRIS

. . . Sorry, Tara.

(Thunder.)

TARA

What's that noise?

CHRIS

It's just thunder. That's all.

TARA

(Relieved.)

Oh.

CHRIS

What?

TARA

I thought it was an earthquake. Had me scared.

(ELIZABETH enters down the stairs. Sees them.)

ELIZABETH

I knocked.

CHRIS

Yeah, sorry, I was just -- working on my project.

ELIZABETH

It's thundering out there.

TARA

We heard.

ELIZABETH

It's so strange. You hardly ever hear thunder here.

Chris, I have to speak to you.

CHRIS

Fine. Speak.

(ELIZABETH looks to TARA,
hesitates.)

ELIZABETH

I just spoke to the deputy minister . . .

CHRIS

(Realizing.)

Oh no.

ELIZABETH

She called to tell me before it's in the newspapers. They're shutting Water's Edge down.
(Pause.)

TARA

What?

CHRIS

Oh Jesus.

ELIZABETH

They say they have to do some further "community consultation." In other words, all that noise Yvonne made got to them.

CHRIS

Yvonne's just an excuse.

ELIZABETH

Yes.

CHRIS

They're doing it to save money!

ELIZABETH

And votes.

CHRIS

Those goddamn hypocrites! If they were gonna do this, they shoulda never started in the first place!

So what did you tell her?

ELIZABETH

Well there wasn't much I could tell her, I --

CHRIS

In other words nothing.

TARA

What are we going to do?

CHRIS

. . . I'm not sure yet, Tara.

TARA

We can stay here, right?

CHRIS

. . . I'm not sure.

ELIZABETH

Look, Chris --

CHRIS

No you look. You just go, okay? If it hadn't been for you and all your friends in high places, this wouldn't of happened. So just go, okay?

ELIZABETH

I didn't shut it down!

CHRIS

No, but at least we wouldn't of got our hopes up.

ELIZABETH

I am trying to build you a home!

CHRIS

Yeah, that's right, eh, just so long as it isn't with you.

(Beat.)

ELIZABETH

I beg your pardon?

TARA

He didn't mean that.

CHRIS

Yeah I did. I had a place, you threw me out.

ELIZABETH

You know you are a nasty little piece of work sometimes.

CHRIS

I am?

ELIZABETH

You know you couldn't have stayed at our place any longer. You didn't even want to.

CHRIS

No, but I would of liked some choice in the matter!

ELIZABETH

Oh, "choice," "choice," what does that word mean? What was my choice, eh, everytime the hospital decided to release you on two days notice, what was my choice, everytime you started to get sick again and started to smear your shit on the walls? What was Ava and Benny's choice?

CHRIS

That was a long time ago.

ELIZABETH

Not that long ago, Chris.

CHRIS

I don't do that anymore.

ELIZABETH

I know you don't, that's why I'm trying to help you, I am trying to help you get on with your life!

TARA

You don't have to yell at Chris, you know.

ELIZABETH

Tara, I'm just --

TARA

He's just saying that cause he's mad!

ELIZABETH

Fine then. Fine. Get your stuff. I'll take you back with me. C'mon let's go.

CHRIS

No.

ELIZABETH

Or your father, maybe you can stay with him and Drew for awhile, just till we sort this out.

CHRIS

I need someplace that Tara can be with me!

ELIZABETH

I'm sure we can find some place that Tara can --

CHRIS

No! You don't understand! Tara and I want to be together now!

(Pause.)

ELIZABETH

Oh. I see.

CHRIS

So that's why we gotta have someplace we can go to together.

(Pause.)

C'mon Tara. Let's get out of here for a bit.

(CHRIS and TARA start up the stairs.)

ELIZABETH

Chris --

CHRIS

It's okay, Mom. I never really thought it was gonna happen anyway.

(They go. Sound of thunder, nearer.)

ELIZABETH looks up.

Outside, PETER approaches hurriedly, carrying a cardboard tube, as CHRIS and TARA exit.)

PETER

Chris --

CHRIS

Not right now, Dad.

PETER

I just heard, I think we can --

CHRIS

Go to hell.

(CHRIS brushes by him. TARA follows.
PETER flings the cardboard tube
aside, rushes to catch up with them.
He grabs CHRIS from behind.)

PETER

DON'T YOU TELL ME TO GO TO HELL, I AM DOING THIS FOR YOU, WHO DO YOU
THINK I AM DOING THIS FOR?

(They struggle briefly, until
CHRIS gets hold of his father's arms
and pushes them away. They stand,
staring at each other, both stunned.
PETER looks to us.)

PETER

You see . . . they shouldn't call it going crazy. It's not someplace you go. You wake up one
morning . . . and there you are.

(He turns back to CHRIS. CHRIS and
TARA go. PETER stands there. He moves
to where the tube lies, picks it up,
considers it.

Fade.)

End of Act One

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