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Middletown

A Play in Two Acts

Will Eno

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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MIDDLETOWN was first produced by the Vineyard Theatre on October 13, 2010, with Artistic Director, Douglas Aibel. The performance was directed by Ken Rus Schmoll, with sets and costumes by David Zinn, lighting by Tyler Micoleau, and sound by Bill BC Du Boff. The cast was as follows:

MRS. SWANSON Heather Burns

FEMALE TOURIST/WOMAN ON DATE/

ATTENDANT 2 Cindy Cheung

AUNT/FEMALE DOCTOR/INTERCOM. Johanna Day

LIBRARIAN Georgia Engel

PUBLIC SPEAKER/GREG/MALE DOCTOR. David Garrison

MALE TOURIST/FREELANCER/RADIO HOST. Ed Jewett

TOUR GUIDE/ATTENDANT/MUSIC HOST Mckenna Kerrigan

MECHANIC James McMenamin

COP Michael Park

JOHN DODGE. Linus Roache

LANDSCAPER/GROUND CONTROL/

MAN ON DATE/JANITOR Pete Simpson

SWEETHEART Olivia Scott

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

PUBLIC SPEAKER – male, 40s-60s

COP – male, 30s-50s

MRS. SWANSON – female, late 30s

JOHN DODGE – male, late 30s-40s

MECHANIC – male, late 20s-30s

LIBRARIAN – female, 50s-60s

TOUR GUIDE – female, 20s-30s

MALE TOURIST – 30-40s

FEMALE TOURIST – 30-40s

GREG – 40s-60s

AUNT – female, 40s-50s

SWEETHEART – female, teens to early 20s

MAN – 20s-30s

FREELANCER – male, 30s-40s

WOMAN – 20s-30s

LANDSCAPER – male, 20s-30s

MALE DOCTOR – 40s-50s

FEMALE DOCTOR – 40s-50s

ATTENDANT – female, 20s-30s

ATTENDANT #2 – female, 20s-30s

JANITOR MALE – male, 30s-50s

Off-stage Voices

COP'S RADIO – female

GROUND CONTROL (POSSIBLY SEEN ON-STAGE) – male

INTERCOM – female

RADIO HOST, SCIENCE SHOW – male

RADIO HOST, CLASSICAL MUSIC SHOW – female

There is opportunity for double-casting of roles, but this should be done as unobtrusively as possible, and not for the purpose of commenting on the nature of any of the characters.

SETTING

ACT ONE

Window of Mrs. Swanson's house and Window of John Dodge's house
Library
Town Square
Outer Space
Mrs. Swanson's Kitchen
Seating for Intermission Audience

ACT TWO

Window of Mrs. Swanson's house and Window of John Dodge's House
Entrance and Lawn of Middletown Hospital
Doctor's office
John Dodge's hospital room
Loading Dock behind hospital
Mrs. Swanson's hospital room

A natural and unforced symmetry might exist between aspects of the sets in the first act and second act. Specifically, between the Swanson and Dodge houses, in the first, and the Swanson and Dodge hospital rooms, in the second; and, between the Town Square and the Hospital Lawn and Entrance.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The set and props should be such that the specified locations are immediately recognizable and there is some richness to the design, but also uncomplicated enough that transitions between scenes can be done quickly and easily.

A general note on the acting: the first and probably most important thing is that the characters should sound, as in most plays, like normal human beings, talking. There is some philosophy in the play and even perhaps some poetry, but the characters in the play are mainly speaking off the tops of their heads, perhaps sometimes thinking out loud, perhaps sometimes seeking to share or clarify a thought they've been having. A serious and simple and kind of matter-of-fact delivery is probably best. Of course there are moments of emotional difficulty, yearning, wonderment, etc., but in general, I think the play should move along at a pretty good clip, like life.

PROLOGUE

PUBLIC SPEAKER. Ladies and Gentlemen, Esteemed Colleagues, Members of the Board, Local Dignitaries, everyone really, stockbrokers, dockworkers, celebrities, nobodies, Ladies, Gentlemen, all comers, newcomers, the newly departed, the poorly depicted, people who are still teething, who are looking for a helping verb, the quote beautiful, the unquote unbeautiful, whose bones are just so, whose veins are just so, the drunk, the high, the blue, the down, *los pueblos, los animales*, foreigners, strangers, bookworms, those whose eyes are tired from trying to read something into everything, those at a crossroads, in a crisis, a quandary, a velvety chair, the dirty, the hungry, yes, we the cranky, the thirsty, the furious, the happy, who are filled with life, bloated with it, gorged on words, and of course the bereaved, the bereft, and let's not forget the local merchants, the smiling faces, the placeholders, us, all we people slowly graying, slowly leaving, who make all this all possible, this activity, this festivity, this hope, this dream dreamt with open eyes, with closed eyes, friends of the deceased, the diseased, friends of the disowned, and of course also healthy friendly people with great skin and congenital heart defects, sports fans, sufferers of autism, down-and-outers, non-believers, animal lovers everywhere, real people people, with doubts, without certainty, with nothing else worth mentioning, the majority of us, silent, stifled, delinquent, in the background, barely hanging on, running out of time, hope, air, heart, nerves, chances, money, blood, friends, courage, faith, hair, time, teeth, time, time, health, hope, all of it, all of it, those *sans* everything, those *avec* nothing, who

can't stand it any longer, who never really could, gentle gentle people, infinitely injured people, lost souls, ghouls, ghosts, descendants, shades, shadows, future ancestors, Ladies, Gentlemen, I know I'm forgetting somebody, friends, likenesses, darknesses, citizens, people, hopeful people, hopeful people, everybody, every last lone dying and inconsolably lonely person, fellow human beings, breathing people, breathers, breathers... welcome. The fire exit's over there. I think you can also get out this way.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(Average evening. Middletown. COP enters and strolls across the dimly-lit stage. He comes to the window of a house, upstage. Through it, illuminated, MRS. SWANSON is seen unpacking boxes, hanging a painting on the wall, etc. COP stands outside, looking in. He strolls a bit more, comes to another window of another house, upstage. Inside, JOHN DODGE, illuminated, is seen sitting at a table, building a pyramid of playing cards. COP stands outside, looking in. He strolls a little more, twirling his police baton. He arrives at MECHANIC, who is sitting on a bench, downstage, drinking out of a bottle in a paper bag. MECHANIC eats something and throws the wrapper on the ground, as COP nears. MECHANIC hurriedly hides the paper bag upon seeing COP approach.)

MECHANIC. Evening.

COP. Maybe. *(referring to the bottle:)* I saw that. You think I'm a cop. I look like a cop, I walk like a cop, so, you figure, case closed: I'm a cop.

MECHANIC. You're not a cop?

COP. No, I am a cop. You were right.

MECHANIC. Well, that's what I –

COP. *(interrupting)* That's what you thought. Everything is as everything seems, I guess. Good for everything. What about you?

MECHANIC. What do you mean?

COP. What about you?

MECHANIC. I don't know. I mean, who knows, you know?

COP. No. What are you doing here?

MECHANIC. I don't know, I was just walking around. Later tonight, I thought I might –

COP. *(interrupting)* Forget about before and after. I mean now.

MECHANIC. Well, I don't know, because I was –

COP. *(interrupting)* You don't know because you don't know. That's the trouble, the beauty, the trouble. So let's just leave it at that. *(motioning to the wrapper MECHANIC threw on the ground)* I think you dropped something.

(MECHANIC picks up the wrapper.)

The problem with people like –

MECHANIC. *(interrupting)* I was just sitting here, minding my –

COP. *(interrupting)* Don't interrupt.

(Long pause, as MECHANIC waits and does not interrupt.)

MECHANIC. Was there something else you were –

COP. *(interrupting)* I thought I said, don't interrupt. You know what, I should just goddamn... *(Long pause. To audience:)* Welcome. Hi, hello. Welcome to the little town of Middletown. Ordinary place, ordinary time. But aren't they all? No. They are not, all. *(to MECHANIC)* Say something nice.

MECHANIC. *(to both the audience and to COP, with some unease)* I'm just sitting here. I don't know what else. Um... *(He tries to think of something else.)*

COP. *(to audience)* Right. Anyway, Middletown. Population: stable; elevation: same. The main street is called Main Street. The side streets are named after trees. Things are fairly predictable. People come, people go. Crying, by the way, in both directions.

MECHANIC. Ain't that the truth.

COP. *(immediately)* Why don't you get out of here.

MECHANIC. (*defensively*) Why? I'm not doing anything.

COP. And that's a reason you should stay? Let's go, move.

MECHANIC. Where?

COP. A different bench, I don't know, another perspective. Just not here, okay? In fact, you know what – here, allow me. I want to help you make a little speech.

(*COP moves behind MECHANIC and begins to choke him with his baton, pulling it with both hands against MECHANIC's throat, from behind. MECHANIC struggles, unable to breathe, unable to get free.*)

Say, "This is my hometown." Say, "My life's a mystery to me." Say it! Be a good human. Be filled with humility. With wonder and awe. Awe!

(*MECHANIC tries to speak, but is unable to breathe. COP continues to choke him.*)

It's not easy, is it. Well, that's life. Listen, I'm sorry for what I'm still doing to you. Truly. But, don't worry. It'll be over in three, two, one...

(*COP continues choking MECHANIC for three or four more seconds, and then releases him. MECHANIC tries to breathe, tries to recover. He begins to exit.*)

(*to MECHANIC:*) Hey, no, I didn't mean you had to –

(*MECHANIC mutters something.*)

(*to MECHANIC:*) Wonderful, great. (*brief pause to audience:*) Excuse me. I'm not exactly sure what I was hoping to... I apologize. I was just trying to imitate nature. Anyway, welcome. Honestly. Middletown.

(*COP exits.*)

Scene Two

(Morning. The library. LIBRARIAN is at her desk, on the front of which is a sign that reads "INFORMATION."

MRS. SWANSON enters.)

MRS. SWANSON. Good morning. I was hoping to get a library card.

LIBRARIAN. Good for you, dear. I think a lot of people figure, "Why bother? I'm just going to die, anyway." Let me just find the form. *(She looks through some paperwork.)*

MRS. SWANSON. I wanted to learn more about the area. Do you have any books on Middletown?

LIBRARIAN. I should certainly hope so – let me take a look.

(She searches on her computer, believes for a moment that she's found something.)

And... *voila*. Oops – no, sorry, we don't. There's a wonderful book called Yesteryear in Today's City of Tomorrow. But it's out. It's due next Tuesday.

(MECHANIC enters.)

Hello.

(MECHANIC heads toward a magazine rack or a chair. His voice is somewhat hoarse:)

MECHANIC. Hi.

LIBRARIAN. *(searching on her computer)* Here's something from the Chamber of Commerce, just to give you a general sense. *(She reads from the screen:)* "Middletown was built on the ruins of other older Middletowns, and, before them, a town called Middenton, which was named for being between two other places, both unknown and now incidentally gone." *(stops reading)* That doesn't sound right. "Incidentally gone." Anyway *(She returns to reading:)*, "A thousand years ago, the area was home to the Chakmawg Indian and it was called Inpetway, which no one knows what it means, but it might have meant, 'You are far away' or, 'Far away from

me.’ The Chakmawg had a highly developed culture and they thrived in their time, until they disappeared, forever. New residents arrived and looked around.” *(stops reading)* That’s not much of a sentence. But I guess it still helps to give us a picture – people kind of lost and smiling. But, okay, let’s see, *(She re-finds her place in the text and continues reading:)* “...arrived and looked around. Today, Middletown is a beehive, a human beehive, of activity and business. Many come to raise families and watch, swollen with civic pride, as their baby draws its first breath of local air. Also, drawn by the excellent clouds and the mostly silent nights, many come here to quietly retire. Middletown. We’ve got you coming and going.”

MRS. SWANSON. That’s from the Chamber of Commerce?

LIBRARIAN. I know. There’s a lot it doesn’t mention. There’s the library, here. And of course, the people. Which is what most places are made out of, if you think about it.

MRS. SWANSON. I guess. I’ll wait for that other book. *(brief pause)* We just moved here.

MECHANIC. *(looking through a magazine, far from the LIBRARIAN’s desk)* I’m listening in on your conversation.

(LIBRARIAN and MRS. SWANSON briefly look over at MECHANIC.)

LIBRARIAN. Sorry. You were saying?

MRS. SWANSON. My husband and I just moved here.

LIBRARIAN. Well, welcome. Is it just you two?

MRS. SWANSON. It’s just us. He travels. But we’re here now. I am. We’re trying to start a family.

MECHANIC. “Come on, family – start! Start, you bastard!”

LIBRARIAN. *(to MECHANIC)* Shhhh. *(to MRS. SWANSON)* Well, welcome to you both. That’s wonderful. How long have you been trying?

MRS. SWANSON. Almost a year now.

LIBRARIAN. And I imagine it must be about the same for your husband. Well, good. Something you both can work on. Good for you. The world needs another person.

MECHANIC. (*again, from across the room*) Whatever you do, don't have an only child. They're the worst. Or so I've been told. Every time you hear a little noise, some little singing or humming, you look over, and there it is again, the same only-child. (*brief pause*) I'm just being me.

LIBRARIAN. Don't mind him, he's only.... (*to MECHANIC:*) You're just responding to things around you, aren't you, dear.

MECHANIC. Basically. (*very brief pause*) Hey, just did it again.

LIBRARIAN. (*to MRS. SWANSON:*) Is there something else I can help you with?

MRS. SWANSON. Do you have books on children? You must. On childbirth and children?

LIBRARIAN. We do. They're in the business section – I've never known why. I'll show you.

(**JOHN DODGE** enters.)

JOHN DODGE. Hi. Quick question. Books on gravity.

LIBRARIAN. Hi, John. (*to MRS. SWANSON:*) Let me just get him squared away. One second. (*Searching on her computer. To JOHN DODGE:*) Books about gravity. Let's see. We have two: The Silent Killer and another one called Laws of the World.

JOHN DODGE. The second one.

LIBRARIAN. That just came back. Let me go see if it's sitting on a roll-y cart somewhere. (*She exits.*)

MRS. SWANSON. Gravity. (*very brief pause*) Hello.

JOHN DODGE. Hi.

MRS. SWANSON. We just moved here.

JOHN DODGE. That's great. Who's we?

MECHANIC. They're trying to start a family.

MRS. SWANSON. Yes, we are, (*to MECHANIC:*), thank you. We is my husband and I.

(**MECHANIC** gets involved in reading a magazine article.)

(to **JOHN DODGE**.) You live here, obviously.

JOHN DODGE. That I do. Is it obvious? Ten years, now. Ten, fifteen years. In fact, I think we're talking fifteen, twenty years, now. Time, you know? "Whooooosh." "Clank."

MRS. SWANSON. I guess. And what do you do?

JOHN DODGE. More like, what *don't* I do.

MRS. SWANSON. Okay, what *don't* you do?

JOHN DODGE. (*brief pause*) You originally asked what *do* I do. So I'll answer that. I do paperwork, lawn work, plumbing, sometimes some house painting. I've worked graveyards, regular hours, happy hours. Sure, sometimes, I'll just stare out a window, let a year go by, two years. For instance, right now, I'm kind of between things. I'm between two crappy jobs, I'm sure – I just don't know what the second one is, yet. Give a call. I'm also trying to catch up on some reading. You might say I'm bent on self-improvement, although I'm sure there's a better phrase. (*brief pause*) What about you? Wait, let me guess.

(*A pause, perhaps five or ten seconds, in which JOHN DODGE stares at MRS. SWANSON and she waits for him to guess.*)

Yeah, I give up – no idea.

MRS. SWANSON. (*following the above line very quickly*.) I used to manage a restaurant. Before that I worked in a bank. Just jobs, you know. When we get settled, I might do something else.

JOHN DODGE. You sound like me.

MRS. SWANSON. No, I don't. I do?

JOHN DODGE. Sort of. Not really. I hate how I sound. You don't sound like me.

LIBRARIAN. (*enters, with book*) Here we are. Speaking of gravity, you might be surprised to know we have a real astronaut from here.

MRS. SWANSON. I am. Wow.

JOHN DODGE. I bought a tandem bicycle from him. He was really friendly when I brought it back.

LIBRARIAN. Oh, he's a complete gentleman. He has one of those haircuts. He said he wouldn't be able to see us, way up there, but that he'd think about us. Can you imagine? All that splendor, all that wonder and beauty, and all you can say is just, "Houston this," and "Houston that." To be so far away, with such a little vocabulary. *(She stamps the book for JOHN DODGE.)* And then there's John, here, with his handy-man work and now his reading. Such *lively* people, our townspeople. Always trying different things. Always pre-occupied. *(to MRS. SWANSON:)* And now you, too.

(hands JOHN DODGE the book)

There you go. Bye, John.

JOHN DODGE. Thanks. Bye. *(to MRS. SWANSON:)* Nice talking to you. Here's my card.

MRS. SWANSON. *(She looks at it.)* This says "Lucy Graves Associates: If you need help, we can help."

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, that's wrong, that's someone else's card.

MRS. SWANSON. Okay. *(pause)* Well, so, then, how would I get in touch with –

JOHN DODGE. *(interrupting)* Here, why don't I just write my name and number on that one. *(He does so.)* There we go. Problem created, problem solved. Bye. *(exits)*

MRS. SWANSON. Bye.

LIBRARIAN. *(to MRS. SWANSON:)* Now, you wanted books on children. What, specifically?

MRS. SWANSON. Health. Pre-natal health. And also maybe wallpapering. We want to get a room ready.

LIBRARIAN. It's so exciting. A room. Wallpaper. I love the patterns. Little flowers or fire engines – it's almost too much. Let me show you.

(They exit.)

(**MECHANIC** moves downstage and stands very still, looking through the audience.)

MECHANIC. I was nervous, earlier. I don't know why. Well, I do know – for part of it, I was being choked. And I'm nervous now, now that I think of it. But, I'm nothing special, post-natally speaking. I fix cars, I try to. I get hassled by the cops, try to maintain a certain – I don't know – sobriety. Sometimes, I volunteer at the hospital, dress up for the kids. It was part of a plea deal. But, what isn't. Nothing really crazy to report. Except, I found this rock once, everyone. What I thought was a meteorite. I brought the thing into the school, here. The kids ran it through all these tests, tapped on it, shined lights at it. I found it in a field. It looked special. Then the astronaut here told me it was just a rock. Said it was probably from, at some earlier time, another slightly larger rock. His name is Greg Something. I had ideas about getting famous, getting on local TV with my meteorite. When it turned out to just be a rock, I thought I could still make some headlines with it if I threw it off a bridge, hit some family in their car and killed everybody. But then I figured, you know what, forget it, that's not me. So now some family's driving around, not knowing how lucky they are, not knowing how sweet it all is. Just because. (*very brief pause*) Wait, hang on a second. Do you... (*Pause. He stays very still and listens intently.*) I thought I heard something. (*listens again for a moment*) I'm still not convinced I didn't. Weird. Anyway, that was just a little local story. Although, you know, it almost had outer space in it. (*brief pause*) I wish that lady luck, with the family. People don't stop to think of how lucky they are. I do. And, I've realized, I'm not that lucky. But I get by. If I had more self-esteem, more stick-to-itiveness, I might have been a murderer. I was a child once. Like everybody. Some worried mother's son or distant father's daughter, sneaking around with

a dirty face and an idea. My hand was this big. (*With thumb and forefinger, he indicates the size of an infant's hand.*) I was somebody's golden child, somebody's little hope. Now, I'm more just, you know, a local resident. Another earthling.

(**MECHANIC** exits as **LIBRARIAN** returns to her desk.)

MECHANIC. Bye.

LIBRARIAN. Were you looking for anything, in particular?

MECHANIC. No, I'm good.

LIBRARIAN. Okay.

(*She returns to working at her desk. Lights down.*)

Scene Three

(Same stage-set as in Scene One. JOHN DODGE's house and the SWANSON's house. COP enters, in the opposite direction of his earlier stroll, and comes downstage. We see MRS. SWANSON and JOHN DODGE in their windows, intermittently, getting up to get a glass of water or something simple like that. COP speaks into his two-way radio.)

COP. All units in the vicinity: see the man. See the man. See the woman. See the streets and houses, the shadows, the words that don't rhyme. All quiet here, over. No News is Good News, over. But there's no such thing as No News, over. Try to see my point. Just look at yourself, over. See the Universe. See a tiny person in the middle of it all, thrashing. See the bright side. Try to look at the bright side. *(Brief pause. To audience:)* Sometimes I'll talk like this, over the wire. Just to see if anyone's listening.

COP'S RADIO (FEMALE VOICE). *(Very brief pause. Very flatly.)* Someone's listening.

COP. Well, there you go. Now I know. *(into two-way radio:)* Hi, Susan. Sorry. All clear.

(He turns down radio, strolls. He comes to the window of JOHN DODGE's house. He stands outside, looking in. JOHN DODGE, illuminated, is inside, tossing a ball up and down, making notes. COP strolls to the window of the SWANSON house. MRS. SWANSON, illuminated, is inside reading. She stands, referring to her book and moving her hand over her belly.)

(COP turns to audience, moves downstage.)

COP. *(gently:)* I do like this time of day: night. All the people. All their bones and arteries and personal problems. Beautiful animal: the Person. Dark. *(pause)* I was too rough with that guy, earlier. I think I embarrassed him. Regrettable. I'm not myself. Sad stuff at home

and I haven't been sleeping, but, I guess we all have a story. Once upon a time, Once upon a time, and so on, The End. *(brief pause)* I try to uphold the law, keep some order around here, but, I have my moods. I just remember screaming "Awe" at the poor guy. Hard word to scream. It just sounds like a sound. And you can't bully people into feeling something, anyway. Oh, well. *(pause)* We once almost had a Glass Museum, here. It would have been called the Middletown Glass Museum. Fact.

(Brief pause. He looks back toward the windows.)

Behold. You know, just, look.

(In their separate windows, we see JOHN DODGE, illuminated, continuing their earlier actions.)

This is what life is like, here, right now. *(brief pause)* Looking in people's windows at night makes you feel lonely. Lonely, but, lonely along with the people in the windows. Along with the whole world, the whole lonely billions. It feels sort of holy, in some screwy way. Fact. *(brief pause)* Fact.

Scene Four

(Bright daylight. Town Square. TOUR GUIDE is holding a clipboard and some maps. She is standing before a simple block of granite, which measures 4' by 4' by 4', and features a small plaque bearing an inscription in unreadably small letters. She checks her watch. A tourist couple arrives. MALE TOURIST has a camera hanging around his neck.)

TOUR GUIDE. Morning. Are you here for the walking tour?

FEMALE TOURIST. We are. Hi.

TOUR GUIDE. Great. Hi. Have you done walking tours before?

MALE TOURIST. *(looking at the monument)* We went to Rome, last summer.

TOUR GUIDE. Oh. I bet you saw some serious monuments there.

MALE TOURIST. The whole place is history.

FEMALE TOURIST. We walked everywhere. We saw all the famous things. A lot of the ancient inscriptions are chipped off or just kind of worn away. And they're in Latin, so even if they were readable, you can't really read them.

MALE TOURIST. It's a dead language.

TOUR GUIDE. *(referring to the monument)* Well, this is in English, so people can enjoy it for years to come.

FEMALE TOURIST. What about when English dies?

TOUR GUIDE. Oh, I think English'll be around for a pretty long time.

FEMALE TOURIST. I doubt the Romans thought Latin was going anywhere, either.

MALE TOURIST. We went to Holland, two summers ago. Holland was a world power, a glorious empire, ruthless. *(brief pause)* We loved those "stroopwafels." They're, like, the local yummy snack. Ruthless empire; yummy snack. People change. Empires, too, is my point. So, ergo, I'm wary of monuments.

FEMALE TOURIST. He likes statues of horses, but, just the horse, no rider. Ergo... (*small shrug*) you know?

MALE TOURIST. I used to gamble – the ponies, trotters. I kept scribbly notebooks and had big dark circles under my eyes. Lost my job, my previous wife – not a long story. But, anyway, yeah, (*gesturing toward monument*) this makes me feel sort of sad and beautiful, sure, but not *that* sad and beautiful. (*brief pause*) Look at us. No, really look at me and her.

FEMALE TOURIST. Just because we don't look like pilgrims doesn't mean we're not pilgrims.

MALE TOURIST. I can see why you'd think we're just yahoos on vacation. But, we're serious people.

TOUR GUIDE. No, of course you are. (*pause*) I'm not sure what you – I mean, I don't know... I give this tour every day. I'm normally thinking about lunch or finding another job – I'm not really focused on the next ten thousand years. What can I say? We don't have any other statu –

MALE TOURIST. (*interrupting*) I'm not trying to be difficult.

FEMALE TOURIST. (*looking at monument*) I sort of like it. It reminds me of my dad.

(*They all look at it for a moment.*)

(*to MALE TOURIST:*) But I can see what you're saying. (*to*

TOUR GUIDE:) I guess we kind of like a strange angle on things. If we go to the opera or something, sometimes we specially request Obstructed View seats. It somehow adds to the whole experience.

MALE TOURIST. And they're cheaper.

FEMALE TOURIST. We love a bargain. You know that saying, "Politeness doesn't cost you anything"? Sometimes, that's what we'll do for the weekend. Just go around being polite.

MALE TOURIST. We've saved a fortune.

FEMALE TOURIST. But, so, yeah, I guess we just like some perspective.

MALE TOURIST. That's right. Perspective.

TOUR GUIDE. Sure, of course. (*pause*) I grew up here. (*referring to monument*) This thing was just always – I don't know – There. I'd see it in the rain and snow, serving its purpose. So that we remember, I guess. In general. So that we have memories.

FEMALE TOURIST. That's a thought.

TOUR GUIDE. I haven't traveled, ever. I'll walk around town, is about it. I'll notice a building or something. I'll look at people. I don't know. I grew up here. I thought this was the world.

MALE TOURIST. Of course you did. But, hey, let me get a quick picture of you being wrong.

(*He snaps a photo of* **TOUR GUIDE.**.)

FEMALE TOURIST. We always sort of want something more, I guess because there's a long history of death in both our families. I guess we like things that are potentially monumental, but that aren't necessarily monumentalized, yet.

TOUR GUIDE. Well, then, I don't know – (*looking around*) I guess then maybe that's everything else. Technically. (*referring to the monument*) Other than this.

FEMALE TOURIST. I guess.

TOUR GUIDE. I don't really know what you want.

MALE TOURIST. Just, something, you know. You're the one with the clipboard. (*He takes a photograph.*)

TOUR GUIDE. Well, okay. Take the air. I wrote on it in school. Take a deep breath. (*They do.*) A hundred years ago, someone was digging a hole here, for this very monument, and he rested on his shovel and sighed. You just inhaled a molecule of the air that shoveler exhaled, in that quiet sigh long ago.

FEMALE TOURIST. (*slightly surprised, as if she's sensed that particular molecule*) Oh yeah.

MALE TOURIST. (*He feels he's also sensed one of the ancient molecules.*) Sweet.

TOUR GUIDE. Yeah. I mean, think of how personal everything is, ultimately – these little sighs, going around in time and space. But then, think of a beautiful sunset on Earth, before human beings had ever evolved. It just beautifully sets. No one there to say, “Oooh” or “Ahhh,” or something breathy like that. It just sets, and then it’s night, nothing personal.

(MRS. SWANSON enters.)

Morning. *(to the group:)* Beneath us, okay, the dirt the sighing man was digging into? It’s layers of fossils and broken pottery and things they think had religious value. Maybe some sad little instrument, way down, a hollow bone with three holes in it. Down we go. Maybe a tooth or a piece of cloth. It’s people strewn all the way through. Some of the dust on my shoes is from outer space; most of the rest is dead human skin.

(JOHN DODGE enters, opposite side of the stage, carrying a plastic shopping bag. He stops and looks inside it, checks his pockets.)

And there’s a person, looking for something in a bag.

FEMALE TOURIST. It sort of completes the scene.

TOUR GUIDE. Sort of.

MALE TOURIST. *(taking a photograph of JOHN DODGE)* Look at him. Classic.

MRS. SWANSON. *(She leaves the group, saying “hi” to them as she goes.)* Excuse me. Hi.

TOUR GUIDE. *(to MRS. SWANSON, as she moves away:)* Hi. Bye. *(brief pause)* You know what – there’s a meadow we could walk to. Just nice grass and trees, nothing noticeably historical going on.

FEMALE TOURIST. We got married in a meadow.

TOUR GUIDE. Then this’ll bring back some memories.

MALE TOURIST. It really will. “Married in a meadow.”

TOUR GUIDE. Okay, then. Onward.

(They exit.)

Scene Five

(MRS. SWANSON, who has been standing off to the side, perhaps trying to remember John's name, perhaps checking her hair, etc., approaches JOHN DODGE.)

MRS. SWANSON. John? We met at the library. You gave me your –

JOHN DODGE. I remember. Sure. Hi. *(still looking around)* I think I bought something and left it at the store. That wasn't a very smart investment.

MRS. SWANSON. I've done that – it's so stupid. Hey, are you hungry? *(She sits down on a bench.)* I have some little sandwiches. I'm really hungry.

JOHN DODGE. That'd be great. *(still thinking about whatever he lost)* Damn it. *(brief pause)* I'm sorry – I would love a sandwich. *(He sits.)* Thanks.

MRS. SWANSON. Was that a tour going on?

JOHN DODGE. I'm sure it was something.

MRS. SWANSON. Here. *(She hands him a sandwich.)*

JOHN DODGE. Wow. They are little.

MRS. SWANSON. I have more.

JOHN DODGE. No, they're great, thanks. *(brief pause)* God, I had the worst night. Almost non-stop meaningful silence. Worst morning, too. Don't get married, that's my advice.

MRS. SWANSON. I'm already married.

JOHN DODGE. Oh, that's right, I forgot. Well, I hope you brought a good book.

MRS. SWANSON. I didn't know you're... Are you married?

JOHN DODGE. I was. All I remember is lying in bed, listening to the breathing. That's not true. We had some pretty good times. Probably my best. Yeah.

MRS. SWANSON. I'm sorry.

JOHN DODGE. It's sad. You sit around reading the side of a cereal box. Half the dishes are gone, half the cups, you eat everything out of a dented can, no more pretty

shoes by the door, and, that's your little half-life. (*brief pause*) Definitely don't get divorced. I know, I'm all over the place on that one. (*brief pause*) Sorry. Are you getting settled here?

MRS. SWANSON. I am. We are. More and more. This is all a big change.

JOHN DODGE. What?

MRS. SWANSON. Here. And the whole idea of children.

JOHN DODGE. It is. I have two nieces.

MRS. SWANSON. Oh, how great – girls.

JOHN DODGE. They are great. You know what – it's just one niece, I think. The other one is her friend. I'm a terrible uncle. But, I don't know, I still feel like a nephew. Time, you know. "Buzzzzzzz." "Plink."

MRS. SWANSON. You said that the day we met.

JOHN DODGE. Something like it, I'm sure. It's a theory of mine.

MRS. SWANSON. It's not really a theory. You're just making different sounds with your mouth.

JOHN DODGE. So are you.

MRS. SWANSON. True. "True." (*brief pause*) How's gravity?

JOHN DODGE. It's all right, I guess. (*brief pause*) What?

MRS. SWANSON. You were reading a book about gravity.

JOHN DODGE. Oh, right. That's over. I just kind of lost the... you know. I mean, do I really need to know about that? Anyway, now, I'm taking this course on watercolor painting.

MRS. SWANSON. You're quite a Renaissance man.

JOHN DODGE. It's not really a course. It's just the directions that came with the paints.

MRS. SWANSON. Well, still, it sounds great.

JOHN DODGE. It's not. It's just some other thing.

MRS. SWANSON. I would think you'd make a really good uncle.

JOHN DODGE. I would too, but, yeah, no. I panic. Who wants a panicky uncle? I get anxious, you know?

MRS. SWANSON. I feel that way sometimes.

JOHN DODGE. Me too.

MRS. SWANSON. (*brief pause*) So, Bob is finishing up some things with work and our old house. He just started up in a new position. He should be here soon. I still don't really know the place. It can get lonely, can't it.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah. You get the mail, it's a clothes catalog. Maybe you leaf through it, maybe think, "Hey, I could buy those pants." Then you think, "But then it'd just be me, again, in a different pair of pants." Then you go out and walk around, and that's your day, time for bed.

MRS. SWANSON. That's kind of gloomy. I like looking at catalogs. Things aren't so bad. I visit Bob here and there, if he's at a convention or something nearby. He's in sales.

JOHN DODGE. I always wanted to be in something.

MRS. SWANSON. Yeah? Well, I'm sure you'll, you know....

JOHN DODGE. Yeah? That's nice. Thanks.

MRS. SWANSON. (*brief pause*) I've been having trouble sleeping.

JOHN DODGE. Oh, God – nighttime. Daytime, too. I'm like, "Enough – I get it." (*brief pause*) I read articles about identity theft and I actually get a little jealous, you know? "Just take it," you know. "Good luck, fella." Sometimes, I think I should just go quietly retire, you know, alone in the bathroom, with an X-acto knife. But then I start up some dumb project or get a book about some idiot thing.

MRS. SWANSON. (*with real sympathy*) John.

JOHN DODGE. You have a nice voice, um... I'm sorry...

MRS. SWANSON. Mary.

JOHN DODGE. Mary, of course. I like it.

MRS. SWANSON. We all have our dark nights. We're probably never as alone as we think.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, no. We hope. (*brief pause*) I heard what you said. It probably seemed like I didn't, but I did. I'm really sorry you can't sleep.

MRS. SWANSON. Me too. No, thank you. (*moved, by even this very small kindness*) I know you're just making different sounds with your mouth again, but, thanks.

JOHN DODGE. I haven't asked you a lot about yourself.

MRS. SWANSON. Is that... are you asking now?

JOHN DODGE. I don't know – I just suddenly tried to picture you not sleeping. Sometimes you get used to the words for things, and then you suddenly remember the things. And so I suddenly saw you, the real Mary, not a word, staring out a window, or crying or reading, whatever you do.

MRS. SWANSON. I do read, sometimes. Or, yeah, sometimes, cry. That's nice of you to – it's nice you would picture me. In tears, or reading. (*brief pause*) Night is hard, you know? It gets so quiet. I never know what I'm supposed to be listening to. (*brief pause*) But it does give me time to catch up on my needless worry.

JOHN DODGE. (*small laugh*) I do that – what you just did.

MRS. SWANSON. What?

JOHN DODGE. Use humor to try to distance myself from the pain.

MRS. SWANSON. I was using humor to try to be funny.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, that's something different. (*brief pause*) If you ever need any help, I'm pretty good with the needless worry.

MRS. SWANSON. The other night, I couldn't stop thinking, "What if my taste buds stop working?"

JOHN DODGE. Massive heart failure in a public place.

MRS. SWANSON. You can do better than that. Plus, that's really more of a guy thing.

JOHN DODGE. Cancer, in the privacy of your own home.

MRS. SWANSON. The old standby. And, yes, good – something for the ladies.

JOHN DODGE. *(without having laughed)* It's good to laugh. *(brief pause)* I like that thing you said – “dark nights.”

MRS. SWANSON. I guess all nights are dark, but you know what I mean. *(brief pause)* Oh, I almost forgot. I'm hoping you can come have a look at something.

JOHN DODGE. I'd love to. What?

MRS. SWANSON. A plumbing thing. I think it's just a clogged drain.

JOHN DODGE. I was thinking maybe it was a painting or a sunset or something.

MRS. SWANSON. No. *(small smile)* Sorry.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, I'll take a look. I could use the work. Not that I'd charge you. *(He gets up.)* Speaking of not making any money, I should get going. Hey, what's today?

MRS. SWANSON. Tuesday. *(or whatever the actual day is)*

JOHN DODGE. Oh, shit. I thought it was Monday. *(or whatever the actual day before would be)*

MRS. SWANSON. Sorry, again.

JOHN DODGE. I probably would have found out eventually.

MRS. SWANSON. I'll give you a call. Bye, John.

JOHN DODGE. Bye, Mary. It was really nice talking.

MRS. SWANSON. It was. Thank you. We should – yes. Definitely. Bye, see you later.

JOHN DODGE. Bye.

(He exits.)

(She begins to exit, then sits back down, lights fade.)

Scene Six

(Lights suggest evening. LIBRARIAN, with her purse and some books, enters.)

LIBRARIAN. *(to audience:)* That book came back today. I was just reading. Here: *(She reads, periodically clarifying terms for the audience.)* “Life had gone on. Several moons had passed.” *(clarifying)* Several months. *(She reads.)* “The medicine man” – a medicine man is a doctor – “The medicine man shook his feathers. The villagers stood, shivering. A star shone over Inpetway.” That’s here. It was. *(She reads.)* “The medicine man spoke in difficult ways of difficult things, in the worried vocabulary of medicine and night. The villagers listened quietly, and quietly misunderstood. The sick man listened, and quietly got worse.” For “sick man,” just think of anybody, an average person. A child has written in the margin here: “anxiety, sickness, death, spiritual.” *(She quickly shows us.)* She writes in these wonderful loopy letters in a bright red pen. At least, I think it’s a girl. *(She reads.)* “The medicine man continued – differently, now. His calm eyes sparkled slowly, as he turned to the blushing woman there.” The “blushing woman” is probably a bride or a woman falling in love. *(She reads.)* “He spoke now in simple ways of simple things. He asked the moon to be beautiful. He asked the sun to come to warm the unborn child and the born mother. He asked the people to be human and the animals to stay animals. He asked the Universe to expand. He said, deeply, to all of them, “Great things. Oh, Great things. Someone is born, someone will die, both are you. Unwind, unknow.” The same little girl has written a question mark, here. *(brief pause)* I read once the question mark comes from a musical notation used in Gregorian Chants, to signal that the phrase should have an upward intonation, that it should rise upward, to heaven. Imagine this little red one here – no sentence, no question, just a little red question

mark, by itself – rising up to heaven, to God. Imagine the look on His face. (*leafing forward a few pages*) Later, she's written the word "atmosphere." And here's a barrette she used for a book mark. Ah, literature. (*Brief pause. Looking up:*) It's a beautiful night. Whether or not there's anything up there.

Scene Seven

(GREG is in a space capsule, floating. The following lines are amplified, with some static and perhaps some delay, as though a radio transmission. Both GREG and GROUND CONTROL are mainly pre-occupied with computer figures and flight adjustments and are not really interested in poetry or philosophy, though these things seem to arise, driven by the circumstance of being in space and seeing Earth. GROUND CONTROL may be seated on stage, perhaps facing away from the audience.)

GROUND CONTROL. Cormorant Nine. *(pause)* Cormorant Nine. This is Ground Control, Houston. Do you read? Do you copy?

GREG. This is C-9. Copy. Sounds like you're in my living room. Over.

GROUND CONTROL. The things we can do. Go ahead, C-9. How's life?

GREG. What a view, is one thing. I've heard about it. But, what a wonderful... I never knew how round round was, Houston. God. All this space, it's just pure majesty, it's endless, majestic. But it's cold, it's almost just raw data, raw mathematics. Then you see little planet Earth and – my God, she's just so welcoming and good. Seems like a symphony should be playing. It, wow, it's just this beautiful fragile thing, something a happy child would draw. It's so blue. Houston.

GROUND CONTROL. *(Indistinct sentence. Something like, "Fivv – . Gull sensor. Ooh min. Ivv.")*

GREG. Repeat, please.

GROUND CONTROL. Fifty-one degrees. Angle sensor arm, two minutes forty-five.

GREG. Copy. Arm is in position. *(A short indistinct sentence.)*

GROUND CONTROL. What's that? Didn't catch that.

GREG. *(pause)* Sorry?

GROUND CONTROL. Go ahead, Greg.

GREG. Oh. I'm just trying to picture life, back home. There's a guy there I remember, thought he found a meteorite, once. It was normal sedimentary rock, just made from dead animals and plants crushed together. He was disappointed. Shouldn't have been. I was never crazy about him, I think he bashed my mailbox in, but, he shouldn't have been sad. That rock, that guy who found it, the field he found it in, all these things are miraculous because all these things are earthly. The words he used to refer to it, the breath it took to make the words, all of it. Just sacredly and profoundly and mysteriously – well, yeah – earthly.

GROUND CONTROL. Are you getting mystical on us, Greg?

GREG. I'm just looking and talking, Houston. I didn't prepare anything.

GROUND CONTROL. Just giving you a hard time, partner.

GREG. Okay.

GROUND CONTROL. Looking good. Go ahead.

GREG. I'm done. But I just have to say, it doesn't look lonely from up here. Everything looks right-next-door. It's where you're sitting, right now. How 'bout that. You're breathing the Earth's atmosphere. You got mountains and clouds, oceans. People out doing things together. Soccer games and birthday parties, listening to beautiful music. Inexpressible, you know. How'd we get so lucky? *(brief pause)* I probably sound like a real cliché. Me, with my chiseled features and the flight suit, waxing all poetic. Waxing all fragile and religious.

GROUND CONTROL. All right, Greg. *(brief pause)* Synchronize, one seven six.

GREG. Synchronize.

GROUND CONTROL. Copy. *(Pause. An eerie sound.)* Say again, Cormorant Niner?

GREG. I didn't say anything. Go ahead, Houston.

GROUND CONTROL. Roger. No matter. Looking good. We do recommend P65 alignment, plus point two two.

GREG. Thank you – P65, plus point two two. (*brief pause*) I'm looking out at the world. I'm thinking about people. I can't tell you what this is like. Over.

GROUND CONTROL. Copy.

GREG. Maybe everybody knows what this is like.

GROUND CONTROL. Maybe they do. Wunderbar, Greg. Looking good. We have no abnormalities. Over.

GREG. Roger. Oxygen is good.

GROUND CONTROL. It sure is. All right, partner. Come home soon.

(*Static. Static fades.*)

Scene Eight

(The SWANSON's kitchen. JOHN DODGE is working on the kitchen-sink drain. He is lying on the floor, periodically ducking in and out of the cabinet, and therefore periodically inaudible. At the top of the scene, JOHN DODGE is on his back, his head and upper torso hidden in the cabinet. MRS. SWANSON is at the kitchen counter.)

MRS. SWANSON. Seriously, John, thanks for helping out. Bob and I are grateful.

JOHN DODGE. *(appears from under the sink to grab a wrench)*
No, it's no trouble. When does he get here?

MRS. SWANSON. Any day, I hope. It's crazy. We used to just be regular people. We said "good night" and "good morning," every day. All of a sudden we're so modern. It's funny. *(brief pause)* Have you always done this kind of work?

JOHN DODGE. God, yeah. In fact, I've been thinking about that philosophy thing about how you can't step in the same river twice. It turns out you can. Sometimes, I feel like I should just... I don't know. I try, you know, but some days it all just seems like the...

(Disappears under the sink. Indecipherable end to the sentence.)

MRS. SWANSON. *(enthusiastically agreeing:)* I know. I know what you mean. Everything suddenly looks like it's spelled wrong, or something. Like, even your own name looks like a typo.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, exactly. I'm always getting, I don't know, I told you this, I get these awful panic attacks. They're actually how I stay in shape. It's a mess. Enough about me, and how I sometimes get claustrophobia and can't swim.

(Indistinct short question: a muffled and indecipherable version of "So how does it feel being pregnant?")

MRS. SWANSON. What?

JOHN DODGE. (*Repeated, mainly as before.*)

MRS. SWANSON. Oh. It's so new. I don't think I could even describe it. I'm really excited. But it's almost like it's just words, at this point.

JOHN DODGE. (*Indistinct medium-length sentence. A muffled and indecipherable version of "It's probably just words at every point."*)

MRS. SWANSON. You're probably right – it's just words at every point. It scares me, though. Having a baby. The words seem so tiny and quiet, compared to the truth of it. Compared with if you really try to picture it. Not to mention, just, the whole thing. I mean, do I look like the kind of person?

JOHN DODGE. (*Indistinct sentence, muffled and indecipherable version of "I think you're quite intoxicating."*)

MRS. SWANSON. Well, thank you, John. I don't think I've ever been called "intoxicating" before. That's very flattering.

JOHN DODGE. (*appears*) I hope you don't think of me as just some kind of a... I don't know. Because I have so much going on inside me. A lot of different... (*brief pause*) You know, people laughed when I said I wanted to get a law degree.

MRS. SWANSON. You have a law degree?

JOHN DODGE. Me? Oh God no. People really laughed, though. (*brief pause*) I've wanted a lot, out of life. First, air and milk, and then it just kept going.

MRS. SWANSON. Well, you've gotten a lot, too, haven't you? In life?

JOHN DODGE. I had shingles, once. I'm kidding. Well, no, I'm not, actually – I did have that. Good argument for death, by the way – shingles. Nice reminder your skin's an enemy.

MRS. SWANSON. Your skin's probably your best friend.

JOHN DODGE. For a while, sure. (*very brief pause*) I have a kind of serious mind/body problem. But, I know what you're saying. I try to be grateful for what I have.

MRS. SWANSON. I wish I had more gratitude. When you think of all the miracles it takes just to sit in a chair. A billion things going right, just to sit here. And do nothing. And watch you work. Miracles.

JOHN DODGE. You get used to them, though. That's the sad thing. You look around: miracle, miracle, miracle. It's tiring. It's sad. Or scary. (*indistinct short sentence*)

MRS. SWANSON. That's kind of extreme, isn't it? But, I guess, to be completely honest, it's always an option.

JOHN DODGE. (*Indistinct short sentence. A muffled and indecipherable version of: "Except for the fact that I'm afraid of dying."*)

MRS. SWANSON. (*laughing*) You can say that again. Oh, Johnny Boy, you can say that again.

(**JOHN DODGE**, *appearing from under the sink*)

JOHN DODGE. That I'm afraid of dying?

MRS. SWANSON. I thought you said something different.

JOHN DODGE. No.

(*He removes a handful of sludge from the drain, puts it onto a piece of newspaper.*)

There.

MRS. SWANSON. Yuck. Is that the problem?

JOHN DODGE. Yeah.

MRS. SWANSON. What is it?

JOHN DODGE. Just years of stuff. Sort of a metaphor for – yeah, no, just years of stuff, gunk.

(*He stands up, and is slightly disoriented.*)

Whoa. I stood up too quick. My whole life, I don't think I ever stood up at the right speed. All life long, John Dodge in the wrong. "All life long," wow, that's hard to say.

MRS. SWANSON. No it isn't.

JOHN DODGE. (*effortlessly*) “All life long.” No, you’re right – it isn’t. I think I better sit down for a few seconds. (*He sits down.*) One one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand. Okay. (*He stands up, same disorientation.*) Wow. Did it again.

(MRS. SWANSON *takes his hand.*)

MRS. SWANSON. Maybe you’re just a dizzy person. They say some people have trouble with the Earth’s, you know, with the rotation.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, maybe that’s – yeah.

MRS. SWANSON. (*brief pause*) John.

JOHN DODGE. Again, she says, in her nice voice, “John.”

MRS. SWANSON. (*small slightly nervous laugh*) Well, what am I supposed to say? (*brief pause*) Are you all right?

(*She lets his hand go. Very brief pause.*)

We haven’t known each other very long, but, do I seem different?

JOHN DODGE. How?

MRS. SWANSON. I don’t know. Somehow. Inside.

JOHN DODGE. Yeah, I don’t know. Kind of. Yeah, you do.

MRS. SWANSON. (*small smile*) Good.

JOHN DODGE. Change.

MRS. SWANSON. I know.

JOHN DODGE. You smiled when you said “Good.” That says a lot about you. You look really well. I bet you’ll be a radiant mother. (*pause*) I don’t have anything, Mary. Sorry, big change of topic, but – I don’t. Look at me. I have a bunch of hobbies I quit and some overdue books I never read. I don’t have anything.

MRS. SWANSON. Yes, you do. Come on. Yes, you do.

JOHN DODGE. Mary, I don’t.

MRS. SWANSON. Maybe you’re not looking hard enough.

JOHN DODGE. (*Pause. Short indistinct sentence, somewhat clearly vocalized.*) Mome gavnerma thurn.

MRS. SWANSON. What?

JOHN DODGE. Just joking, because of the – *(He points to the cabinet.)* Remember when you couldn't hear me?

MRS. SWANSON. Oh, right. *(She covers her mouth and says an indistinct line, about five syllables long, perhaps something like "Gabralldee yo fon gerg fonderall.")*

JOHN DODGE. Hmm. I never thought of it that way.

(They share a little laugh. Brief pause.)

Mary, I'm looking as hard as I can.

(Lights down.)

Scene Nine

(COP enters darkened stage with powerful flashlight. Perhaps he comes into the audience. Behind him, intermission audience enters unnoticeably and is seated, facing actual audience.)

(He shines the light into the face of an actual audience member. Moves the light to another audience member, and then another.)

COP. Don't worry. People always look so worried. *(shines light around the stage)* We got a report of some problem, down here. Some trouble. A scream, maybe a loud sigh, a couple of sighs, something. I'm sure it's fine. Just normal people being human in the night. Inner life meeting outer life. Bang. Kapow. But, yeah. Nothing to worry about.

(He shines the light back over the stage.)

Sleep tight, pretty Middletown. All is well.

(Flashlight goes out. COP bangs it on his leg a couple of times. It comes back on.)

There we go. Okay. Pray the Lord your soul to keep. Something like that. Whatever makes you feel calm. *(very brief pause)* Just be all right.

(He exits.)

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