



The Purple Rose Theatre Company

Guest Artist

A black and white photograph of a vintage suitcase, likely a travel bag or trunk. The suitcase is shown from a low angle, highlighting its handle and latches. The surface of the suitcase is textured and shows signs of wear, including a large, irregular tear or hole on the side. A circular emblem or logo is visible on the side panel. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

by Jeff Daniels



The Purple Rose Theatre Company

is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit professional theatre registered with the federal government and the state of Michigan. Founded in 1991, the PRTC operates under a SPT Tier 7 agreement with Actor's Equity Association.

The Purple Rose Theatre Company
137 Park Street
Chelsea, Michigan 48118
www.purplerosetheatre.org

Guest Artist

by
Jeff Daniels

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Originally produced by The Purple Rose Theatre Company (2006)

Jeff Daniels, Executive Director

Guy Sanville, Artistic Director

Alan Ribant, Managing Director

The production was directed by Guy Sanville.

Guest Artist premiered at The Purple Rose Theatre Company in Chelsea, Michigan on January 27, 2006. The play was directed by Guy Sanville; the set design was by Bartley H. Bauer; the costume design was by Christianne Myers; the lighting design was by Dana White; the sound design was by Quintessa Gallinat; the properties design was by Danna Segrest; and the stage manager was Katie M. Doral. The cast was as follows:

TICKET MAN Randall Godwin
KENNETH WATERS Patrick Michael Kenney
JOSEPH HARRIS Grant R. Krause

CHARACTERS

KENNETH WATERS early 20s, an apprentice at a professional theatre company

JOSEPH HARRIS 50s, a world renowned, critically acclaimed playwright

TICKET MAN 40s, a local bus employee

PLACE

The bus station in Steubenville, Ohio

TIME

A recent early autumn at about 3:00 AM

Guest Artist

ACT ONE

The old bus train station in Steubenville, Ohio. Some benches. Two vending machines; one for coffee, the other for snacks. A ticket office with a caged window. A small speaker with exposed wires is directly over head. Two rest room doors. A glass door leads outside. Outside the door, perhaps a couple of metal newspaper machines or a city trash can. A working clock on the wall reads 2:47.

Spread across a bench is the splayed out body of KENNETH WATERS, his knapsack in the seat next to him. Sleeping nearby is an OLDER MAN, sleeping, his head underneath a coat. His hand rests on an old suitcase. Behind the barred window, a TICKET MAN smokes, routinely managing paperwork. A sign reads, "Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited is a Smoke-Free Facility."

The sound of an approaching bus. Pulling up to the curb. Air brakes. The idling of a diesel engine. The TICKET MAN reaches for microphone. Clicks it on.

TICKET MAN (*through speaker ...*) Now arriving, 1156 out of Wheeling, Barnesville, Cambridge, Zanesville, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Nashville.

KENNETH wakes up.

TICKET MAN 1156, out of Wheeling—

KENNETH checks the clock on the wall. Realizes.

Rushes to the ticket window.

TICKET MAN —Barnesville, Cambridge, Zanesville,
Columbus—

KENNETH Excuse me.

TICKET MAN —Cincinnati and Nashville, now arriving.

KENNETH Sorry. What happened to 4465?

TICKET MAN Welcome to the exciting world of bus travel.
How may I help you?

KENNETH The 4465? Out of New York City?

TICKET MAN The 1156 out of Wheeling, Barnesville,
Cambridge ...

KENNETH No, no. I know. What about the 4465 out of
New York?

TICKET MAN There is no 4465 out of New York.

KENNETH There has to be! Wait a minute, I have a
schedule!

TICKET MAN There's the 4465 out of Weirton, Pittsburgh,
Monroeville—

KENNETH That's it! That's the ... right, right.

TICKET MAN —Breezewood, Harrisburg, King Of Prussia,
Philadelphia, Mt. Laurel, Newark and New York City.

KENNETH Was it on time?

TICKET MAN One thirty.

KENNETH Dammit!

TICKET MAN Watch your language.

KENNETH I'm sorry.

TICKET MAN Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited is a
profanity free facility, god dammit.

KENNETH Did anyone get off? Older? Kind of
distinguished looking? Wait! I have a picture!

*KENNETH pulls out a worn paperback from his back
pocket. A photo of a man is on the back cover.*

KENNETH Here!

*KENNETH displays the paperback through the cage.
The TICKET MAN glances at the picture and points
past him. KENNETH turns to look at the OLDER
MAN, asleep in the chair.*

KENNETH Oh, god. How long has he been there?

TICKET MAN One thirty.

KENNETH Why didn't you wake me up?! (*off TICKET MAN's look*) I'm sorry. It's just, I'm in a lot of trouble, okay? Oh, god. Do you know who that is?

TICKET MAN I don't know nobody.

KENNETH That's Joseph Harris. (*off TICKET MAN's look*) You've heard of Joseph Harris, right?

TICKET MAN I ain't heard of nobody.

KENNETH Well, that's him. And he's a genius. Have you ever met a genius before?

TICKET MAN Just my wife.

KENNETH That man wrote the greatest play in the history of the American Theatre. Better than anything by O'Neill, better than Arthur Miller, better than Tennessee Williams and don't even bother bringing up any of the present day playwrights because not one of them could tie that man's shoes. Y'know how they say all the great playwrights are dead? Not true. One of the best that ever was is right there. Right in front of me. Right before my very eyes.

TICKET MAN You should have picked him up at one thirty.

KENNETH approaches HARRIS, still sleeping underneath his coat.

KENNETH (*reciting, to himself*) Sir, if I may, it is because of you that I have decided to commit my life to the theatre. Through your art, you have opened up the creativity that lies within my very soul, crying out to be expressed, desperate to change a world in desperate need of ...

HARRIS coughs. Stirs. KENNETH lifts the coat.

KENNETH Good morning, sir.

HARRIS opens his eyes.

KENNETH My name is Kenneth Waters. I'm with the Dean Martin Repertory Company. I'm here to take you

to your hotel. It's a very nice hotel. It's downtown. Within walking distance of the theatre.

MR. HARRIS Dean Martin is within walking distance?

KENNETH That's funny. No, sir. Steubenville is the birthplace of Dean Martin. We're very proud of that around here. Don't ask me why.

MR. HARRIS Stupid what?

KENNETH No, Steubenville.

MR. HARRIS Why am I in Stupidville, Dean?

KENNETH Kenneth.

MR. HARRIS Who's Kenneth?

KENNETH I am. You obviously need to get some rest.

MR. HARRIS This feels like one of those places you go only if you have to. Does it feel that way to you, Dean?

KENNETH Kenneth. No, I grew up here. Lived here all my life.

MR. HARRIS Escape.

KENNETH As soon as we get you to your hotel, I'll make a run for it, I promise. How 'bout some coffee before we hit the road?

MR. HARRIS Where's the person who was supposed to pick me up an hour ago?

KENNETH He was here. I just said "he." What I meant to say was "me."

MR. HARRIS "Me" was here?

KENNETH No, I was.

MR. HARRIS Who was? You were?

KENNETH Yes. Well, actually, technically ...

MR. HARRIS Actually, technically, you weren't because when I got off the bus I stood on the curb with my heavy suitcase, waiting for someone to pick me up or at the very least pick up my suitcase and after standing for what seemed like a very long time no one actually technically came, at which point I actually technically made my way in here, dragging my now very heavy suitcase, and sat down, collapsing in this very spot and still, to my amazement no one from the Jerry Lewis Repertory—

KENNETH The Dean Martin Repertory ...

MR. HARRIS —Company came forward to gather me or my suitcase at which point I fell asleep in this sad excuse for a seating device, thoroughly wrenching my back. I feel major surgery coming on.

KENNETH Here. Let me get that for you.

KENNETH reaches for HARRIS' suitcase. With surprising swiftness, HARRIS slaps KENNETH's hand.

MR. HARRIS No!

KENNETH I'm sorry. I was just ...

MR. HARRIS Don't apologize!

KENNETH backs away. An awkward silence. Finally:

MR. HARRIS Do you know any good jokes?

KENNETH Jokes?

MR. HARRIS I need a good laugh.

KENNETH You're not serious.

MR. HARRIS I'm a playwright. I'm eternally serious. I'm also important, which is even worse.

KENNETH No, I don't. Besides, even if I did, I'm afraid I'm not very good at telling them.

MR. HARRIS That's hardly something to fear. Go ask the masses.

KENNETH The who?

MR. HARRIS The ones who no longer go to the theatre because they're too busy watching *American Idol*. O'Neill was so lucky to have written when he did. (*re: TICKET MAN*) Look at him in there. Trapped in a cage. Of your own making, I might add! (*to KENNETH*) Ignore the symbolism. Go.

KENNETH (*to TICKET MAN*) We were just leaving!

MR. HARRIS Not until I hear a joke. I'm a very good laughter. All my Producer friends comp me into their Opening Nights and seat me right behind the critics. It never helps, but as long as there's food, what do I care?

KENNETH You know who knows a lot of good jokes?
 Simon.

MR. HARRIS Neil? Well, I should—

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS —say so. He’s written the same play for
fifty years.

KENNETH Simon Johns.

MR. HARRIS Who?

KENNETH Simon Johns. Our Artistic Director.

MR. HARRIS Oh, yes, of course. He and I spoke over the
phone. I don’t know if you’re aware, but the man was
born without a sense of humor which I didn’t think was
genetically possible until he spent an hour and a half
telling me about himself.

KENNETH He can be very funny.

MR. HARRIS He’s a bore. Why did the chicken cross the
road?

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS No. Why. I say, “Why did the chicken cross
the road?” And you say, “Why?” not “What?”

KENNETH To get to the other side.

MR. HARRIS That’s the punch line.

KENNETH I know.

MR. HARRIS I thought you said you didn’t know any
jokes?

KENNETH Everybody knows that one.

MR. HARRIS Ah, you prove my point! Granted, you cut
directly to the punch line, but then, that’s what’s wrong
with your generation, isn’t it? It’s all about the now. The
being there, not the getting there. You have no use for
the journey.

KENNETH Okay, fine. I know one joke.

MR. HARRIS See? I knew you were holding out on me.

KENNETH It’s a theatre joke.

MR. HARRIS Stop.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS Are you implying the theatre is a joke?

KENNETH No! Of course not!

MR. HARRIS Well, it is. Trust me, I've spent my life in it.

KENNETH I don't believe that for a second.

MR. HARRIS Well, the sooner you believe it, the easier it'll be to read your own reviews. Is it funny? This joke about the theatre? Because if it isn't, I'm going to personally see to it that you never work in this business again. (*off KENNETH's look*) That was a joke.

KENNETH Oh.

MR. HARRIS Just tell me your ...

KENNETH Right. Okay. There was this actor. An old character actor. He was playing the doctor in *The Miracle Worker*. You know the famous play? About Helen Keller?

MR. HARRIS Define famous.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS What is fame?

KENNETH It's well known. Something well known.

MR. HARRIS Ah, thank you. I did not know that.

KENNETH Anyway, this actor was also a drunk and his career had not been going well. And in the first scene of the play he's to come on stage and inform Mr. and Mrs. Keller that their daughter is, y'know, the way she is. So before the curtain goes up, this actor sits in front of his dressing room mirror, drinking. Staring at himself. The curtain goes up and he walks on stage and he says, "Mr. and Mrs. Keller, I'm sorry to tell you, but your daughter is dead." And he turns and walks off stage, out of the theatre and never sets foot on the stage again.

MR. HARRIS ... Why?

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS No. Why?

KENNETH That's the joke.

MR. HARRIS An actor who no longer can stomach the arbitrary cruelty of his profession, who finds playing the same role, over and over, to a vapid, disinterested public beyond meaninglessness ...

KENNETH No, that's not ...

MR. HARRIS And what if I told you that actor's name

was Kensington Malloy? And that the theatre was the Palladium Playhouse in Kansas City, Missouri? And that I not only happened to see that production of *The Miracle Worker* but that I was there, in the audience, the very night Mr. Malloy walked onto that stage and ended both the play and his career?

KENNETH I'm sorry.

MR. HARRIS Don't apologize! An artist never apologizes!

KENNETH I'm sorry.

MR. HARRIS Not sorry!

KENNETH I'm not sorry! I'm not ...

MR. HARRIS And for the record, that was not a joke, but an anecdote. And hardly comedic. Tragic, to be sure, in the classical sense. You're aware of the Greeks?

KENNETH Yes. Of course.

MR. HARRIS Name three.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS Name three Greek playwrights whose influence on the world of drama is still felt today.

KENNETH Euripides, Sophocles, and Aristophanes.

MR. HARRIS Very good. Who said, "Anything awful makes me laugh"?

KENNETH Aristophanes?

MR. HARRIS Charles Lamb. Do you know Charles Lamb?

KENNETH Was he Greek?

MR. HARRIS An obscure English author who once misbehaved at a funeral. Laughing during the eulogy or something. He wrote a letter to the appropriately appalled widow and, in the form of an apology, he stated with great importance, "Anything awful makes me laugh." He died. I don't know if you heard.

KENNETH No, I didn't.

MR. HARRIS In 1834. No one truly appreciates anything until it's gone. Actually technically, you know what I would really like?

KENNETH Anything. You name it.

MR. HARRIS A drink.

KENNETH No.
MR. HARRIS No?
KENNETH I mean, I can't.
MR. HARRIS Have I mentioned I won the Pulitzer?
KENNETH For *Up A Lonely River*. It's my favorite play in the whole world. I cannot even begin to tell you how much that play means to me.
MR. HARRIS As much as a drink would mean to me?
KENNETH Mr. Harris, I'm under very strict orders. Simon made it very clear before I left. Under no circumstances was I to get you liquor of any kind.
MR. HARRIS I hate it when my reputation arrives before I do.
KENNETH I'm sorry.
MR. HARRIS Not.
KENNETH I'm not sorry. Really. I would if I could but I can't.
MR. HARRIS What's your name again?
KENNETH Kenneth. Kenneth Waters.
MR. HARRIS Mr. Waters, do you drink?
KENNETH No.
MR. HARRIS Would you like to start?
KENNETH I'm sure the hotel has a mini-bar.
MR. HARRIS Yes, I'm sure it does. Who was it who told you about my little problem?
KENNETH I can't tell you that.
MR. HARRIS Have I mentioned I won the Pulitzer?
KENNETH Your agent. She told Simon to "treat him like the alcoholic he is."
MR. HARRIS Former agent.
KENNETH Oh. I didn't know.
MR. HARRIS Neither does she. Tell me something, did she use the line about how I "can't possibly write from the bottom of a bottle"?
KENNETH I don't know what she said.
MR. HARRIS The Pulitzer.
KENNETH Word for word. Can we go now?
MR. HARRIS She stole that line from me, I'll have you

know. This from a woman who can drink me under any table in New York.

KENNETH I'll pull the car up.

MR. HARRIS How much?

KENNETH How much what?

MR. HARRIS Five? Ten? Over and above the price of whatever it is you can round up, of course.

KENNETH Sir ...

MR. HARRIS Preferably, gin, though at this point I'll take anything this side of mouthwash.

KENNETH I told you. I ...

MR. HARRIS Twenty dollars. Twenty dollars for one drink.

KENNETH I'm sure once we get to the hotel ...

MR. HARRIS GET ME A GODDAMN DRINK!

KENNETH stops at the force behind HARRIS' explosion. HARRIS holds out the twenty dollar bill. Ever so slightly, his hand visibly shakes.

MR. HARRIS Please.

KENNETH I can't.

An awkward silence. Finally:

MR. HARRIS Go.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS You can go now.

KENNETH Go where?

MR. HARRIS Wherever someone like you goes.

KENNETH I'm not going without you.

MR. HARRIS Yes, you are. You're going to walk out that door, get into your car, and drive away. Before you do, however, would you mind asking the man to book me on the next bus to New York?

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS Don't make me repeat myself. This country is redundant enough as it is.

KENNETH Mr. Harris, you can't do that.

MR. HARRIS I can and I will.

KENNETH You have rehearsal.

MR. HARRIS No, you have rehearsal. I'm going back to New York.

KENNETH Sir, I'm just doing what I'm told.

MR. HARRIS Not yet, you're not.

KENNETH If I don't deliver you to the rehearsal first thing tomorrow morning ...

MR. HARRIS Oh, now I'm a package, am I? Something to be delivered? Wrapped up in some industrial strength envelope—

KENNETH I didn't, no, that's not ...

MR. HARRIS —and shipped overnight because I absolutely, positively have to be there?

KENNETH I'm sure you'll feel differently after you've talked to Simon. He can't wait to meet you in person.

MR. HARRIS Apparently, he can. Otherwise, he wouldn't have sent you. Go.

KENNETH Sir, I'm just an Apprentice.

MR. HARRIS What's that supposed to mean?

KENNETH Nothing, trust me. You can't go back to—

MR. HARRIS Apprentice to what?

KENNETH —New York without, the theatre. I'm an Apprentice at the theatre.

MR. HARRIS Apprentice to what?

KENNETH I'm sorry?

MR. HARRIS Stop apologizing!

KENNETH I'm sorry.

MR. HARRIS Not!

KENNETH Not sorry!

MR. HARRIS Don't tell me you're studying to be an actor?

KENNETH No, I don't have the talent.

MR. HARRIS You don't need talent. All you need is a deep seeded belief that the whole world is as excited about you as you are.

KENNETH I want to be a playwright.

HARRIS reaches for something to steady himself.

KENNETH Someday. Not yet, not now, of course. I have

so much to learn, but that's why I'm here, that's why I wanted to be the one to pick you up. I had to meet you. To just, I don't know, to just be around you, I guess. To experience your essence.

MR. HARRIS I have an essence?

KENNETH Not your essence.

MR. HARRIS No, I like having an essence.

KENNETH I told Simon, "I don't care what time he gets in, I want to be there." I begged him. I said, "Joseph Harris is the greatest American playwright in the history of the American Theatre. In the history of theatre, period." Better than O'Neill, Miller, Williams ...

MR. HARRIS Shakespeare?

KENNETH ... Yes.

MR. HARRIS Go on.

KENNETH I have so many questions for you, I don't know where to start.

MR. HARRIS Questions are what make art, art.

KENNETH *Writers On Writing*, published in 1986. "Art And the Artist."

MR. HARRIS Very good.

KENNETH I've read everything you've ever done. Or said, for that matter. The full lengths, the one acts, the essays, the monologues, even your Op-Ed pieces in *The New York Times*. One of my favorites is "The State Of The American Theatre," October, 1978. You were so eloquent about the need for a collective voice to speak from our stage and your prediction that Broadway would succumb to how did you put it, hang on ...

KENNETH pulls out a crumpled piece of paper.

KENNETH "In our quest to find new voices, the American Stage will turn its back on its very own, only to drop the bar and welcome with open arms anything with an accent, preferably ones spewing Irish blarney, Royal pomposity or Cockney slang. Mark my words ... " I love this part. " ... Mark my words, to spend one's life writing for the American Theatre is to aim for a place

somewhere between airport paperbacks and the graffiti located above your local urinal.”

MR. HARRIS I was drunk.

KENNETH I found it prophetic.

MR. HARRIS I had just opened a play that included a ten minute sequence where two of the fattest actors you’ve ever seen dropped their pants and farted into the face of the audience. Needless to say, the critics were not kind. So I wrote to *The Times*, explaining it was a metaphor for the slow, poisonous disintegration of Creative America. I think they published it out of pity. Another American playwright screaming from the ledge.

KENNETH Well, you were right.

MR. HARRIS Hardly. Though I must say, if the cast could have farted in an English accent, the play would still be running. New York has always had its imperialistic eye trained across the sea. Trust me, if they could tie Manhattan to the back of the Queen Mary and drag it to England, they’d feel right at home. No one writes for the theatre anymore unless they have to, Mr. Waters. It’s all about screenplays and six figure development deals and getting a place at the table with twelve other playwrights, hoping in this week’s episode one of your jokes makes it into the mouth of your own, personal Sit-Com Star. Though, I love Reality Television, if only for the simple fact that I view it as the American Theatre’s revenge on all of those money grubbing sellouts. But you can’t really blame them, can you? If the theatre won’t produce you, can’t support you and yet still, you want to write, you have no choice but to follow the herd to California and get paid a King’s Ransom because you can spell your name. Talk about godforsaken.

KENNETH But you stayed.

MR. HARRIS Stayed where?

KENNETH In the theatre.

MR. HARRIS Yes, well, much to my accountant’s dismay.

KENNETH But see, that’s what makes you so great. When others turned their backs, you nobly clung to your

principles, hanging on to the sanctity of your creative life, proving what it means to be a true artist.

MR. HARRIS I am hardly noble.

KENNETH To me, you are. To me, you are royalty. The King Of The American Theatre. Strong words, I know—

MR. HARRIS No, no.

KENNETH —but there is no one and I mean no one with your uncompromising commitment to your art.

MR. HARRIS You should stop now.

KENNETH I can't. I can't stop, Mr. Harris. Because of you, I have decided to commit my life to the theatre. Through your art, your craft, your sheer brilliance, you have opened up the creativity that lies within my very own soul ...

MR. HARRIS Here.

KENNETH —crying to ... what? What's this?

HARRIS hands KENNETH an envelope. Unopened.

MR. HARRIS It's the advance. For the commission. Much as I love being paid to write, I hate being paid not to write even more.

KENNETH I don't understand.

MR. HARRIS There is no play.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS I haven't written a word. I'd apologize, but I'm in the arts, so ...

KENNETH Is this some kind of joke?

MR. HARRIS This is not a joke.

KENNETH This is not a joke?

MR. HARRIS I think we've established this is not a joke.

KENNETH But there has to be a play. We have to have a play.

MR. HARRIS Well, if I don't have one there's no way you're going to have one and, trust me, I don't have one.

KENNETH We commissioned you!

MR. HARRIS I had a couple ideas, a couple things I thought might have legs enough to sail past page 20

and flourish into something grand, some epic drama— or a comedy, I'd have even settled for a comedy— but in the end, nothing.

KENNETH Wait a minute.

MR. HARRIS Though, I did have one idea, which is why I got on the bus at all, about a young girl and her dog, but by the time the bus pulled into Philadelphia, the dog had died and the girl had become a transvestite, and I thought, "Well, that's hardly original."

KENNETH Mr. Harris.

MR. HARRIS Maybe the dog could be the transvestite ...

KENNETH You sent us a First Draft.

MR. HARRIS I did no such thing.

KENNETH Simon read it. He told the whole staff it was brilliant!

MR. HARRIS The only thing of any brilliance were Simon's efforts to cover his Artistic ass. I called him and told him what I had wasn't readable yet. Little advice: the next time a playwright calls to say his play isn't readable, it's because there's nothing to read.

KENNETH I'm calling Simon.

KENNETH whips out his cell phone.

MR. HARRIS *Do Up A Lonely River.*

KENNETH We just did it two months ago!

MR. HARRIS So do it again.

KENNETH We can't do it again!

MR. HARRIS Sure, you can. Tell them it's a rerun.

KENNETH You don't understand. We've announced it to the world!

MR. HARRIS Good Lord, I hope you have enough seats.

KENNETH Mr. Harris, this is a very big deal for us. For the first time in our history, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* is sending its Number One Critic ...

Instantly, HARRIS goes for the ticket window.

MR. HARRIS Front! Front!

KENNETH Mr. Harris, please! Just talk to Simon, okay?

MR. HARRIS To the front!

The TICKET MAN appears.

KENNETH This is so out of my what, my jurisdiction, my realm of whatever ...

MR. HARRIS When is the next bus to New York?

KENNETH No! What are you, no! You can't do this! Don't do this, please! (*to TICKET MAN*) He doesn't want it. Forget it. Mr. Harris, please ...

TICKET MAN Leaves at six forty five.

MR. HARRIS I'll take a one way ticket, please.

KENNETH No!

TICKET MAN Window or aisle?

KENNETH Neither!

MR. HARRIS Window.

KENNETH Don't do this. Please. I'm begging you.

MR. HARRIS You didn't—

TICKET MAN (*reading*) Welcome to the exciting world of bus travel. By purchasing a round trip ticket, you can save less than the cost of two one-way tickets.

MR. HARRIS —do anything. Relax. Not everything in life is your fault. (*to TICKET MAN*) I'm never coming back.

KENNETH No! This is—

TICKET MAN Seniors, if you are young at heart and 62 years or older, get five percent off the regular fare.

MR. HARRIS (*to TICKET MAN*) No.

KENNETH —my fault! Trust me! Somehow, in some way this—

TICKET MAN Students, take advantage of our Student Advantage Card and get up to 15 percent off the price of an unrestricted ticket. If you—

KENNETH —is going to come crashing down on my head! Please. Listen to me. Look, whatever I did or didn't do, I'm sorry.

MR. HARRIS Not.

KENNETH I'm whatever I have to be to keep you from doing this!

MR. HARRIS My stay here—

TICKET MAN —are on active duty or retired, as a member of the military you may receive a discount of 10 percent. In addition, all—

MR. HARRIS —is over. Finished. Done. *(to TICKET MAN)*
Do I look military to you?

TICKET MAN In addition, all military personnel—

KENNETH I'm not qualified to let you do this!

MR. HARRIS No one "lets" me do anything.

KENNETH I'm not saying that. I'm saying don't go. Not yet. Not until you've talked to Simon. Please.

TICKET MAN —may travel for a maximum of \$198 round trip anywhere in the continental United States. Fare may be higher during peak holiday travel ...

MR. HARRIS I only want a one way ticket to New York. Could you simply tell me how much that is, please?

TICKET MAN Fifty two dollars.

MR. HARRIS Thank you! *(to KENNETH)* Give me fifty two dollars.

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS I'll pay you back when I get to New York.

KENNETH Okay. All right. First of all, I don't have any money.

MR. HARRIS You little liar.

KENNETH Look at me! Do I look like I have money?

TICKET MAN You want the ticket or not?

MR. HARRIS Yes.

KENNETH No! He's not—

As KENNETH pleads with the TICKET MAN, HARRIS goes to KENNETH's knapsack.

KENNETH —going anywhere! Sorry for the confusion.

MR. HARRIS Not!

KENNETH I'm not sorry for the confusion! *(re: noticing HARRIS)* Hey!

HARRIS finds a few small bills.

MR. HARRIS You're holding out on me.

KENNETH I got three bucks!

HARRIS pulls a manuscript out of KENNETH's knapsack.

MR. HARRIS And what is this?

KENNETH Nothing. Give it back.

MR. HARRIS Is this a play?

KENNETH Give it to me!

MR. HARRIS You really are a playwright.

As HARRIS goes to read the title page, KENNETH grabs his manuscript out of HARRIS' hands.

KENNETH I'M NOT A PLAYWRIGHT!

HARRIS stops. From the window, the TICKET MAN looks out at KENNETH, who gathers himself.

KENNETH ... I'm not a playwright. (to TICKET MAN)
Cancel it. (to HARRIS) I'm just here to pick you up.
That's all. I don't need ... I'm just here to pick you up. I'll
be in the car.

KENNETH takes his knapsack and heads towards the door.

MR. HARRIS Would you like me to read it?

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS Would you like me to read your play?

KENNETH You would ... you would read my play?

MR. HARRIS We're certainly not going to read mine.

KENNETH Are you kidding? I'd be, what ...

MR. HARRIS Eternally grateful?

KENNETH Yes! Thank you! Thank you so much! I can't
believe this!

MR. HARRIS While I'm waiting for my bus.

KENNETH No. I don't think so.

MR. HARRIS Have I mentioned I won the Pulitzer Prize?

KENNETH Yes, I believe you have.

MR. HARRIS Have you ever seen one?

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS Well, as trophies go, it's quite tasteful. Very
elegant, very distinguished.

KENNETH Mr. Harris, if you get on that bus, I'll be fired.

MR. HARRIS H.L. Mencken—also dead, 1956—wrote a true artist is “against the environment in which God has placed him.” Yearn to anger the “contemporary one hundred percenters,” as he called them.

KENNETH I’m not angry about anything.

MR. HARRIS Then you will never be a playwright, Mr. Waters. I was once permanently asked to leave the premises. The Cornelia Street Playhouse in ...

KENNETH Philadelphia.

MR. HARRIS Oh, you’ve been to Philadelphia?

KENNETH No, but ...

MR. HARRIS As soon as you arrive you realize you’re the smartest person in town. We were doing *The Man*—

KENNETH *The Man Who Died Again*.

MR. HARRIS —*Who Died Again*. Do you know this story?

KENNETH No, only that ...

MR. HARRIS Then shut up. I’m waxing poetic about myself and I’d prefer not to be interrupted. It doesn’t happen all that often and when it does, much like with the visiting muse— you’re aware of writing via the muse, aren’t you?

KENNETH Of course.

MR. HARRIS Do you have one?

KENNETH Doesn’t everybody?

MR. HARRIS Where is it?

KENNETH Where’s what?

MR. HARRIS Your muse. I’d like to meet him. Or her. Or it. Maybe it’s an “it”.

KENNETH I don’t ...

MR. HARRIS Check your pockets. It must be in there somewhere. Not having one myself, I’ve always been curious as to what they looked like. That little bird that sits on your shoulder, chirping above you like some golden swallow full of lyrical prose, steering you through your story like some know-it-all tour guide ...

KENNETH What about the Inner Voice?

MR. HARRIS You’re hearing voices?

KENNETH Simon said every artist has an Inner Voice.

MR. HARRIS If Simon's hearing voices, he should be padding around his room looking for his medication. Inner voice. I wrote every one of my plays without the assistance of anyone, thank you very much. Including Artistic Directors who are too important to meet my bus. Where's your phone?

KENNETH Are you going to call Simon?

MR. HARRIS No.

HARRIS takes KENNETH's phone, sets it on the ground, and stomps on it, smashing the cell phone to pieces.

KENNETH What are you ... ? That's my phone! You just ... !

MR. HARRIS I've always wanted to do that. Give me your credit card.

KENNETH My what?

MR. HARRIS Hand it over.

KENNETH What is this? A robbery?

MR. HARRIS Yes. Stick 'em up.

KENNETH I don't have a credit card, all right?

MR. HARRIS Of course, you do. Every young person—

During the following, KENNETH picks up the pieces of his phone. Tries to reassemble it.

MR. HARRIS —in today's theatre has a credit card, a toy phone, and a Lamborghini. What do you drive?

KENNETH A car.

MR. HARRIS What kind of car?

KENNETH It's not a Lamborghini, okay?

MR. HARRIS Porsche? Ferrari? A Jag-u-wah?

KENNETH A Ford Escort.

MR. HARRIS Used?

KENNETH What does that matter?

MR. HARRIS I knew it! It's right off the lot, isn't it?

KENNETH What's wrong with having a good car?

MR. HARRIS Bought and paid for by well meaning, well funded parents who can't stand the idea of their son going into such a vagrant profession. That's another thing wrong with your generation, no one suffers

anymore. Let me guess? Daddy and Mommy wanted their Son Who's Not A Playwright to be a doctor?

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS A lawyer? How about President of the United States? They've lowered the entry requirements, I don't know if you've heard ...

KENNETH Wing nuts.

MR. HARRIS Wing what?

KENNETH Nuts. My family is into wing nuts.

MR. HARRIS I'm going to hate myself for this ...

KENNETH It's the nut with the little metal wings on it so you can screw it in with your fingers. We also make weld pins, weld screws, adjusting screws, levelers in both inch and metric threads, low carbon and stainless steel. We're the largest maker of finger fasteners in the Upper Midwest.

MR. HARRIS Where would the world be without finger fasteners?

KENNETH That's exactly what my father says to me about three or four times a year. And I nod my head, answering the question he never asks, assuring him that yes, I'm planning on spending the rest of my life in manufacturing.

MR. HARRIS And then it all went terribly wrong.

KENNETH Yeah, well. When I told him I was going into the theatre, I might as well have said I was running off to join the circus.

MR. HARRIS You are.

KENNETH He said, "Kenneth, the the-A-ter is no place for a real man. It's nothing but a congregation of low lifes, gypsies, and ... "

KENNETH stops himself.

MR. HARRIS ... faggots?

KENNETH looks at HARRIS. HARRIS holds KENNETH's look.

KENNETH I'm straight.

MR. HARRIS Good for you.

Finally:

KENNETH So, you were saying ... what, what were you saying?

MR. HARRIS I have no idea.

KENNETH You were talking about the Cornopolis Theatre. Not Cornopolis ...

MR. HARRIS Cornelia.

KENNETH Cornelia. The Cornelia Street Playhouse.

MR. HARRIS In Philadelphia.

KENNETH In Philadelphia.

MR. HARRIS I believe I was telling you a story which could have been a play if only I'd written it.

KENNETH Right.

MR. HARRIS Lesson Number Twenty-Three: You and your muse should always write extensive stage directions so as to save yourself from directors who think of themselves as artistic who also happen to be from Philadelphia. I forget this hack's name. Better not to remember, I'd only vomit all over my shoes. Which is what I almost did when I saw the Dress Rehearsal. I said to him, "Excuse me, I don't mean to stunt your genius, but didn't I just see you at the intersection of Market and South Penn Square?" And he looks at me, peering out from underneath a fedora you'd find only on a Jersey City pimp, glaring at me as if I were nothing more than a ... well, a playwright. And he says, "What did you just say?" And I said, "You work for the Philadelphia Police Department." And he says, "I don't have a clue as to what you're talking about." To which I reply, "You direct traffic, not plays. And I remember seeing a great traffic jam with lots of honking horns and people yelling and screaming, all because you couldn't direct them through the intersection in an orderly fashion. Much like the First Act I just saw." At which point I walked out of the theatre, straight to the bus station, and out of Philadelphia forever.

KENNETH What happened to your play?

MR. HARRIS Sold to the rafters. Until it moved to New York

where it ran for about fifteen minutes. The critics pissed all over it. Speaking of the bombastic and spineless, this Simon person, the director with no play to direct, does he have any talent?

KENNETH Very much so. In fact, last year he won a Steubie for his production of *Our Town*.

MR. HARRIS He won a what?

KENNETH A Steubie. It's our local theatre award. We have this ceremony at the end of the year. Everybody comes. It's nice. I know, it's not a Tony or a Pulitzer, but then we're not New York, so ...

MR. HARRIS You're not even Philadelphia. Has this Steubie Award-Winning Director of yours read your play?

KENNETH God, no.

MR. HARRIS And why not?

KENNETH He was going to. He really was, and then, for whatever reason, he didn't get to it, which is completely understandable. He's very busy.

MR. HARRIS Winning Steubies?

KENNETH My mother read it.

MR. HARRIS Did she love it?

KENNETH Not really. But then, she can be very critical. When I asked her what she liked about it, she said, "The pages were in order." I thought that was a little harsh.

MR. HARRIS Maybe she doesn't recognize greatness when she sees it?

KENNETH It's far from that.

MR. HARRIS How would you know?

KENNETH Oh, I know. I may not know much, but I know that.

MR. HARRIS Lesson Number Three Hundred and Eighty-Six: the playwright never knows.

KENNETH You have to. I mean, if you don't, who does?

MR. HARRIS Good question.

KENNETH Wait a minute. You mean, when you finished *Up A Lonely River* ...

MR. HARRIS I thought it was the worst thing I ever wrote.

KENNETH I don't believe that for a second.

MR. HARRIS It's true.

KENNETH So who do you trust? The critics?

HARRIS reaches for something to steady himself.

KENNETH I didn't mean that! I take it back! I'm sorry!

MR. HARRIS Not.

KENNETH Not sorry! Y'know what? I don't even read reviews. I don't. I don't believe in them. Never have, never will.

MR. HARRIS Write this down.

KENNETH Absolutely.

MR. HARRIS "The dramatic critic is a man who leaves no turn unstoned."

KENNETH George Bernard Shaw!

MR. HARRIS Very good.

KENNETH And he's dead!

MR. HARRIS Very.

KENNETH 19 ...

MR. HARRIS 50.

KENNETH 1950, of course.

MR. HARRIS If you remember nothing else, remember that. It will serve you well when they use your work to criticize you personally.

KENNETH What about when they like you?

MR. HARRIS Mistrust them even more. Because as soon as you're adored, you fall into the inevitable trap of spending the rest of your career writing to please them. Or, in my case, not writing to please them. And when you do that, you are no longer an artist. An artist writes for himself and then he invites everyone else. Do you have a title?

KENNETH A what?

MR. HARRIS A title. For the brilliant play I'm about to read.

KENNETH Oh, I'd rather not say.

MR. HARRIS *Oh, I'd Rather Not Say* by Kenneth Waters.

KENNETH Very funny.

MR. HARRIS Let's imagine that up on the marquee, shall we? That's the first thing I do whenever I finish a new play. I take a cab up to the Belasco— still the best theatre in New York, bar none— and I stand on the opposite side of the street and try to picture my title up in lights. If I can envision it ...

KENNETH *The Great American Play.*

MR. HARRIS Hasn't been written yet. Never will be, for that matter. Lesson Number Two Hundred and Forty-Seven: In art, there can never be a greatest anything. Play, novel, painting, symphony, burger— try as we might, it will never be because as soon as one of us gets close, no one will know. Why? Because it will be missed. Or more than likely, dismissed. Why? Because we are no longer qualified nor interested enough to recognize greatness. We have no idea what it looks like anymore. For to recognize true greatness, we must have a willingness to be terrified. Troubled. Disturbed. And in today's world, no one wants to be any of those things.

KENNETH No, that's my title.

MR. HARRIS What?

KENNETH Of my play.

MR. HARRIS That's your title?

KENNETH Yes.

MR. HARRIS *The Great American Play* is the ...

KENNETH Title of my play, yes.

MR. HARRIS The title you have chosen, out of all the possible titles floating around out there, you have decided the one and only title for your play is ...

KENNETH *The Great American Play.*

MR. HARRIS ... Is it?

KENNETH Is it what?

MR. HARRIS The Great American Play?

KENNETH That's just the title.

MR. HARRIS That's not what I'm asking you. Is this the Great American Play?

KENNETH That depends on what you mean by the Great American Play.

MR. HARRIS Answer the question.

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS So this is not the Great American Play.

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS And yet, the title would lead me to believe ...

KENNETH Tentative title.

MR. HARRIS Oh, don't change it now. It might be perfect.

KENNETH It's just a play.

HARRIS turns to KENNETH. Finally:

MR. HARRIS There is no such thing as "just a play." Lesson Number Five Hundred and Two: This is your art. Say it.

KENNETH Say what?

MR. HARRIS This is my art.

KENNETH This is my art.

MR. HARRIS Louder.

KENNETH This is my art.

MR. HARRIS I am an artist and this is my art!

KENNETH I am an artist and this is my art!

MR. HARRIS Tell your friends! Tell your—

KENNETH I am an—

MR. HARRIS —neighbors! Tell the world!

KENNETH —artist and this is my art! I am an artist and this is my art! I am an artist and—

HARRIS climbs onto a bench.

MR. HARRIS I AM AN ARTIST AND—

KENNETH —this is my ... Mr. Harris? What are you doing? Get down! Sir!

MR. HARRIS —THIS IS MY ART! I AM AN ARTIST AND THIS IS MY ART! I AM AN ARTIST AND ...

The TICKET MAN appears in the window.

KENNETH Mr. Harris! Mr. Harris!

MR. HARRIS —THIS IS MY ART! I AM AN ARTIST AND

THIS IS MY ART!

TICKET MAN (*through speaker*) You want me to call the cops?

KENNETH No!

MR. HARRIS Yes! Call the cops! Arrest all the artists! Throw us—

KENNETH Don't listen to him! He doesn't know what he's saying!

TICKET MAN Please step down off the chairs. Those chairs are the property of Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited. Those are not your chairs. Please step down off the chairs, sir.

KENNETH I got him! I got him!

MR. HARRIS —in your jails! Lock us in your prisons! Drop us into the darkest, dankest dungeons of your ignorance, but no matter where you confine us, you will never—

Like a boxer holding up a championship belt, HARRIS hoists KENNETH's manuscript high above his head.

MR. HARRIS —silence our collective voice because the truth shall be heard!

KENNETH Okay. Let's go.

MR. HARRIS Stand with me!

KENNETH No.

MR. HARRIS Stand with me, Mr. Waters!

KENNETH C'mon!

MR. HARRIS What are you afraid of?

KENNETH Get down—

TICKET MAN (*reading, through speaker*) "Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited hereby advises you—

KENNETH —off the chairs! He's gonna call the cops!

MR. HARRIS A true artist embraces incarceration! "For a tear is an intellectual thing, And a—

KENNETH Mr. Harris, please!

MR. HARRIS —sigh is the sword of an Angel King, And the bitter groan of the martyr's woe, Is an—

TICKET MAN —that you are in violation of Ordinance Number 289-64-7 regarding the malicious destruction of company property. You are hereby notified that any further violation herewith of the aforementioned said ordinance shall be considered a breach thereof and said violators shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

MR. HARRIS —arrow from the Almighty’s bow.”

KENNETH Get down.

MR. HARRIS Who said it?

KENNETH I have no idea.

MR. HARRIS William Blake!

KENNETH William Blake.

MR. HARRIS Died in 1827!

KENNETH What a shame. Let’s go.

As KENNETH goes for HARRIS’ suitcase, HARRIS hits KENNETH with his manuscript.

MR. HARRIS Stand and rage against those who yearn for a country without culture! Let those who would persecute their artists with their silly little laws do so with both of our blessings! For any law that hinders the growth of an artist is a surrogate for those who fear the truth! Let those who would ravage your soul, ravage away! Let them—

Undressing, HARRIS struggles out of his coat and shirt, followed by his shoes and socks. Each item of clothing is thrown at the TICKET MAN, bouncing off the cage. KENNETH scrambles, gathering each discarded piece of HARRIS’ clothing.

MR. HARRIS —riddle our naked bodies with their harmless ignorance for it is you! (to TICKET MAN) You are what is wrong with the American Theatre! You, who—

TICKET MAN “Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited hereby advises you that you are in violation of Ordinance Number 576-29-3 regarding the flagrant display and/or carrying out of any act deemed indecent, improper, lewd, obscene, and/or objectionable as determined to

be by Steubenville Bus & Travel Limited. You are—
MR. HARRIS —would dilute this young, vibrant creative voice! You, who would reduce this potential masterpiece to—

TICKET MAN— hereby notified that any further violation herewith of the aforementioned said ordinance on company property shall be considered a breach thereof and said violators shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

The half-naked HARRIS charges the window, unbuckling his pants. KENNETH grabs him.

MR. HARRIS —obscurity! He could very well be the next William Shakespeare! The next—

KENNETH I got him! I got him! It’s okay! I got him!

KENNETH steers HARRIS back towards the bench. The TICKET MAN stops.

MR. HARRIS —Tennessee Williams! The next Arthur Miller! Yes, even the next Joseph Harris! That’s right! Joseph Harris! I am Joseph Harris!

KENNETH Okay! Okay!

MR. HARRIS I am the American Theatre! I am—

KENNETH Sit down.

MR. HARRIS —everything to you! Everything!

KENNETH Just sit down. C’mon.

TICKET MAN Hey.

MR. HARRIS I am everything. I am ... I am everything.

TICKET MAN Hey.

KENNETH turns to the TICKET MAN, who nods for him to come over.

KENNETH I’ll be right back, okay? You just stay here.

MR. HARRIS Mr. Waters?

KENNETH What? What is it?

HARRIS grabs KENNETH, pulling him close. His eyes wild, his breathing heavy ...

MR. HARRIS That ... was theatre!

HARRIS shoves KENNETH away. KENNETH goes to the ticket window.

KENNETH It's okay. Really. He just gets a little wound up sometimes, that's all.

TICKET MAN I didn't call the cops.

KENNETH I know. And I appreciate that.

TICKET MAN I could have.

KENNETH I know. Thank you.

The TICKET MAN stares out at KENNETH.

KENNETH Right.

KENNETH takes out his wallet and slips a ten dollar bill through the bars of the cage.

TICKET MAN Keep him off the benches.

KENNETH Right.

TICKET MAN And dressed.

KENNETH I will.

The TICKET MAN disappears. KENNETH goes back to HARRIS.

KENNETH You okay?

Half dressed and physically spent, HARRIS puts on his shoes, socks, shirt, and coat ...

MR. HARRIS I was wrong about you.

KENNETH What are you talking about? I just kept you out of jail! I kept us both out of jail!

MR. HARRIS There are only a hundred of us, Mr. Waters. One hundred people who will go to their graves knowing what it means to stand up for artistic truth. I thought you were one of us.

HARRIS goes back to dressing himself. Finally:

KENNETH I have a MasterCard.

MR. HARRIS Do you now?

KENNETH Yes.

MR. HARRIS Well, don't just stand there. Pay for my ticket.

KENNETH After you read my play.

MR. HARRIS Before.

KENNETH After. And I mean every word of it. No skimming. No thumbing through the slow parts.

MR. HARRIS You drive a hard bargain, Mr. Waters.

KENNETH I'm going to lose everything, Mr. Harris. My apprenticeship, my affiliation with the theatre, and there's a very good chance I may wind up back in wing nuts so when you say you're going to read my play, I need to know you are really going to read my play.

MR. HARRIS Even if it kills me.

KENNETH Okay.

MR. HARRIS And a drink.

KENNETH I can't do that. Even if I wanted to, there's no place open.

MR. HARRIS There are places open in New York and Philadelphia.

KENNETH Well, we're not in New York or Philadelphia.

MR. HARRIS You keep saying that and every time you do, I keep thinking, "Death, how slowly you trod." Who said that?

KENNETH I have no idea.

MR. HARRIS Neither do I, but whomever it was, I'll bet he was drunk as a skunk when he said it. (*calling off*) Front!

KENNETH What are you doing?

MR. HARRIS Ordering a drink.

KENNETH He's not going to have anything.

MR. HARRIS You've obviously never traveled by bus. (*calling off*) To the front!

KENNETH Mr. Harris, I'm not agreeing to any of this.

MR. HARRIS I promise to nurse it.

The TICKET MAN appears at the window.

MR. HARRIS There you are. Sir, by chance would you happen to have any liquor for sale?

KENNETH We completely understand if you don't.

A full pint of whiskey lands on the counter behind the bars of the cage.

MR. HARRIS Perfect! Pay the man.

KENNETH How much?

TICKET MAN Fifty bucks.

KENNETH Fifty ... ?!

MR. HARRIS We'll take it.

KENNETH You have no problem spending my money, do you?

MR. HARRIS Think of it as supporting the arts.

KENNETH takes out his wallet.

KENNETH (to TICKET MAN) I know what you're doing, okay? I'll pay it, but I just want you to know that between the two of us, I know what's going on here.

KENNETH stuffs the bills through the Window. The TICKET MAN slides the pint of whiskey to KENNETH.

MR. HARRIS Who said, "Some writers take to drink, others take to audiences"?

KENNETH I have no idea.

MR. HARRIS Gore Vidal.

KENNETH Of course.

MR. HARRIS Unfortunately, he's still alive. Me? I'll take them both. If taken in moderation, both can be very intoxicating. They stimulate you, and then, once they have worked their way through your system, down you go, face first. (*notices Kenneth*) Mr. Waters? May I have it, please?

KENNETH stands near the exit. Holding the whiskey.

MR. HARRIS My drink. Mr. Waters? Mr. Waters, would you please ...

KENNETH Out in the car.

MR. HARRIS I beg your pardon?

KENNETH We're going to the hotel. You can read my play there. In the morning, I'll take you to the theatre and you can tell Simon yourself there's no play. Then after that, I'll bring you back here and put you on a bus to New York.

MR. HARRIS We had an agreement.

KENNETH So did our theatre company.

KENNETH holds HARRIS' gaze.

MR. HARRIS I see. Well ...

HARRIS picks up KENNETH's manuscript. Holds it out towards KENNETH. The manuscript shakes slightly in HARRIS' hand.

MR. HARRIS Don't forget your play.

KENNETH goes to HARRIS. Takes the manuscript.

KENNETH I'll wait five minutes and then I'm leaving.

KENNETH starts out.

MR. HARRIS Where were you during 9/11?

KENNETH What?

MR. HARRIS Answer the question.

KENNETH What's that have to do with anything?

MR. HARRIS It has everything to do with everything and as a playwright you should know that.

KENNETH ... It was tragic.

MR. HARRIS It was Shakespearean. Heroes, villains, life, death, sacrifice, vengeance, redemption, even hope. Though, I must say, if the Bard had written it, I'd like to think he would have toned down some of the gruesomeness.

KENNETH No one could have written that day.

MR. HARRIS Sometimes they write themselves. That day defined us, Mr. Waters. And much like a great play, we remember forever where we were when we saw it, and having seen it, we come to know the truth about ourselves. At least, I did.

KENNETH I was at school. In the library. Some frat guy stuck his head in and yelled out something about how they were blowing up New York. We all kind of sat there, just looking at each other.

MR. HARRIS What did you feel?

KENNETH It was a long time ago.

MR. HARRIS No, it wasn't.

KENNETH Sadness. Anger. Rage. Helpless. In the end, I felt helpless.

MR. HARRIS I felt nothing. In the middle of all the screaming sirens. The terror in the eyes of all those poor people staggering up 7th Avenue. The wind that someone said carried the poison that would kill us all. I just stood there. Watching it all happen. Taking it all in.

KENNETH It must have been horrible.

MR. HARRIS Yes, it was. Do you still feel it?

KENNETH Feel what?

MR. HARRIS That day.

KENNETH No. I mean, not like I did then.

MR. HARRIS The helplessness remains, of course. Humankind's defining characteristic. But whatever became of all our sadness and anger and rage? Where did all of that get to?

KENNETH I don't know.

MR. HARRIS I do. I know exactly where it went.

With tears in his eyes, HARRIS picks up his suitcase and holds it in his lap. After several beats, KENNETH goes to HARRIS. Hands his manuscript to HARRIS. And the pint of whiskey. KENNETH sits.

KENNETH On one condition.

HARRIS turns and looks at KENNETH.

KENNETH You have to tell me the truth.

The lights fade out.

END OF ACT ONE