

A YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

a seasonal cycle

by Brent Englar

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NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

The four short plays that make up this cycle contain twelve roles (three per play). I strongly suggest casting six performers and doubling as follows:

	<u>“Opening Day, 2050”</u>	<u>“Fireworks”</u>	<u>“The Critic”</u>	<u>“Plunge”</u>
<i>Middle-aged Man 1</i>	Baby Bill		David	
<i>Middle-aged Man 2</i>	Johnson		Turner	
<i>Middle-aged Woman</i>	Sharon		Waitress	
<i>Younger Man</i>		’Remy		Max
<i>Younger Woman 1</i>		Maygin		Jo
<i>Younger Woman 2</i>		Jenifer		Wendy

The set may be as simple as chairs and tables, rearranged or removed as necessary for each play. During scene changes, please play seasonally appropriate music.

OPENING DAY, 2050: O'S AT NATS

a 10-minute play

by Brent Englar

CHARACTERS

“BABY BILL” MURKOVSKI, 45, self-described Number One Mid-Atlantic Sports Fan

SHARON, 45, his wife

JOHNSON, 35, local reporter

TIME

Opening day of the 2050 Major League Baseball season

PLACE

Nationals Park in Washington, D.C.

(Lights up on a mostly empty section of the upper outfield gallery. In fact, the only people present are BABY BILL and SHARON, who sit watching the game, and JOHNSON, who points a recording device at BABY BILL.

BABY BILL is decked out in full fan regalia: a Nationals cap and an Orioles jersey, or an Orioles cap and a Nationals jersey, or perhaps he alternates between innings; the grass-stained trousers to a beer league softball uniform; a bright orange shoe paired with a black sock; a bright red shoe paired with a blue sock; and a large baseball glove. SHARON wears jeans and a T-shirt. JOHNSON is nattily dressed in a sport jacket and tie)

JOHNSON

So tell me, Baby, what brings you back to the ballpark each year?

BABY BILL

Love of the game, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON

But neither club has had a winning season in your lifetime.

BABY BILL

Be all the sweeter when we do. Just a sec—
(screaming at a player)

THAT’S HOW TO SWING THE STICK, HOMBRE!
(to JOHNSON)

You recordin’ every word I say?

JOHNSON

That a problem, Baby?

BABY BILL

I guess not.

SHARON

Make sure to use his full name when you quote him.

JOHNSON

“Baby Bill” Murkovski, I got it—

SHARON

—Number One Mid-Atlantic Sports Fan, “Baby Bill” Murkovski.

JOHNSON

That’s a mouthful, Mrs. M.

SHARON

It’s Sharon, I told you.

BABY BILL

(to SHARON)

There peanuts left?

(SHARON passes BABY BILL the bag. They nosh on peanuts throughout)

JOHNSON

I’m hearing rumors, Baby—ownership made you a pretty sweetheart deal.

SHARON

What did you hear?

JOHNSON

I’m hearing ownership’s got plans to christen this whole section for your husband. Their way of saying “thank you” for half a century of support.

BABY BILL

Mr. Lerner Junior the Third met with me yesterday.

JOHNSON

So it’s true?

BABY BILL

(enthusiastically)

All I gotta do is make five more openin’ days, and they name a sandwich after me. Maybe give me tickets to a playoff game.

JOHNSON

A sandwich?

BABY BILL

You probably shouldn’t mention that in your story.

JOHNSON

Don’t think I will.

SHARON

They’re planning an official announcement for later.

JOHNSON

You’ve been coming here fifty years ... and your reward is the Baby Bill Barbecue Roll?

BABY BILL

You think it’ll be barbecue?

SHARON

We could use your mother’s recipe!

JOHNSON

It’s not quite what I was expecting.

BABY BILL

That’s okay. I’m not expectin’ to wait five years for no playoff tickets.

SHARON

You call it, baby.

BABY BILL

This is the year we go all the way.

JOHNSON

You mean Washington or Baltimore?

BABY BILL

I mean both.

JOHNSON

Isn’t that a tad optimistic?

BABY BILL

Lemme tell you something. I was born exactly 45 years ago today.

JOHNSON

Happy birthday.

SHARON

It’s tomorrow.

BABY BILL

Do you know what happened exactly 45 years ago today?

JOHNSON

Let me see ... you were born?

SHARON

He was born tomorrow.

BABY BILL

The Washington Nationals played their very first game.

JOHNSON

How’d they do?

SHARON

Don’t you remember?

JOHNSON

It’s not like I was there.

BABY BILL

They lost to Philadelphia 8 to 4. But on that same day the Orioles blanked the visitin’ Athletics 4 to nothing. That was the year we got off to a 42 and 28 start—held onto first for 62 consecutive days.

JOHNSON

It was a magical time, I’m sure.

BABY BILL

I like to think me bein’ born had something to do with it.

(screaming at a player)

ATTAWAY TO BRING THE HEATER, PAPA K!

JOHNSON

Remarkable.

SHARON

Why do you say that?

JOHNSON

Sherry—

SHARON

—Sharon—

JOHNSON

—Take a look around. You’re all by yourselves on an island. You’re Mid-Atlantic hermit crabs!

(BABY BILL takes a swig of beer. JOHNSON leans forward)

JOHNSON (Cont’d)

You ever hear of Charley Lupica?

BABY BILL

He the Number Two Mid-Atlantic Sports Fan?

JOHNSON

He lived in Cleveland. Remember the Indians?

BABY BILL

Sort of.

JOHNSON

Baby, how long have you been sitting in that seat?

BABY BILL

This is my 2,648th game.

SHARON

Plus another 600 at the Yard.

BABY BILL

667.

JOHNSON

Well sir, Charley Lupica never pronounced himself the Number One anything. But he did sit atop a flagpole for 117 days.

SHARON

The hell does that have to do with us?

JOHNSON

He thought to inspire the team.

SHARON

Did he?

JOHNSON

Are you kidding? They loved him. He had his picture in the paper, and for the final game of the season, the owner of the club cut down the flagpole, drove Charley to the ballpark, and presented him with a brand new automobile.

SHARON

What paper do you write for, Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON

I told you, the *Post*.

SHARON

I don’t recall seeing your byline.

JOHNSON

This isn’t my usual beat, Sharon.

BABY BILL

Don’t take no special effort to sit on no flagpole.

JOHNSON

For 117 days?

BABY BILL

All I’m sayin’ is it ain’t very inspiring.

JOHNSON

You tell me, Bill—what is inspiring?

BABY BILL

This Lupica fella, he ever paint his face orange, dye his hair blue, and wave a giant foam finger till his arm near fall off?

JOHNSON

Not in 1949.

BABY BILL

He ever shell out fifty bucks for a ticket, fifteen bucks for a beer, and two bucks to wipe his ass in the john?

JOHNSON

Maybe two bucks for a ticket.

BABY BILL

He ever stand outside the warehouse at six in the morning with a homemade sign sayin’ “Sell the team, for the love of God, sell the goddamn team”?

JOHNSON

I highly doubt it.

(BABY BILL nods. He pops a handful of peanuts in his mouth and stares at the field)

BABY BILL

(suddenly)

JOHNNY ON THE SPOT WITH THE LEATHER, BIG MAN!

(to SHARON)

I may not make it to work next week.

SHARON

You getting sick?

BABY BILL

I was thinkin’ it might be a good idea to stay with the team.

SHARON

The Nats?

BABY BILL

Either one. Hang on ...

(unfolding a pair of schedules)

See, the Nats leave for Wrigley on Friday. But the O’s go back home. That’s nine games right there—New York, Boston, San Juan. Then it’s an eight-game home stand for the Nats, then back to Baltimore ... there really isn’t a conflict till May.

SHARON

What in God’s name are you talking about?

BABY BILL

I told you, I could stay with the team.

(to JOHNSON)

You think I could talk to this Lupica fella?

JOHNSON

He died in ’02.

BABY BILL

He have grandkids?

JOHNSON

What did you have in mind?

BABY BILL

(gesturing at the field)

Any wonder these boys are awful? You tell me who they’re playin’ for! You think they look up here and see me wavin’ my cap?

(pointing at JOHNSON)

That seat you’re sitting in? Used to belong to Joey Strongbow—anchored the wave with me near twenty seasons. And back of Joey was the twins, and next to them was

Tina—only woman I knew still owned a megaphone. She’s at Rock Creek now—the twins moved south to Tampa. And over there was Moose, and there was Steve-Oh, and over there was Chris ... Joey gave his tickets to his son-in-law. Needed a down payment on a house ... And now ...

(exhorting the empty seats around him)

Here we go, D.C.—SUPPORT THE TEAM!

(Deafening silence. JOHNSON sticks the recorder in BABY BILL’s face)

JOHNSON

There’s no one here but you, Bill—what’s your plan?

BABY BILL

Mr. Johnson, you’ve been pointin’ that thing at me since the third inning. But the real story starts now, and I’m gonna give you the headline: “Number One Sports Fan of the Mid-Atlantic, William ‘Baby Bill’ Murkovski, pledges not to move from his seat till the Baltimore Orioles meet the Washington Nationals in the World Series.”

JOHNSON

Are you sure you’ve thought this through?

SHARON

Course he ain’t thought it through, he’s an idiot.

(to BABY BILL)

How you gonna go to the bathroom?

BABY BILL

Mr. Johnson, how did Charley Lupica go to the bathroom?

SHARON

Not to mention—hey, I’m talking to you—

(forcing BABY BILL to look at her)

Bill, baby, what am I supposed to do?

BABY BILL

You can sit here with me.

SHARON

The whole summer?

BABY BILL

Ain’t no place on God’s green Earth I’d rather be.

SHARON

I think we’d lose our jobs.

BABY BILL

Sugar, when Mr. Johnson writes his story, we’ll be heroes. Heroes don’t lose their jobs. They get new cars!

JOHNSON

Mr. Murkovski, about that story—

BABY BILL

(screaming at a player)

—DONO USAGI, COMIN’ THROUGH IN THE CLUTCH!

JOHNSON

Bill, the story—

BABY BILL

—We’re on our way, Mr. Johnson!

SHARON

Honey, the man’s trying to tell you something.

BABY BILL

I’m sorry.

JOHNSON

It’s fine.

BABY BILL

I just get so excited.

JOHNSON

Of course you’re excited—it’s your birthday. But this story—I don’t see it happening.

BABY BILL

How come?

JOHNSON

To be honest, I don’t think you can do it.

SHARON

My husband’s been sitting in this seat for over 25 years. He’s been named the “Old Potomac and Luxury Suites Fan of the Game” by the TV cameras more than 100 times. And you don’t think he can do it? Who the hell are you to think something like that?

JOHNSON

Because they’re going to make him leave when the game ends.

SHARON

Now just a damn minute—

JOHNSON

—There’s a reason you’re the only ones still paying to see the Nats play the Orioles, Mrs. Murkovski. You get a more interesting reason, you give me a call.

(JOHNSON turns off the recorder, stands, and exits. For a long moment, BABY BILL stares at the field)

SHARON

(finally)

You want I should get you a beer?

BABY BILL

Huh?

SHARON

All them peanuts—you’re probably dry as a bone.

BABY BILL

I still got some.

(He fishes a beer bottle from the mess at his feet and takes a swig, then offers the bottle to SHARON)

SHARON

I got my own.

(They watch the game. Suddenly BABY BILL leans forward)

BABY BILL

GOGOGOGO SLIDE ... SLIDE ... SLIDE ... SHIT!

(falling back in his seat)

Don’t nobody learn how to run the bases? What’re they payin’ a coach for if he don’t teach ’em to run the bases?

SHARON

Outfielder made a nice throw.

BABY BILL

They run the bases like they just crapped their pants.

SHARON

Should we go?

BABY BILL

What?

(after a moment)

I don’t think that reporter knows what he’s talkin’ about.

SHARON

He’s an asshole.

BABY BILL

That ain’t nice. But I don’t think he knows about baseball. Askin’ me what the Nats did their very first game.

SHARON

That’s just what I said.

BABY BILL

That should be me doin’ what he does.

SHARON

I bet you’d do great.

BABY BILL

You think so?

(She smiles at him. He takes another swig of beer and nods. They watch the game in silence as the lights fade to black. End of play.)

FIREWORKS

a 10-minute play

by Brent Englar

CHARACTERS

'REMY, mid-20s

MAYGIN, the same

JENIFER, the same

TIME

Fourth of July weekend

PLACE

Jenifer's car—four chairs arranged in two rows of two—on a gridlocked section of highway

(Lights up on JENIFER, who is napping in the passenger seat, and MAYGIN, who would be driving were it not for the miles-long traffic jam. Both are dressed for the beach. 'REMY stands in the shoulder of the road, conversing with MAYGIN through the passenger-side window. He carries a large backpack with many flaps and pockets)

MAYGIN

Forty-five dollars? That's outrageous!

'REMY

Hey, you can find a better offer—

MAYGIN

—I wasn't looking to find offers.

'REMY

I'm sorry. Sounded like you were interested.

MAYGIN

I was. Until I heard it cost forty-five dollars.

'REMY

Well, how much would you pay?

MAYGIN

For one firework?

'REMY

That's right.

MAYGIN

One illegal firework?

'REMY

One incredible, illegal firework.

MAYGIN

Incredible how?

'REMY

It spells out your name in red, white, and blue flashes.

How’s it know my name? MAYGIN

What’s your name? ’REMY

Jennifer. MAYGIN

That one “n” or two? ’REMY

Two. MAYGIN

“I” or a “y”? ’REMY

People spell it with a “y”? MAYGIN

Sometimes with an “a”. ’REMY

I’m the traditional spelling. MAYGIN

Easy—I’ve got lots of traditional Jennifers. ’REMY

Right there in your backpack? MAYGIN

So you want one? ’REMY

NO! MAYGIN

(waking up)
Are we there? JENIFER

We haven’t moved in an hour. MAYGIN

JENIFER
You’re kidding.

MAYGIN
Fourth of July traffic—who knew!

JENIFER
How long was I out?

MAYGIN
How do I know? Ten minutes.

JENIFER
You’re kidding.

’REMY
(to JENIFER)
What’s your name?

(Noticing ’REMY for the first time, JENIFER screams)

’REMY (Cont’d)
It’s fine—I get that all the time.

JENIFER
Who are you?

’REMY
Name’s ’Remy.

MAYGIN
Remy?

’REMY
You know, Jeremy.

MAYGIN
Then why not “Jeremy”?

’REMY
I like the apostrophe.¹
(to JENIFER)
So now you’re up, you want to test a rocket?

¹ “Remy” with an apostrophe is pronounced exactly the same as “Remy” without an apostrophe.

JENIFER

Could you please stand by someone else’s car?

’REMY

(pointing to MAYGIN)

We’re bargaining.

JENIFER

Then bargain outside her window.

’REMY

What, in the median? I could be clipped.

JENIFER

This is the mother of all traffic jams—you’ll be fine.

’REMY

Sorry. I’d rather be safe.

MAYGIN

Would you excuse us, Remy, please? Just for a minute.

’REMY

Sure thing. I’ll take a leak.

(’REMY exits. MAYGIN turns to JENIFER)

MAYGIN

I think that’s my cousin.

JENIFER

You don’t know?

MAYGIN

We’ve never met. My parents disapprove of his family’s lifestyle.

JENIFER

What’s their lifestyle?

MAYGIN

Nudism.

JENIFER

He’s not nude.

MAYGIN

Maybe he disapproves too. Maybe he ran away. Maybe that’s why he’s selling fireworks by the side of the highway.

JENIFER

Maybe he’s a psycho.

MAYGIN

There are no psychos in my family.

JENIFER

Just nudists you’ve never met.

MAYGIN

You’re in a lousy mood.

JENIFER

I’m allergic to psychos, Maygin!

MAYGIN

HE’S NOT A PSYCHO! Also, FYI—he thinks my name is Jennifer.

JENIFER

Why?

MAYGIN

Because that’s what I told him it was.

JENIFER

Why?

MAYGIN

Because I didn’t want to give him my name.

JENIFER

SO YOU GAVE HIM MINE?

MAYGIN

No! I’m Jennifer with two “n”s.
(pointing offstage)
He’s coming back!

JENIFER

Floor it!

Traffic!
MAYGIN

FUCK!
JENIFER

(’REMY reenters. He crosses to JENIFER’s window)

’REMY
So, who’s ready for a flying spinner?

MAYGIN
Remy, do you have any cousins?

’REMY
What’s it to you?

MAYGIN
My friend here was just saying that out here in the country people seem to have a lot of cousins.

JENIFER
I didn’t say that.

’REMY
Well, I can’t speak for people. Me, I’ve got a cousin, somewhere, but I never see her.

MAYGIN
How come?

’REMY
She’s a nudist.

MAYGIN
No she’s not!

’REMY
How do you know?

MAYGIN
Because, Remy, I’m your cousin.

’REMY
My cousin’s name is Maygin. With a “y.”

MAYGIN
M-A-Y-G-I-N. Pleased to meet you.

'REMY
Seriously?

MAYGIN
Why don't you get in the car?

JENIFER
Maygin—

MAYGIN
—He's my cousin.

'REMY
Okay.

('REMY sits in back. He leans forward so that his head is between
MAYGIN and JENIFER)

'REMY (Cont'd)
How come you're wearing clothes?

MAYGIN
I might ask you the same.

'REMY
What does that mean?

MAYGIN
It means our parents lied to us.

JENIFER
Imagine that.

'REMY
You another cousin?

MAYGIN
That's Jenifer. For real this time.

(to JENIFER)
There, now he knows the truth.
(to 'REMY)

We're friends.

One “n” or two? ’REMY

One. JENIFER

Remy— MAYGIN

—Could you please use the apostrophe? ’REMY

Excuse me? MAYGIN

My name. It’s ’Remy. ’REMY

Remy. MAYGIN
(the same pronunciation)

’Remy. (the same) ’REMY

Remy. (the same) MAYGIN

Forget it. So how did our folks lie to us? ’REMY

My folks said your folks were nudists. MAYGIN

They are nudists. ’REMY

But ... you’re wearing clothes. MAYGIN

Did they say I was a nudist? ’REMY

MAYGIN

No ...

'REMY

Good. It's disgusting.

(to JENIFER)

For most people, I mean.

JENIFER

(getting out of the car)

I'm taking a leak!

'REMY

(pointing downstage)

There's a couple bushes down that way.

JENIFER

Then I'm going this way.

(JENIFER exits upstage. 'REMY turns to MAYGIN)

'REMY

What's her problem?

MAYGIN

Allergies. Who cares—Remy, why would your parents say I'm a nudist?

'REMY

I guess to be fair, they never said you. But it's a normal enough assumption, your folks being nudists.

MAYGIN

MY FOLKS AREN'T NUDISTS!

'REMY

They co-founded the Hidden Valley Nudist Ranch and Casino.

MAYGIN

The what?

'REMY

Where I grew up. From what I hear, there was this argument, before you or me were born, and your folks left for good.

(taking out his cell phone)

I'll show you the website.

(’REMY performs a quick search, then shows the phone to MAYGIN)

’REMY (Cont’d)

See that couple right there?

MAYGIN

Oh God ...

’REMY

Hey, I bet your mom’s pregnant with you!

MAYGIN

GET OUT OF THE CAR!

’REMY

What? Why?

MAYGIN

You’ve ruined my life!

’REMY

That’s fine, I’ll go. But I’m going to tell you something first.

MAYGIN

Please don’t.

’REMY

Now listen—there’s no problem so big it can’t be made small by the sight of your name unfurled across the sky in red, white, and blue flashes.

MAYGIN

I DON’T WANT A GODDAMN FIREWORK!

’REMY

I’ll let you think it over.

(’REMY gets out of the car. He starts to walk away, then turns back to MAYGIN)

’REMY

You know, there’s a part of me always knew we’d meet someday. I’ll prove it to you.

(He opens a flap in his backpack and pulls out a brilliantly colored rocket)

On the house. 'REMY (Cont'd)

What is it? MAYGIN

It's a Maygin. M-A-Y— 'REMY

—G-I-N? MAYGIN

Don't be a stranger, cuz. 'REMY

(He hands MAYGIN the rocket and exits. After a moment, JENIFER reenters. She looks around to make sure 'REMY is really gone, then gets back in the car)

About time he left. You okay? JENIFER

My parents were nudists! MAYGIN

Join the club. JENIFER

What? Yours? MAYGIN

Yep. JENIFER

No ... I've met them! MAYGIN

You really think I'd let them meet my friends in that condition? JENIFER

But ... don't they like being nudists? MAYGIN

I guess they like me more. JENIFER
(noticing the rocket)

What’s that?

MAYGIN

A Maygin.

JENIFER

A what? Never mind. Aren’t those illegal?

MAYGIN

I won’t light it in front of you.

JENIFER

It’s probably a dud.

(leaning back in her seat)

Wake me when we’re moving. I’ll drive.

(JENIFER closes her eyes. MAYGIN watches her sleep for a moment. Then she looks up through the windshield, as though watching her name unfurl across the sky, letter by letter)

MAYGIN

M-A-Y-G-I-N ...

(She makes a sound like a firework exploding. Blackout. End of play.)

THE CRITIC

a 10-minute play

by Brent Englar

CHARACTERS

DAVID, early 40s

TURNER, the same

WAITRESS

TIME

Early in the day

PLACE

A booth in a coffee shop in a small city. A window looks out on an empty street. Autographed photos of local celebrities dot the walls.

(Lights up on DAVID and TURNER seated across from each other in the booth. DAVID, dressed in a suit and tie, is halfway through a plate of eggs. TURNER wears a wrinkled T-shirt and pajamas; he gestures with a newspaper)

TURNER
Were you even there?

DAVID
Of course I was there.

TURNER
Easy to say.

DAVID
That’s my byline, isn’t it?

TURNER
’Cause you weren’t in your seat.

DAVID
Where exactly is my seat?

TURNER
Back of the theatre. Far from the rabble.

DAVID
It’s a preview, I move around—

TURNER
—I mean, it doesn’t read like you were there.

DAVID
I take my job seriously, Turner—

TURNER
—Oh, so it’s Turner now?

DAVID
May I finish my eggs?

TURNER

It’s just I figured my first new play in nearly four years might at least warrant some nostalgia ...

(reading from the newspaper)

“Mr. Monroe, back from sabbatical, has added another flabby layer to his sagging body of work.”

DAVID

Turner—

TURNER

(still reading)

—“Mr. Monroe picks up right where he left off: swinging for the fences and grounding to the shortstop.”

DAVID

That was a figure of—

TURNER

—That was uncalled for, David! That was uncalled for.

(The WAITRESS enters with a cup of coffee, which she sets before
TURNER)

TURNER (Cont’d)

I didn’t order any coffee.

WAITRESS

You want something else?

TURNER

I already said I’m not—

WAITRESS

—If you don’t want something, it don’t make no sense sitting in a restaurant.

TURNER

Well, I’m with my—

WAITRESS

—Does it?

(She glares at him. He glances at DAVID, who suppresses a smile)

TURNER

I’ll take some eggs.

WAITRESS

How you want 'em?

TURNER

(pointing at DAVID)

What's he having?

WAITRESS

Omelet.

TURNER

Scramble mine.

(She grunts and exits)

TURNER (Cont'd)

(calling after her)

Please!

DAVID

Listen, Turner, I'm sorry I didn't like your play.

TURNER

When's the last time you liked a play I wrote?

DAVID

I don't owe you a good review.

TURNER

Seven years and seven months.

DAVID

Since what?

TURNER

Since your last good review.

DAVID

I'm flattered you remember.

TURNER

That's because it's still the only one in twenty years!

DAVID

What say we paint a silver lining?

TURNER

Are you serious?

DAVID

I am one-hundred percent serious. Turner, that’s twenty year’s worth of productions.

TURNER

Sixteen.

DAVID

Sorry?

TURNER

My “sabbatical.”

DAVID

You’re the one who chose to walk away.

TURNER

Creative juices. You wouldn’t understand.

DAVID

Four years lain fallow—
(gestures toward his review)
For this?

TURNER

Okay, so it’s not Shakespeare.

DAVID

It’s not even bad Shakespeare.

TURNER

Like you would know the difference.

DAVID

You’re right, checkmate—now let me enjoy my cold omelet.

TURNER

Why don’t you like my plays?

DAVID

I—Don’t you read my reviews?

TURNER

I’m asking you now.

(DAVID hesitates. TURNER leans forward)

TURNER (Cont'd)

Go on. I want to know.

DAVID

You don't say anything that you haven't already said. And so damn seriously—can't you even fake a sense of humor?

TURNER

Your writing isn't funny either.

DAVID

I'm a critic! You haven't cracked a joke since college.

TURNER

The real world is less amusing.

(The WAITRESS enters with a coffee pot. She moves to refill TURNER's cup)

TURNER (Cont'd)

I'm fine.

DAVID

It's a bottomless cup.

(to the WAITRESS)

I'll take some too.

(She refills DAVID's cup, then turns to exit)

TURNER

Hang on.

WAITRESS

You want something else?

TURNER

Do you know who I am?

WAITRESS

Cousin Al?

TURNER

I'm serious. Do you know me?

(She stares, uninterested)

Are you a theatergoer?
TURNER (Cont'd)

Nope.
WAITRESS

Do you know him?
TURNER
(pointing at DAVID)

Nope.
WAITRESS

Do you read the newspaper?
TURNER

You write for the P-T?
WAITRESS
(to DAVID)

I do.
DAVID

You know Joan Stovall?
WAITRESS

Not very well.
DAVID

(She shrugs and exits)

You see that? We're in this horseshit town together.
TURNER

This is our home, Turner.
DAVID

Forty years and counting.
TURNER

Then leave.
DAVID

TURNER

Where?

DAVID

New York? Chicago? Hollywood?

(TURNER fiddles with his napkin but says nothing. Outside the coffee shop, a bird crashes into the window and drops to the sidewalk. DAVID and TURNER leap up)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Shit!

TURNER

It's a pigeon!

DAVID

Holy fuck.

TURNER

It's dead.

(They stare out the window. The WAITRESS appears outside. She crosses to where the bird fell and bends down. After a moment, she rises and exits, dead bird in hand. DAVID and TURNER return to their seats)

TURNER (Cont'd)

(finally)

You think I should write a comedy?

DAVID

Jesus, Turner, I don't know.

TURNER

I'm blocked.

DAVID

So why ask me?

TURNER

You're a writer.

DAVID

Do I write plays?

You're my friend.

TURNER

Not at the theater.

DAVID

Bullshit.

TURNER

Sorry?

DAVID

That's bullshit! You're my enemy?

TURNER

I'm neither.

DAVID

Just doing your job?

TURNER

That's right.

DAVID

What's your job?

TURNER

I'm there to review your plays!

DAVID

TURNER

I turn forty-one next month, David. What do I have to show for it? A binder full of programs and newspaper clippings. And too many books full of things that I've already said.

(The WAITRESS enters with a plate of scrambled eggs. She deposits the plate in front of TURNER and hands DAVID his check)

DAVID

I'm still eating.

WAITRESS

No rush.

TURNER

What did you do with it?

WAITRESS

Trash. Damn birds never learn.

DAVID

Why do you think they would?

WAITRESS

Why do you think they wouldn't?

TURNER

What are you doing tonight?

WAITRESS

You asking me on a date?

TURNER

I wrote a play. It's being produced at the Esquire. Would you like a ticket?

WAITRESS

Don't really go for live plays.

TURNER

It's a free ticket. Maybe you'll like it.

(as she hesitates)

Payback for the eggs.

WAITRESS

You gonna take a bite?

(He takes a bite of eggs. She grins)

WAITRESS (Cont'd)

What time?

TURNER

Curtain's at eight.

WAITRESS

(to DAVID)

He any good?

DAVID

I'm biased.

(She exits)

TURNER

You couldn't say yes?

DAVID

What does it matter what I say?

TURNER

Nothing. You're absolutely right. One-hundred percent.

(He stands, pulls out his wallet, and throws a few bills on the table)

Guess I'll be seeing you, David.

DAVID

Turner ...

TURNER

Yeah?

DAVID

You want some pie or something?

TURNER

No.

DAVID

More coffee? My treat, what do you say?

(He holds out the bills TURNER threw on the table)

TURNER

I'll see you around, David.

(TURNER exits. DAVID puts down the money. He shakes his head and takes a sip of coffee as the lights fade to black. End of play.)

PLUNGE

a 10-minute play

by Brent Englar

CHARACTERS

JO, mid-20s

WENDY, the same

MAX, the same

TIME

A bitterly cold day in January

PLACE

A secluded spot along the beach at Sandy Point State Park in Maryland. Upstage, a dune rises against overcast skies; downstage is the Chesapeake Bay. Exits into the bay should happen through the audience.

(Lights up on JO, downstage. She wears water shoes and a long coat and stares happily at the water. For a moment the only sound is the wind. Then a male voice shouts from offstage)

MAX (O.S.)

JO!

JO

(turning to wave)

MAX! HI!

(MAX enters from stage-left, followed by WENDY, who carries a large beach bag. Compared to JO, they are bundled heavily against the cold. At the sight of WENDY, JO’s smile fades)

MAX

Sorry we’re late.

JO

It’s no problem.

(looking at his sneakers)

Your feet are going to freeze.

MAX

So is the rest of me.

JO

It starts with the feet.

(to WENDY)

I’m Jo.

(JO extends her hand. WENDY does not take it)

MAX

Wendy gave me a ride.

JO

I would have given you a ride.

MAX

I didn’t want to impose.

JO

But I invited you.

WENDY

Can you both get on with it? I’m freezing.

JO

Why are you here, Wendy?

WENDY

Max doesn’t drive.

MAX

I catered her dinner party. She owes me.

JO

That’s charming. And now ...?

WENDY

Max wants to go swimming.

MAX

I want to be a polar bear.

WENDY

Jo is not a polar bear. She is a person who has forgotten that people do not swim in sub-freezing temperatures.

JO

Max, come here.

(JO pulls MAX downstage)

JO (Cont’d)

Max ...

MAX

Yes?

JO

Why are you here?

MAX

You made it sound so exciting, when I heard you in the café, you seemed happy just thinking about it—I thought, I want to feel like that.

JO

Why here? You can plunge anywhere.

MAX

You invited me.

WENDY

FREEZING!

JO

I look forward to this all year. The weather perfect. The beach to myself. But Max, you seemed interested, so fine, I said, come along. You were sweet. And stepping into that water is an experience no one should miss.

WENDY

So step already—please!

JO

Not even you.

WENDY

Me?

JO

Yeah.

WENDY

But I don't want to.

JO

BUT I DO! AND YOU'RE RUINING IT FOR ME!

MAX

I brought cocoa.

(JO and WENDY stare. MAX grabs the beach bag)

MAX (Cont'd)

It's Cordillera chocolate. From Colombia. It's delicious.

(MAX takes a thermos and several cups from the bag and begins pouring cocoa)

JO

You're not serious.

MAX
My own recipe.

WENDY
(to JO)
It is good.

JO
You’ve had it?

WENDY
Of course.

(MAX hands JO a cup. She takes a small sip)

JO
It’s good.

MAX
Are you nuts? It’s the best you’ve ever had.

(MAX hands another cup to WENDY, pours one for himself, and returns the thermos to the beach bag. A long moment of silence as they sip and savor the taste)

JO
Is there whiskey in here?

MAX
A very little bit.

JO
It’s good. What else is in the bag?

MAX
Change of clothes and a towel.

WENDY
(to JO)
Don’t you have a change of clothes?

JO
I’m wearing it.

WENDY
How do you mean?

JO
I go in naked.

WENDY
(to MAX)
You had no idea, I’m sure.

MAX
Should I be naked?

JO
I recommend it.

WENDY
(looking around)
Don’t more people usually do this?

JO
The official plunge is next weekend. There’s thousands of people. It’s a nightmare.

WENDY
I can imagine.

JO
No, you can’t.
(to MAX)
You ready?

(MAX stares nervously at the water but says nothing)

JO (Cont’d)
Suit yourself.

(JO steps toward the bay and starts to unbutton her coat. MAX grabs her arm)

MAX
What’s it like?

JO
It’s like a thousand-pound icicle explodes on your body. A couple more seconds and your legs go numb. You turn back to shore but they don’t. You ready?

MAX
I think I’ll have some more cocoa.

JO

I’m going in over there. Please don’t follow me.

(JO exits into the stage-right wing. MAX pours himself another cup of cocoa, then offers the thermos to WENDY)

WENDY

No thank you.

MAX

There’s not much left.

WENDY

Where did you meet her again?

MAX

The café.

WENDY

The coffee shop?

MAX

She drinks tea.

WENDY

She’s cute.

MAX

That’s not why I came.

WENDY

Then why, Max?

MAX

I WANT TO BE A POLAR BEAR, I TOLD YOU!

(taking a big drink of cocoa)

Do you think she’s angry?

WENDY

I think anger is her natural state.

MAX

You made her angry first.

WENDY

I didn’t chase her away.

(WENDY points offstage)

WENDY (Cont'd)

Oh lord, she really is naked ...

(MAX spins around to look. He and WENDY stare offstage for a long moment)

MAX

Jesus ...

WENDY

Max, take off your damn clothes and get in the water.

MAX

Wendy, I—

WENDY

—NOW!

(As though inspired, MAX drains his cocoa in one gulp and throws down the cup. He strips to his boxer shorts, screams, and charges into the water. WENDY takes a digital camera from the beach bag)

WENDY

MAX!

(waving)

CHEESE, MAX!

(WENDY takes a picture. JO re-enters from the stage-right wing, wrapped as before in her coat; her hair is wet)

JO

Where'd he go?

(WENDY points at the water. JO crosses downstage and stares)

JO (Cont'd)

He looks like a crazy man.

WENDY

What about you?

JO

No idea.

(WENDY takes a picture of JO, then turns the camera around so that JO can see herself)

JO (Cont'd)

I look ill.

WENDY

What do I look like?

JO

Very sensible. Let me ask you something ...

WENDY

Go ahead.

JO

Are Max and I supposed to be on a date?

WENDY

You don't know?

JO

I thought maybe ... but you came too.

WENDY

Somebody has to hold the camera.

JO

You two aren't ... are you?

WENDY

I'm his sister. Jo, to tell you the truth ...

JO

Yeah?

WENDY

I think Max just wanted to be a polar bear.

(They stand quietly and watch MAX cavort. Finally JO turns to leave)

JO

It was nice meeting you, Wendy.

WENDY

What about Max?

JO

Tell him next year he should bring water shoes.

(JO exits into the stage-left wing. WENDY takes one more picture of MAX. She picks up the discarded cups and places them in the bag with the camera, then puts down the bag and strips to her underwear. With an insane scream she sprints into the water. Blackout. End of play.)