

Parked
by
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Characters:

LUKE – an architect. Late 20’s or Early-Mid 30’s. Has just opened up an architecture firm with LORENA– who has been his friend from childhood. Organic, somewhat spiritual (raised Catholic), can be considered “laid-back” at times, although he is driven by what he loves. Idealistic.

LORENA – an architect as well. Same age as LUKE. Half Jewish/Half Catholic. She is high-strung and a little neurotic; a perfectionist. Fearing abandonment, she often closes up, and puts on thick shields; although, despite the shields, she’s quite sensitive underneath all the layers. She has known LUKE since childhood.

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

1. Reading at The Arkansas Theatre Rep. Aug. 2007 for their festival “Voices at The River” – for emerging Black and Latino Playwrights.
2. Performance at The Cameleon Theatre, Amsterdam. May 3, 2008.
3. Performance at Just The Funny Theatre in Miami. Dec. 27, 2009.

“...the promises of leaves
And the promises of glass ...”
-Michael Palmer

SCENE 1

One Act

Before the scene even begins, somewhere in the backdrop --on a screen, for example, the audience sees:

*“the promise of leaves
And the promises of glass...” (Quote by Michael Palmer)*

The inside of LUKE and LORENA’s architecture studio/apartment in Manhattan. LUKE and LORENA have been friends from childhood and now roommates and business partners. They are both in their late twenties (perhaps even early 30’s) and we catch them, now, in the middle of an argument. The radio is on in the background and the song Leroy Brown is on. They have been working all night; it’s early morning now – around seven am.

Lights go up first on the open window in their apartment which faces a shaft and the brick wall of the building next to theirs. The lights then pan to LUKE and LORENA. New York City sounds are heard coming in from the window throughout.

LUKE is full of clay. LORENA is impeccably dressed. LORENA’S first lines are heard while the lights are still on the brick wall.

LORENA

[As she goes about her business, hard at work]

Fine, leave then. Slip out the back, Jack, get in the van, Stan ...

LUKE

So you’ve been listening to Paul Simon again?

LORENA

You have a problem with Paul Simon?

LUKE

You see, this is why I have to get out of here.

LORENA

Fine, just go...

[*Pauses and then, to annoy him, adds a rhyme*]

“Joe.”

LUKE

[*Luke is exasperated*]

I’m only going for a damn walk.

LORENA

So do it. Go. Go get your air, your fresh, fresh air.

LUKE

What’s wrong with air?

LORENA

Nothing, I just don’t get what’s wrong with *this* air, this air right here. I’m breathing it, I’m fine.

LUKE

First of all, you’re not fine. You’re flipping out like a fish out of water And, if you must know, what’s wrong with this air is that my fingers are blistered from building this thing and I’m tired and this air is choking me with all this fucking clay smell, not to mention the shit and piss smell that’s permanently embedded in the air waves.

LORENA

It doesn’t smell like shit.

LUKE

Oh really, because just a second ago I thought it was the end of the world and all the rats in Manhattan were rotting in this apartment.

LORENA

It’s not my fault that Mo’s got stomach problems, what do you want me to do about it, Luke?

LUKE

I don’t know feed him better food, Science Diet or whatever. I don’t care, that’s not the point. Because, it’s not just the smell of cat and cat litter and cat litter dust and cat piss and cat shit that’s bothering me anyway, it’s also all the fucking hair that’s gotten stuck all over the clay so that every time I try to even *attempt* anything in the model it’s like molding a fur ball.

LORENA

What do you want then? Just tell me, what is it you want me to do? Throw Mo out the window, is that what you want? Or what? You wanna stop building this thing?

LUKE

You know very well we can't stop building this thing. We promised. We're under contract. We have a deadline.

LORENA

You promised. *You* signed the contract. Forty-eight hours, Luke! We have forty-eight hours! [*obviously concerned about the time pressure*] I would have never taken this on, you know that. You've known me long enough to know that I don't take on impossible tasks. I take on jobs we can do and do well, jobs that build our reputation, not destroy it. This is a death wish for us.

LUKE

Yes, Lorena I may have *physically* signed the contract, but need I remind you that it's *our* firm, and therefore, *our* project.

LORENA

Yeah, but all this "ideal urban environment Utopia" bullshit is just like you –

LUKE

[*Cutting her off. Escalating into slight hysteria*]

-- It's not Utopia, it's just a park. Nothing's worked in that spot before and so the city's decided on a park. All the place needs is a park. We're making a model for a park, that's it. A park. A park, a park, a park. Just a freakin' park.

LORENA

Yeah, but I know you, in your little head, you want Utopia.

LUKE

You see, you see. This is why ... This is –

LORENA

[*Interrupting*]

-- Why what?

LUKE

[*Slower. Trying to keep himself calm and in-check*]

Why I have to go for a walk.

LORENA

This is ridiculous. This whole project is ridiculous, what's to 'architect' about a park anyway?

LUKE

Are you kidding me?! Great architect you are! It's the ULTIMATE architecture you ass, it's designing around nature ...

LORENA

Which is ridiculous.

LUKE

It's not ridiculous, it's difficult.

LORENA

So why are we doing it, why'd you take it on? We had a gagillion other job offers -- with longer time lines ...

LUKE

Because it's hard, I took it on *because* it's hard.

LORENA

[*Mocking*]

"Because it's hard," listen to you. I can't believe I'm your partner. We're nothing like each other. I don't want to make big, open things. I want to make buildings, I want things that stand there, hard and tall as fucking oaks, except they're not oaks, they're not your glittering little trees, they're things *I* made, *I* designed, not just some fucking seed and dirt!

LUKE

My god you're an egomaniac!

LORENA

First of all, you should know that by now, don't act so damn surprised. And second, look who's talking, Mr. "let's go and build a castle in the air, fair castle made of leaf and bush" and all that unite-man-with-nature-Walden-Pond crap!

LUKE

There must be toxic mold in this clay or something -- you're totally mad --

LORENA

[*She stares at him, there's a pause*]

... I just don't know why you have to go for a walk now, right now, right when we've gotten to this point, when all we really need to do is buckle down and –

LUKE

[Interrupting. Exhausted of arguing]

--Because I'm tired. I know you don't get tired. I know you're like speed on speed. But I get tired and my eyes start to hurt and my body starts to feel weak. I get tired. Like a normal human being, I get tired. And I need to go for a walk to unwind.

LORENA

No one's stopping you.

LUKE

[Looks at her like she's crazy. Like she's ridiculous. Pauses.]

You know what? I'm just gonna go. Come, go, stay, wait... whatever, but I need a break. *[Luke cleans his hands quickly of the clay as he says this line; puts on his jacket and turns to go. Lorena, against her true will, reluctantly, and huffing and puffing the whole time through, gives in and follows him out the door].*

SCENE 2

LUKE and LORENA are walking towards Central Park. LUKE is leading until LORENA catches up. We must feel New York City around them. There is a street performer tuning his flute, getting ready for the days work. Taxis honking, city bustling, etc. Early morning in a city that never sleeps.

Note to Director: The Flute Performer will come back later, in a similar fashion. It is a Directorial choice to either have another actor here, or simply creatively use a prop, a filmic device, or a screen, etc that solves the placement of a flute player here.

LORENA

[Walking briskly, catching up, looking or acting pumped]

Okay, so let's get brainstorming.

[Pause]

What about a clock tower? What do you think about a clock tower, a really, really old-looking one, art nouveau-nineteenth-century-Paris type thing. Woody and yellow and all pink/melon colors. Whataya think?

LUKE

What?

LORENA

A clock tower. For our park. A really amazing clock tower.

LUKE

You shouldn't have anymore of that Chai Tea. One second you're screaming at me and now you're talking about a "clock tower," what is this *Back to the Future*? ... Or is this about your Germany-trip again? I don't know how healthy that trip was for you.

LORENA

What are you now – a shrink?

LUKE

It doesn't exactly take a behavioral genius to figure out that trip did something to you. And why won't you tell me anything about it? It's...it's annoying—

LORENA

[*Sarcastic and annoyed herself*] Well I'm sorry little Luke is annoyed – it's not exactly like we have time to "catch-up." Blame yourself for that—

LUKE

--We can take a break you know. Talk. I mean, what happened? Did you find her?

LORENA

Nothing...I already told you I didn't find anything. Plus, it's not about the trip – this is about you being a total prick and signing a contract behind my back—

LUKE

--It was a good opportunity for us!—

LORENA

--I'm jetlagged and I'm stressed. I mean, for God's sake Luke, what did you expect? You pick me up from the airport and I'm all happy to see you and be home and get slowly back into the swing of things -- and then you hit me with this shit and here we are two days later, no progress, and me with a massive set of bags under my eyes – and a headache the size of Australia.

LUKE

I couldn't just let this opportunity slip through our fingers... You weren't answering my emails or phone calls and I called you and IM'd you and texted you every three seconds.

LORENA

I was busy.

LUKE

[Frustrated with her. Tired again.]

You're always busy, Lorena. That's the freakin' problem... You're Type-A workhorse crap is gonna give you a heart-attack at 38. Sorry, but it's true. There's nothing wrong with taking--

LORENA

(Cutting him off, knowing exactly what he's going to say)--We don't have time for breaks—

LUKE

Fine. *[giving up]* Go, tell me your idea...Just—

LORENA

[Getting right to it and not without excitement]

--A Clock Tower. A fabulous-looking clock tower.

LUKE

I don't know. People shouldn't have to be worried about time in a park. Time shouldn't exist when you're sitting on a park bench.

LORENA

Really? Says who? That's when people are *most* worried about time. "Let me see how fast I can scarf down this pretzel before I have to go back to work?" "How many minutes left until I have to punch back in?" "When is he coming, is he late, is he going to stand me up, I'm such a loser, what time is it, if he doesn't show up in ten minutes I'm leaving, I don't know why I date ..."

LUKE

[Interrupting]

Okay, okay, I get it.

LORENA

All I'm saying is a clock tower is something to think about...

[Both characters have reached Central Park at this point].

LUKE

Something to think about...
[Looking around, inhaling the air]
 on this perfect New York day.

LORENA

[As LUKE is taking in the day, LORENA looks briefly at her watch, and then gives in to looking at LUKE as he looks around. She sighs.]

There's no such thing as a perfect day.

[Pause]

...Except when we were kids, maybe we had a couple back then...Remember the Legos my mother gave us? She bought them for my brother, but he never played with them so she gave them to us one day when we kept complaining we were bored, and said: "here guys, make a kingdom."

LUKE

[Laughs] Oh my god, yes, how many world's did we make? Over and over... under your mother's bed, under the kitchen sink, in her closet. But you'd always tear them down, and I'd get so mad at you. I always felt like you had no right to do that...they were mine too.

LORENA

They weren't good enough.

LUKE

They were perfect.

LORENA

We pretended to be every person in the world in those Lego houses. Superstars...and astrologers.

LUKE

Best friends.

LORENA

Mortal enemies.

LUKE

Ken and Barbie.

LORENA

[laughing] Oh my god, I totally forgot. We used my mother's flip-flops as their bed...

LUKE

And in the background the sound of her blow dryer while she ironed-out people's hair...

LORENA

With the oldies station on...

[*And then, suddenly, looking at her watch and turning back to the park project*] So, back to the Tower, What d'ya say we try the clock tower on for size?

SCENE 3

When the scene opens LUKE and LORENA are inside somewhere dark and cavernous. This will turn out to be their Clock Tower, from the inside, already constructed – sometime in the future. The scene is bleak, although it feels like, at some point, this was a majestic structure. There are hints of the art-nouveau/Parisian style and pink/melon colors LORENA had mentioned before.

They are imagining this episode as if they were two other people in the clock tower that has already been built. In other words they are “playing out” the roles they are imagining in the structure they are creating, like they did when they were kids. As Lorena says, “trying them on for size.” They can either be wearing accents of other people's clothing (their characters') or more than just accents. To differentiate these characters they might also take on other accents verbally.

LORENA leads LUKE into the fantasy. Pieces of the true LUKE and LORENA resonate throughout the fantasy sequence, as they will also do later in the play.

Throughout, the echo of the ticking of the clock is heard along with wind.

There are battery powered lamps, flashlights, lighters, lanterns, things of that nature. Sound of wind is heard throughout. LORENA is wearing a

gas mask as a hat and LUKE has a backpack nearby. There is a baguette sticking out of it.

LORENA

[Singing, somewhat dramatically, making fun of the song a little]
...In the year 3535, if Man is still alive...

LUKE

Very funny...Not that song, that's the worst song ever, please. *[small pause]* In fact, a little silence wouldn't hurt. *[gusts of eerie wind are heard from the outside.]*

LORENA

Good luck getting any peace with that wind blowin'.
[Another eerie gust is heard. LORENA pauses to listen, then nodding as if she knows something, pointing at the wind] Mm-huh, that there wind is blowing a strange way.

LUKE

What do you mean "a strange way?"

LORENA

I mean I've heard stuff about the wind, about when the wind changes direction or about which direction it's going, about the positive ions that are blowing around that fuck with your head.

LUKE

Positive ions? What are you talking about?

LORENA

I'm serious. Like the Santa Anas in California or – whatever, I don't know, it's all bunch of BS.

[Pause]

'Sides, what do you need silence for anyway?

LUKE

Well, if you must know. I just had a major crisis. A change in career paths if you will and I'm trying to get my life in order, which is what I was trying to do before all this doomsday crap started with the mega red-nuclear-terror alert and, well, now I just have to think about bigger things, which I was planning on doing here, except you were here and you won't stop talking and ...

LORENA

[*Interrupting*]
 --Did you get fired? --

LUKE

...No, not exactly--

LORENA

--Did you quit your Wall Street job because the stock dropped or because you wanted to "lose the suit and become an artist?" [*says this last bit while making imaginary quotation marks with her hands*]

LUKE

[*A little annoyed*]
 Stop doing that. I hate imaginary quotation marks. Anyway, no. That's not what happened.

LORENA

So ... What? What then?

LUKE

I was in the seminary. Studying to be a priest.

LORENA

No kidding?!

LUKE

Not kidding at all.

LORENA

So why'd you drop it? You don't look like a priest. You're too...

LUKE

Too what?

LORENA

Nothing.

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LUKE

Too handsome?

LORENA

[*Giving him a sideways look*] Who knew wannabe priests were so flirtatious.

LUKE

[Playing along and taking the bait]

Actually that was part of the problem. I thought I was being called but then I realized -- I just wasn't committed enough. I mean what about love? *[very brief pause]* Real, *physical* love... isn't that an expression of God too; could I really give that up? *[Lorena looks at him with the same sideways glance, then with a question mark written on her face, and then looks down, like it's hitting too close to home and he drops the bait. All done fairly quickly]* ... I just felt like I needed to run off to a cave or something for a while, you know what I mean. Think. Like St. Ignatius of Loyola.

LORENA

[grateful that they've changed the subject]
Who?

LUKE

St. Ignatius of Loyola. He mapped out spiritual exercises for people while he meditated in a tiny little cave. Taught them how to question their inner selves... Legend has it, that when he died and they autopsied his body, they found tons of ulcers, because he wouldn't eat, you know... he was too caught up in bigger things; couldn't be bothered with something silly, like eating.

LORENA

[Sarcastic]
Right...

LUKE

Fine, be that way.
[LUKE rolls his eyes at her like he's done with her and is going to go to another corner of the cave, but she calls him back with the next couple of lines before he can turn from her]

LORENA

No, wait, don't go to sleep... Okay... So, you dropped the priesthood for the sainthood.

[Pause, then more bubbly] Well, look on the bright side, this is kind of like a cave.

LUKE

Not really, no, this scenario isn't exactly what I had in mind. I'm here because I'm selfish and because I don't want to die mostly.

LORENA

Me too. But don't let them fool you, everybody's selfish. Trust me, if more people knew about this place it'd be more crowded than the train to Auschwitz.

LUKE

How'd you find out about this place?

LORENA

I like archives. Read about it on microfilm. In the deepest pit of a library in Germany.

LUKE

[Luke's ears peak, like it's something he's been wanting to hear. He's trying to remain in character but this is one of those moments where LUKE shows through the game – due to their earlier conversation. Luke is curious.] A public library?

LORENA

No, not public. It was at the house where I was staying. I got a grant to do some research and that's where I went...I was researching my grandmother. The house belonged to this bizarre guy who had a private underground archive with a bunch of Nazi documents and Survivor statistics in files and files and files. He also had a ton of history and engineering journals, stuff like that. Tons of tunnels, like some freakish Howard Hughes thing. No museum could pay him as much as he wanted for it, so it just stayed there, and people visit it.

LUKE

Was your grandmother a Survivor?

LORENA

I don't know.

LUKE

What were you looking for?

LORENA

Just that. I was trying to find her, figure out what happened to her. My grandfather abandoned her. He was a Christian. She was a Jew, and he left her behind. He took my mother with him to the States, but he left my grandmother behind. Can you believe that? I mean what kind of person does that? *[Pausing, nodding her head in disbelief]. [Somewhat sarcastically/ with a hint of cynicism]* What's funny is that, in the end, my mother fell in love with some version of her father and she got left too.

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LUKE

Except she wasn't a Jew in Nazi Germany

LORENA

[Getting a little bitter]

No, my mother was a Jew with bad luck and a kid in a different kind of ghetto – a New York one, big difference, you're right. But so what? We still got left. But I guess that's what men do, they leave.

LUKE

[Not knowing how to deal with the tail-end of the comment, LUKE ignores it]
Did you find your grandmother?

LORENA

No...I couldn't read a lot of the files because so much of them were in German. But they had a lot of stuff in English, and in Hebrew, which I can read...*[pausing only slightly]* anyway, that's where I read about the two whack-job architects who built this clock tower--

LUKE

[Interrupting]
--Right—

LUKE/LORNENA

[in unison]
-- Luke Wood and Lorena Steel –

LORENA

[Both laughing lightly a little. Then Lorena Interrupting/continuing]
--Right ...it was in a volume of *Architronic* from a while back and it was talking about structures and about where the best places to hide would be if there was a nuclear war. So, yeah, I thought it might be good thing to know and ...well, here we are, aren't we.

LUKE

Indeed. Here we are...
[Pause. Then going back to their conversation]
When you were in Germany, did you go to the camps?

LORENA

Sort of.

LUKE

What do you mean sort of?

LORENA

I stood outside for a long time and after what I felt outside, I just didn't think I had to go in.

LUKE
You were scared.

LORENA
Have you ever been there?

LUKE
No.

LORENA
Then don't tell me what I was. How would you know? Besides, you're not me, you can't tell me what I was or wasn't feeling. You have no idea.

LUKE
You're right. I'm sorry.

LORENA
[There is a very brief pause and then a change of subject]
How long should we give it do you think?

LUKE
What?

LORENA
The war...you know, outside. How will we know if they've attacked, how will we know when it's over?

LUKE
I have no idea. Could be anything – the end could never come; could be 48 hours, who knows?
[Again, gusts of wind]

LORENA
Well, at least we're not out there linking up, or whatever the plan is, in that big stupid world-wide chain of theirs.

LUKE
I don't think it's stupid.

LORENA
You don't think it's stupid? What's wrong with you?...It's doomsday solidarity, it makes me wanna choke all of them. All those quilt-loving imbeciles....I'm warning you, don't get sentimental because I can tell you right now, I'm not gonna sit here and hold your hand and say an Our Father like your little world-wide-chain-gang.

LUKE

You're no good.

LORENA

And you're strange fruit. You might as well face it.

LUKE

What does that mean? What, like a fig?

LORENA

It means you're dead and swinging off a poplar tree and there's nothing you can do about it.

LUKE

I don't think I like you.

LORENA

Well, that's really pretty tough because it might just be you and me for a while.

LUKE

If not forever ... Oh god.

LORENA

Great, me and a drop-out priest, responsible for the continuation of the species.

There's a moment of silence between them. They fidget. Perhaps one of them draws circles on the dirt ground of the tower with a stick. Something like this. They look at each other, then away. Until LORENA speaks.

LORENA

--Do you suppose the government has a place like this where they can save certain people that they pick and then they hide them away, you know, in pairs -- just in case, for the continuation of the race. Like the president and Stephen Hawking or something, and I don't know, Nobel Laureates and super models.

[Pause]

Who would you pick to go in?

LUKE

You mean besides us?

LORENA

Right, besides us, of course.

LUKE

I don't know, but it'd be kind of interesting if instead of picking people like the president, you picked only one kind of person... [*LORENA puts on a face like she doesn't quite get it, LUKE follows, explaining*] Like if you collected a bunch of the same kind of people -- a bunch of poets or something and that was it, only poets.

LORENA

That'd be a disaster.

LUKE

[*Laughs*]

It might.

LORENA

Let's not get into Utopias, we can see how well that idea worked out for America.

LUKE

[*The wind blows loudly again. Both of them Pause*]

I think I want to go to sleep.

LORENA

[*panicking a little; trying to stray him from sleep*]

Now? You want to go to sleep now, you wanna waste your time sleeping? C'mon, don't go.

LUKE

I'm not going anywhere, I *can't* go anywhere. I'm just going to sleep.

LORENA

[*Worried*]

You might die in your sleep.

LUKE

Then pray the lord my soul to keep, etc etc. Anyway, please leave me alone. I'm going to rest for a little while. And then I'm going to wake up and I'm going to meditate, and you're going to leave me alone and let me do all of that [*turning his back to lie down on the ground*].

LORENA

[*LORENA starts to loose her breath just slightly*]

This is nothing like I thought it would be.

LUKE

[*His back still turned to her, she staring at his back*]

What would be?

LORENA

[Again, slight loss of breath. Trying to catch it, but still very much under control – an anxiety is approaching slowly]

The end.

LUKE

[LUKE'S back still turned to her]

What did you think it would be?

LORENA

I don't know, but not like this.

[Her breathing is beginning to get agitated. The wind is loud]

I didn't think it would be just me in this place, all alone.

LUKE

You aren't exactly alone. What am I, chopped liver?

LORENA

You might as well be...you're just lying there with your back turned, sleeping...and I'll be here all alone while they zap us to death *[her breathing goes escalates]*.

LUKE

[Turning back to face her]

Jesus, calm down.

LORENA

I can't breathe. My arm's numb – isn't that the sign of a heart attack?

LUKE

[Now totally facing her, concerned, trying to help]

Right or left?

LORENA

Both, they're both numb.

LUKE

Move them around.

LORENA

I'm serious, they're really numb...and I can't really ... I can't really ... can't ... *[Unable to catch her breath]*

LUKE

Relax. You're just having a panic attack.

LORENA

I can't ... breathe.

LUKE

Calm down, you have to calm down, you're hyperventilating.

LORENA

I can't ... I can't ... I ... can't brea ...br ...brea ...b ... bb ...b...

LUKE

Come on, just breathe slowly, try and do it slowly, you'll catch it back.

SCENE 4

LORENA and LUKE are sitting on a park bench. They are back to "reality," so to speak. LORENA has her head between her legs, trying to catch her breath.

LUKE

[Rubbing her back softly]

Come on, just breathe slowly, try and do it slowly, you'll catch it back. Just chill out, we're going to meet our deadline, it's all going to be fine.

LORENA

It can't just be fine. It has to be great. It has to be really great; every other architect has failed at this spot, ours has to be good, really good *[panic is still simmering]*.

LUKE

Ours is going to be perfect, don't worry.

LORENA

How do you know? What if our park sucks?

LUKE

[Smirking a little – knowing just the thing to pull her out of this]

It can't. We took an oath.

LORENA

[remembering, laughing a little] The-Coney-Island-Pact-of-Blood.

LUKE

How did it go?

LORENA

(Like she can't believe he's forgotten)

You don't remember it?

LUKE

I remember the feeling...riding the Ferris wheel; us deciding about going to architecture school and opening up the firm—

LORENA

--(Lifting her head. Reciting and cutting him off, holding up her right hand. Serious and dramatic and making fun of herself at the same time; smiling) I do solemnly swear to house the world's souls in building that sing. Marble, stone, and everything old –

LUKE

--(Picking it up where she leaves off. Remembering, finishing her line. It makes LORENA happy that he remembers. Laughing a little, reminiscing.) structures with stories to be told—

LUKE/LORENA

--towers of gold.

LUKE

And then you cut me.

LORENA

(Laughing)

Well, yeah...helloo, bond-of-blood, right. There's no other way to do it.

[Realizing he's just calmed her down...getting back into reality, out of the memory]

Okay...okay. Thanks...I feel better.

[Pause. Deep inhale and exhale.]

So, the clock tower? What happens in our story?

LUKE

Well, Brownie and Iggy Jr., they think it's all over, the end of the world, the big bang or the second big bang or whatever, so they go outside ... and die. But they die not because of nuclear holocaust, but because they get shot by American Armed Forces who think they're terrorists, hiding out, planning, plotting. They get gunned down, Bonnie and Clyde style.

LORENA

So what we're saying is that the clock tower is out of the question.

LUKE

[With a quick nod]

On to other ideas, my girl.

[Says this as he slaps her knees lightly with his hand and gets up]

Let's walk a little.

They start to walk, slowly this time. The backdrop is a large screen with images of the park wandering by with its meandering sidewalks, its vistas, bridges, fountains, rocks, and sculptures. As if they are strolling through all of this, taking it in and thinking.

LUKE

What about sculpture?

LORENA

Like what sculpture?

LUKE

I don't know, sculpture. A sculpture garden, maybe? Tuileries... The Rodin Museum?

LORENA

Feeling Parisian much?

LUKE

Yeah, a little, I guess ...Have you ever been to Paris? Paris is wonderful.

*[Smiling]*When I first went to Paris it was cold and I collected dead leaves from the ground so that I could make bookmarks. I laminated them.

LORENA

[Sarcasm mixed with actual questioning]

When was that? In college?

LUKE

Yeah, Sophomore year.

LORENA

So anyway, for the sculptures, are we thinking bronze and bold or grand and metal, or grand and woody, or woody and –

LUKE

--I'm thinking let's go wood.

LORENA

How organic of you. But, okay. Wood is good. I'm thinking wood is good too. What about trees? Should we have fruit growing on these trees? Fruit

could work, don't you think? People could pick it and it would add color.
And mosaics, a little Gaudi.

LUKE

[They are getting excited, rolling out ideas]
Yeah. Benches, Mosaics –

LORENA

[She's getting into it. Physically, verbally]
Lamps, lamp posts like the kind Gene Kelly would see and say: I gotta swing 'round that one.

LUKE

[Smiles at her]
Definitely lamps like that.

LORENA

And what about the entranceway?

LUKE

Twisted wood, you know, like branches all linked up in a massive natural-looking arch of wood and vine. Really grand and dense but really delicate too -- like the meeting of a nineteenth century metro station and the trunk of a mossed-out, thousand year-old tree in the middle of the Amazon.

LORENA

Fantastic.

LUKE

Good.

LORENA

So, we've got an entrance then.
[Pause]
What does this mean for the rest of the design?

LUKE

It means we have to get a little wild and the trees have to be tall and I'm thinking it should all be enclosed, like a paradise enclave. An island.

LORENA

Good, very good.
[And then a pause, and out of nowhere]
Say, Luke, why'd you make yourself a priest in the clock tower anyway?

LUKE

Say, [*Mocking her "say"*] I don't know.

LORENA

Yes you do.

LUKE

No, I don't. I really don't.

LORENA

Did you ever want to be one?

LUKE

Yeah, just like all Catholic school kids, I guess. You know how it is, I'm sure you probably had nun fantasies.

LORENA

No. Nope.

LUKE

Never?! You never wanted to be nun? Not even just a little? Never even curious?

LORENA

Um, no.

LUKE

That's weird.

LORENA

No, it's not weird. You're weird.

LUKE

You weren't totally fascinated by them at school?

LORENA

No. And I wasn't fascinated by the rabbis either although God knows my mother, rest her soul, tried to push them on me to no end.

LUKE

[*Laughing*] Yeah, your mom was really serious about you grabbing hold of your Jewish roots...I never really got why she kept you in Catholic School...

LORENA

Mom just kept me in Catholic School after he left because I'd already been there forever and she didn't want me to be away from all the friends

I'd made...But after my father left, we never went to church again, just temple. So no, never had the nun thing going...and Rabbis didn't really get to me either.

LUKE

And now you're nothing.

LORENA

[*Getting slightly offended*]

What do you mean I'm nothing?

LUKE

[*Brushing it off*]

You know, atheist, you know what I mean...[*moving on, away from the offense*] Anyway, priests did get to me. I was totally enthralled. I memorized how to give a mass and once, the first time I ever got drunk in my life, it was at one of my parent's Christmas parties, and I started performing a mass for everyone at the party. I stood at the top of the stairs and just started reciting and then I took a jug of wine and a glass and a bowl of rice crackers that was lying on the table and I started putting the rice crackers in all the guests mouths while saying: "body of Christ ... body of Christ ..." the guests thought it was hilarious. Oh, and I draped a table cloth over myself to make it look like a priestly robe ... my parents were mortified. But it was a big hit with the guests, I'm telling you, and they fueled me on, so it lasted for a while. I must've been like fourteen or something like that, and I remember feeling like one of the Von Trapp kids, getting all that attention. Except I wasn't singing departing ditties and lullabies, I was chanting in Latin [*Laughs*]. I gave the *entire* mass in Latin, don't think I took the easy route. No, no.

LORENA

Typical. [*Smirks*] I'd give anything to have been there.

Moment of silence. They just walk/stroll, side by side.

LUKE

What about you, Lo? You've wanted to be an architect ever since I can remember, was there anything before that? Anything to match my embarrassing little priest confession there? [*genuinely interested*]

LORENA

I wanted to be a violinist.

LUKE

Really? I don't remember that.

LORENA

Really.

LUKE

But you don't play the violin... Do you? [*doubting his memory – or what she might have disclosed in the past to him*]

LORENA

No, never picked up a real violin in my life. My aunt gave me a plastic one for one of my birthdays and I played it a lot, but it sounded squeaky, you know, since it was really just a plastic bow screeching across plastic strings.

LUKE

Sounds like a parent's worst nightmare.

LORENA

Yeah, pretty much. They should've understood though, how excited I was about it, and maybe, who knows, I could've turned out to have been an arrogant violinist with a ton of black dresses.

LUKE

Did you ever ask for lessons?

LORENA

[*A little bitter*]

No, I thought it was something they should've given me without me having to ask. You know, like your parents know to feed you, you don't have to say, when you're a baby, "mom, I'm hungry." They should just know the shit that makes your eyes glimmer, they should be able to see that. You know what I'm saying?

LUKE

No. How would they know if you didn't tell them? Got to ask for what you want.

LORENA

I played that plastic violin all the fucking time.

[*Bitter and in turns dramatic*]

My little baby fingers bled from playing that plastic violin.

LUKE

You're being melodramatic.

LORENA

[*Sad*]
It was yellow.

LUKE

[*Sincere*]
Wow, now that's cool. A yellow vilolin.

LORENA

I thought so.

LUKE

Well at least your mother wasn't totally devoid of intuition – she did give us those Legos, didn't she?

LORENA

[*smirking with recognition*] That she did.

LUKE

[*LUKE stops to say this, facing LORENA*]
Whatdya say, come Wednesday, hump day, hand-in day, culmination day—

LORENA

[*Interrupting*]
--Halleluiah day --

LUKE

--We celebrate by going up to Lincoln Center for a Violin Concerto, they're doing Vivaldi I heard, The Four Seasons.

LORENA

And then some pink champagne at Café Mozart –[*then suddenly remembering something*]. Oh, but no, no. Shit! Wednesday I can't.

LUKE

Why not? Wednesday's done-day, forty-eight hours from now we're free birds again.

LORENA

[*hesitant*] Yeah, but, before you even signed the contract, I ...I'd made plans to go –

LUKE

--What? A date? [*at first playful*]

LORENA

Not a date, no I just. I'm going out with, with [*blushing*] ... a friend.

LUKE

[Teasing]

Oh, so you *do* have a date! Who with?

LORENA

It's not a date.

LUKE

Okay, whatever. Who are you *not* dating?

LORENA

JK Harrington.

LUKE

JK Harrington?!

LORENA

[Blushing again, against her will. Trying to act tough]

Yeah, so?

LUKE

You have a fucking crush on him, I can't believe it!

LORENA

You're being so ridiculous. I do not.

LUKE

You're almost thirty and you're in love with a guy that wears Che Guevarra T-shirts?!

LORENA

This is ridiculous and accusatory. I'm not continuing this conversation.

LUKE

Look at your face. Oh my god, I think you're blushing. I didn't think I'd live to see the day.

LORENA

[Lights a cigarette. Nervous. Jittery.]

You really need to stop. I don't blush. I'm not blushing. We really do need to stop this nonsense. Need to get back to work.

LUKE

Why? So you can explore your potato-famine-fantasy of workers and revolution and love ...lalalalala?

LORENA

Don't treat me like a fucking hippie.

LUKE

I bet you secretly love Joan Baez and own every Dylan album ever recorded.

LORENA

I hate Joan Baez and little Bobby Dylan too and all the other folksy folk and you know it. Look at me: hippies don't wear black turtle necks and designer boots.

LUKE

Reformed hippies do.

LORENA

I was never a hippie.

LUKE

I've seen your Wellesley pictures.

LORENA

I should've never shown you those pictures. Let me tell you, just because I had a long skirt and sandal phase --

LUKE

--Okay, now seriously. Be serious for a second.

LORENA

That's what I've been trying to do.

LUKE

Do you really have the hots for this guy?

LORENA

No!

LUKE

Promise?

LORENA

Yes! I promise. Can we get on with it now? Or need I remind you about our dire-strights deadline?

LUKE

Hmh.

[LUKE gives off a sigh and expression like he's not sure whether to believe LORENA or not, but his expression says: "ok, i'll let it go...for now." There's too much at stake; they must finish the park. He turns from the audience to lean on the thick cement railing of the bridge the two of them are now standing on, looking at the view in front of him].

LORENA eventually takes out her cigarette and does the same – leans on the bridge and looks out. Lights fade with her last exhale of smoke -- their backs to audience, as they lean over and look out.

SCENE 5

Lights come up on the same scene we left. LUKE and LORENA turning to look at each other at this point, however, facing audience this time.

LUKE

What would you miss? I mean, what would you miss if the world really ended?

LORENA

Fruit.

LUKE

[Smiling]
Oh yeah...Stawberries.

LORENA

And, butternut Squash.

LUKE

Hazelnut-flavored coffee with cheesecake.

LORENA

Oranges ... And the *color* of oranges.

LUKE

Really red radishes with the dirt still on them.

LORENA

Giant, seedless grapes.

LUKE

Sweets. Cake. Frosting.

LORENA

Lemon frosting.

LUKE

Vanilla.

LORENA

Peach.

LUKE

And caramel.

LORENA

Gorp.

LUKE

[*Hauling the flow*]

Gorp??

LORENA

You know, “Good Old Raisins n’ Peanuts.”

LUKE

Trail mix? You’d miss trail mix?

LORENA

Yeah, well ...

[*Shrugs. Pauses*]

Anyway, where were we before our little binge there.

LUKE

Right. The entranceway. Grand, woody, and enclosing.

LORENA

What else?

LUKE

What about carousels and accordions?

LORENA

We can't really *plan* accordions can we now? A carousel is a good idea, like faerie-landish -- especially with the entranceway -- grand, woody, and enclosing ... Midsummer nights dream, and so on -- but accordions? How do you figure them in?

LUKE

You're right, it would be lame to get someone to just stand there all the time with an accordion. But, we can give off the feeling and hope that it happens naturally. You know how there are places where trumpets are appropriate and other places where you expect to hear an acoustic guitar. Well, our place will just have to be the kind of place that draws accordion players. If we put in the right kind of carousel, the right kind of trees, the right kind of stones on the ground, walls to go around -- then people will know that this is one of those places where accordions should be played, right?

LORENA

Okay ...

[A little doubtful but allowing him to continue. Somewhat curious]

LUKE

[explaining]

Accordions are like fog.

[LORENA'S face still looks skeptical, so LUKE continues]

You know, cheesy and sort of heartbreaking at the same time.

LORENA

[Completely sarcastic]

Oh yeah, I know exactly what you mean. Every time I see one of those accordion players with a monkey on a string I just wanna hold the monkey's hand for a while when I hand over my dime.

LUKE

I'm being serious.

LORENA

For fuck's sake. Get off the cheese train.

LORENA pushes herself from the bridge and begins to walk. He follows.

LUKE

You're tough stuff sometimes, you know that. You're buildings are always gonna suck if you can't see, sometimes, that something like fog is --

LORENA

--Please, let's not go over it again. Let's just not talk about the goddamn fog, ok. We might as well be talking about puppies and sun-kissed tulips.

LUKE

We might as well be – we *are* making a *park*, remember?

LORENA

With a grand wooden entrance and a carousel.

LUKE

Maybe a carousel. We haven't decided about the carousel yet.

LORENA

So, let's decide.

Lights fade

SCENE 6

LUKE and LORENA are standing in front of a Carousel (or an image of a Carousel on a screen, like a black and white movie). LUKE is wearing a suit and LORENA is in a 1930s-style dress. The whole scene is very stylized – very black and white film noir.

In the center of the carousel there is someone playing a flute (the same musician/actor/or image that LORENA and LUKE passed in the beginning as the street performer, the FLUTE PLAYER, which was tuning his flute, getting ready for his morning of work). The FLUTE PLAYER is dressed in shabby clothes like the baggy-coated men in Chagall paintings. For a long while, LUKE and LORENA stand there and listen to the flute. And the carousel, empty, goes around and around.

After a while, LUKE in his new guise/character, hands LORENA (in her new guise), a gardenia. LUKE'S got a hard-boiled style about him. She's graceful and beautiful but at the same time a little bit like

*Katherine Hepburn (tough in the same way).
The scene is “hard-boiled” and fun but must
be played out as if there is something
important at stake, from the beginning. In
this case, it’s land that’s at stake.*

LUKE

*[As he hands her a gardenia that he takes from his coat pocket. Gardenia
in tact]*

A gardenia, my dear.

LORENA

Thank you.

LORENA puts the flower in her hair.

LUKE

[with sincerity and worry, like it’s something he might lose]

I love this place.

LORENA

It’s Paradise.

LUKE

More like purgatory; but, home.

LORENA

To think we might lose it...

LUKE

Don’t I know it...When I was a kid, we used to live right by this carousel;
our pad was right off the main drag. Me and my sister used to come here
all the time. Not that this place was ever any bushel of berries babe, but it
was still like a flop house for the ailin’ if you catch my drift.

LORENA

I’m getting a taste of the martini, yeah .

LUKE

Even before Saxon took over, there was always somethin’. This carousel’s
always creaked – used to have parrots everywhere; all around it. Those
parrots were like the secret password at a speakeasy’s Judas hole.

LORENA

Parrots? Like the kind that’ll come stand on your shoulder?

LUKE

The very ones darlin'. Really tacky ones; and a man snappin' pictures right by them too. I was so scared of them, aced me out every time, made me stick to my sister like a cheap suit. It was always a problem gettin' to this carousel.

LORENA

Which creaked ...

LUKE

...But which I loved.

[Pause. Takes a drag from his cigarette. Blows the smoke out slowly]

But those parrots. They were attack parrots. That's how I remember them anyway.

[Takes another long drag. Flicks his ash]

...That's why I made my sister come. She wasn't afraid of anything that chick. She'd make me close my eyes and she would hold my hand, and we would pass the parrots and the guy snappin' the shots and the harp player and she'd run me straight through to the carousel. And as long as I didn't look back to where the parrots were, I was fine. I'd reached sanctuary, cozy as a chick's coal bin.

LORENA

Sounds like a myth. There was a harp player too?

LUKE

Oh yeah. But I wasn't scared of her, even though she was gold.

LORENA

Painted woman?

LUKE

Yeah. And with a stiff gold-dipped wreath around her head.

LORENA

I wish I could do that. Make dough that way *[Nods her head towards the flute player on their carousel]* like that flute player over there.

LUKE

You could, if you really wanted to, doll. It'd be less cold hard cash though. No more men in spats and fancy suspenders.

LORENA

No more silk stockings and designer scarves.

LUKE

And you'd have to get yourself some lessons ... not to mention some balls, sweets.

LORENA

I believe I've grown myself a set of those in our profession already, wouldn't you agree, dear? I don't know beans, but I've learned a thing or two 'bout dancin' on a dime with The Big Sleep and that, my dear's, the coldest it gets, jim.

LUKE

Then it's just a matter of your aptitude for the flute ...

LORENA

A matter of how my fingers would work on it, I know.

LUKE

That's right.

LORENA

[Short pause and then, overly nonchalant]
Or, I could just kill Saxon.

LUKE

[Laughs lightly, sarcastically at first. After he says the line, he realizes she's not bluffing]
Or you could do that.

LORENA

[Intensely. Looking at him this time]
If I killed him we'd be next in line. We could run the whole joint. We wouldn't lose the land. This place would be ours. Paradise. Parrot-less. Ours. It belongs to us anyway. We got first dibs.

LUKE

I know our feet dug their heels here first, doll, but...end up in some Shakespearean mess? Unwashable blood all over our hands?

LORENA

[She looks at him slyly]
No. Not if we remember to not look back at the parrots.
[Pause]
I'll need your help though. I talked to him.

LUKE

To Saxon? What did the son of a bitch say?

LORENA

He's not willing to give over any of it to us, no settlements he said. The hard line. He doesn't want to compromise a bit of this place, not an inch.

LUKE

None of it?

LORENA

Nothing.

LUKE

So we're gonna have to keep fighting him for the rotten piece of land then?

LORENA

That's right, that's what it boils down to, my boy.

LUKE

I'm starting to wish I were that flute player too. Rather be a Bible-punchin' hymn hustler than stuck in this bend, sweets.
[Pauses, looks at her, looks at the carousel; opens his coat and takes out his gun]

LORENA

[Sarcastic]
 Gardenias and guns, all from the same coat pocket. How poetic.

LUKE

It's your idea, babe. You wanna be queen of this fucking joint, go ahead. You're the one that wants to rule over all the chicks and fillies, be the cool mother cat ... If it were me, just me, I'd say dice this shit, this jive's too close to a raw hide. I'd rather be stuck with the parrots and the photographer than be king of this Chantilly lace, even for a day.

LORENA

One way or another, we have to get rid of Sax. We're not the only ones after him, he's hotter than a two-dollar pistol. If there isn't any extension of the boundaries, we're gonna have a bloodbath. He's parked on his ass on this one. How many people has he killed already? Too many. We don't have much of a choice here.

LUKE

[Pause]

I get it, but I don't want it. I'm not going to help you kill him. I can't have anymore blood on my hands. I don't care what it means to this place, I just can't.

LORENA

Have it your way, but there's nothing's gonna hold me back from this.

SCENE 7

LORENA and LUKE are back to being themselves – two architects in Central Park. They are walking through flowers now – a garden.

LUKE

Would you really have done it?

LORENA

Done what?

LUKE

Would you have really killed the dude?

LORENA

Yeah, I guess I would've.

LUKE

You can't just go around killing people. *Not* in our fucking park.

LORENA

It's not real ...

LUKE

It is though, I mean eventually it will be. Eventually it's gonna get done and we need to set some standards....*[pausing just slightly and then blurting out]*Why are you so angry?

LORENA

I'm not angry. I'm just realistic.

LUKE

No, you're angry. You're always angry. It's always there, somehow, even when you're happy there's that little bit of it, it's –

LORENA

--*[cutting him off]* Listen, if Saxon or anybody else thinks he can just take over, take what's not his, take it away from everyone it belongs to, that love it, and need it...then, then he's just getting what's coming to him. Yes, I would kill him. If I saw him I would kill him. After what he took from me, in an instant I would slice his throat just like he did hers.

LUKE

[Thrown off. Treading carefully]
What are you talking about, Lorena?

LORENA

[Coming out of the trance/fit she was just in. Almost in disbelief that she's gone where she's gone]
Nothing. I'm sorry...nothing.

LUKE

You're scaring me Lo. Who --...What --...I mean, are you talking about your --*[interrupting each other's lines]*

LORENA

[matter-of-factly, but a little bit sadder than before]
--Yes, Luke. That's exactly what I mean.

LUKE

[slower now, and very carefully. Now piecing it together and in shock that she has gone where she has gone and is talking about this even slightly]
Your? *[pause]* Mother?

LORENA

[same tone as before. Sad and matter-of-fact]
If I ever came across the son of a bitch that killed her...Yes, I would kill him.

LUKE

[still careful, shocked]
You never talk about that. I've never...You've never...I didn't ask, because I thought that's what you needed from me...that you would have told me, if you wanted to...Is that how it happened?...Somebody...

LORENA

Sliced her throat.

LUKE

Did they ever --

LORENA

[Calmer. Colder than before.]

--Yes, they found him.

LUKE

Where is he? Did they --

LORENA

--Yeah, he's in prison. With his whole Neo-Nazi gang....They were trying to take over the neighborhood while we were away at college and I remember my mother was scared, and she would tell me all the time on the phone. But I never took it seriously, because you just don't think anyone really thinks like that anymore, you know what I mean? They knew she was Jewish. My mother was soo Jewish, you couldn't miss that about her. And they tried to make an example of her...you were far away then, and I got used to not talking about it...so I didn't. I don't. Except now. It kind of feels good...to put it out there.

LUKE

Jesus Lorena...I...*[He stops trying to talk and he takes her in his arms and he hugs her, her head fitting under his]*

SCENE 8

Some time has passed since the last scene. LUKE and LORENA are back in the architecture/studio. LORENA is getting up from a nap, LUKE is working at a table on some blueprints and sketches.

LORENA

[waking up abruptly from her nap on the couch, looking around. Finds LUKE with her gaze; remembering then what just transpired. Her mood is different though. More the Lorena we knew before the confession, if not a little softer.]

God, Luke, I'm sorry, what time is it? I dozed off...I

LUKE

[looking back at her]

Mornin' ...2am.

LORENA

[Shocked, and jumping from the couch immediately. Remembering the deadline; the project].

Oh my god, I slept for hours...Oh my god, I'm sorry...Shit!

LUKE

Don't worry, I've been setting everything to paper...we'll get it all into the model in a bit.

LORENA

I'm ready, let's go.

LUKE

[jokingly]

You sure? No coffee?...You don't want to, I don't know, brush your teeth or something.

LORENA

[Acting pumped...as the scene progresses gets into it without the initial artificial-pumped feel]

No, it's fine, I'll just have gum...Let's go. Where are we?

LUKE

[Taking her lead]

Well, I was putting some final touches on the carousel.

LORENA

Yeah, that was a keeper.

LUKE

Switched the accordion-feel for flute, though...

LORNEA

Right.

LUKE

And now, well...next parts up for grabs.

LORENA

What about a coffee shop?

LUKE

By the carousel?

LORENA

Or somewhere else.

LUKE

By the wooden entranceway?

LORENA

[*Like what she's about to say is ingenious*]
Or, by the burial ground.

LUKE

There's a burial ground?

LORENA

[*nodding yes, as in there's a burial ground and then, nodding no for what she's about to say*]But no gravestones.

LUKE

No gravestones. Unmarked graves. The dead are the dead. A collective.
We'll commingle.

LORENA

And the coffee shop goes over this ground?

LUKE

People drinking coffee over dead bodies?

LORENA

Is that a good idea?

LUKE

I don't know. Let's try it.

LORENA

We're getting good at this.

LUKE

[*Making a hand motion like he's presenting something*]
And now, "The Coffee Shop."

LUKE and LORENA move to the kitchen area of their studio/apartment. Singing fast cartoon music as they get there, as if they are fast-forwarding. When they make it to the kitchen, suddenly they are playing two characters at a coffee shop. They are dressed in black (or have black accents. LUKE might wear a black beret, for example. LORENA is already in black.

Perhaps just add a black scarf, tied around her neck).

The atmosphere is ornate and moody. There is a light music playing in the background – either a violin or jazz. There are mirrors all around. LORENA has a huge cup of coffee in front of her. LUKE has a small cup of tea.

In this next scene it is as though LUKE and LORENA play at being a couple on a first/second/third date – LORENA is reeling LUKE in.

LORENA

[Looking at LUKE intensely. Speaking sensually about the coffee.]
 When I drink coffee I want to suck the bean, let it come down my throat in chunks and fill it like a coating, like a flood. I want all the sugar to live inside me until its crystals make me twiddle and my eyes water. I feel this way about coffee. It makes my face hot and it makes me hungry for bread and I just wanna jump the oat bran muffins and low-fat cranberry orange crumbcake, the pumpkin-seeded pumpernickel bagels and the croissants stuffed with marmalade and almonds. I think about the milk that runs from imaginary fountains and the spirits that lay sleeping in wine, until you drink them and wake them up and they skip around your body and poke you about and prick the inside of your skin. My face feels like a furnace and I sit here, thinking now, that home would be a good place to go now, to sleep in my blue cotton pants and my thin, white shirt, the one with the quarter inch border of silk at the straps.

LUKE

Nobody feels that strongly about coffee.

LORENA

[Seriously]
 I do. I can't stop.

LUKE

You're ... funny.

LORENA

I'm serious.

LUKE

It wouldn't be funny otherwise. It's so American, you know.

LORENA

What do you mean?

LUKE

I just mean the way you are, the way your cup of coffee is so gigantic. It's so excessive. Like Europeans, they don't have Big Gulps or Ventis...you know what I mean?

LORENA

Whatever. So what's your poison?

LUKE

Excuse me?

LORENA

What are you drinking?

LUKE

Tea. Mandarin Orange.

LORENA

I've always hated tea drinkers.
[Reaching for the honey]
 Honey?

LUKE

Yes. Please.

LORENA

[She pours the honey]
 It's too clay-ish.

LUKE

Too what?

LORENA

Clay-ish. You know, too oh-I'm-so-natural-like-the-clay-from-the-river-and-the-cup-that-I-now-hold-in-my-hands ... blah, blah, blah

LUKE

Wow.

LORENA

I wow you?

LUKE

You're trippy.

LORENA

It's the coffee. Goes straight to your head. I usually don't talk this much.

LUKE

What are you drinking there? Triple Espresso?

LORENA

No, no. Decaf. My doctor told me that if I continued to drink so much coffee, it would have to be decaf or I'd make an Ignatian hole in my stomach.

LUKE

[Can't help but laugh a little. There's another pause. Then searching for a new topic]

Why do you drink so much of it?

LORENA

It makes me happy.

LUKE

What else makes you happy?

LORENA

Yellow.

LUKE

Why?

LORENA

Because it reminds me of The Beatles and their Yellow Submarine.
[Pause] What makes you happy? [Asks it like she means it; wants to know]

LUKE

A lot of things.

LORENA

Like what?

LUKE

Many things.

LORENA

Tell me one.

LUKE

There are so many.

LORENA

So you're very happy. A very happy person. That's good. Name one thing.

LUKE

I like carousels.

LORENA

Me too. Except I always sort of wished carousels were made out of mermaids ---

The music screeches to a halt, bringing us back to LUKE and LORENA, this time themselves, still sitting in "the coffee shop," breaking out of character.

LUKE

Wait, Lorena, that's it. That's how you make the flute feeling. We make the carousel but we make the design a mermaid design instead of horses.

LORENA

Yeah, that would be amazing. Sirens. Wow, cool. You know, I always did sort of wish carousels were made of mermaids.

LUKE

Well then, here's your chance.

[Pause]

But I say we move the coffee shop outside.

LORENA

You're right, the whole indoor-coffee-shop thing, makes it all too Woody Allen for my blood.

LUKE

Right. So we move it outside, with all the tree, and the wood, and the carousel, and flute stuff.

LORNEA

And the burial ground.

LUKE

And the burial ground...*[he repeats burial ground without thinking, because he's still thinking about the carousel, which is what makes him ask the following]* Hey, Lorena, can I ask you something?

LORENA

Uh-oh, what?

LUKE

If you were in the park with JK Harrington--

LORENA

Oh god, not again!

LUKE

No, just listen...If you were in the park, with--

LORENA

--What park? Central Park?

LUKE

No, our park. The one we're designing. Once it's been built, and forested and fountained –

LORENA

Okay? If I were alone with him in our park what?

LUKE

If you were alone with him in our park, what would you do? Would you have a cup of coffee with him, or would you ride the mermaid carousel?

LORENA

What?

LUKE

Just answer the question. Would you ride the carousel with JK Harrington?

LORENA

This is totally absurd.

LUKE

[Slow, clear, persistent]

Would you ride the carousel?

LORENA

Stop it! Okay, just stop it! Let's just skip the coffee shop thing and move on to the rest of the park.

LUKE

We'll deal with that later. We can't move on yet because we haven't made any real decisions about the coffee shop. What it'll be like, etc. Answer the JK question, then we can begin to move on.

LORENA

I'm ready to move on NOW.

LORENA gets up from the table and begins to walk away. LUKE follows her around the apartment.

LUKE

Yeah okay, in a minute, but I'm not going to get off the question, so just answer it and we'll proceed onward. Would you ride the carousel with JK?

LORENA

I don't know.

LUKE

Would you *want* to?

LORENA

I don't know. Who cares?

LUKE

Just tell me.

LORENA

My god, you're being so obnoxious.

LUKE

[Audibly lower than the rest of his questions, like it's difficult to get this out]

Would you ride with me?

LORENA

What?!

LUKE

Nothing.

LORENA

No, no. What did you just ask me?

LUKE

Nothing. It was nothing ... I ... nothing.

LORENA

[pleading in desperation]

Please, Luke, I beg you. Let's finish. Let's get this done. The clock is ticking. We've got just a little over twenty-four hours. Please.

LUKE

[Giving in, knowing the time crunch, but these first lines of his are passionless; going through the motions]

Ok. The Coffee Shop. What's it gonna be. Indoor? Outdoor? Not at all?

LORENA

Let's not get carried away. We need the coffee shop. Like you said, Americans like their Venti Decafs. It'll bring money and people will want a place to go to eat their lunch or take a break...

LUKE

Okay, so then what?

LORENA

A compromise. A compromise between indoor and outdoor. So that it's warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

LUKE

What?

LORENA

Glass...I say we make the whole thing out of glass. Can you imagine, how amazing that would be?

LUKE

We'll need some kind of buttressing though. A lot of it. Steel, something like that. Tempered glass.

LORENA

Of course we need some kind of support system – a seamless truss? Can't have it shattering before it's even finished. But we should make it as

translucent as possible, so that you can see everything from outside and so that, at night, it glows from the inside.

[*Pause. Sort of dazed and inspired. Smiling/euphoric*]

Do you think it'll move people?

LUKE

[*Mocking*]

The glass?

LORENA

Yeah, don't look at me like that. Don't tell me you're not moved by glass, like stained glass in churches, like when you look at a really beautiful hand-blown Venetian glass vase, or when you see the sun and all that city reflecting off skyscraper windows?

LUKE

You wanna know the truth? I don't think people will even notice they're surrounded by glass.

LORENA

Well, that's our job, isn't it, to make them notice?

LUKE

It's gonna be hard to pull the glass off, engineering wise.

LORENA

But it'll be beautiful, so who cares? And if we pull it off, my God ... Plus, look who's talking, Mr. "we took this project on *because* it's hard."

[*Pause*]

I haven't been really moved by some thing in a long time. You know how when you're really young, before you even get to college, before you even know any architectural definitions and you just go around town looking at buildings, and looking at a great fucking building could make you cream in your pants. Remember that?

LUKE

[*getting more into the conversation now*]

Yeah, I remember train stations used to really do it for me.

LORENA

And pictures in books of places you've never been to. Everything was spectacular. And now, now nothing is...that's why this is so important. Don't you want to feel that again?

LUKE

I do.

LORENA

Marble, stone, and everything old...

LUKE

[Luke nods softly at the oath]

Structures with stories to be told...

LORENA

--Okay then. So then let's do it. Final stretch...Here *[Getting close to and pointing to the model]*, we've been holding out on this piece for last. It's a big plot of land, I know, and I know we were fucking around in the beginning and you were calling it "the sacred space," but really, it's time. Time to deal with what the fuck we're going to put in "the sacred space." *[Pointing to an empty space in the model at the center of the park]*.

LUKE

Nothing. Sacred space is sacred space right? We should leave it green. People can just come here and you know, pray, meditate, be one with nature... Just a bunch of grass and open space. That's what I think.

LORENA

We can't do that, it's too much space. It's the center of the park, it should have some sort of marker or something.

LUKE

What for? Let's just leave it open. Less joggers'll be killed that way.

LORENA

How do you figure?

LUKE

You know, more open space means more people can see what's going on. Less trees to hide behind. Plus, sound carries easier in open space, so if someone is actually getting mugged or something, people will be able to hear it, stop it, catch my drift?

LORENA

There aren't going to be any muggers in our park anyway.

LUKE

Why not? Why should it be any different than any other park?

LORENA

[Pointing to the model]

Because we've got lamps all over the place. Plus, we have burial grounds, people respect burial grounds.

LUKE

[*Sarcastic*]

Oh really?

[*Pause*]

Anyway, as far as I'm concerned nothing should go there.

LORENA

There can't be nothing. If it was all a lot of nothing, then where's our hand in all of this.

LUKE

First of all, it's not a lot of nothing. It's a decision to have nothing, a decision we have to make around a whole lot of somethings, which we chose and designed, so, if we choose nothing and build nothing then that's something because it was a choice.

LORENA

Oh shut up.

LUKE

[*Getting offended/upset*]

No, I'm not going to shut up. Who do you think you are? You think just because --

LORENA

[*Frustrated*]

--It's just, Jesus, you piss me off, Luke. You think you're so fucking high and mighty and ethereal sometimes. "Nothing implies everything," I mean c'mon just shut the fuck up with that crap.

LUKE

Here we go again. Typical. Just typical. I'm sick of this circle, Lorena.

LORENA

You know what? *You* finish it. *You* know everything, *you* follow whatever straight line you need to get from here to there and you finish it.

LUKE

I think I've been more than patient, Lorena. And if you can't see that, if you can't see that by now, I don't know what to tell you...Here you are – a little pause in the flow of creative juices and you're taking us right back where we started – that's just classic Lorena style isn't it? There's a moment in your life when you're just going to have to get over it.

LORENA

First of all, what the fuck is that supposed to mean? And second of all, I'm being serious in asking you, really this time, why the fuck you chose this project? Don't tell me "because it's hard." I want to know why you picked to design a park when all you've ever made are office buildings.

LUKE

I'll tell you why, Lorena. You said it yourself. This city's decided to put a park here [*points to the model*], here in this very spot where everything else has failed, where nothing works, where everything closes down and is doomed for bankruptcy.

LORENA

We know all of this, I did my homework too. Doomed city-corner. Now get to the point.

LUKE

I'm getting to it, if you stop interrupting, I might actually get to it in our lifetime. So anyway, yes, exactly -- doomed city-corner, that's exactly what this is. One restaurant after another. Pizza, Chinese, fancy Italian, New Wave Thai, it all fails. And you just know the second one place opens that it's going to close down; and your greatest hope is no more than whatever it is -- it lasting longer than the one before.

LORENA

So?

LUKE

So here's the thing, my dear. [*Like he's got something*] They can't close down a park.

LORENA

No, they can't close down a park, not technically. But they can abandon it. They can piss in a park, shit in a park, mug in a park.

LUKE

Not if we do it right. You're the one who said, five seconds ago, that we weren't going to have muggers. You're the one who said you wanted to make something beautiful, that you wanted to feel something again. You're contradicting yourself. I mean I know this spot isn't in the best of neighborhoods, but –

LORENA

This isn't some cute little community garden project.

LUKE

I know it's not. And that's exactly why we don't need to fill it up to the brim with stupid little potted plants, if you catch my drift. We can just leave some of it open. Let it breathe.

LORENA

Not if it's going to be a place where you want people to come to "pray" or be "sacred in our sacred space" or whatever.

LUKE

[Frustrated]
Why not?

LORENA

Because, people need something to pray *to*, and I mean a real something.

LUKE

[Interrupting]
Why?

LORENA

You may be very enlightened and what have you. But you are designing something for other people, you've got to think like most people think not just like yourself. In case you haven't noticed, most religious institutions are filled with icons.

LUKE

*[still frustrated and interrupting her – upset --like he can't hold it in anymore, like "why isn't she getting this"]--*We don't have to call it a religious space, just sacred space. You're an atheist, what does it matter to you? You're so damn stubborn, you're such a fucking Jew sometimes, I swear.

LORENA

You realize you just called me an atheist and a Jew in the same breath.
[Then starting to get angry, realizing what he's said]
And, fuck you! What the hell does that mean?

LUKE

Nothing. It means nothing. It means your fucking Jew, that's it.

LORENA

You're a bastard.

LUKE

Then you're a bitch, Lorena. We've been spinning around this damn project for days now and all you do is bitch, bitch, bitch, bitch. I'm sick of it!

LORENA

[Very serious and slow. Anger showing through. Holding back tears.

Good-sized pause and then the line.]

So then get the fuck out of here, leave. That's what you've wanted to do since the moment you met me, isn't it? I hate you. Just drop the fucking park and go. That's it, this is over.

LUKE

No. *[Grabbing her by the arm]*

You don't have the right to hate me, Lorena.

LORENA

[Angry, trying to get away, hitting him]

Let go of me.

LUKE

No, I'm not letting go, Lorena. Not this time. You're going to listen to me.

And you know why? Because you didn't make that Lorena, *we* made that.

[Pointing or looking at the model]

LORENA

[A little scared and angry at the same time]

It's not my park. I never wanted it.

LUKE

It's our park, Lorena. Like it or not, it's our park. And I think you did want it. You were scared of failing at it. But you did want it. You *do* want it.

LORENA

[Shaken up, making way out of his grip and throwing the model to the floor -- climactic]

I don't give a shit about the park!

LUKE

[First matter-of-factly, and then beginning to fall apart]

We make worlds and you knock them down. Over and over again -- you ram your hands right into them like a power jet and down they come. You can't keep doing this to me, Lorena.

LORENA

You're not some untouchable saint, Luke.

LUKE

You're right Lorena, I'm not. I'm not sacred. You hit me and I bleed. And whatever sacred space I had in my life you fucked up.

LORENA

There's no such thing as sacred space.

LUKE

[Breaking down a little more]

There is, Lorena. And I thought I had it. Once upon a time, I thought I'd gotten hold of it...

LORENA

[Looking straight at him. Sarcastic; dark; hurt; angry]

And I ruined everything. Right, Luke, that's what you're saying, isn't it?

LUKE

You shred it to pieces. *[Luke sits down, goes away from her].*

You're a fool, Lorena *[Stares at her, like he's preparing himself to say something and then goes for it].*

--It was right when I was coming back from college, we hadn't even gone to architecture school yet, we hadn't even made the pact to open the firm. It was early September; I was finishing my last batch of theology classes -- a little late. But, I'd decided what I wanted out of life.

[Pausing again, looking at her]

I thought I'd found that space where god exists. And I wanted to lead other people there. I really thought I could.

LORENA

You're the egomaniac, you know that, Luke. You think you know God?

LUKE

[Keeps going, despite what she says. Nothing's going to stop him from getting it out this time.]

I thought I was special, that I had a gift. But I was wrong.

LORENA

No one is special. We're all made of the same shit.

LUKE

[Keeps going]

--I'd come home to tell my mother -- I was coming home to tell her I was going to be a priest. No one knew what I was going through, that push and pull, between god and the world -- trying to make sense of that space where they intersect...But I'd decided, I'd decided to give it all up and dedicate my life to that search...to that sacred space where everybody's god intersects...And then I saw *you*.

LORENA

[Nodding side to side – no -- like she doesn't understand; like she's not sure where he's going. But she's anxious, at the same time, to hear what he has to say. Like he might finally say what she's been waiting for him to say for so long. Quietly, almost inaudibly]

What?

LUKE

[Going on with his story]

--I was walking around Central Park, right before I was going to tell my mother. And I saw you, Lorena -- *You*, who I hadn't seen in so long ... you were sitting there on a bench, with an ice cream in one hand and your change from the ice-cream in the other hand. *[Really visualizing it in his head. Making her remember]* It was like you hadn't had time to put away your money because the ice-cream was dripping everywhere, so you'd sat down to concentrate on eating it. You were a real mess -- *[laughs a little, because it's so unlike LORENA to be such a blatant mess]*

LORENA

[Remembering. Really quieting down now]

--That was the day we ran into each other? The day we went to Coney Island—

LUKE

[Continuing his story – he's going to get through it this time. Whatever it is he needs to tell her; he's going to tell her]

--the ice-cream was dripping down your chin and all over your arm and it was like the sun wasn't giving you enough time to compose yourself, you had to lick that ice cream before you lost it... It was pink.

LORENA

Strawberry.

LUKE

--And that's when I knew you had ruined me. I couldn't leave you again. You had rammed right into -- and shattered every illusion I had of what I thought God was. My entire world came crumbling down. So you know what Lorena, you don't have the right.

[Pause. Slow tears].

That day is why I took this job. You're why we're doing this park. This is *your* park, Lorena. You have to take responsibility for it.

[Stumbling, just a little]

And I'm not going to let you walk away this time. God dammit, Lorena. You tell me what you want to put in that sacred space. Because I have no idea what to put in this place you've destroyed -- where there was something so big and now there's nothing.

LORENA

[A longer pause, she's searching for him; trying to fill him again. Almost afraid she's lost him for good. She covers her mouth; she's crying. And then, more boldly].

You mean besides us?

LUKE

I love you, Lorena. *[This must be said firmly; strong]*

The play ends with a video projection playing all around them. A very large backdrop screen appears showing the image of blueprints animating into a park. We begin to see the fruition of the images we have just heard about. The carousel. A glass coffee shop, etc. And, towards the end, image after image of green open space. The screen goes black and the following quote appears: "...the promises of leaves and the promises of glass ..." – Michael Palmer

THE END

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