

Switching Tracks

A Full Length Play

By

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SWITCHING TRACKS

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Production History

2022 - Commission - San Diego Repertory Theatre, San Diego, California

2024 - Staged Reading - North Coast Repertory Theatre, Solana Beach, California

Character Descriptions:

MICHAEL - Identifies as male, any identifier. A middle-aged lawyer working through a mid life crisis. Conservative and passionate. A product of his upbringing. Seeing his ex-wife for the first time in over a decade has brought back feelings of anguish and love. After this chance encounter there may be enough love for himself to continue growing and find his inner light.

REBECCA - Identifies as female, any identifier. About the same age as Michael. Her life is moved into different directions. Now a mother and an artist. A progressive woman from a Chicago household. She seems to have grown the most outwardly of the couple. Still harbors certain feelings towards the relationship.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: The more abstract the scene design the better. Simple elements work best.

TIME: Now.

PLACE: The great terminal of New York's Grand Central Station.

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A bench and a bit of the station exists on stage. The set is fragmented and broken suggesting that our characters are incubated in their own world in this very public place. There is a schedule board that lists the various arrivals and departures. The sounds of Grand Central Station. A small blue light appears on both stage left and stage right. This is where REBECCA and MICHAEL spend much of their time addressing the audience. Lights slowly rise on the schedule board. It reads: "Art. That's a man's name." The image holds for a few beats and then the schedule board and Michael's blue light slowly fade out.

Rebecca, enters, dressed very "artist-like" casually carrying a number of painting supplies and a small easel. She stops in her blue light spot. She puts down her painting items and pulls her cell phone out of her pocket. She presses a button and listens to the voicemail. MICHAEL, in his 40's, enters from the opposite direction, dressed in full on business attire, carrying a briefcase moving briskly. He's on his phone and stops in the area where his blue light is. More lights slowly rise to fill out the stage. Michael is on his cell phone with one hand over his other ear attempting to have a work conversation. Even after all these years Rebecca is able to recognize Michael's voice through all the sounds of Grand Central.

MICHAEL. There wasn't any second trial. You told the DA that remember? This happened last time with the Bowerman case remember? Yeah. There's no plea bargain for a- *(Listens.)* Yeah. Yes! *(Listens.)* Okay, then send it upstairs. Check with Robert to make sure. *(Listens for a long time.)* We'll just have to go to re-trial on this and- *(Listening to his phone)* But the prosecution doesn't need to know that. They haven't- *(Listening)* I don't need to know that either if you want to be honest. And I'm being honest. He already signed for it so it shouldn't matter if-. *(He turns in her direction. There is a moment of recognition and his entire body language shifts. She gives him a grin. The busy sounds of*

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the train platform fade off into the background. There is a moment of stillness between them. Realizing he's on the phone she puts her hand up to say hello. Into his phone) Yes, I'm still here. I uh... I... Uh. Listen- *(He crosses towards her. He is still on the phone. He is trying to get off the phone as he gives her a hand signal that he is attempting to get off his phone but the person on the other end of the line won't stop talking.)* Yes, and if you could show Vasquez that file- *(He listens for a little while longer. She goes back to looking at her phone.)* Hey Donna, can- Yes, can I call you back in a few minutes? *(Listens)* Yeah. *(Listens as he turns his back to HER.)* I just ran into a client. Can I call you back? *(Listens.)* In just a few minutes. *(Listens)* Yes. Okay. Yeah. Okay. Thanks. *(He listens for a long time again, giving Rebecca another hand signal as if he is still attempting to get off the phone. She stands up, starts to check her stuff as if she is going to leave.)* Okay, listen I really need to go. I just ran into an important client and- *(Listens.)* I gotta go. Can I call you in a bit? I gotta catch a train too and I- *(Listens.)* Okay, yeah. *(Listens as he looks at REBECCA who looks at him.)* Yeah, you too. *(Listens.)* Bye. *(Listens again.)* Bye. *(He finally hangs up.)* Sorry. I got caught there. *(Beat. She just smiles. He is a little unsure as to how to approach her.)*

REBECCA. Hi. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. How are you? *(Silence.)* Oh... uh... *(They hug a bit awkwardly with his briefcase over his shoulder and her cell phone in her hand. The moment they make physical contact there is a little awkward tension-filled chuckle from both of them.)*

REBECCA. Good, I'm good.

MICHAEL. Great. You look fantastic.

REBECCA. Thank you. *(Beat.)* You heading in or out?

MICHAEL. In. Yeah, it's my uh... yeah, I'm just jumping over to Chelsea.

REBECCA. Chelsea?

MICHAEL. Yeah.

REBECCA. Takeover?

MICHAEL. Oh, no. Just a few meetings. You know... Same old stuff.

REBECCA. Sure. *(Silence as they both smile awkwardly at each other.)*

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MICHAEL. Sorry / I'm not so sure about

REBECCA. You / were saying.

MICHAEL. No, go ahead. (*Silence. He is a little uneasy. She is still and calm.*) I was just coming from The Tin Sardine.

REBECCA. Oh my God! I haven't been in there for... years now.

MICHAEL. I always thought I'd seeing in the kitchen as the executive chef. You were always telling the wait staff how to cook and-

REBECCA. Braise. It was the one dish that needed to be braised a bit more and-

MICHAEL. Yeah, you were always doing that. I'm surprised they didn't let you into the kitchen and cook it yourself. I mean... you loved that.

REBECCA. It was just a hobby.

MICHAEL. Six weeks of that culinary correspondence course didn't feel like a hobby to me.

REBECCA. Well-

MICHAEL. You were good. I remember. You made that amazing dish, the uh... crab, uh-

REBECCA. Yeah.

MICHAEL. The crab thing with the uh... the uh... oh what was it?

REBECCA. Grilled Soft Shell Crab with Squash Blossom Potato Purée.

MICHAEL. Good memory.

REBECCA. I remember everything.

MICHAEL. Yes, you used to say that. (*Beat.*)

REBECCA. A little chunky.

MICHAEL. Me? (*Beat.*)

REBECCA. No, the purée I made that night. I thought it was a bit chunky.

MICHAEL. (*shaking his head because he doesn't remember it that way*) Ah! I don't... I just remember eating it. I don't remember it being chunky or anything.

REBECCA. That's because you have a soft palate.

MICHAEL. That's right. I do. You said I do. (*Beat.*) Do I?

REBECCA. Yes. We talked about this that night? When you came to my cooking final?

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MICHAEL. Oh yes. I have uninteresting taste buds.

REBECCA. Unrefined taste buds is how the argument proceeded.

MICHAEL. Right. Unrefined. That was me.

REBECCA. That was a good fight.

MICHAEL. Yeah, I slept on the couch for two nights because of it.

(Beat.)

REBECCA. Sorry.

MICHAEL. No, that's... it's...*(Beat.)*

REBECCA. The meat 'n 'potato kid-

MICHAEL. I like oysters now. I've uh... I'm warmed up to them.

(Beat.)

REBECCA. Oysters? You? Really?

MICHAEL. Yes. I mean... yeah.

REBECCA. Seriously?

MICHAEL. I'm not joking. Half my client meetings are at the oyster bar in our building.

REBECCA. I tried for years to shove those buggers down your throat.

MICHAEL. Well we were out one night. *(Quickly).* I was out... with some friends and we stopped by the Siren Shack. Have you heard of this place over on, uh...

REBECCA. Market?

MICHAEL. Yes, you've been there?

REBECCA. No, but I've heard of it. It's supposed to be-

MICHAEL. It is. It's great. Good seafood. Scallops. *(Beat.)*

REBECCA. You still like the... what was the coconut shrimp? Fried, right?

MICHAEL. No.

REBECCA. Oh.

MICHAEL. Cholesterol. Had a little heart thing a while back.

REBECCA. Oh no. You okay?

MICHAEL. Yeah. I'm fine. I have some medication. *(Beat.)*

Anyhow I had a few Wellfleets with a bit of red wine reduction.

REBECCA. Did you try the Rockafellers?

MICHAEL. Yeah. *(Beat.)* They're good. The Wellfleets and uh, the... Blue-

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REBECCA. Bluepoints.

MICHAEL. Yes. Those are very tasty. (*Beat.*) At least my *unrefined* palate thinks so. (*Silence.*) So, uh... so what agency are you with now?

REBECCA. Good lord, I'm done.

MICHAEL. Done?

REBECCA. Done! I'm done with it. Done. Out. I got out.

MICHAEL. You're kidding.

REBECCA. Nope, I did it. I finally did it. I said I would do it and I did.

MICHAEL. You talked about that for how many years?

REBECCA. Many years.

MICHAEL. And you just did it. I never thought you would do it. The money is always good.

REBECCA. Well, I did. I needed a career not a job. You know I moved over to Torres and, it just-

MICHAEL. And you feel all right about it? Leaving it all?

REBECCA. Amazing! It's so freeing. I can't tell you the feeling.

MICHAEL. I can imagine.

REBECCA. Yeah.

MICHAEL. Torres is small.

REBECCA. Yeah, but...

MICHAEL. When did you quit?

REBECCA. About seven, eight years ago now. I never could get there. I was stuck just doing assistant paperwork stuff. Pretty soon after I left that DA I just... I don't know. (*Beat.*) Yeah. (*Beat.*)

MICHAEL. That's good. So, now you're-

REBECCA. It just got to be such a head case with the government red tape and you know I hated wearing a suit. I think I was there more for my parents more than myself. I barely passed the bar you know that. So, it just wasn't... (*She stops and smiles, redirecting her energy towards him.*) So. (*Silence.*)

MICHAEL. Yeah. But for you...(*Beat.*)

REBECCA. For me it was... (*Attempting to redirect this.*) You know. It's... it's just so much- I mean I was slinging crap.

MICHAEL. Yeah I know.

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REBECCA. There was so much crap, and I just couldn't handle that. You know?

MICHAEL. I know.

REBECCA. I was... It was hurting me. I thought I was actually making the world a better place. What an eye-opener.

MICHAEL. Yeah.

REBECCA. I just couldn't sling crap any longer at people.

MICHAEL. I can understand.

REBECCA. So, what are you doing now?

MICHAEL. Slinging crap. *(She chuckles a little.)*

REBECCA. You love it though.

MICHAEL. It fits me.

REBECCA. Yes, it does. You're definitely a crap slinger that's for sure. *(He smiles politely but knows how loaded her comment was.)*

MICHAEL. Yeah.

REBECCA. One of your specialities.

MICHAEL. I plead the fifth.

REBECCA. You were born to do it.

MICHAEL. I might have been born a natural crap slinger but the shit took a lot of work.

REBECCA. And you're partner now, I'd imagine. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. No. Uh... no.

REBECCA. No?

MICHAEL. *(looking away)* I'm still not uh... partner. No.

REBECCA. Why not? *(Pause.)*

MICHAEL. *(thoughtful)* It's... You know...

REBECCA. No, it's okay. I just thought that. You're still with Bresky and-

MICHAEL. Yeah. There has just been a ton of restructuring and so we all thought, I mean I thought it best that I stay where I was and... so... *(He chuckles. She's listening. A pause. Uncertain what else to do with their conversation.)* Uh... do you still live in the city, or...

REBECCA. No. No, actually... I don't live in the city, any longer.

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MICHAEL. Really? Such a city girl. You love the sound of jackhammers out the window, center of culture and go go go. That's a switch.

REBECCA. I was just up here for the day.

MICHAEL. Right. You were-

REBECCA. I just saw you and I thought... I just thought... I would just say hello.

MICHAEL. Hello.

REBECCA. Right. *(A pause.)* So I should-

MICHAEL. Did you recognize me immediately or uh-

REBECCA. No, I mean yes... You walk the same.

MICHAEL. Really?

REBECCA. Yeah.

MICHAEL. What do you mean?

REBECCA. You just walk the same. Even in a crowd I could find you by-

MICHAEL. You never... wait, what?

REBECCA. You have that weird stoner, Steve Jobs kind of walk.

MICHAEL. *(smiling a little)* I still don't know what that means. You always said that, but-

REBECCA. Walk around I'll show you.

MICHAEL. Forget it.

REBECCA. Come on.

MICHAEL. *(Good mannered.)* No! Get outta town. I'm not doing that.

REBECCA. Fine. *(An old connection. Michael takes a few steps and does "the walk." Rebecca laughs.)* That's the walk. You lead with your head. That's the Michael Weston walk. Ever since Dryser & Harris it's been a thing.

MICHAEL. My walk was a thing?

REBECCA. You didn't know that?

MICHAEL. No.

REBECCA. Everyone knew. Even Ellenstein used your walk as an example of the proletariat. He said your walk was pure Marxist.

MICHAEL. *(smiling)* I have a Marxist walk?

REBECCA. You have a Marxist walk.

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No words from Rebecca, just a smile and a polite chuckle. Another beat. The schedule board flickers but nothing appears. She looks at the schedule board.

REBECCA. I think I'm late.

MICHAEL. Excuse me?

REBECCA. My train... it's late. *(Michael turns out to read the train schedule.)*

MICHAEL. Yep. Mine too.

REBECCA. You should just grab a cab.

MICHAEL. *(He doesn't want to grab a cab.)* Yeah. *(Beat.)* Where are you living now? *(Beat.)*

REBECCA. I told you... Out of the city.

MICHAEL. Out of the... Right. Sorry. Yeah. *(She doesn't want to go into it.)*

REBECCA. I've got a, uh... uh... *(He senses this and shifts the conversation.)*

MICHAEL. What do you have with you there? Did you buy a piece of-

REBECCA. It's some art. *(Beat.)* It's some artwork.

MICHAEL. *(chuckling)* Stole a piece from the Guggenheim, huh?

REBECCA. *(not very amused)* Yeah.

MICHAEL. I thought you might have actually moved into that lighting exhibit after we split. Pulled out an air mattress and just lived there on the third floor.

REBECCA. *(politely)* Uh-huh.

MICHAEL. The one with the different colored lights, the uh-

REBECCA. Turell.

MICHAEL. Is that the girl?

REBECCA. Guy.

MICHAEL. Right. I knew that. *(Beat.)* What time are you heading out?

REBECCA. Soon as my train gets in. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. I'm so sorry, I never even asked you... What are you doing now? *(She doesn't answer this but attempts to change the subject.)*

REBECCA. Umm... *(She struggles a little with her heavy artwork pieces.)*

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MICHAEL. I'm so rude, do you need some help there-

REBECCA. No. No, I'm fine.

MICHAEL. Okay.

REBECCA. Yeah, I'll manage.

MICHAEL. You always do.

REBECCA. I'll just adjust the... *(She adjusts the artwork so she has a better grip. Changing the subject)* So, you're not bothered at all?

MICHAEL. With what?

REBECCA. You not making partner after all these years?

MICHAEL. Um... no. Not really?

REBECCA. Not really?

MICHAEL. Well, these hot shot kids have all this energy, I just...

REBECCA. You used to be one of those hotshot kids.

MICHAEL. Yeah. Used to be I suppose, I... I don't know. *(A long silence. Rebecca smiles a little and nods. Pause. She gathers her paintings.)* Where are you going?

REBECCA. Nowhere. *(Beat.)* I um... How's your beer scene? Still hanging at the Fainting Goat?

MICHAEL. I'm not there too often.

REBECCA. Really?

MICHAEL. I stopped drinking. *(A long pause.)*

REBECCA. Really? *(A long pause.)*

MICHAEL. Yeah. *(Beat.)* Yes. I don't drink. After that thing with the-

REBECCA. Yeah I remember. Vividly. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. A few years ago I was with Scotty and Yvonne and you know the crew... And there were a few kids who just passed the bar. A bunch of us from the firm go and there's this guy at the door. I had a few nips before we headed downstairs and so- *(Rebecca's funny sounding alarm on her phone rings. She reaches for her phone with the artwork in her hands as best she can.)*

REBECCA. Sorry.

MICHAEL. Is that your alarm?

REBECCA. *(quickly)* Yes. *(She turns her alarm off.)* Sorry. Go ahead. *(Beat.)*

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MICHAEL. No, it's all right. *(She nods. An awkward pause. She understands.)*

REBECCA. I think it's great. No longer drinking.

MICHAEL. A better choice.

REBECCA. Choices.

MICHAEL. We all make choices. *(Beat. Awkward pause)*

Do you wanna grab some dinner and maybe-

REBECCA. *(gathering to go)* I don't think that's the best idea.

MICHAEL. Ah. *(Beat.)*

REBECCA. Well, I-

MICHAEL. Please sit.

REBECCA. I should really... I just wanted to say hi-

MICHAEL. Please. *(Silence. Finally...)*

REBECCA. I don't really... I don't know if that's the best idea.

MICHAEL. *(keeping it light)* I'm not gonna bite. I just... Let's just... Please. I'm asking you. *(She relents, keeping herself at a certain physical distance and sits.)*

REBECCA. You look different. I mean your hair. It's...

MICHAEL. More grey.

REBECCA. Yeah. And your eyes have a little...

MICHAEL. What?

REBECCA. No, nothing. *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. You still look the same though. Still radiant as ever. *(There is a long silence. Rebecca's phone rings.)*

REBECCA. I... uh...

MICHAEL. Sure.

REBECCA. I just wanted to say hello. That was all. *(She looks at her phone, pondering whether to answer it. She awkwardly pulls it out and looks at it and then decides to not answer the phone.)* Suppose I should go. *(She doesn't leave. Michael doesn't leave either. They both stand there while her phone continues to ring again. After the fifth or sixth ring she picks it up.)* Hello? *(She looks at who called and then hangs up.)* Just missed it. It's uh...

MICHAEL. Important.

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REBECCA. Very. Hang on. I'll just text here. Hang on. *(She texts on her phone then puts it away. More silence.)* I thought I saw you once.

MICHAEL. Really.

REBECCA. I was eating with a friend of mine and I looked across the restaurant and I thought I saw you as you passed by the front window. In Chicago. *(Michael doesn't say anything. Rebecca waits for a response that Michael won't give. A long pause.)* Where did you go Michael? *(Another pause. Michael stirs and is very uncomfortable.)* You wake up one day in a high rise New York apartment and the man you've been married to for years leaves a note in the kitchen telling you he is leaving. A note. *(Beat.)* A typed note. Not a handwritten note, but a fully typed out note from your office. You probably had Stephanie type it out for you.

MICHAEL. Samantha.

REBECCA. It even had the firm's header on it.

MICHAEL. It was efficient.

REBECCA. Yeah. No phone call. No multimedia. Clean break. New client.

MICHAEL. I didn't have time-

REBECCA. To talk to me? To communicate? *(A long silence.)* Thank you for the payments though.

MICHAEL. I couldn't leave you alone in the condo. The mortgage was too high for you to handle yourself. I knew that.

REBECCA. I don't want to get into this.

MICHAEL. I uh...

REBECCA. I should go. My train.

MICHAEL. It doesn't leave for nearly an hour. *(Another funny text sound. She pulls out her phone and checks it. All is well.)*

REBECCA. I gotta go. *(She stands and collects her items.)*

MICHAEL. Wait. *(Beat as she stops.)* Please.

REBECCA. You have a train.

MICHAEL. I'll grab the next one. *(Silence.)* Please. Sit down.

REBECCA. I can't.

MICHAEL. *(attempting to appeal to her artistic side)* What are you coloring now?

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REBECCA. Painting. The art is called painting, Michael. It's not color by numbers.

MICHAEL. Sorry. I'm sorry. I know. I never could get that right.

REBECCA. (*relenting a tad*) Currently I'm working on a Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec replica for a marketing firm.

MICHAEL. No shit?

REBECCA. Still have to pay the bills. I'm essentially reworking an old piece.

MICHAEL. I know how that can be. (*Michael's cell phone goes off silently in his pocket. Talking over the cell phone going off*) And you enjoy it?

REBECCA. Freelancing? A lot more than working in a law firm, yes. There are challenges but... but yes, I really love it.

MICHAEL. Good. I'm happy for you. Very happy for you.

REBECCA. Thank you.

MICHAEL. Hmmm.

REBECCA. You're not even paying attention are you?

MICHAEL. Sorry, I was getting a text and-

REBECCA. Uh-huh.

MICHAEL. My apologies.

REBECCA. You were always multitasking.

MICHAEL. I supported us by multitasking. (*Silence. Then finally, his text alerts goes off again.*)

REBECCA. You need to take that.

MICHAEL. I need to take this. (*Michael takes out his phone, texts for a moment, and puts it back in his pocket.*) I'm listening. I've always been listening.

REBECCA. You really believe that don't you? (*Beat. His phone rings silently again. She gathers her stuff and begins to leave.*)

MICHAEL. Are you... are you coming back into the city?

REBECCA. Friday. I have to pick up another piece.

MICHAEL. Piece?

REBECCA. Piece of art.

MICHAEL. Oh, right. At the Guggenheim.

REBECCA. It's my art.

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MICHAEL. Of course.

REBECCA. I have my work in a gallery in SoHo where-

MICHAEL. Soho, huh?

REBECCA. Phillip owns a gallery and he thought that it would be best to-

MICHAEL. Phillip?

REBECCA. He's a... He's a gallery owner. We uh-

MICHAEL. Oh.

REBECCA. And he-

MICHAEL. I didn't even ask to look at your piece. May I? *(He crosses to her as she turns the canvas over. It's covered in plastic.)*

REBECCA. It's called The Vegetarian on Bacon Street.

MICHAEL. It's covered in plastic.

REBECCA. Nothing gets past you.

MICHAEL. Can I see it?

REBECCA. Without the plastic on it?

MICHAEL. Yes.

REBECCA. Uh, well, I'm making a litho and then signing it.

MICHAEL. Lithos, huh? Going commercial?

REBECCA. No. *(Beat.)* Yes.

MICHAEL. Hang on to those lib values for as long as you could huh, and then-

REBECCA. It's just that-

MICHAEL. You need money. Easy to wag the finger when you're young. But you still need food to eat and-

REBECCA. The proceeds actually go to a non-profit that I help set up. *(Beat)*

MICHAEL. Oh. Well, then you're still doing the good for the good of the people.

REBECCA. They're a... a very generous couple. It's a commission. They love art.

MICHAEL. May I see it?

REBECCA. I really do need to go.

MICHAEL. You do?

REBECCA. Yes.

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MICHAEL. Just a second, though. Please. *(Beat)*

REBECCA. Okay. *(She puts down her purse as Michael awkwardly helps her while she unwraps the painting. It's an oil on canvas piece. He looks at it and then turns his head trying to figure out which direction he should look at it. She laughs a little bit.)* Be serious.

MICHAEL. I am.

REBECCA. Come on. *(She holds it the proper way for him to look at.)*

MICHAEL. Is that... Are those women wearing wedding dresses?

REBECCA. Uh... yes.

MICHAEL. Red wedding dresses? *(She nods.)* Why are they red?

REBECCA. Because they um... they were trying to uh... get over their divorces and they... they went to a grape stomp.

MICHAEL. A grape stomp?

REBECCA. Yes, a grape stomp that is held each year in the little town of Mondiego in uh... in Oregon and uh... and instead of selling their wedding dresses that they could never use again... uh... they uh... jump into this giant bucket of grapes to celebrate the end of harvest and the end of their marriage. *(Beat)*

MICHAEL. The dresses are ruined.

REBECCA. It's sort of a purging thing. *(He looks at the painting more closely.)*

MICHAEL. Is that you? *(A long pause.)*

REBECCA. Maybe. *(Beat)*

MICHAEL. That dress cost...

REBECCA. One-thousand three hundred, eighty-two dollars and thirty six cents.

MICHAEL. Your dad must have been-

REBECCA. Pissed. Yeah. He sure was.

MICHAEL. Was it cathartic? *(A long pause.)*

REBECCA. No. Actually it wasn't. *(She politely smiles and covers the painting again.)*

MICHAEL. Are you living with anyone?

REBECCA. We shouldn't have this discussion.

MICHAEL. Sure... uh... I understand. *(Beat)*

REBECCA. Well, I'm glad that we-

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MICHAEL. Are you back in the city soon?

REBECCA. Friday as I said.

MICHAEL. Same time?

REBECCA. Um... about this time yes. I have to pick up another painting.

MICHAEL. In Soho?

REBECCA. No, a little restaurant in Tribeca. They've got four of my pieces.

MICHAEL. Non cathartic I hope.

REBECCA. Yes. More traditional cubist in fact.

MICHAEL. Which restaurant? *(Beat)*

REBECCA. Uh... It's a new little pizza place. Jesus Crust.

MICHAEL. Jesus... Crust?

REBECCA. *(Smiling, knowing that this might get to him a little).* Yeah, it's eclectic. It's owned by an atheist couple.

MICHAEL. I see.

REBECCA. Your head exploding?

MICHAEL. No. Not at all.

REBECCA. I'm trading two of them out with another pair I've done. Actually, I sold two and, so-

MICHAEL. That's fantastic. *(They look into each other for a long time. Rebecca breaks the connection. She is about to say something, but then says something else.)*

REBECCA. I really have to go.

MICHAEL. Why?

REBECCA. I just do.

MICHAEL. We could talk for a little while...

REBECCA. I don't think that's such a good idea. *(There is no more than that. Beat.)*

MICHAEL. I gotcha. *(She starts to really leave this time.)*

REBECCA. I have to get home.

MICHAEL. I don't see a ring. *(She stops. There is a long silence.)*

REBECCA. Stop-

MICHAEL. I could walk you to your train-

REBECCA. Stop-

SWITCHING TRACKS

MICHAEL. Is there a-

REBECCA. Please. *(Beat)* It was good to see you. *(Silence.)*

MICHAEL. Same here. *(They don't move. He takes a long look at his ex-wife. Lights slowly shift. The schedule board reads: "If you're not trying to be real, you don't have to get it right. That's art." Sound of a train whistle. Lights to black. Music. Lights up. Rebecca and Michael are on opposite sides of the stage in pin spots. The train whistle cuts. She addresses the audience.)*

REBECCA. We were together for twelve years. Married for nine. Got engaged on the Fourth of July and married on Flag Day, that's how patriotic he is. Raised in a predominantly conservative Catholic East Coast household around the Boston area. His father is a banker and his mother a homemaker. This man was raised in that type of household that gave you a firm platform to succeed. In... certain ways. As long as one follows the dominant colonization perspective. His father was successful and wealthy and his mother was something from a greeting card. Or at least that's what it appeared to be... on the surface.

MICHAEL. *(Addressing the audience.)* Rebecca. Born in Bellevue Washington, raised in Seattle and later the Chicago area. Three months my junior. A tomboy when she needed to be. Sensual and feminine when she needed to be. She was not what I was expecting in my life. And definitely not what my parents had expected.

REBECCA. His parents were those East Coast old money conservatives that lived in one of those cold white plantation homes. Political neophytes who listened to tag lines and instantly created an opinion about anything or anyone that didn't align with their political leanings.

MICHAEL. Her parents were middle-of-the-road liberals. Hard working. Good people even if they were somewhat judgmental.

REBECCA. *(to him)* Judgmental?

MICHAEL. *(to her)* Yes.

REBECCA. *(Back to the audience.)* His mother was nice, but his dad was a douche.

MICHAEL. *(to audience)* Her parents loved me.

REBECCA. *(to audience)* My parents liked him... enough. Considering he wasn't-

SWITCHING TRACKS

MICHAEL. *(to Rebecca)* What? Religious? Or was it the wrong type of religion?

REBECCA. You said it, not me.

MICHAEL. And why did that have to be a... thing?

REBECCA. Because. Our identity is burned into who we are. Anything or anyone that isn't is subject to scrutiny.

MICHAEL. *(With a sigh, back to the audience.)* Most major holidays were spent at my parents house.

REBECCA. On the surface, being in the presence of his parents felt like a Norman Rockwell painting.

MICHAEL. Rebecca's parents were always arguing.

REBECCA. *(to Micheal)* Discussing.

MICHAEL. *(to Rebecca)* Loud discussions it sounded like.

REBECCA. My parents don't hide their feelings, their intentions, their...

MICHAEL. Political leanings? *(Beat)* There was always some innocuous kind of argument about her brother's holiday date or whether to bring a sweater to the movies. They always seemed to be yelling but maybe they were all just hard of hearing.

REBECCA. My parents were civil but they had a hard time accepting him. My Uncle Roy was the one that seemed to be able to see through his slick conservative veneer. He was a literature professor at NYU.

MICHAEL. The holidays were a challenge but it really was about family. They appreciated that I could support the two of us.

REBECCA. My mother *hated* that he made so much money stepping on the eyeballs of others.

MICHAEL. *(To Rebecca)* I thought that she loved that I made so much money, because... *(He stops.)*

REBECCA. You were going to say-

MICHAEL. Nothing. *(Beat.)* Around the holidays her Uncle Roy and I would quote books and pretend we were all academic and stuff. Quoting obscure literature reference that nobody cared about any more.

REBECCA. "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit."

MICHAEL. I often times had a difficult time wrapping my head around what he saying.

SWITCHING TRACKS

REBECCA. “We know what we are, but know not what we may be.”

MICHAEL. I had a feeling he didn’t care for me too much.

REBECCA. ”Kill all the lawyers.” (*A look between them.*)

MICHAEL. Her parents lived in Chicago. A little apartment in The Loop. It was nice. Quaint.

REBECCA. (*to MICHAEL*) Okay... quaint?

MICHAEL. (*to REBECCA*) Yeah, what’s wrong with quaint?

REBECCA. It’s not the word, it’s how you say it.

MICHAEL. I never meant anything by it.

REBECCA. Come on, you know it’s loaded.

MICHAEL. I never knew you felt this way.

REBECCA. Because I just never told you. (*They look at each other for a long pause and then they both turn back out and address the audience.*) I’ll admit, there were times when I just wanted to escape my angsty middle class holiday world and delve into his cosy Hallmark Channel land of eggnog and carols and gift-giving and red, white and green sweater vests. His family was huge and mostly accepting of me, except his mother. She would look into my eyes the curse and she that stare sometimes would penetrate my skin, because I knew that was all she was looking at. But overall, honestly there were so many times when I felt... comfortable there. More comfortable than in my own household. Is that wrong? Oftentimes I felt that I was betraying who I am, my family, my identity. It was easier to assimilate into his world. I hated myself for that. Hated it, so why did it feel so easy. So nature? Is that... terrible to say? I found myself swept away. I was completely divided. My heart said one thing and my brain said another. (*Beat.*) And there were times that I felt as if I ignored one part of myself while convincing myself to be with him for other reasons. And I felt guilty about it, but it usually seemed that it was our differences that brought us together.

MICHAEL. (*to audience*) And I suppose that is why we seemed to work so well... at first. She listened to NPR.

REBECCA. And he watched Fox News.

MICHAEL. She was artistic.

REBECCA. He was the definition of practical.

MICHAEL. I wanted children and... (*Beat*)

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MICHAEL. She didn't.

REBECCA. He was smart. Lawyer wise I mean.

MICHAEL. She was smart. Intelligent. Exceptionally opinionated. Always marching for some kind of rights for someone. Letter-writing campaigns. Beautiful smile and an incredible heart. I was a Red Sox fan. We'd go to Yankee/Sox games and I think she cheered on the Yankees just to piss me off.

REBECCA. I cheered on the Yankees just to piss him off.

MICHAEL. She didn't even like baseball.

REBECCA. I think it's the most boring sport in the world.

MICHAEL. But she was a gem. *(A respite.)*

REBECCA. He loved to go out to eat. He was adventurous that way.

MICHAEL. She loved to explore the culinary world.

REBECCA. He was fun and courageous when it came to trying new things and traveling.

MICHAEL. She had the most cavalier attitude. *(A connection. Perhaps a chuckle between them.)* She loved art. Hated to clean.

REBECCA. I hated cleaning.

MICHAEL. Graduated with a degree in Social Government.

REBECCA. I wanted to be a force of change in politics in some... way. I was going to disrupt the world!

MICHAEL. Terrible home maker.

REBECCA. First to admit it.

MICHAEL & REBECCA. Never wanted-

MICHAEL. To be a parent. *(Beat. Michael turns to her. She looks at him. Her face is blank. Beat, then addresses the audience.)*

REBECCA. When we first started dating... I was young. No. That 'not fair. We were both young. Younger! Anyhow, he was studying to be, can you say it with me... a corporate lawyer. Ugh. You know one of those guys that protected the massive corporations against the environment, small business, real small businesses, not those faux small business with 2,000 employees and call themselves small business. Abhorred unions without every having been in one or known anyone in one. Hated socialized democracy in any form. Force feed bullshit from his parents about "handouts." He believed in limited government, free

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markets, individual liberty, traditional American values and a strong national defense. He was the sort of preppy-dressing nerd that wore his massive cell phone on a clip on his belt for all to see. I wanted to hate him. Really, I did. Although he did believe in women's rights and gender equality and global warming. The trouble was... I couldn't. He was charming and kind and very generous and even when our opinions differed he listened. Or he at least appeared to listen. And he was cute as hell. The man loves his country a bit too much. Wore the American flag on shirt, hats, his underwear. You know the kind. Loves spending time with the guys drinking until the wee hours of the morning. And he could fix anything, cars, air conditioners, computers, anything. He renovated our kitchen all by himself. The man would buy flowers for me every week at the farmer's market so he was conscious about the art of romance, even if he couldn't live in it day-to-day. Loves sports. He was good at everything athletic. Except swimming. He couldn't swim. Don't tell him that I told you that. He gets embarrassed. Other than that, I always felt safe with him. (*Beat.*) Physically at least. All relationships end. Dating, marriage. Whether through separation, divorce or death, all relationships will end at some point. And it is how we manage ourselves when we are alone that builds us, that defines us. Without a partner do we sink or do we-

MICHAEL. (*methodical*) Swim. Did she tell you I couldn't swim? That's always bothered me. As a kid... I never... learned. I always had older brothers and family members that would carry me on their backs or hold my hand in the water. I could tread fine on my own, but... I never really learned to swim. (*Beat.*) I felt like I was capable of sinking at any time. You see, I always relied on others to ensure that didn't happen. But as I have gotten older there seem to be less people to hang onto. (*Beat.*) Perhaps that's why, these days, I avoid the pool altogether. (*Beat*)

REBECCA. They say that you never truly leave the one you loved. At times, love is wide and open and at times narrow and foreboding. Is it possible to completely remove someone from your heart? To extract them, like a thorn in your skin? The romantic day trips to wine country. The honeymoon in Austria. The wedding with four hundred of your closest friends and family. The intense feelings for the person that you

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share your life with. Simply... your best friend. How do we simply dispatch that person? *(A long pause.)* Oh, it's not like that. He lied.

MICHAEL. I lied.

REBECCA. He hurt me. I lied.

MICHAEL. She lied.

REBECCA. I hurt him. *(Another long pause.)* So, why do we still feel? *(The schedule board reads: "Fantasy love is much better than reality love." Music Lights slowly cross fade to the sounds of the train station as if in a fantasy. Michael enters and looks around for Rebecca. He stands for a while waiting for her. He checks his phone and pretends to be busy. He sits. Then he stands and is about to leave when she appears on one side of the stage in her own light. She "enters the scene." They slowly come towards each other. There is a long embrace. Finally, they part. A long pause. She smiles and walks off to her train. The lights shift. He is alone on stage. The sounds fade away as he stands up and takes out a handwritten letter. At a certain point in the monologue lights on Rebecca slowly fade up while she listens to him.)*

MICHAEL. "My dearest Rebecca, The great celestial orb has risen on this night solely in order to radiate upon your glorious face. Your eyes are like twinkling stars as we sit here, alone, in the world. The universe is ours and the love we have is beyond the moon. I know there have been problems but let me help you. Let me guide you. Let me... love you. You're always in my heart. You're always in my mind. Let me into the deepest vestibules of your soul my sweet. Let me in and I'll create the most colorful palate of love that you'll be able to mix with for the rest of our days. Forever yours." *(He folds the note up and takes a deep breath. He then speaks directly to the audience.)* I didn't write that. I found this letter folded up in her jeans pocket one afternoon. *(Shift.)* On our second date, she came over to my place for the first time. I was still living like a college bachelor. The house was a disaster. She looked around at the strewn clothes and dirty dishes and asked me point blank: "You don't like things tidy huh?" And I told her the only time that I clean the house is when I move out. *(Beat.)* The day I walked out, the day I ended our marriage I left our condo... immaculate. *(Long pause.)* I'm not a poet. I uh... I've held onto this letter for all these years, turning

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things over and over in my head. *(Beat.)* My type of writing is more judicial. Legal jargon. I'd never written something like... Look, I can do things spur of the moment. I can. I love to do those types of things. Actually all that matters is that this letter... wasn't from me. Her husband. She always told me that she loved for how unromantic I was. Why is lust so pure and simple and love is so convoluted and complicated? Or maybe it isn't. That's some shit my father told me. The only dating advice he ever gave me. *(Pause. He unfolds the letter and looks at it.)* This is handwritten. The man who wrote it composed this in fucking calligraphy! He drew little pictures, cute little stupid pictures in the margins of the note. If I had written this note, or rather if I had dictated those exact words to my secretary and then she typed them out and sealed it up with a beautiful envelope from some exclusive Italian printing company or something would it have meant the same thing to her? This note is handwritten. It's handwritten! Who even does that anymore? *(Rebecca's light fades up to match her in the scene. She has been listening to the letter, watching him on the other side of the stage. We hear the echoes of the train station and people moving about in normal time. Sound of thunder. Rebecca "enters the scene.")*

REBECCA. Hey.

MICHAEL. Hey.

REBECCA. Didn't know if I'd see you.

MICHAEL. Yeah, well... I'm here. *(Beat.)* Another painting? *(Rebecca stops.)*

REBECCA. Yes.

MICHAEL. With the plastic on it?

REBECCA. Details never get by you.

MICHAEL. Details are all part of the profession.

REBECCA. Yes.

MICHAEL. Yeah.

REBECCA. It's raining. I'm not sure you picked up on that. It's a detail.

MICHAEL. Yeah, I got it. Weather details, right. You coming from a show?

REBECCA. Yeah. Heading home.

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MICHAEL. Your train delayed?

REBECCA. Yes. I saw it on my phone.

MICHAEL. So why did you get here so early?

REBECCA. Maybe I shouldn't have.

MICHAEL. I'm glad you did. *(Silence.)* Can I see the painting?

REBECCA. Sure. *(She unwraps the painting and shows it to him. He lifts it up and studies the details. She starts to giggle.)* Do you like it?

MICHAEL. Yeah.

REBECCA. It's upside down.

MICHAEL. Oh. *(He turns it over and over trying to determine which side is up. With a wry smile she helps him.)*

REBECCA. It's this way. That's the uh... the angle of the...

MICHAEL. Oh yes, your signature is here and-

REBECCA. Right.

MICHAEL. Got it. Cool. Right. *(He studies it again.)*

REBECCA. It's got some abstract elements. *(He studies it right side up.)*

MICHAEL. It's... it's neat.

REBECCA. Neat?

MICHAEL. It's more than neat. It's... you know what I mean. *(She stands there as if waiting for something, but Michael doesn't say anything. She begins to leave.)* I, uh... look...

REBECCA. I shouldn't have stopped. I- *(He looks into her.)*

MICHAEL. Please. This isn't by accident.

REBECCA. Are you stalking me?

MICHAEL. What? No! No, no no... I'm not saying... Look, maybe... maybe we were supposed to run into each other. It keeps happening all of a sudden.

REBECCA. It happened once.

MICHAEL. Twice.

REBECCA. Once. *(Beat.)* I have a feeling you were waiting for me today.

MICHAEL. Okay, maybe once. I don't want to seem like a...

REBECCA. Stalker? You were always persistent.

MICHAEL. I'm a lawyer. We're supposed to be persistent.

SWITCHING TRACKS

REBECCA. Michael...

MICHAEL. Rebecca, I've... you know I've really changed. I have. My life is different. I'm not the same person. I've changed.

REBECCA. (With weight.) People don't change Michael, they simply bend. *(Beat)* I have to go.

MICHAEL. Look-

REBECCA. Please.

MICHAEL. Stay for a moment.

REBECCA. No. I... *(A text alert. She looks at her phone and then to Michael. Pause.)*

MICHAEL. Can we just... chat for a little while?

REBECCA. I don't think that's a good idea.

MICHAEL. Why not?

REBECCA. It's just not.

MICHAEL. Give me a good reason.

REBECCA. I really need to go.

MICHAEL. You have a date?

REBECCA. No.

MICHAEL. You have another art showing or something?

REBECCA. It's not that.

MICHAEL. You were always running from me, always. I was there for the economics and the good smile, right? That was me fitting into your pocket.

REBECCA. That's not true.

MICHAEL. We haven't seen each other in god knows how many years.

REBECCA. I saw you two days ago.

MICHAEL. All I am asking of you is a few minutes of your time. Give me one reason why you can't give your ex-husband, the man you spent twelve years of your life with, the time of day?

REBECCA. I have to pick up my son. *(This knocks him out cold. There is an exceptionally long pause. A shift in the momentum.)*

MICHAEL. *(almost in a whisper)* Your son. *(Pause.)*

REBECCA. Yes. *(A long silence.)*

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MICHAEL. I see. (*Another exceptionally long silence between them. This is difficult for him, but he is earnest.*) Well... (*Long pause.*)
Congratulations. (*Beat*)

REBECCA. Thank you. He's great. He's a wonderful kid.

MICHAEL. (*Composes himself and smiles from his heart.*) I'm sure he is. (*Silence.*)

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