

The 4:00 am 'lizbeth

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(The play takes place in a section of the now abandoned Central Railroad line that runs across Elizabeth, New Jersey. The section is enclosed by trees and evokes a feeling of being in the middle of a forest, yet beyond those trees are the concrete sidewalks, the streetlights, and the sound of cars passing.)

ACT I: The 4am 'lizabeth

(October, 1995. When the lights come up, Eddie and Jay enter. Eddie is carrying a knapsack and a paper bag with beer.)

EDDIE

It's been a while since Jimmy had to kick us out at closing, can't even remember when the last time was. What time is it now?

JAY

3:08.

EDDIE

Cool. 52 minutes. It comes at exactly 4 o'clock.

JAY

Yeah.

(Eddie and Jay settle down. Jay grabs a beer and finds a place to sit. Eddie stands staring down the length of the track.)

EDDIE

Hey, man, I'm glad you came. It really means a lot to me.

JAY

Yeah, yeah. Just don't you be depressing the shit out of me, I'm depressed enough as it is.

EDDIE

Alright... What happened?

JAY

Nothing.

EDDIE

Is everything ok?

JAY

Yes, everything's just fine fucking dandy.

EDDIE

Alright. I mean, I was just kinda surprised you said yes.

JAY

Yeah, well I just didn't feel like going home yet, and Jimmy's is closed.

EDDIE

Aight man, I respect that... You know I called Jerry to come too.

JAY

Really.

EDDIE

Yeah.

JAY

How is he?

EDDIE

He sounded alright. Though he didn't wanna come.

JAY

Oh well.

EDDIE

Yeah. He really isn't taking this well, is he?

JAY

No.

EDDIE

Yeah, but it's been three months since his Dad's funeral.

JAY

It takes longer than three months. And his father was sick for much longer than that.

EDDIE

I just hope he's ok, that's all.

JAY

He'll figure it out... and quit being so fucking depressing.

EDDIE

Alright, I'll drop it.

(Eddie takes a cheap camera out of his bookbag.)

JAY

Aw, jeez...

EDDIE

Smile.

(Eddie takes a picture.)

JAY

Eddie, cut it out.

EDDIE

I gotta have someone in it.

JAY

Why?

EDDIE

Cause it'll look like a gay as hell postcard if no-one's in it.

JAY

A what?

EDDIE

A gay as hell postcard. It'll look like a gay as hell postcard if no-one's in it.

JAY

Well you're not taking pictures of me all night.

(Eddie aims the camera)

EDDIE

Jay Perez. October 17, 1995. Time, 3:10 am.

JAY

Eddie...

(Eddie shoots. Jay chases him around.)

JAY

You fucking... you're gonna find that thing up your ass.

EDDIE

Ok! That was the last one.

(Eddie takes a picture of himself and blinds himself with the flash.)

EDDIE

We used to be here every day back in high school. Remember Jerry's story that won that contest? The 4:00 AM 'lizbeth.

JAY

Heh, yeah.

EDDIE

Jerry was such a fucking storyteller.

(Pause. No response from Jay. Jay just sits drinking beer.)

EDDIE

It happened sometime in the twenties. It was the year of the big blizzard, and this passenger train was coming into 'lizabeth at 4 AM. This worker was supposed to pull this switch so the train could go into the station, but he was drinking that night, and he forgot which way the train was supposed to go, and he saw the light of the 4:00 AM 'lizabeth coming toward him, so he crossed his fingers and pulled the switch and the train passed to the left. But it was the wrong way. They hadn't de-iced that part of the tracks and the train derailed, killing twenty three people.

The worker got fired, but he became so guilty over the whole thing. It messed up his entire life. He started to drink even more and he would stay on these tracks all night, calling for the train to get him. One night, he went out, and never came back. He just disappeared. It's as if the 4:00 am 'lizabeth actually did come and take him. And pretty soon, people who live nearby said that they could hear the train pass by at exactly 4:00. They say that every time it passes by, it takes someone with it.

JAY

No shit.

EDDIE

And that's why nobody uses this line anymore, but no-one wants to tear it out either. They just built everything around it.

JAY

And to think this was just a place for us to drink beer without getting into trouble.

EDDIE

Yeah, back in high school... heh, remember we used to pay Jerry's uncle Jack to get beer for us, and we'd come up here and get wasted.

(Eddie grabs a beer.)

EDDIE

You know what we said we'd do when we graduated? We were gonna work the summer and save up our money, then hop on a rental van and just drive across the country. You know, see the world.

JAY

Gina always wanted to do that. She said I never take her out. She wanted to go to like Virginia or Florida. That was her big dream.

EDDIE

So let's do it... it'll be so fucking cool.

JAY

Man, we ain't got the money to do something like that.

EDDIE

If Gina wants to go... I could cash all my savings bonds, I mean, it's not like I'm gonna need it anymore...

JAY

She doesn't wanna go.

EDDIE

But you said...

JAY

Look, she doesn't wanna go alright? Trust me, she doesn't wanna go.

EDDIE

Ok... sheesh! Probably had another fight with her tonight.

JAY

Shut the fuck up!

EDDIE

Ok!

(Pause. Eddie goes into his bookbag and pulls out a football, and tosses it to Jay.)

EDDIE

I was cleaning out my closet the other day, and look what I found.

JAY

Oh shit.

EDDIE

Remember that?

JAY

It's the old football we used to play with. So it was with you the whole time.

EDDIE

Hey, no-one really asked for it. You got a new one when you and Jerry joined the team, but this one... this one was special, 'cause we had this ball since we were like six.

JAY

Yeah. We were crazy about football back then.

EDDIE

Man, we had some fucking good times here. You, me, Jerry,... even Alvin... remember when he used to hang with us. We'd toss around a football, and Jerry would practice his mile long throw and you, Mr. Running Back Guy, would run down the track trying to outrun the football, while Alvin would try to get the rocks out of his shoes.

Yeah, we had some fucking good times here.

Wonder how Alvin's doing now.

JAY

Jerking off at Rutgers.

EDDIE

No, didn't he go to Princeton.

JAY

He went to Rutgers.

EDDIE

No, last time I saw him he said he was going to Princeton.

JAY

That's what everyone thought, but he didn't get into Princeton.

EDDIE

Princeton turned him down.

JAY

Yeah.

EDDIE

Bullshit, he was number one in our class.

JAY

Princeton didn't take him.

EDDIE

Fuck, man, the guy was a genius.

JAY
So?

EDDIE
What do you mean, "so"?

JAY
Why are you getting all riled up about it?

EDDIE
I'm not... it's just...I don't know. I just thought he went to Princeton.

(Pause. He stares down the length of the track.)

EDDIE
Remember that time we scared the shit outta him? Jerry was so sure that the 4:00 AM 'Lizabeth was gonna come that night... and we all snuck out of bed to come here... Jerry came up behind Alvin with a whistle and blew it.

(Jay laughs)

Man, I will never forget the look on Alvin's face. And then that homeless guy appeared and we thought it was the ghost of that switch worker and we all ran. That was so funny. Alvin wet his pants...

JAY
He never hung out with us after that.

EDDIE
I know.

(He stares down the track again.)

JAY
3:15.

EDDIE
What?

JAY
It's 3:15.

EDDIE
Oh. You think maybe it'll come tonight?

The 4:00 am 'Lizabeth? JAY

Yeah. EDDIE

Maybe. JAY

Seriously. EDDIE

Yeah. JAY

(They hear a noise.)

Hello? EDDIE

Who's there? JAY

It's me. JERRY

Jerry! You scared the shit outta me. EDDIE

How'd you know we were here? JAY

I saw Eddie's car outside. JERRY

(Eddie hands him a beer)

Long time no see. JAY

Yeah. JERRY

How ya holding up? JAY

I'm fine. JERRY

How's your mom doing? JAY

Ok. JERRY

Your sister? JAY

Minnie's fine. JERRY

That's good. JAY

Hey, I'm really glad you came, man. EDDIE

How's that new apartment working out? JAY

Fine. JERRY

Your mom's not upset that you moved out? JAY

Listen, I got a call from Gina. She was all upset, she said you guys had a fight and you stormed out. She called me at 1 o'clock in the morning to ask me to make sure you got home safely. JERRY

She fucking called you? I don't believe this. Well, what you tell her? JAY

I said I would. JERRY

And that's why you're here. JAY

Yeah. JERRY

JAY

I don't need no damn baby-sitter.

JERRY

What the hell do you think you're doing?

JAY

Excuse me?

JERRY

What do you think you're doing?

JAY

I'm hanging out. Why've I always gotta be doing something to somebody? Can't a guy just drink and chill out for a while?

JERRY

You can't be doing this anymore. You got the baby to think about now.

JAY

She told you about the baby?

EDDIE

What baby?

JERRY

Yes. She told me about your baby.

JAY

Motherfucker...

EDDIE

Shit.

JERRY

How could you just leave Gina there, she's like crying her eyes out. She's wondering where you are, and what the f... what the hell is happening with you.

JAY

Hey, I don't need no damn preacher telling me what's right and what's wrong, alright? I ain't see you in months, and the first time I see you, you give me a damn lecture on things I already know?! Who the fuck do you think you are, thinking you're better than me?

JERRY

Look, I'm sorry... I didn't mean to come at you like that...

JAY

Well, you did, motherfucker.

JERRY

Look, man, Gina is at home, all upset, ready to kill herself, and you're over here drinking... I mean, how am I supposed to take that? Huh? How else am I supposed to say it? Is this the way you're gonna be a father to your baby?

JAY

Hey, how the fuck do you know what kind of father I'm gonna be to my baby? What business is it of yours anyway?

JERRY

I don't want Gina hurt.

JAY

Since when did you care so much for Gina?

JERRY

I've always cared for Gina.

JAY

Oh really?

JERRY

Since we were kids. She's like a sister to me and I don't want her hurt.

JAY

Well, maybe you should go marry Gina.

JERRY

Well, yes, maybe I should. But she doesn't love me, she loves you. You've got a woman that loves you. There ain't too many guys who can say that.

JAY

I know that. Don't you think I know that?

JERRY

Then what are you gonna do about it?

JAY

I don't know. I don't know, alright? I don't know what the hell I'm gonna do about it. I ain't ready to be no father. Is that what you wanted to hear? Well, you heard it, I ain't ready to be no fucking father.

JERRY

And so what about Gina?

JAY

I don't know. I'm a fucking asshole. I'm fucking loser who just lost his third job this month, and is a fucking alcoholic. And you, well, Gina told me you just got a fucking promotion in your job. Hell, she wants me to ask you for a job. Look at you. You're the one who's ready to be a father. You're the fucking sensitive type. You're the one she talks to in the middle of the night when she's in trouble. Hell, maybe the baby ain't even mine! Why don't you take care of the baby? Now that you've got this void in your life.

JERRY

Void?

JAY

Yeah, it'll help you get over it.

JERRY

Get over what?

EDDIE

You guys... come on.

JAY

Yeah, that baby would make a great replacement...

JERRY

Fuck you! FUCK YOU JAY! Leave him outta this. You've got no idea what went on with me and my father, so just fuck off. I was trying to be a friend...

JAY

Well, you've got no idea what went on with me and Gina. No fucking idea. You ain't got no motherfucking right preaching to me about what I gotta do. So YOU fuck off!

(Jerry's cellphone suddenly rings.)

JAY

What the fuck is that?

JERRY

(Answering it.) Hello?

JAY

He's got a fucking cellphone!

JERRY

(On the cellphone.)

Hello?... Minnie, what's wrong?... Why, what happened?... Oh, come on... not again... What happened this time?... She can't find her wedding ring?... What do you need me home for?... I'm at home... I can't go over there for every little thing!... Minnie... Minnie! ... Just tell her to calm down... Ok, I will, I'll go over there... Ok! I will!... Ok!... Ok... Ok... bye.

(He hangs up. There is a moment of awkward silence.)

EDDIE

Is everything ok?

JERRY

Yes, everything's fine.

EDDIE

Sure?

JERRY

Yeah.

EDDIE

Have a beer.

JERRY

I got one.

EDDIE

Oh.

(Eddie opens it for himself)

EDDIE

He didn't mean it.

JERRY

Whatever.

(Pause. Eddie picks up the camera and takes a picture.)

JERRY

What the fuck are you doing?

EDDIE

I'm taking a picture.

JERRY

Why?

EDDIE

Nothing, it's just for a scrapbook I'm putting together.

JERRY

Since when you start putting together a scrapbook?

EDDIE

I just wanna do it.

JERRY

Why?

EDDIE

Nothing. I just wanna do it.

JERRY

Well, cut it out with the pictures, you're giving me the fucking creeps.

EDDIE

Alright! Hey, Jerry.

JERRY

What?

EDDIE

I haven't seen him in a long time. Whatever happened to your Uncle Jack?

JERRY

He's in jail.

EDDIE

Are you serious? For what?

JERRY

Drugs.

EDDIE

Heh. Wow. He was cool though. He was "groovy". Writing, peace songs, poetry. Performing in nightclubs.

JERRY

He was a fucking fag.

EDDIE

Well, yeah. That goes without saying. Him and his flower tee-shirts, and his beads, and his...

JERRY

So, Eddie, how's school?

EDDIE

School? Oh... well, I took a lot of extra courses this summer, I'm graduating a semester early, this December.

JERRY

Really?

EDDIE

Yeah, an Associates in Computer programming from Union County College.

JERRY

Congratulations.

EDDIE

Thanks.

JERRY

That's great Eddie.

EDDIE

And you know, after I graduate, you, me, and Jay could go cross country. Drive to California and back. I think that would be awesome.

JERRY

Yeah. That would.

EDDIE

Think of it... the mountains, the deserts. We could go by Green Bay and try to see a Packers game... Yellowstone, Mount Rushmore, Old Faithful...

JERRY

Uh huh.

EDDIE

What do you say?

JERRY

I work now.

Can't you get time off?
EDDIE

No.
JERRY

That's too bad.
EDDIE

(Jay tosses Jerry the football)

Hey, Jerry, catch.
JAY

(Jerry catches it.)

Remember that?
JAY

Hey, yeah, I remember this. Where the hell'd you get this from?
JERRY

Eddie found it in his closet.
JAY

You're kidding.
JERRY

Lets see that spiral.
JAY

Go long.
JERRY

(Jay catches the ball and runs down the track with it till he goes offstage.)

Hey, Jay, where the fuck are you going?
JERRY

(Jerry and Eddie watch as Jay runs down the track further and further away from them.)

Jay! Where the fuck is he going?
JERRY

EDDIE

I don't know.

JERRY

(Playful) Fucking asshole.

EDDIE

Hey, Jerry, what time is it?

JERRY

Almost 3:40, why?

EDDIE

Twenty minutes till the 4:00 AM 'Lizbeth gets here.

JERRY

Oh, yeah. The 4:00 AM 'lizbeth.

EDDIE

That was a fucking good story, man. I mean, when you won that contest, you were the talk of the entire school.

JERRY

Yeah.

EDDIE

Why didn't you keep writing?

JERRY

I didn't like it.

EDDIE

Man, you could've been famous.

JERRY

No, I wouldn't have been famous. It was just a fucking story.

EDDIE

But you should've at least tried. I mean, it's better than driving trucks all day. I never understood why you never went to college for it.

JERRY

Because I couldn't.

EDDIE

Why not?

JERRY

Look, it was my father, alright?

EDDIE

What about your father?

JERRY

He didn't want me to do it.

EDDIE

You shouldn't let your father run your life. He can't make that kind of decision for you.

(During this, Jay returns, out of breath, and overhears this.)

JERRY

When my mother showed him that I won that contest, I was in my room, and I thought he could come through that door and congratulate me. Tell me he was proud of his son. He came through that door and started to beat me... he told me he wasn't going to let me become a fag and he beat me some more while my mother stood helplessly at the door screaming, begging him to stop. What was I supposed to do?

(Jerry sees Jay)

JAY

What the fuck are you guys talking about?

JERRY

Nothing.

JAY

Fuck, I haven't run like that in a long time. I'm outta shape.

JERRY

You're telling me.

JAY

Speak for yourself, Gatorade boy.

JERRY

Hey, it wasn't my fault there was a quarterback better than me.

JAY

Yes it was.

JERRY

Oh please.

(Pause. They drink and stare into the sky as Eddie stares down the length of the track.)

JERRY

Man, I haven't had one a' these since the last time I was here.

JAY

Get the fuck outta here.

JERRY

I'm serious.

JAY

As serious as Eddie.

EDDIE

What?

JERRY

I haven't. Four months.

JAY

How do you go without beer for four months?

JERRY

Ain't got no woman.

JAY

Fuck, you ain't ever got no woman.

JERRY

See what I mean?

JAY

That's cause you're fucking gay.

JERRY

What?

JAY

Fucking gay.

JERRY

Oh please. Just because I don't think with my dick don't mean I'm gay.

JAY
Yeah it does.

JERRY
Eddie ain't got no woman.

EDDIE
Hey.

JERRY
You eyeing me up man?

EDDIE
Shut up. I ain't gay.

JAY
Hey, leave the guy alone.

JERRY
(Falsetto) I ain't gay.

EDDIE
Fuck you!

JERRY
Wouldn't you like to try.

EDDIE
SHUT UP! YOU FUCKING DICK. JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!

JERRY
Calm down, Eddie. You know I'm just playing with you. What the hell is wrong with you?

EDDIE
I ain't no fag.

JERRY
Alright. You ain't no fag. You used to go out with that girl, what was her name, Charlene?

JAY
Jerry...

EDDIE
I gotta piss.

What? JERRY

I gotta piss. EDDIE

Alright. JERRY

(Eddie exits.)

What the fuck is wrong with him? JERRY

You don't know, do you? JAY

Don't know what? JERRY

Shit. JAY

What? JERRY

Eddie, he's... JAY

Gay? JERRY

No, man, listen to me. JAY

What? JERRY

Charlene's dead. She died last month. JAY

She died? How? JERRY

JAY

She...

(Jay hesitates. Eddie interrupts.)

(Offstage) Shit!
EDDIE

What?
JAY

Aw, shit!
EDDIE

What?
JAY

I stepped on shit!
EDDIE

JERRY
(Laughing) Eddie... you're a fucking asshole, you know that?

EDDIE
(Re-entering) Shut up.

JERRY
You stay away from me.

EDDIE
I wiped it off!

JERRY
I don't care. You stay the fuck away from me.

EDDIE
Come on. It don't stink.

JERRY
You sit over there.

EDDIE
You guys suck.

(Sits away from them)

EDDIE

Can you guys at least pass me a beer?

JAY

Here.

EDDIE

Thanks. What time is it?

JAY

3:45.

(Pause. Jerry takes out his cellphone and punches out a number.)

JERRY

Hello... Gina? It's Jerry. Yes, I found him. I took him home. Yes, he's OK. No, he's not here, I'm at home now. You two talk about it in the morning, alright? Go to bed. Get some sleep Gina. OK. OK. Bye.

(Puts away the cellphone. Pause)

JERRY

I figured you didn't want to talk to her right now.

JAY

No.

JERRY

OK.

Y'all aren't leaving anytime soon and I didn't want her up all night.

Jay, you know I could get you a job with me at Greenview Trucking.

JAY

Yeah?

JERRY

Yeah. We have to train you for a while... you know, get a CDL, you just have to make a commitment.

JAY

A commitment.

JERRY

Yeah, you can't get tired of it and quit like your other jobs, you have to stay with us... for a while, at least.

JAY

Let me think about it.

JERRY

What's there to think about? You need this job.

JAY

Hey look, I said I'll think about it, alright?

JERRY

Alright.

JAY

I feel like this is a dream and I'll just wake up. Haven't you had that happen to you? You dream that something happens that fucks up your life and you're all pissed and then you wake up and none of that shit ever happened.

JERRY

Jay, this is ain't no dream.

JAY

Look, let me think about it, alright? I just need some time alone to think about it.

JERRY

(Pause, as Jerry hesitates with what he is going to say.)

You know when I gave the eulogy at my father's wake, I said things about how he loved his family and how dedicated he was to his job and everyone thought it was beautiful and how lucky he was to have a son that loved his father. I looked at my mother and sister and it tore me apart to see them so sad. But when I looked at my father... I mean... I told myself he was gone... my father was dead... I tried to feel something... but I felt nothing... my own father was lying there and I felt nothing. That's the kind of son I became. His whole life was invalidated because I failed to love him.

Whether you're there or not, Gina is going to have that baby. The question is, is that baby going to love its father?

(Pause)

JAY

Four and a half months.

JERRY

What?

JAY

Four and a half months... she's been carrying it for four and a half months. And she told me tonight. It's too late for an abortion.

JERRY

You're going to have her abort?

JAY

No... No, I'm not gonna have her abort.

She told her parents first before me. When I came in to see her, they just glared at me as I passed by. And she asked me up to her room and she closed the door and said, "Jay, I'm pregnant."

Just like that. From outta nowhere. She had known for like two months. I don't know what happened. I couldn't breathe, my eyes suddenly got dark... I just had to get outta there... Her father tried to stop me as I left... "Where the fuck do you think you're going?"... I just kept going...

So now they think I'm one of those motherfuckers who run around making girls pregnant and abandoning them.

JERRY

But you ain't.

(Pause)

JAY

No. I guess I ain't.

(Pause)

EDDIE

(With the football) Hey, you guys remember when we all joined the middle school football team? Man, that was a funny experience.

JAY

Funny for you.

EDDIE

Well, yeah. I mean, I sucked.

JAY

Yeah, you sucked.

EDDIE

Jerry's father tried to teach us all how to play. And I kept getting hit in the head.

JAY

Yeah.

EDDIE

He was so cool, trying to teach us to play. Remember when Jerry finally got to play in a game, and he threw that hail mary pass that just never made it? That was funny... after the game, Jerry felt so bad 'cause everyone was making fun of him... I mean, his dad just went off on him...

JERRY

Yeah, well, I don't have a dad like yours, ok?

EDDIE

I'm sorry, man.

JERRY

Don't be sorry. I'm not sorry. My father hated me. I wasn't man enough for him. He never did anything for me. He only made things difficult.

EDDIE

That's terrible, man.

JERRY

No, that's life. Eddie, get the fuck outta that shell a' yours cause life is a bitch. You gotta fucking grow up.

EDDIE

Jerry, man, don't lay this out on me.

JERRY

Fuck, man! Grow the fuck up! I mean, come on, you call me because what, you want us to stay up all night in the cold, waiting for the fucking train! Grow up, Eddie! You and your cross country and your fucking pictures and your fucking scrapbook... you can't take anything seriously. Life's been good to you Eddie, you ain't got no fucking problems in your life.

EDDIE

Hey, don't you fucking tell me that life's been fair to me! You ain't the only one with problems in this world, so just shut the fuck up, alright?

JERRY

Yeah right. The worst thing that ever happened to you is when you got rear ended on Route 22.

EDDIE

Shut up, man. JUST SHUT UP! You don't know nothing. JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!

JERRY

Oooh, I think I hurt his feelings.

JAY

Shut up, man. Shut the fuck up!

JERRY

Well, it's fucking true!

JAY

No, it's not. Just leave the guy alone, alright?

JERRY

Why?

JAY

Why?... Because...

JERRY

Why, because that girl, Charlene...

JAY

Charlene had AIDS.

JERRY

Yeah, so?

JAY

So does Eddie.

(Silence.)

JERRY

What?

(Jerry's cellphone rings. He answers.)

JERRY

Hello? Mama... what are you doing still up?... I'm ok Ma... Yes, I know I said I'd go over there, but...Ma... Ma stop it!... STOP IT ALREADY!... I'm sorry... I'm sorry Ma, it's just... I'm at home, Ma... I was gonna call... I thought you were asleep... No, Ma, I love you... Ma... Ma... are you ok? Is Minnie there? She'll take care a' you. You'll find it Ma... I'll help you look for it tomorrow...It's probably under a pillow or something... You know I'm always here, Ma. I'm here. I won't leave you. I'll always be here... I know... I know...

I'll be there... I'll be there... ok?... Ma, I'll just change and I'll go over there... Ok!... Ok... ok... ok... ok... ok... bye.

(He hangs up. There is a pause, then he suddenly erupts, kicking and punching everything he can.)

Shit. Shit! SHIT! JERRY

Jerry... EDDIE

DON'T TOUCH ME!!!! JERRY

Jerry, calm the fuck down! JAY

SHIT!!!!!!!!!! JERRY

Jerry! JAY

(Jerry uses up all his energy. He breaks down between the two rails.)

Shit. JERRY

Jerry. EDDIE

(Neither one has the courage to come up to him. They just sit and drink beer.)

Jerry? EDDIE

Jerry, there's this story I'm writing.

What? JERRY

I'm writing this story. I want you to read it. EDDIE

JERRY

You're writing a story.

EDDIE

Yeah. There's like a bridge over a large river, but there's a large gap in the middle. And there are these three pedestrians: a voiceless pedestrian, a heartbroken pedestrian, and a pedestrian with baggage.

JERRY

Huh?

EDDIE

Well, they wonder what to do and they argue about how they're gonna cross. The voiceless pedestrian catches the flu and turns around to go home. The pedestrian with baggage throws his baggage over the gap to the other side and then makes a running start and jumps over the gap and goes on his way.

JERRY

And the heartbroken pedestrian?

EDDIE

I don't know. He figures he could probably jump across but he can't do it because there's a dead ghost on his back.

JERRY

A dead ghost?

EDDIE

Yeah, there's a dead ghost is on his back. And he can't get himself to leave the dead ghost.

JERRY

Why not? It's dead.

EDDIE

That's the point. He's standing over the gap, and he has to make the decision. Does he leave behind the ghost and go on with his life? Or does he turn around and follow the voiceless pedestrian with the flu home? Or does he fall into the gap?

JERRY

So he has to make the decision.

EDDIE

Yeah.

JERRY

So, he has to decide whether he wants to live his happy life on the other end of the bridge, but he has to leave the dead ghost behind.

EDDIE

Exactly.

JERRY

And the pedestrian with baggage...

EDDIE

The pedestrian with baggage has no other choice but to carry the baggage with him. He doesn't know it, yet, but his entire life is in his baggage. But he will... I know he will.

JERRY

And the voiceless pedestrian... why did he get the flu?

EDDIE

Just unlucky, I guess... now he's too sick to get across the bridge, even if he wanted to.

JERRY

Why not? He could get better.

EDDIE

Maybe... most likely he won't.

JAY

What the fuck are you guys talking about?

EDDIE

Pedestrians.

JERRY

Trying to get over a bridge.

JAY

Ok... what the fuck ever

(Pause. Jay picks up the football and tosses it to Jerry)

JAY

Hey, catch.

(Jerry catches it. They toss the football back and forth.)

EDDIE

(He is starting to doze off.)

I wonder what Alvin's doing right now. He used to hang with us. That kid was so fucking smart. He's gonna win a Nobel Prize or something, you just watch. The kid was the smartest guy I've ever known. He's gonna get himself a million dollar job, and a good wife, and a big house with a Lamborghini and a Porsche, and three shiny dogs, and sons who will also become Nobel Prize winners.

JERRY

Yeah, Eddie. That guy was so fucking smart. Probably kicking ass down there in Princeton.

EDDIE

(Small pause) Yeah.

You know what I'm gonna do? When I graduate, I'm gonna go for it. I'm gonna go cross country. On my own.

JERRY

Eddie...

EDDIE

No, man... it's something I gotta do. You guys know what you gotta do. Me, this is what I gotta do.

You know where I wanna go? I wanna go to the grand canyon. I don't know why, I just wanna go there. It's so big and open and... I don't know, I just wanna go there.

JAY

That's really cool, Eddie.

EDDIE

Yeah. Yeah... that would be so fucking cool.

(Pause)

JAY

Eduardo Perez.

JERRY

What?

JAY

Eduardo Jeremiah Perez.

JERRY

Ew, that's stupid.

JAY

Jason Eduardo Jeremiah Perez... Junior. Yeah... that sounds about right.

JERRY

What if it's a girl?

JAY

Jasona Eduarda Jeremiah Perez.

JERRY

She'll murder you while you sleep.

JAY

You still gonna get me that job, Jerry?

JERRY

Yeah, you got it, man.

JAY

You think I could be a father, Jerry?

JERRY

(Sincerely:) Yeah.

(Pause)

JAY

Hey Jerry. Remember when we were like twelve and your Uncle Jack promised to take us to Action World? And we were all psyched up to go, and then we found him passed out in his apartment. And your Dad took off of work and took us. I remember when we went on the roller coaster. You didn't want to sit with him, you went to sit with Eddie, so I sat with your father. I was so fucking scared so he put his arm around me and he said everything was gonna be ok, and for some strange reason, I wasn't as scared anymore.

JERRY

Yeah... I remember.

(Pause)

JERRY

If I scored that touchdown on the team my father would've been so proud of me. He never cared if I got A's and B's, all he cared about was whether I could drink beer and swear and pick up any girl I wanted and... I disappointed him big time. But I really wanted to make him proud. I just never did.

I was all set to go to college, but my father, he wouldn't let me... he got sick, and he made me take a job at his trucking company so that someone would be there to take care of my mother and my sister when he couldn't work anymore. He said I could go to college when my mother and my sister were ok. He didn't understand.

You should have seen his face when he found out I was going to be an English major... an English major! "What, so you can join those faggot poetry clubs and wear flowers and get hooked on LSD like your Uncle Jack?" He never made it past high school, he didn't know... All he wanted was for me to "learn responsibility" and "earn my pay like a real man"... that came first... that came first for the ignorant motherfucker.

He wanted the best for me. For us. He was just trying to take care of us the best way he knew how.

(Pause. Eddie has fallen asleep)

JAY

Hey, I think we better get Eddie home.

JERRY

He's had way too much to drink.

JAY

Eddie, wake up... shit, he's hot, he's running a fever.

EDDIE

What time is it?

JERRY

4:08.

EDDIE

Thanks.

JAY

Let's go home, Eddie.

(Jay helps him offstage. Jerry starts to pack up what's left. He picks up the football and stands there staring at it.)

EDDIE

(Offstage:) Wait! Wait a sec. I gotta take a picture.

JAY

Come on, Eddie.

EDDIE

Please?

JAY

Alright.

(Eddie re-enters and takes a picture of the stage.)

EDDIE

Let's go, Jerry.

JERRY

Alright. I'll be right there.

(Eddie exits. Blackout on Jerry holding the football.)

ACT II: Pike Dreams

(October 1991. The train tracks. It is 3:30 in the afternoon. Jerry is on the tracks, bookbag next to him, he is writing, absorbed in his work. Eddie enters.)

EDDIE

You weren't at school today.

(No response. Jerry keeps writing.)

EDDIE

Mrs. Walshenko missed you. You know how much she enjoys you being in her class. You're always so active. Today, class was so quiet. I thought she was going to cry. She asked me to tell you that she looked in the 'lizbeth public library for any information regarding the 4 am 'lizbeth, but she couldn't find anything. She did get a ton of information about this railroad and she said she was going to give it to you when you came back. But she couldn't find anything about a train crash. She calls it an urban myth.

She's a fucking weirdo.

(Jerry suddenly tears out a page, crumples it and tosses it.)

EDDIE

How's the writing coming along?

(Jerry glares at Eddie. Eddie breaks eye contact and looks down on the ground. Jerry stuffs the notebook into his bag.)

JERRY

I didn't have much left.

EDDIE

Oh.

JERRY

It was going great. The story was going great.

EDDIE

Cool!

JERRY

I was at the ending when you came along.

EDDIE

Wow! You wrote the story already? You wrote it all today?

JERRY

No, I was at the ending when you came along.

EDDIE

The 4am 'lizbeth.

JERRY

Yes, The 4am 'lizbeth.

EDDIE

Is it good?

JERRY

It's gonna be the best motherfucking story that magazine's ever seen. Once I finish it.

EDDIE

I wanna read it.

JERRY

When it's done.

EDDIE

Alright.

JERRY

I didn't know if I could do it, but I did. It's gonna be my ticket to college.

EDDIE

Sweet. When you win an Oscar you better mention us in your speech.

JERRY

An Oscar? Oscars are for movies.

EDDIE

Yeah, I know.

JERRY

I write stories. After college it's gonna be novels.

EDDIE

Which get turned into movies.

JERRY

You're hopeless.

EDDIE

Ok. Why did the blonde get fired from the M&M factory?

JERRY

What?

EDDIE

She threw out all the W's. Fucking hilarious.

JERRY

From your stupid computer thing again?

EDDIE

Yeah... found this BBS that has hundreds of blonde jokes it's fucking hilarious.

JERRY

Jeez.

EDDIE

And they got yo' mamma jokes too.

JERRY

That's great, Eddie.

EDDIE

Yo' mamma's so dumb, she threw a ball at the floor and missed.

JERRY

Uh, that's nice, Eddie...

EDDIE

Fucking hilarious!

JERRY

You spend too much time on that stupid computer.

EDDIE

No I don't.

JERRY

Whatever.

EDDIE

Why weren't you in school today?

(Pause)

I was sick. JERRY

Shit. EDDIE

Really. JERRY

Damn, Jerry actually cut school. EDDIE

I didn't cut school. JERRY

But you cut school so's you can do more homework. That's fucking pathetic man. EDDIE

Fuck you. JERRY

How much is the scholarship anyway? EDDIE

Two thousand. JERRY

That's it? EDDIE

It's not the money that's important. This is a pretty famous prize. It looks fucking great on a college application. JERRY

I've never even heard of The New Yorker. EDDIE

That's because you're ignorant. JERRY

EDDIE

Yeah, well, I'm just saying, it's not that fucking famous, is all, Mister Fucking Shakespeare.

JERRY

No.

EDDIE

No what?

JERRY

Shakespeare wrote plays. I write short stories.

EDDIE

What the fuck ever.

JERRY

Shit, why'd you even bother applying to college anyways?

EDDIE

Fuck you, man!

JERRY

Shit.

EDDIE

My parents would kill me if I didn't go to college.

JERRY

No they won't.

EDDIE

Wanna bet? You don't know how they are when people aren't around.

JERRY

That's true with all families.

EDDIE

You don't know my dad that well... I mean, your dad would be perfectly fine with it if you didn't go to college.

(An unexpected silence from Jerry.)

JERRY

I'm going to college.

EDDIE

Of course, I'm just saying...

JERRY

I ain't gonna be a loser when I grow up... I'm gonna make something of myself.

EDDIE

Alright, I was just saying...

JERRY

Where's Jay?

EDDIE

What?

JERRY

Jay. What happened to Jay?

EDDIE

I didn't see him after school. I don't know where he is. He didn't show up during lunch period, someone said he cursed out a teacher.

JERRY

Fuck. Who?

EDDIE

Ms. Howard probably.

JERRY

Motherfucker.

EDDIE

Why do we hang out with that troublemaker?

JERRY

Because no-one else will.

EDDIE

Shit.

JERRY

Bitch.

EDDIE

Whoa, let's not get carried away now.

JERRY

Second month of school just started..

EDDIE

So yeah... he's probably in detention, that's why I didn't see him.

JERRY

Detention? Fuck, he got suspended.

EDDIE

You think so?

JERRY

Fuck yeah.

EDDIE

Shit.

JERRY

His mom is probably going off on him now.

EDDIE

Shit.

(They hear Jay coming in.)

JAY

Hey.

JERRY

Speak of Lucifer.

JAY

Who?

JERRY

Nothing.

JAY

What the fuck are you motherfuckers talking about?

JERRY

Nothing!

JAY

I wanna know!

JERRY

Lucifer. The devil. Get it? Speak of the devil? Speak of Lucifer?

JAY

You're fucking weird.

JERRY

Fuck you.

EDDIE

I got it.

JAY

That's cause you're fucking weird too.

EDDIE

Am not.

JAY

What are you doing here, anyway?

EDDIE

Uh... we practically live here...

JAY

Not you, Jerry.

JERRY

Why wouldn't I be here?

(Pause)

JERRY

What the fuck are you looking at?

EDDIE

Jerry's been here all day working on his story.

(Pause)

JAY

Oh. Forget it then.

(Jay goes into his bookbag and pulls out a six pack. Hands them out.)

EDDIE

All right!

JAY

While it's cold.

JERRY

How many days?

JAY

What?

JERRY

How many days you get suspended?

JAY

Oh. Rest of this week.

EDDIE

Shit.

JAY

My mom had to get me from the school in the middle of her shift. Boy was she pissed. She had to go right back to work at the hospital afterwards. "You stay home till I get back tonight, ya hear?"

EDDIE

Shit.

JERRY

Why the fuck did you have to go do something like that, anyway?

JAY

Cuz she was being a motherfucker... getting on my case for no reason.

JERRY

So?

JAY

"So" what? I ain't taking that shit from her?

JERRY

So? You the one that got suspended.

JAY

Fuck you alright?

EDDIE

She is a bitch though. My guidance counselor was gonna put me in her class, but I was like, "no way, man!".

JAY

So why the fuck didn't you say anything?

EDDIE

I didn't know you had her until school started.

JAY

It's gonna be a fucking long year.

EDDIE

Yeah, senior year too. That fucking sucks, man.

JAY

Fuck you.

EDDIE

No thanks.

JAY

What?

EDDIE

Nothing.

JAY

Whatever you say.

EDDIE

Fuck you man.

JAY

Where was your Uncle Jack? He wasn't in his apartment.

JERRY

He's there... my father had to pick him up from police station last night. He's probably just passed out.

JAY

Heh. Again.

JERRY

It's a good thing my father knows the guy at the jail... otherwise...

JAY

Your dad knows everyone.

JERRY

No he doesn't.

JAY

Your dad could run for mayor, he'd win, no question.

JERRY

No he won't.

JAY

What would he say to your drinking beer?

JERRY

Are you kidding? He says it's better to learn how to hold my liquor now than later... so if I ever get into a fight, I can defend myself.

JAY

(Laugh) You? In a fight? A barfight?

JERRY

Not funny.

JAY

Yes it is.

JERRY

Fuck you.

JAY

So how're you doing with that story?

JERRY

I gotta make a phone call.

JAY

What?

JERRY

I'm gonna make a phone call at the pay phone in the fucking parking lot. Is that alright?

JAY

Yeah. Knock your fucking self out.

Thank you. JERRY

(Jerry exits.)

(Dramatically) Was it something I said? JAY

Jerry's almost finished with it. EDDIE

What? JAY

The story. He's almost done. He said he was at the ending when I came in. EDDIE

4am 'lizbeth. JAY

Yeah. EDDIE

Fucking Shakespeare. JAY

Oh, I got one... yo' mamma's so fat when she wore a Malcolm X T-shirt a helicopter tried to land on her. EDDIE

(Jay stares at him.)

I got it off a list from this BBS. It's fucking hilarious... EDDIE

(Jay continues to stare.)

So yeah... how were you able to get the drinks? EDDIE

I had to ask that old army guy to go buy it. JAY

Are you serious? That guy charges five bucks. EDDIE

Tell me about it. JAY

Geez. EDDIE

I got it. JAY

(Sarcastic) Oh, I forgot... you're working now. EDDIE

And don't you fucking forget it. JAY

Yeah, free french fries. Don't you have to be there now? EDDIE

(Looks at his watch) Nah... I'm good. JAY

Free french fries... try saying that fucking fast. EDDIE

(Jerry returns.)

Everything alright? JAY

Yeah. JERRY

When was that story due again? JAY

In two weeks. JERRY

That's fucking great. JAY

Yeah. JERRY

JAY

You should get Alvin to take a look at it.

JERRY

I don't need his help.

EDDIE

Alvin ain't good at English anyway, he's all Math and Science.

JERRY

It's fine without him.

JAY

Where is he today, anyway?

EDDIE

He's in Princeton today, remember?

JAY

Oh, yeah, is that today?

EDDIE

Yeah, how could you forget, he won't stop mentioning it.

JAY

Fucker.

JERRY

I think it's great he's applying to Princeton. If anyone can get in there, it's Alvin.

JAY

At least his annoying ass ain't around here. More drinks for us.

JERRY

He ain't so bad.

JAY

How far is Princeton from here?

JERRY

I dunno... like an hour from here.

JAY

What exit?

JERRY

On the Turnpike... I dunno. I know it's past Rutgers, Rutgers is like 9? or 8?

EDDIE

Rutgers is 9. Princeton is 9 too, but further down Route 1, close to Trenton.

JERRY

Congratulations, Eddie.

EDDIE

Thanks.

JAY

You know what's great? Driving through the Turnpike on a motorcycle.

JERRY

Aw, jeez.

JAY

Seriously.

JERRY

We know.

JAY

Matt... He's buying a new bike.

JERRY

Woo hoo.

JAY

He's selling me his old one.

JERRY

No shit.

JAY

Fucking sweet.

JERRY

How much?

JAY

Three thousand.

JERRY

Fuck!

JAY

Hell, I've been saving for that since I was fifteen.

JERRY

You a sad fuck, Jay.

JAY

Fuck you. It's gonna be so sweet, I'm gonna drive that thing up and down the turnpike.

JERRY

And get yourself killed.

JAY

Fuck you alright! Damn, you're worse than my mother.

JERRY

What's she gonna say?

JAY

She can't say a damn thing when it shows up in our driveway... it's not like I can return it.

JERRY

Shit.

EDDIE

Shit.

JERRY

Is that the most important thing to you? You ain't even finished your essay for your Rutgers application yet.

JAY

I'm working on it, alright?

JERRY

You gotta turn that in soon.

JAY

Why don't you write it for me.

JERRY

Fuck you man.

JAY

You know I ain't gonna get in unless someone writes it.

JERRY
It's Rutgers. Everyone gets in.

JAY
Not me.

JERRY
Shit, you gotta be pretty bad not to get in.

JAY
Well, I did get suspended.

JERRY
Not funny.

JAY
Lighten up!

JERRY
Come on, Eddie and I have already sent in our apps. You ain't got much time left.

JAY
I'll do it, alright? Damn!

JERRY
I'll help you, but I can't write it for you.

JAY
Alright!

JERRY
I just don't want you to get left behind.

JAY
Shit man, Rutgers is a few exits away on the Turnpike. You ain't going to fucking Nebraska.

JERRY
That's not what I mean.

JAY
Fuck you, alright?

EDDIE
Damn, I can't wait... Imagine when we all dorm and room together? How fucking cool would that be?

See? JERRY

Fuck you. JAY

College will be a fucking blast. We'll go to frat parties, keggers, get wasted... sorority girls. EDDIE

Hah. You? JERRY

Why? EDDIE

With a girl? JERRY

Fuck you. EDDIE

Well, they got fat girls in the sororities too, you know. JAY

Fuck you too! Fuck the two of you! EDDIE

And the gay frats. JAY

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you. EDDIE

Or the computer clubs. JERRY

Shit man. You all suck. EDDIE

Shit. We're only kidding, damn. JAY

Fuck you. EDDIE

JAY

Sor-ry. It's not like Shakespeare here is gonna do better anyways.

JERRY

Shakespeare wrote plays... I write...

JAY

See what I mean?

JERRY

Fuck you.

JAY

You two are hopeless.

JERRY

Like you're any different.

JAY

Hell yeah.

JERRY

Shyeah... you a dreamer like the rest of us.

JAY

Hello... who's the only one who had a date to the junior prom?

JERRY

She was desperate.

JAY

Whatever.

JERRY

You didn't even get to first base.

JAY

Uh... Maybe because my Ma taught me better!

JERRY

Yeah, that and she was a heifer.

JAY

Fuck you, Jerry.

EDDIE

Yeah, well, the only reason I've never gone out with anyone is cause I have standards.

JERRY

Shyeah! Sure! Yeah Eddie.

EDDIE

I'm serious... all the good looking women are in college. They're all ugly here.

JERRY

Whatever you say Eddie.

EDDIE

Fuck you.

JAY

They ain't so bad here.

EDDIE

There's a whole world out there. We just gotta get outta this town...

JERRY

God bless America!!

EDDIE

Yeah.

JAY

Y'all are fucking crazy.

EDDIE

Fuck yeah.

JAY

I need another beer.

(Jay takes another beer. Pause. The guys sit around, enjoying their beer.)

EDDIE

Confucius says, "Man who goes through airport door sideways going to Bangkok."

JAY

What?

EDDIE

It's a Confucius joke.

JAY

Who the fuck is Confucius?

EDDIE

How the hell should I know? It's funny.

JAY

That's why you'll never get any girls.

EDDIE

Fuck you.

JAY

Hey, do you know someone in your class named Gina?

JERRY

Who?

JAY

Gina. Forget her last name.

JERRY

Brown hair, skinny?

JAY

Yeah.

JERRY

Yeah, of course, you don't know Gina?

JAY

I've only seen her around.

JERRY

I've know her like forever... my Dad was best man at her father's wedding.

JAY

Damn.

JERRY

Why?

JAY

So you and her family are kinda close?

Why? JERRY

I met her outside the guidance office. JAY

Forget it man. JERRY

What? JAY

Forget it. JERRY

Who said anything? JAY

She's in the top ten in the class. JERRY

So? JAY

It ain't gonna work. JERRY

Are you saying I ain't good enough for her? JAY

Yeah. JERRY

Woho! EDDIE

Don't matter what I think, anyway. Her parents are strict as hell. They make her study like hell so she can get into a good college. She don't do much of anything else. JERRY

Hey, who said I was going for her anyway, I was just asking, damn. JAY

I'm just saying. JERRY

JAY

Damn, is there anyone in 'lizabeth your dad doesn't know. This whole town is like six degrees of Jerry's dad.

JERRY

I just happen to know her, that's all.

JAY

Why weren't you at school today?

JERRY

I was sick.

JAY

No you weren't.

JERRY

Nothing. I just took the day off.

JAY

Don't lie.

JERRY

I wanted to work on my story.

JAY

Uh huh.

JERRY

The deadline's coming up.

JAY

You said you got two weeks.

JERRY

So? I need time to revise it and all.

JAY

Shit.

JERRY

Speaking of deadlines.

JAY

Oh please.

JERRY

I mean, shit, if Eddie can write his essay, why the fuck can't you?

EDDIE

Hey fuck you man.

JERRY

Pedestrians.

EDDIE

It was a fucking good essay.

JERRY

What I don't get is... ok, so the pedestrian with the bookbag that has a neon stripe has a fight with the pedestrian with purple Nikes and he runs into the street where there's a big ice cream truck headed that way...

JAY

A fucking ice cream truck goes like fifteen miles an hour.

EDDIE

It wasn't a kiddie ice cream truck, it was a big truck that had ice cream in it.

JERRY

Alright, so a big ice cream truck is headed his way, why didn't the voiceless pedestrian say anything?

EDDIE

Because he's voiceless, duh.

JERRY

Oh, right... he's voiceless.

EDDIE

Y'all suck. It's symbolic... it's simile.

JERRY

Metaphor.

EDDIE

Whatever. The guys at Rutgers will understand it and they'll be all impressed.

JERRY

I'm sure.

JAY

I ain't gonna write an essay like that.

EDDIE

Fuck you guys, alright? You all just don't get it, that's all. It's the best damn essay I've ever written.

JERRY

Hey, no argument there.

EDDIE

Fuck you man.

JERRY

I'm kidding, Eddie, geez, it's pretty good.

JAY

I still don't get it.

JERRY

It's about the American Dream! It's about the common man! It's about trying to cross the street without getting run over by an ice-cream truck!

JAY

Ok.

JERRY

It's fucking brilliant!

EDDIE

It's pretty good for someone who's gonna be a computer science major.

JERRY

Who sucks at math.

EDDIE

Shut up.

JAY

I don't know what the hell I'm a write about.

JERRY

It'll come to you.

JAY

I don't know how the hell I'm gonna be able to afford it. My mom can barely afford to pay our bills, much less pay for college.

JERRY

You gotta apply for financial aid.

JAY

Of course. But we still gotta pay for something. Books, all that shit. It's gonna be a lot of money, no matter what.

JERRY

Of course... it's college.

JAY

I mean, Eddie's rich, his parents can afford it.

EDDIE

I ain't that rich.

JAY

And you, you do good in school. You can get scholarships and all. Me, I can barely get through high school. I heard college is much harder. Why'm I gonna put myself through that, you know?

JERRY

What are you trying to say?

JAY

It's just a lotta effort, you know? I just want school to be over with... I don't wanna go back to school... where it's even harder than high school... they say all the stuff you do in one year in high school, you do it in one semester in college... shit, man...

JERRY

What are you trying to say?

JAY

I don't know.

JERRY

Shit man, this is your future! What kind of future are you gonna have if you don't go to college?

JAY

Aw jeez....

JERRY

You don't wanna work at McDonald's all your life, do you?

JAY
Someone's gotta...

JERRY
Not you! You're better than that.

JAY
No I ain't...

JERRY
Aw shit, Jay!

JAY
A lotta people are doing good, even if they didn't go to college... I mean, look at your dad, he ain't doing too bad.

JERRY
Aw shit, man...

JAY
I'm not saying I'm not going. I'm still gonna turn in the application... I'm just saying... there's a possibility that I won't go...

JERRY
Don't you wanna get outta here? Don't you want something better?

JAY
Sure I do... but that don't mean I can...

JERRY
I ain't gonna stay here forever, you hear me? I ain't. I'm gonna do something better with my life.... I'm gonna be somebody.

JAY
And no-one's stopping you.

JERRY
All I ever want is to get on the Turnpike and never come back... I'll dorm at Rutgers and then after that I'll get my own place. Somewhere other than here.

JAY
Good!

(Pause)

JERRY

Shit.

JAY

I'll work on that essay tonight.

JERRY

Whatever.

(Pause)

EDDIE

Hey, you think they got acting classes at Rutgers?

JERRY

What?

EDDIE

I wanna take acting classes.

JERRY

What happened to computer science?

EDDIE

I'm still doing that... I'm just... I've always wanted to try acting, you know? That's why you go to college right? Expand your mind?

JERRY

You don't know how to act.

EDDIE

That's why I need acting classes, duh.

JERRY

Whatever.

(Jay brings his hand to his mouth to smell his breath.)

JAY

Eddie, you got the gum?

EDDIE

Yeah.

(Eddie goes to his bookbag and grabs a pack. Jay gets one. Eddie offers one to Jerry, Jerry checks his breath, takes one.)

JAY

What the fuck do you wanna act for?

EDDIE

It's fucking cool!

JAY

You wanna be a big star? Like Mel Gibson?

EDDIE

Naw, not Mel Gibson... hell no.

(Pause)

JAY

So, you ain't doing football this year, huh?

JERRY

Yeah right.

JAY

What'd your dad say?

JERRY

How'm I gonna get in the team, have you seen those guys?

JAY

Quarterback.

JERRY

Fuck. Hell no.

JAY

Your dad must be disappointed.

JERRY

Yeah, well fuck.

JAY

Well, hey, I'd try out too, but... you know... the coach...

JERRY

I know.

JAY

Your dad's a fucking cool guy, you know?

(Jerry looks at him suspiciously.)

JAY

When me and my mom moved here, he always helped us out, you know? Always gave us a ride if we needed it, till we got our own car... that kind of thing.

JERRY

What?

JAY

He even helped get my mom that job at the hospital.

JERRY

And?

JAY

I mean, he would always try to teach us football and all. Everyone always treats me like a punk, but not your dad. Other than my mom, he's the only grown up that don't treat me like a piece of shit.

JERRY

Yeah, so?

JAY

I'm just saying.

(Jerry stares at him, then realizes.)

JERRY

She told you?

JAY

Yeah. In the car.

JERRY

How'd she know? She don't even work on that floor.

JAY

Word spreads.

JERRY

Oh shit.

(Pause. Jerry turns away and quietly drinks his beer.)

EDDIE

What happened?

(Jay motions for Eddie to stop. Pause.)

JERRY

I gotta make a phonecall.

(They watch as Jerry exits.)

EDDIE

What the fuck is wrong with him?

JAY

My mom... in the car... she told me. This morning, Jerry and his Mom took his dad into the ER. That's why he wasn't in school today.

EDDIE

What? Oh shit! What happened?

JAY

I don't know... she said they're running all kinds of tests now to find out what's wrong.

EDDIE

Oh shit.

JAY

They said he'd been seeing his doctor about it for a while now, but today he blacked out or something... I don't really know.

EDDIE

Damn.

JAY

I know.

EDDIE

Why didn't he say anything?

JAY

You know Jerry.

EDDIE

Oh shit.

JAY

He's probably ok. I mean, she said he regained consciousness and he was alright, it's probably nothing serious. They just gotta make sure, you know.

EDDIE

I hope so.

JAY

He'll be fine.

EDDIE

Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure he'll be fine...

JAY

Yeah.

EDDIE

Man.

JAY

Don't you have to be like an acting major to take acting classes?

EDDIE

I dunno.

JAY

I think you do... like you gotta audition for them and shit... and have to be in those gay-ass plays and shit.

EDDIE

I saw an ad for this thing they're doing in Jersey City... they're like an agency and they're like looking for models and actors and shit.

JAY

Really.

EDDIE

Yeah. I think you just gotta pay for them to do your pictures and junk, and then they'll take that and put it in a catalog and show it to movie guys and junk.

JAY

Nice.

EDDIE

I'm gonna go. It's gonna be so sweet.

JAY

Good luck man.

EDDIE

Thanks.

(Pause. Jay looks toward the direction of where Jerry exited.)

EDDIE

You can probably still change out of Ms. Howard's class.

JAY

What?

EDDIE

I think you got till the end of the first marking period. Just see your guidance counselor.

JAY

Really. Yeah, I'll probably do that.

EDDIE

I've never had her, but I can't stand her. Even I just pass by her class in the hallway, she's mean.

JAY

Heh.

EDDIE

So when do you get your bike?

JAY

Next week.

EDDIE

It'll finally be yours, huh? You've been working on that bike since you were like, fifteen.

JAY

Heh, yeah. Matt taught me everything about bikes.

EDDIE

What do you call a man with no arms and no legs on your doorstep?

JAY

Jeez.

EDDIE

Matt... haha.

JAY

Those are corny as hell, Eddie.

EDDIE

I know that's why they're so funny!

JAY

Shit.

EDDIE

Just don't fucking kill yourself on the bike..

JAY

I won't.

EDDIE

What's taking him so long?

JAY

Let him be.

EDDIE

Next week, Alvin is going with his parents to Harvard. Don't know why though, he want's to go to Princeton so bad. But I guess he just wants to see what it looks like.

JAY

Where's Harvard?

EDDIE

I dunno, somewhere up there, Connecticut, I think... or Boston... somewhere there.

JAY

Damn... they're going all that way, just to see it.

EDDIE

Yeah. Good thing we know him. When he gets like rich and junk, maybe he'll invite us to his yacht or something.

JAY

Fuck.

EDDIE

If anyone can make it, it's Alvin.

JAY

Fucking Alvin.

(Jerry returns. He goes to sit. The other two watch him. Pause.)

JAY

Everything alright?

JERRY

Yeah. Everything's fine.

JAY

What did they say?

JERRY

Nothing.

JAY

Who were you talking to?

JERRY

No-one.

JAY

What?

JERRY

They haven't come home yet.

JAY

Are they supposed to come home today?

JERRY

Shit Jay, it's none of your fucking business!

JAY

Jerry...

JERRY

Oh, I forgot, you're his favorite son, you're the son he's never had... of course you want to know.

JAY

I'm just...

JERRY

Why don't you go ask your mother?

EDDIE

Maybe they're still in the hospital and they're trying to call your house.

JERRY

Maybe.

EDDIE

Maybe you should wait for them at home.

JERRY

Maybe you can go fuck yourself.

EDDIE

Shit man...

JERRY

Hey, you can film yourself while doing it... yeah, you wanna act? Go ahead. It's the only way you're gonna get laid.

EDDIE

Jerry...

JERRY

(To Jay) And you, you wanna fuck up your life, go ahead. I don't fucking care anymore. You think small, you're gonna be fucking small... all your life, you're gonna be a small, worthless, common man, because you ain't got the fucking guts to do anything better. If you don't fucking care, why the fuck should I fucking care?

JAY

Man...

JERRY

I don't even know why I fucking hang out with you. I ain't gonna be like you. I'm gonna make something of myself. I ain't gonna be stuck here in this town forever. I ain't gonna get stuck and get married to wife who'll get fat and have dirty kids wearing hand me downs running around and only being able to afford second hand cars that fucking break down every week. I ain't gonna do that, you hear me? I ain't!

JAY

Where the fuck did this come from?

JERRY

And if you guys wanna be stuck in Elizabeth for the rest of your fucking shit of a life, go right ahead... with all the other worthless, small minded, poor fucks... I don't know why I thought you were any different? You're just like all of them.

JAY

Jerry... if you wanna talk about it...

JERRY

Talk about what?

JAY

Jerry...

JERRY

I don't want to talk about it with you!! Have you considered that? Huh?

(Pause.)

JAY

I have to go to work.

JERRY

Yes, go to work. That's all you're ever gonna be good for... flipping burgers.

JAY

Fuck you, Jerry. Fuck you!

EDDIE

Hey guys...

JAY

I'm going. I ain't taking this.

(Jay exits. Awkward silence. Jerry takes out his notebook again. He stares at Eddie.)

EDDIE

I'm gonna go...

JERRY

Go.

EDDIE

I'll see you later... or whatever...

JERRY

Yeah... whatever...

EDDIE

He's gonna be ok... your Dad.

JERRY

I have to finish my story.

EDDIE

Ok.

(Eddie takes his stuff and exits. Jerry is once again alone. He begins to write in his book. Pause. A faint sound of a train is heard. It gets louder and louder.

Jerry stops writing and stares at his notebook sadly. Then he gets up and walks in the direction of where Jay and Eddie exited. He stops over the tracks. He stares for a while and then falls to his knees, clutching his notebook. He breaks down and begins to sob quietly. The sound of the train gets louder and louder until we hear a deafening crash.

Silence. Blackout on Jerry kneeling on the tracks.)

ACT III: Ghosts.

(August, 1999. Late afternoon. Jerry is standing on the tracks. Eddie, in what he was wearing in the first act, is sitting somewhere behind him.)

EDDIE

What time is it?

JERRY

It's almost 4.

EDDIE

So you really are going, aren't you?

JERRY

They want me to head up their operation from the other end of the country. It's a damn good deal. I'm flattered they'd trust me that much.

EDDIE

You were always that kind of person.

JERRY

Like my father.

EDDIE

Yeah.

JERRY

I'm working right in San Francisco... half the time I'll be in a suit, half the time I'll be in our centers all over the area.

EDDIE

And I bet it pays pretty well too.

JERRY

Yeah. Of course. I'll be buying a house right outside. Three bedrooms, two baths, a pool.

EDDIE

Nice.

JERRY

I might even be able to go back to school or something.

EDDIE

That's great.

JERRY

My aunts live right outside the city. So it's good for my Mom... she won't be alone.

EDDIE

And Minnie?

JERRY

She's graduated last June, just in time for college. Stanford.

EDDIE

It's perfect.

JERRY

Yeah. Perfect.

EDDIE

You deserve it.

JERRY

Yes.

EDDIE

I'm glad for you.

(Pause)

JERRY

I never thought I'd leave. I wanted to so bad, but I just never thought it would happen. Now I don't know what to think.

EDDIE

We had some good times here.

JERRY

Yeah... you, me, Jay... even Alvin, remember Alvin?

EDDIE

Crazy fucker.

JERRY

Whatever happened to Alvin?

EDDIE

I don't know... never heard from him again.

JERRY

I hear they're tearing this thing down too...

EDDIE

They're building junk all over the place... there's even a big mall coming up soon.

JERRY

Jeez.

EDDIE

Hopefully then we'll be known for something else besides Ikea.

JERRY

Yeah.

EDDIE

Lot's of things are changing. Even if you stay here, everything is going to change around you anyway.

JERRY

I might as well, then.

EDDIE

Yeah, you might as well.

JERRY

We never did see that train.

EDDIE

Didn't we?

JERRY

Fucking 4am 'lizbeth.

EDDIE

Motherfucking 4am 'lizbeth.

(Jay enters.)

JAY

Who are you talking to?

JERRY

No-one.

(Jay does not see Eddie. It is at this moment the audience realizes that Eddie is dead.)

JAY

I saw your car parked outside. What the hell are you doing here?

JERRY

I don't know.

JAY

You weren't answering your phone.

(Jerry checks his phone. Turns it on.)

JERRY

I must have forgotten to turn it on.

JAY

Shit. Your mother was all frantic.

JERRY

She called you?

JAY

Yeah.

(Jerry rolls his eyes and smiles sadly)

JERRY

Jeez.

JAY

When do you leave?

JERRY

Next week.

JAY

You're really doing it, huh?

JERRY

Yeah.

JAY

Shit.

JERRY

How's the wife and kids.

JAY

They're alright. Gina might go back to school this fall.

JERRY

Really?

JAY

Yeah, she's pretty excited. We just have to get the money together. My mom's got the night shift, so between us all, we always got someone to take care a the kids.

JERRY

That's great.

JAY

Listen, I gotta go... gotta pick up the kids... you know....

JERRY

Yeah, of course.

JAY

Call your Mother, she's worried about you.

JERRY

Hah.

JAY

If you need help with the moving and all, just let me know.

JERRY

I will.

(Jay turns to leave, but stops.)

JAY

Take care of yourself.

JERRY

I will. You too.

JAY

We'll be alright.

JERRY

I know.

(Jay takes one last look at the tracks. Brief pause. He looks at Jerry, then turns to go.)

JAY

Later.

JERRY

Later.

(Jay exits. Brief pause. Jerry gets up, looks at the tracks once more. Then turns to Eddie.)

EDDIE

Take care.

(Jerry wants to say something, but he doesn't know what to say. He smiles faintly at Eddie, and then exits. Lights out on Eddie.)