



# THE PAVILION

BY CRAIG WRIGHT

★ Revised Edition



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PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



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Originally produced by the City Theatre Company, Pittsburgh.

Partially developed at the Carnegie School of Drama.

"Down in the Ruined World"  
Lyrics by Craig Wright  
Music by Peter Lawton and Craig Wright

*for Aaron Posner*



“I guessed the wrong keys, I battered on the wrong panels, I picked the wrong roads. O God, ain’t there no way to guess again and start all over back where I had the keys in my hand, back where the roads all came together and I had my pick?”

*from “Ambassadors of Grief” by Carl Sandburg*



**Pavilion** *n.* 1. An ornate tent. 2. A light, sometimes ornamental roofed structure used at parks or fairs for amusement or shelter. 3. A temporary structure erected at a fair or a show. 4. The surface of a brilliant-cut gem.

THE PAVILION received its world premiere by City Theatre's New Works on Stage in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on September 8, 2000. It was directed by Aaron Posner; the set design was by Tony Ferrieri; the lighting design was by William O'Donnell; the sound design was by Jennifer Fritsch; the original guitar music was by Craig Wright; the costume design was by Lorraine Venberg; and the production stage manager was Patti Kelly. The guitar music was performed by Tom Cunningham. The cast was as follows:

NARRATOR .....	Joel Van Liew
PETER .....	J. Christopher O'Connor
KARI .....	Kathryn Petersen



## **CHARACTERS**

### **NARRATOR**

PETER, a 37-year-old man

KARI, a 37-year-old woman

### **PLACE**

The play takes place at The Pavilion, an old dance hall in the fictional town of Pine City, MN. The setting is suggested only by a pair of benches.

### **TIME**

The time is the present.



# THE PAVILION

## ACT ONE

NARRATOR. (*To the audience.*) This is the way the universe begins. A raindrop (that isn't really a raindrop) drops, like a word, "rain" *drops*, into a pool (that isn't really a pool, more like a pool of listening minds), and tiny waves circle out in an elegant decelerating procession, -cession, -cession. Then, after a time, the pool of listening minds grows still once more.

Now, but *backwards*, this is the way the universe begins: the still pool of listening minds, the sudden shrinking circles dissolving at the center, conserving at the center until boom, sloop!, up goes the droplet, up towards the voice that raindrops words, up towards the voice and it hangs in the air — remember it there — because *that's* the way the universe begins. A little pavilion. A momentary sphere. A word made of stars, dancing.

From the fire-latticed floor of the earth, sweet shoots of green spring up through the cooling webs, and mountain deep water sloshes over continents, swinging. Volcanoes of ice snow crystal-blue ash across miles of moss-seething tundra, and creatures crawl up on the shore, imagining things. The air is blood-thick with insect songs and the palm fronds tinkle like gongs in the tropical rain. Monkeys in slow-motion turn into women and men and soon campfires dot the plains for days in every direction. And around each campfire, minds spring to life like sudden stars in a blank, black sky. The tiny tea leaf of consciousness spreads its bittersweet smoke through the sea of the primitive mind. Law is invented; then morality, then love, then forgiveness. Thousands and thousands of ideas, knit together over time, each one less practical and more ornamental than the last, all stretched taut above the wandering, wondering heads like a little

pavilion; a temporary shelter for the human project. (*Peter enters, holding a spray of flowers.*)

Once secured, time speeds up like a language being learned. Very quickly, like words and ideas forming in a mind, African empires rise and fall, greatness sprays up in fountains all across the Fertile Crescent and then shatters into droplets of novelty and nuance; Alexander and his Macedonians hammer through Persia, Asia Minor, deep into India, and blood and knowledge spread machine-like through the valleys, float down the Ganges on a bed of simmering pollen, algae and dharma. Christ is born, and a second later, nailed to a tree; Europe is invented and then the Renaissance and then the Enlightenment and then the steam engine and then suddenly! — *his family* came to Minnesota in the late 1800s. From Finland. His great-great-grandmother wrote a book which is actually in the Library of Congress, about her first winter in the new world. Anyone can read it, it's there. It's called *Pioneer Days*. Years came and went, faster and faster, there were two world wars, one right after another, and then he was born right here in Pine City, Minnesota in the year we call 1969 (*Adjust as necessary.*) in the house across the bay there, on the shore of Lake Melissa, that's *you*, and this ... this is The Pavilion. (*Narrator indicates the stage.*) The windowed walls of this century-old dance hall are all opened out toward the lake. The tables are set, the floor's been swept, and the napkins are folded like fans in the water glasses. There's a cool breeze blowing, and every now and then the buzz and hum of water-skiers passing by can be heard through the dinner music being piped in over the sound system. (*To the techs.*) Excuse me, could we have some dinner music, please? And a water-skier, perhaps? Thank you. (*To the audience.*) This is a play. About time. It's seven o'clock. Ten or twenty couples have already arrived. Some are milling about, some are seated at their tables, reading their place mats, upon which are printed The Class of 1987's (*Adjust as necessary.*) Hall of Fame. That was twenty years ago. The Boy Most Likely To Succeed is now a Microsoft millionaire. The Girl With the Best Sense of Humor is still single. And one half of the Cutest Senior Couple is suddenly picked out of the crowd by a friend. (*To Peter.*) Peter Mollberg?

PETER. Pudge?! Is that you?

NARRATOR. (*As Pudge.*) It's me!

PETER. You've lost weight!

NARRATOR. You know what, I haven't! My body has changed, but I still weigh the same!

PETER. You look great, though!

NARRATOR. That's what everybody keeps telling me! I'll take it! Hey, I read in the program book, Peter, you and me, we're in the same business!

PETER. You're a psychologist?

NARRATOR. Yeah, I kinda am!

PETER. What does that mean?

NARRATOR. I'm working nights at the Suicide Hotline!

PETER. (*Befuddled.*) That's great!

NARRATOR. Yeah, I got started volunteering through church, but it turns out I'm really good at it! So I quit the turkey farm and they hired me on full time with benefits! A nationwide company!

PETER. Congratulations.

NARRATOR. Yeah. The guy in charge took me in the office and said, "You know, I've never seen anything like it, Pudge, you've got a natural ability for this sort of stuff."

PETER. I bet you do.

NARRATOR. He said I've got a comforting presence, and that's what it takes, right? (*Suddenly, grimly, as Kent.*) Hey, have either of you guys seen Cookie?

PETER. No.

NARRATOR. (*As Kent.*) Thanks.

PETER. Pudge, I'm a little confused ...

NARRATOR. What?

PETER. How do they make money on an 800 number?

NARRATOR. Aha! It's not an 800 number, Peter. It's a 900 number.

PETER. Ahh.

NARRATOR. Yeah, ninety-nine cents a minute.

PETER. For a Suicide Hotline?

NARRATOR. Man, when it works, it's a bargain!

PETER. You don't get a *lot* of calls, do you?

NARRATOR. Only thousands. And not all from around here either. Like last night, I was just slammed. Didn't even get a break!

This one guy, his name was Kevin Conzemius from Fresno, California ... what a sad sack, he kept me on the phone for two hours, this guy, with a gun to his head the whole time!

PETER. (*Adding it up, horrified.*) That's 120 bucks ...

NARRATOR. Yeah, ka-ching! See, he went out to California from Louisville, where he was from, with this girl, Kendra, and then she left him for some guy and he was really freaked out. I mean, I think he had some pretty deep-seated self-esteem problems going way back.

PETER. Sounds like it, going to California.

NARRATOR. That's what I told him too! What a freak! But every minute or so, Peter, he was interrupting me, tapping the barrel on the telephone, saying, "You're not listening to me, man! *You're not listening to me!*" And then BANG!

PETER. What happened?

NARRATOR. That's confidential, Peter; you understand. (*Kari enters, catching Peter's eye.*) You know, after the reunion, they're gonna burn the old place down, right?

PETER. (*Distracted by Kari.*) The Pavilion?

NARRATOR. Yeah, the fire department's gonna burn it down.

PETER. Why?

NARRATOR. Because starting tomorrow, they're gonna build a big concrete amphitheatre.

PETER. For Summer Carnival?

NARRATOR. No, there's gonna be a five-day country music festival here every summer from now until 2028.

PETER. Jesus.

NARRATOR. Yeah, Cookie Brustad's mayor now, Peter, everything's changing. Everything's changing. Who are the flowers for?

PETER. Kari.

NARRATOR. (*As in "bad idea."*) O-o-oh.

KARI. Denise! (*Narrator becomes Denise.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Denise.*) Kari!

KARI. You are the last person I expected to see here tonight! The world traveler! You didn't even come to the ten-year!

NARRATOR. I tried!

KARI. You did not!

NARRATOR. No, I had the date mixed up, I came a week early.

KARI. That is a lie!

NARRATOR. No, I swear, I showed up at the Dude Ranch, and there were all these people wearing chaps and spurs and I was thinking, "Boy, everyone's really changed ..."

KARI. Oh my God, that is so funny.

NARRATOR. Give me a hug. *(They hug and make a "MMMMMM" hug sound.)*

KARI. I'm so glad you came.

NARRATOR. Where's Hans?

KARI. Home sick.

NARRATOR. Aww.

KARI. But I want to know what *you've* been up to; last I heard you were in ... Thailand or somewhere?

NARR. Bangkok, mmhmm.

KARI. God, that's so cool. Doing what?

NARRATOR. Drug Enforcement. Working for the embassy.

KARI. That must be so exciting.

NARRATOR. It's not so different from Pine City. *Lot* of drugs. And you're ...

KARI. ... still at the bank.

NARRATOR. *(Weakly.)* Wow.

KARI. I've tried to get out, Denise, but they keep me locked up with all the valuables down there in the basement —

NARRATOR. You're still in the safety deposit box?

KARI. Yeah, but hey, I spend my days surrounded by diamonds and pearls, it could be worse ...

NARRATOR. And you're still with Hans.

KARI. I am, yeah.

NARRATOR. And how's that?

KARI. Fine.

NARRATOR. Really?

KARI. *(Reassuring Denise.)* Hans is not so bad, Denise. In fact, do you want to know what the only bad part is, of being married to Hans, the only bad part?

NARRATOR. What?

KARI. And you can't tell anybody ever that I said this, okay?

NARRATOR. What is it?

KARI. *(Almost whispering.)* I really hate golf. Isn't that awful? I

didn't know it when I married him, I was actually thinking it might be kinda fun to live on a golf course and be married to the pro, you know? I don't know, you know, all the grass, maybe, it just seemed ... pastoral. But now I know, I hate golf.

NARRATOR. I do too ...

KARI. And you should see it, Denise, our house is so full of tees —

NARRATOR. I can imagine —

KARI. — and balls and visors and clubs, it's so ...

NARRATOR. Golfy —

KARI. Yes, and he has this putting green set up in the rec room that he practices on every night and I swear, the sound of that ball popping out of that machine ... it's like a baby spitting up.

NARRATOR. Do you two have any kids?

KARI. No, we've got a dog, though, Tramp, he's our big baby.

NARRATOR. (*Conspiratorially.*) Peter's here.

KARI. Who cares? (*After a beat.*) So, uh ... are *you* married or ... whatever ... involved with ... anybody? (*Peter and Kari see each other for the first time.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Narrator, to the audience.*) At the center of everything in the universe, there's you.

PETER. Hi.

KARI. Hi.

NARRATOR. A fragile crystal (that isn't a crystal, really, more like a way of being), spinning and changing, gathering and giving off light. And this method, this bright idea that is YOU is displayed, like a jewel, in a body. Your body.

PETER. (*Tentatively.*) How are you doing?

KARI. I'm fine.

NARRATOR. (*To the audience.*) And beyond the edge of your body lie the gemlike worlds, each one nested snugly in the next; the world of air, the world of people, the world of emotions, of ideas, of the sky, of fire, of the stars, of cold darkness and mystery; and nothingness. And at the center of everything in the universe, there's you — this force, sending out trajectories, creating webs of relationships with your words, with your work, with your love. It seems so simple, and yet, there are these *other people* —

PETER. You haven't changed a bit.

KARI. (*Uncomfortably.*) Yes I have.



NARRATOR. (*To the audience.*) — every one of them *also* a center of everything, every one of them *also* cradled and maintained at the hub of all existence —

PETER. I just mean you look great.

KARI. (*Coldly matter of fact.*) Thanks.

NARRATOR. (*To the audience.*) — just like you and yet, not you.

KARI. You look tired.

PETER. I've been driving all day.

NARRATOR. (*To the audience.*) An infinite number of centers to an infinite number of worlds; but you can stand right next to them and talk. It all makes for quite a complex geometry. And then there's time. It's seven thirty-five. (*Peter offers the bouquet.*)

PETER. I got you these.

KARI. (*Not taking them.*) Why?

PETER. I don't know ... I ran into Slick at Sundberg's Café and he walked me down the street and showed me around the flower shop. I thought of you. That's all. Don't feel like you have to take them.

KARI. I don't.

PETER. See, that's cool. (*Making conversation.*) I guess marrying into that family was the smartest thing Slick ever did, huh ...

KARI. Yeah, Slick's a real genius.

PETER. All I mean is he owns that place now, and he never would've —

KARI. Half.

PETER. What?

KARI. He only owns half.

PETER. He told me he owns it all.

KARI. Once Jackie's mom dies, but not until then.

PETER. He told me point blank she's dead and he owns it.

KARI. That's what he tells everybody.

PETER. While Jackie's mother's still alive?

KARI. Yeah, you didn't tell him those were for me, did you?

PETER. No.

KARI. Because that wouldn't be good. (*Brief pause.*)

PETER. How's Hans?

KARI. (*Closing up.*) Hans is fine. How's your Dad?

PETER. I'm just trying to be polite.

KARI. Nice try.

PETER. Didn't mean to make you mad.

KARI. (*Mad.*) I'm not mad! I just really wish you let me know you were coming!

PETER. Why?

KARI. Because I wouldn't have come, okay? I wouldn't have come. Are you gonna stay?

PETER. Why?

KARI. Because if you're gonna stay then I won't.

PETER. Then I won't stay.

KARI. (*After a beat.*) No, don't do me any favors, if you want to stay, you stay, just don't ... talk to me or anything or talk to my friends, okay?

PETER. Okay.

KARI. (*After a beat.*) Actually, do whatever you want, because I don't want to be involved with you, I don't want to be here with you NOT doing something because of me, so just be here and whatever ... happens ... happens! Okay?

PETER. Okay.

KARI. Good!

PETER. (*To himself, grimly.*) That went well.

NARRATOR. (*As Narrator.*) It's eight o'clock. Dinner's in full swing. Toasts are being made so vigorously by this time that already by the entrance to the catering truck there's a bus pan full of broken glass. The sun is setting across the lake in a golden purple mist — if you're seated by the stage you can see it from there — and everyone in the room is bathed in warm summer air and *the most poetic lavender light*. (*To the techs, after the stage turns a bit lavender.*) Thank you. (*To the audience.*) It's really very grand.

KARI. And then he has the nerve to show up with flowers, it just blows my mind! (*Narrator becomes Angie.*)

NARRATOR. (*Troubled.*) Maybe he's changed.

KARI. People don't change.

NARRATOR. Maybe he wants to change.

KARI. No, I know what he wants, Angie, he wants to be a good guy. He wants everybody to say, "Wouldja look at that ... Peter and Kari! Boy he must really feel bad about dumping her when she was pregnant, but gee, it looks like now she's found it in her heart after all these years blah blah blah blah blah," I don't want to do that!

NARRATOR. Do you have a Kleenex?

KARI. (*Absently.*) Yeah, here — I don't want to spend this whole evening having people whisper in my ear, "Peter's here, did you see, Peter's here, are you gonna talk to Peter?"

NARRATOR. But he looks so lost.

KARI. That's because he is, he shouldn't be here! I mean, if you're gonna live by a certain set of rules, then live by them; but don't come crawling back, don't try to change the rules later just because you feel bad —

NARRATOR. Why?

KARI. — what?

NARRATOR. Why not change the rules? Why not try, if you're not happy?

KARI. Because, you should live with what you did. You did it, you suffer, you live with it.

NARRATOR. But that's why I'm ...

KARI. What?

NARRATOR. That's why I'm seeing Cookie now. I'm changing the rules because I'm not happy. Kent doesn't make me happy.

KARI. But it's different —

NARRATOR. You told me you thought it was a good idea ...

KARI. For you, Angie. For you.

NARRATOR. But not for Peter.

KARI. Not for me. (*Angie bursts into tears.*) What, Angie? What is it?

NARRATOR. I'm pregnant.

KARI. Is it Cookie's?

NARRATOR. I don't know.

KARI. Oh my God. (*Narrator becomes Nolan.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Nolan.*) I was sitting around a campfire with about five or six of my Roman centurions. Peter, it was so real.

PETER. Sounds like it.

NARRATOR. We were camped in a wide valley in the Caucasus Mountains. For hundreds of yards in every direction I could see fires and circles of my soldiers and I could hear horses whinnying out in the darkness. (*He does two distant whinnies and a snort.*) And there was a goat, roasting over the fire on a spit. I could hear the fat crackling and smell the meat. It was amazing. And I looked around at my men and I suddenly knew they were all going to die

in the midst of battle the very next day. And I was the only one who knew.

PETER. That does sound amazing.

NARRATOR. So yes, I believe in it. Kari really hates your guts.

PETER. Yeah.

NARRATOR. She doesn't believe in reincarnation either. You two *should* be together.

PETER. She's married to Hans.

NARRATOR. In *this* life.

KARI. Peter's gotten kinda fat, hasn't he? (*Narrator becomes Coral.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Coral.*) Fat? No. Are you gonna eat that?

KARI. But look at him; he's gotten kind of ... pushy-mushy, hasn't he?

NARRATOR. (*Chewing.*) Don't be mean, he's just older, Kari. We're all older. And what is he, a counselor or something like that? He never moves, he sits in a chair all day. (*Taking another morsel.*) These are so good! (*Chewing.*) I think you're being too hard on him. You're no spring chicken either.

KARI. I sit in a chair all day down in the box at the bank and I weigh the same as I did in high school.

NARRATOR. Only because you're sad. That's not a good thing. Look at all the gals. Heather, Alison. If you'd had some kids like we did — oh shit I'm sorry — (*As Kent.*) Hey, have you seen Cookie? Or Angie?

KARI. They were, he was right over there by the punch bowl, Kent, uh, a moment ago. And I haven't seen Angie recently.

NARRATOR. (*As Kent.*) Thanks. (*As Coral.*) I'm sorry, I don't know why I said that. (*As Narrator.*) It's eight-thirty-two. The dinner dishes have been cleared away by the teenagers in their black pants and white shirts, thirty-five dollars for one night of work. And there's a woman standing on the stage, talking into a microphone that obviously isn't working, and then suddenly, with a pop and a squeal, it is. (*Narrator becomes Lisa. Note: the year of the graduating class can be moved forward to reflect the change in production date. Narrator as Lisa, to audience.*) Is everybody having a good time? Fabulous! For those of you who don't know me, I'm Lisa Gulbranson, and I know you've all been here for a while, having a wonderful dinner and catching up with each other, but now let me

formally welcome you, on behalf of the whole reunion committee, (which is essentially me and Angie), to the Class of 1987's (*Change as needed.*) twentieth reunion! Yay! There's some school spirit! Pine City Panthers, P-C-P! I see a lot of familiar faces out there! And don't everybody forget we've got Skippy Schouviller from Ingebretsen Photography set up right over there all night taking pictures, so if you want your picture taken with the *old gang*, you just talk to him.

Now, when we first started planning this party, Angie and I thought it would be fabulous if we could get The Mustangs back together to play. But it didn't take long for us to realize only two of the original Mustangs were still with us: Eddie Gieselhardt and Peter Mollberg. Then we never got an RSVP from Peter ... naughty. But, even *worse*, last month, as many of you probably have heard, Eddie was killed in a car accident on his way to a "gig" in Fargo. So when Peter called and told us last week he'd be coming, I asked him if he could just play us all a song, to remember and whatever, in Eddie's honor. So, before we head into the dancing portion of the evening, let me introduce to you, and it makes me kinda sad to say this, the Class of 1987's (*Change as needed.*) Vice-President, and the only surviving member of The Mustangs, Peter Mollberg! (*Peter enters with guitar.*)

PETER. (*To audience.*) Hey. It's nice to see everybody tonight. Uh, you'll have to imagine the rest of The Mustangs are up here with me. Spencer would've been over here on bass, Brad on the drums, and Eddie would've been right there. This, uh ... this was the last song Eddie and I ever wrote. Ever since high school, we've been sending tapes back and forth in the mail, writing songs, just for fun. I wrote the words to this one and Eddie wrote the tune, and he would've played it a lot better than I'm gonna play it, but that's the breaks. Also, I gotta apologize a little bit, it's kind of a sad song, but this is a reunion, so that's okay, a little, right? So I figure this is Eddie's way of being here, and we can all get drunk and dance afterwards and he can't, so here it is. Nobody's ever heard this before. First time ever. (*Sung.*)

COME MY DARLING, COME MY LOVE  
WE'LL GO DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
OF STRIP MALLS, CIGARETTES, RUBBER GLOVES

AND CALIFORNIA GIRLS

IN EVERY CORNER, IN EVERY CAR  
THERE'S A COAL-GREY COUPLE CURLED  
THE PEOPLE MAKE LOVE THE WAY THEY CAN  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD

SO COME MY ANGEL COME MY PRIZE  
WE'LL GO DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
DON'T VEIL YOUR FACE, DON'T HIDE YOUR EYES  
SEE THE OIL IN THE WATER SWIRL

THE SCENT'S ENOUGH TO SPIN YOUR HEAD  
BUT OH HOW THE COLORS CURL  
WE SETTLE FOR A BEAUTY SUNK IN CHAINS  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD

AND WITH A LONELY KIND OF HEARTBREAK  
WE LOOK AROUND, DO A DOUBLETAKE  
IS IT BABYLON OR EDEN IN A MIST?  
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING

IS THE GREAT WORLD JUST A BLACK HOLE  
OR ETERNITY'S GREAT GOAL?  
I FELT SURE OUR NAMES WERE ON THE LIST  
BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING?

DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
THERE'S NO WAY OF KNOWING  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD

SO COME MY DARLING, COME MY DEAR  
WE'LL GO DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
WHERE THE ANSWERS ARE FOREVER NEAR  
AND THEY'RE AS REAL AS CULTURED PEARLS

IF THE WORLD IS WHAT THE EYE CAN SEE

THEN GOD'S A PRETTY GIRL  
AND THE ONLY FREEDOM IS TO GIVE  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD  
DOWN IN THE RUINED WORLD

*(Spoken.)* That's it. Thanks for listening. Mustangs forever!

NARRATOR. *(As Narrator.)* It's nine o'clock, and the DJ is offering cash prizes to the first ten couples to hit the dance floor. In far corners, squads of men talk sports, play pinball, or network, and at least seven spouses, who came only out of spite, have been abandoned and stand nursing their drinks alone or in pairs along the cold, undecorated wall of a doomed landmark which to them means nothing at all. *(Music plays loudly while Narrator, as Patty, and Kari dance. Narrator as Patty.)* So how come you're not dancing with you know who?

KARI. *(Not hearing.)* What?

NARRATOR. How come you're not dancing with *Peter*? Didn't you see the way he was looking at you from the stage?

KARI. Yes, I did, and that's one of the 15,000 reasons I'm not dancing with him!

NARRATOR. Do you still have any of Peter's songs?

KARI. No. I had one cassette with all the songs he ever wrote for me on it. But I got mad one day and broke it open and unspooled the whole thing.

NARRATOR. Kari! You are so fucking stupid.

KARI. I know! But I still have all the unwound tape. It's in a box at my folks', under my old bed, with some other stuff ... pictures and things. But they're all torn up.

NARRATOR. But you've kept them?

KARI. I guess I have, yeah.

NARRATOR. Why, you fucking kookiehead?

KARI. *(Not hearing.)* What?

NARRATOR. *(Louder, as music stops.)* Why do you keep all of Peter's old pictures and songs if they're all torn up and destroyed? Are you still in love with Peter? *(Kari exits the scene, mortified, as Narrator becomes Smoke.)*

PETER. I just think ... I'm being honest now — I just think, I've had all these relationships, right?

NARRATOR. (*As Smoke, disinterestedly.*) Yeah. Can I have a sip of that?

PETER. Here, and not one of them has ever really worked out. I mean, seriously, stop and think about this. Not one single relationship of mine has ever truly been healthy and normal and ... right, as in, not even close! I look back ... wreckage. Which is funny, I know, because I'm a psychologist so I'm supposed to have my shit together, okay, ha-ha. But I always get to a certain point, Smoke, where I just stop feeling. I go from everything and then suddenly to nothing, numbness, absolute zero.

NARRATOR. See, that's where I'm at with Theresa and the kids, exactly.

PETER. Why does that happen?

NARRATOR. It's just life, Peter, you get emptied out.

PETER. If you let yourself, maybe.

NARRATOR. No, you don't have any control, you're powerless. It's a physical thing, it's a natural degenerative process, like losing your hair. You lose your feelings.

PETER. No.

NARRATOR. *Yes.* Men are born with a certain capacity for feeling — like women, they've only got so many eggs — men only have so many feelings. And life uses them up. Every love affair, every death, every friend, every joke that's funny that we laugh at uses up our feelings. And when life's done with us, when it can't suck any more feelings out of us, life tosses us aside.

PETER. You really think so?

NARRATOR. Peter, I'm a minister. I know these things.

PETER. It's like ...

NARRATOR. (*Bored.*) What?

PETER. No, you don't want to hear about this.

NARRATOR. (*Relieved.*) Okay.

PETER. It's like when I said no to Kari back then, when I left town?

NARRATOR. (*Slightly impatient.*) Yeah?

PETER. It's like I got on the wrong train, you know? And I've been on this train now for twenty years, and Jesus, I don't want to go where this train is going, I really don't.

NARRATOR. Where do you want to go?

PETER. I want to go ... I want to go where I maybe could have



gone with her, you know? ... if I had been more ... I don't know, strong or something. When I saw Kari for the first time, Smoke, I'll never forget it; it was like the first or second week of high school and I walked into the audiovisual lab and there she was. And I swear — I couldn't have put this into words back then, but it's all I think about lately — it was really like I recognized her or something. And I don't mean it like we'd met before or anything. We'd never met. It was just ... it was as if in her face ... in her beauty ... I was finally seeing the beauty of everything, you know? ... the unreachable beauty of the whole world that I'd always felt inside and tried to hold onto but never could, it was all in her. The whole universe had articulated itself in her. To me. That's just how I saw it. And I just knew that if I could be with her ... by her side, you know? ... then I could be alive and be a part of things. I'd at least have a chance. Now I know it sounds crazy, Smoke, I know, given everything that's happened, and there's a lot of water gone under the bridge, and a lot of time has passed, and there's been a lot of stupid shit and I've done most of it, but when I see her now, I still feel the same way. I look at her and I still see it, I see her face and I think, "Oh, there you are ... the world. Where have you been?" I love her, you know? I screwed up back then, there's no getting around it, but I love her. I think she's great. I love her.

NARRATOR. Have you told her that?

PETER. No.

NARRATOR. Don't. (*Narrator becomes Carla.*) Whatever you do, honey, don't forgive him.

KARI. I'm not gonna forgive him!

NARRATOR. No, but I can see it in your eyes, you're susceptible. It was that song, wasn't it? Kari, just because Satan gave him that guitar to torment you with doesn't mean you have to take the bait like a dummy!

KARI. Carla, I'm just saying that I'm tired of being angry!

NARRATOR. Tough it out!

KARI. No!

NARRATOR. Yes, you tough it out! You stay angry! Because listen to me, honey, when you forgive a man you lose yourself, and that's the God's honest truth. You want some words to live by? Here's two: NEVER FORGIVE.

KARI. Carla ...

NARRATOR. No, I'm right! Tim screwed around on me once — look at him over there, makes me sick — he screwed around on me with a girl we had working for the summer, this little bitch from Holland named Anna. (*Dutch accent.*) Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, *Anna*. (*Shudders.*) And he begged me to forgive him, on his godforsaken knees in the parking lot at two in the morning, he begged me, crying like a baby, like he was awake having open heart surgery, "Oh I need you, Carla, please, please forgive me ..."

KARI. Poor thing.

NARRATOR. That's exactly what I thought, and I forgave him. (*Hitting herself in the face.*) Dummy! Worst thing I ever could have done. (*To Tim.*) *Worst thing I ever could have done.* (*To Kari.*) No, don't look at me that way, it's true, because ever since that day, I've been one down; and in marriage, honey, if you're one down, you're down all the way, and I know you know what I'm talking about.

KARI. What is that supposed to mean?

NARRATOR. Oh please. Christ, look at him over there. Makes me want to vomit. Someday, though — I tell you this in confidence — someday he's gonna do it again — he says he won't, but he will, he's weak, he will — and when he does I'm gonna take everything he's got along with the kids, and the first thing I'll do with the money — this is my dream, I think about it every night — the first thing I'll do is get myself a vanity plate and put it on my truck, and you know what it's gonna say? "I HATE TIM." You get eight letters —

KARI. Carla —

NARRATOR. (*Counting the letters.*) "I HATE TIM."

KARI. Carla!

NARRATOR. What?

KARI. You only get seven letters.

NARRATOR. Oh. Then it'll just have to be "HATE TIM." I think people will still get the idea.

KARI. Oh, I think they will too.

NARRATOR. Maybe they'd even take it as a challenge, you know? To get more involved?

KARI. Maybe.

NARRATOR. Like Greenpeace.

KARI. Gotcha.

NARRATOR. That'd be good. (*Resuming her train of thought.*) See, these reunions are *very* sneaky and the men know it too; they request the old songs from the DJ and talk about the old times, "oh baby I've changed"; there's women feeling generous all over this place tonight. But listen to me, forgiving a man will not make you any younger; and, don't you dare dance that sweetheart dance with him, it's like giving yourself cancer indulging in that nonsense! Tim's asked me twice already and I've said no, and I'm married to him! Peter Mollberg hurt you. He didn't have to. He chose to do it. And that's the end of it. Christ, wouldja look at Tim over there? "Haw haw haw ..." I swear I'm getting a case of infectious diarrhea just looking at him. (*Narrator becomes Cookie.*) Peter Mollberg?!

PETER. Cookie?

NARRATOR. I've gained a lot of weight, I know, it's all the pot, man, I live in a state of continual munchies, but listen, you're a therapist or something in the Twin Cities, right?

PETER. Cookie, before we talk about anything else, we're gonna talk about The Pavilion —

NARRATOR. Now is not the time!

PETER. I heard on "Talk of the Nation" there are laws about landmarks and historic buildings —

NARRATOR. I heard the same show, Peter, but this is not a church, it's just the motherfucking Pavilion and the laws don't apply!

PETER. It's a church to me! This is a cathedral of memories in my head, and I bet it is to a lot of other people too —

NARRATOR. You know what it is to other people? It's a problem, it's old and in the way —

PETER. Yeah, well, I'm gonna call for a referendum —

NARRATOR. *We had a referendum, man, the people have already spoken, now would you please fucking listen to me?!*

PETER. What is it?

NARRATOR. (*Heightening intensity of stoned paranoia.*) You're a shrink, right? Like you talk people down from buildings and stuff? You've got methods of ameliorating really high-pressure situations?

PETER. Why?

NARRATOR. I'm in totally deep shit, man. I'm desperate and on the run.

PETER. From who?

NARRATOR. Kent!

PETER. Kent Luneburg?

NARRATOR. Yeah! He found out about me and Angie and he called me this morning and said he's gonna kill me.

PETER. You're seeing Angie on the side?

NARRATOR. Duh! And Kent said he's gonna kill me tonight! Said Jesus told him it was alright!

PETER. Cookie, settle down! Have you called the police?

NARRATOR. He's the *Chief* of Police, Peter, get with the fucking program!

PETER. So what do you want me to do?

NARRATOR. *Talk to him! "Understand" him, or whatever the fuck it is you people do! (Kari enters scene.)*

KARI. Cookie?

NARRATOR. *(Trying to be cool.)* Hey, Kari.

KARI. Kent's looking for you.

NARRATOR. *(Freaking out.) I know!* Peter, man, you gotta help me, he's stalking me like a fucking jungle cat!

PETER. *(To Kari.)* Where is he?

KARI. He's right over there.

NARRATOR. Shit! All I want to do is make life better for people and smoke some decent weed and now I got fucking Jesus after my ass!

KARI. Jesus?

PETER. Kent says Jesus told him to kill Cookie.

KARI. *(To Narrator.)* And you believe him?

NARRATOR. Well, what if Jesus really told him that, Kari? That's not good! Hey, is it true you guys are getting back together?

KARI. Are you telling people that?

PETER. No!

KARI. *(To Cookie.)* Where did you hear that?

NARRATOR. I don't know, it's just been kinda going around that Peter's moving back and Hans is outta the picture.

KARI. Shit! *(To Peter.)* Have you been saying that to people?

PETER. No!

NARRATOR. Even if you're not moving back, you two *should* dance the sweetheart dance at midnight.

KARI. No we shouldn't.

NARRATOR. But it'd be perfect, you guys were the Cutest Senior Couple and all that shit. We'll turn down the lights, turn on the glitter ball, give everybody a little hope for the future, you know? I mean, you guys were so fucked up, what a testament.

KARI. To *what*?

NARRATOR. Where is he now?

PETER. He went into the bathroom.

NARRATOR. Thank you, God. (*Narrator addresses audience.*) It's nine-thirty; the sun has gone down, and there's a warm corona of indiscriminate voices and sounds and grey-purple light that spreads for thirty yards in a circle around the old dance hall at the edge of the lake. Cars are beginning to cruise the lakeshore road ... can you hear those radios? And the catering trucks are pulling away, having cleaned up the last of the dinnertime dishes; and the fire trucks are pulling up, groaning into the parking lot, and the hoses are being unrolled, and the crew of new volunteers, with "helmets and everything," are nervously awaiting their instructions in the quiet, spinning light of the silent sirens. And the party's still going strong.

PETER. Lot of people came.

KARI. Yeah.

PETER. More than I woulda thought.

KARI. Yeah, Angie and Lisa really got their shit together.

PETER. It's really a great party.

KARI. Yeah, it's a great party.

PETER. (*After a beat.*) So look, do you wanna ... get out of here?

KARI. With you? Are you kidding me?

PETER. I'm not, actually.

NARRATOR. (*As Jeff.*) Hey, Peter, that song was beautiful, man!

PETER. Thanks! (*To Kari.*) I thought maybe we could ... you're looking at me funny, is this the craziest thing anybody's ever said to you?

KARI. It's close.

PETER. I almost forgot, I got you these. (*He offers her a small box of chocolates.*)

KARI. God, Peter, you're like Monty Hall. What are they?

PETER. Just some chocolates. With caramel. Your favorite. (*She does not take the box.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Sarah.*) Kari, Darren and I are going home, do

you want us to drop you off on the way?

KARI. No, I've got a car, Sarah, thanks!

NARRATOR. You're okay to drive?

KARI. Uh-huh.

NARRATOR. (*Doubtful.*) Okay.

PETER. Come on, we'll just get the hell out of here and go have a drink at The Shoreview or something. Nothing romantic.

KARI. Like it's up to you whether it's romantic.

PETER. I'm just saying my intentions are honorable.

KARI. Are you nuts?

PETER. No, listen, it'll be nice. We'll play some air hockey and see Cork and Patty and the Ruika brothers. We'll say hi to Frostie and Booger. We'll just check it out and then I'll take you home. No big deal. Please.

KARI. Peter. The Shoreview was torn down three years ago. There's a waterslide there now. Cork and Patty broke up. Cork is working on a fishing boat up in Alaska and Patty and the three kids, one with leukemia, are living with Patty's mom in Staples. The Ruika brothers are in jail for robbing the bank in Wadena. Booger is dead —

NARRATOR. (*As Arne.*) Kari, would you tell Hans I'm gonna be late for my tee-time tomorrow, I'm so fucked up.

KARI. Yeah, Arne, I'll tell him —

NARRATOR. (*As Arne.*) Thanks. Hey, Peter, I love you!

PETER. (*Disconcerted.*) Hi.

KARI. — and I don't want you to take me home.

PETER. (*Astonished.*) Booger's dead?

KARI. Yeah, he fell from six stories working construction up in Grand Forks after the flood in ninety-eight. (*Change as necessary.*)

PETER. Jesus.

NARRATOR. (*As Carl.*) Yo, Peter, Mustangs forever!

PETER. (*Distractedly.*) Yeah, Carl, rock on! (*To Kari.*) Sorry about that.

KARI. No, it was a nice song.

PETER. Kari, what do I have to do to get that look off your face so you can see me? This is not twenty years ago, I'm not who I was; can't we just be together for a couple of minutes to talk as human beings? I'm not asking you to hold my hand or anything — (*She*

*holds up her hand with the wedding ring on it.)*

KARI. Peter, look! Does this ring mean anything to you? Does it signify anything at all? I'm married, okay? I'm attached. Vowed. Wedded. Welded. I'm married!

PETER. It's okay with Hans.

KARI. What do you mean it's okay with Hans?

PETER. Just that, it's okay with Hans, if that's what you're worried about.

KARI. You called Hans, what, you emailed him?

PETER. I called him at the pro-shop.

KARI. Are you fucking kidding me?

PETER. No.

KARI. Oh my God. So, okay, you called him and asked him what?

PETER. I just asked if I could maybe see you after the reunion, to try to clear some things up — he knows we knew each other —

KARI. I know he knows we knew each other, everyone in town knows we knew each other! God, are you really as stupid as this? Or as devious? Shit!

PETER. He wasn't in our class, he said he wasn't going. It's better that way, isn't it, that he knows? Otherwise I felt out of line, you know?

KARI. Do you know how creepy that is, to call my husband? How invasive?

PETER. I was trying to do the right thing for *you* —

KARI. So you called my husband and asked him, what? For permission to take me out or something?

PETER. Sort of, I guess, yeah ...

KARI. Grow up!

PETER. Look, I thought it was a good idea, maybe I was wrong!

KARI. There's no maybe about it, Peter, you were wrong!

PETER. I'm sorry!

KARI. God, I've been sitting here all night going nuts thinking of what to do, trying to decide what position it would put me in with Hans if I even talked to you, if he knew, if he didn't, and what that would mean, and now you tell me that you called him and he knows — you asshole!

PETER. I said I'm sorry!

KARI. Saying you're sorry doesn't change the position I've been

put in! "Sorry" isn't even a word! "Sorry" is just a noise people make when nothing else can happen! God, do you know what it's gonna be like when I go home tonight? What I'm going to have to wade through? Shit! You are always doing this to me! Do me a favor and just go away! I mean it, go away! *Move apart from me!*

NARRATOR. (*As Jake.*) Kari, are you okay?

KARI. I'm fine! I'm fine.

PETER. I just didn't want to get you in trouble with Hans!

KARI. I'm his wife, not his daughter!

PETER. You know what I mean.

KARI. Yes I do know what you mean, you mean you didn't want to get yourself in trouble with Hans. Or maybe you did, I don't know, you're such a weirdo! Anyway, Peter, let's just get the cards on the table, even if I wasn't married, even if you were the last man on earth, I wouldn't go with you to The Shoreview or even for a walk around the block, okay?

PETER. Kari, I know I hurt you, that's why I'm here —

KARI. "Hurt"? "Hurt" barely touches this, Peter, this is not about being "hurt." There's a pain beyond hurt; and it's vast and it's endless and it doesn't sting and it doesn't burn, it just weighs all around you like some sick, nauseous gravity, that's what you did to me, okay? The day I called your house and your father told me you'd left town for college? Excuse me? And not to call back ... are you kidding? Seventeen years old and this adult who knows his son has made me pregnant says "don't call back"? Do you have any idea how alone I felt? God, I felt so alone! And now you show up here twenty years later, talking about old times ... and you think you can ask me out for some kind of weird penitential date at The Shoreview without even really mentioning what you've done ... like it'll be in bad taste or something even to bring it up, and I'm willing to sit here and *listen*? That's so *sick*.

PETER. But that's exactly what I want to talk about, if you'd just give me a chance —

KARI. No! I never had a chance from the day we met, and now you don't get one either! Every molecule of my life is, like ... seventeen degrees off from where it should have been ... and it all started with you. Because of you, I'm seventeen degrees and an eternity away from everything under the sun, and my baby —



instead of a baby, I have a shadow of a baby, and it stretches across my whole ... Goddamned ... life.

PETER. I do, too!

KARI. No you don't, you have nothing but a giant sucking need!

PETER. Kari, I didn't make you get rid of that baby!

KARI. So what was I supposed to do?

PETER. You could have kept it!

KARI. And you could have stayed!

PETER. I know! And I wish that I had! I wish I had fought harder to do what was right, I wish I had spent the past twenty years with you and our baby instead of alone as the world's greatest fuck-up, I wish I could go back in time and do it all over again —

KARI. And what, you want some kind of fucking credit for wishing? Wishing is nothing! It's just like "sorry," it's nothing and it refers to nothing! God. Everything since the beginning of time was working together to make my happiness possible; and then you, you walked into the audiovisual lab in your flannel shirt ... and you fucked it up! You fucked everything up! Do you understand that? Because of you, the entire universe is ruined ... forever! (*Brief pause.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Narrator, to audience.*) We'll take a short break. (*Music rises. Lights down.*)

## End of Act One

## ACT TWO

*The scene is the dock that extends from the doors of The Pavilion and out to the edge of the lake. Light rises on Narrator.*

NARRATOR. (*To audience.*) In the middle of life, we find ourselves alive. Disoriented; lost; but alive. Time, like an immense pavilion, stretches above us, behind us, and ahead of us — sand beneath our feet — how did we get here? We can remember one moment ago with what seems at first to be an intense accuracy: we were standing right there; we were saying *thus* and *thus*; a decision was made, irreversible effects were somehow caused by the causes of other effects, we swear we were standing right there ... but already it blurs and decays, and the wind in our faces, all the oncoming moments wash over us with a deafening roar, we're pulled forward, and then back, by memory's undertow, forward and back ... it's dizzying. And does the future exist? Is it already there, an undiscovered landscape, waiting in shadow just beyond our footfall, down we go, there it is, ahhhh; or do we stand at a precipice, eternally falling onto a track which only a runaway train can lay? Do we become by forgetting or by remembering the past? Are we building ourselves, or are we rather foaming into existence on the developing curve of a wave? At the edge of the water, at the edge of the land, on the shore of the past and the future we stand; somehow, in the middle of life, as if born again in the foam of the ancient oceans, we wake in the wake and we find ourselves: alive. (*Kari enters, with a champagne bottle and glasses. She sits on the edge of the stage.*)

It's ten o'clock. Outside The Pavilion, here in the dark beyond the beach and the volleyball nets, a few couples are preparing to leave early, to pick up the kids at Grandma's, to start the long drive home to Breckenridge, Moorhead or Devil's Lake. Inside, the pounding darkness is lit intermittently by a sudden strobe light, a

flash, revealing all at once a dance floor packed with bodies, and a windowsill that stretches for one hundred and five feet along the southern wall, lined with beer glasses, wine coolers, napkins and an undone tie. And a few pairs of high-school sweethearts are sitting cross-legged out on the dock, talking about old times, and tenderly brushing the occasional mosquito away from a longed-for cheek. Far above the earth, the stars are slowly wheeling around Polaris ... *(Peter enters, carrying his guitar in its case.)*

PETER. I'm leaving.

KARI. Goodbye.

NARRATOR. *(To the tech, in a bit of a rush.)* Could we have some stars please? *(Scant stars come out.)*

PETER. Angie told me you were out here. I thought you went home.

KARI. Right, like I'm in a hurry to go home.

NARRATOR. Would it be asking too much to actually have the Northern Hemisphere near the summer solstice in the year 2007? *(Change as necessary.)* Quickly? *(The sky fills up with stars.)*

PETER. Anyway ... I've got a long drive back, so ... *(Narrator traces a path across the sky and a shooting star races by.)*

KARI. Oh, Peter, look!

NARRATOR. *(To the techs.)* Thank you.

PETER. What?

KARI. Didn't you see that?

PETER. No, what was it?

KARI. I don't know, a shooting star, maybe? Or a comet? What is the difference anyway, between a shooting star and a comet?

PETER. I don't know, I never really listened in science.

KARI. Me neither. *(Brief pause.)* Just stick around a second, maybe it'll happen again.

PETER. *(Surprised at the invitation.)* Okay.

NARRATOR. *(To audience.)* In human history, every little thing makes a difference. *(Peter sits down cautiously, not too close to Kari. There should be ample space left for silence and contemplation of the stars in between lines in the scene that follows.)*

KARI. How long until midnight?

PETER. I don't know, I don't wear a watch.

KARI. Me neither. Can you tell time by the stars? *(They both look up.)*

PETER. Not really. It must not be midnight yet, though, we're not on fire. *(Brief pause.)*

KARI. I can't believe that dress Rhonda Porkonnen's wearing, can you?

PETER. I told her she looked like a big ripe strawberry.

KARI. You did? You dork.

PETER. No, she took it as a compliment, it kinda worked out. I got lucky.

KARI. I think her husband is a criminal.

PETER. The guy with the mustache?

KARI. Yeah, doesn't he just have that look?

PETER. He does have kind of a Snidely Whiplash thing going.

KARI. And I think I heard somewhere tonight that he was a ... video pirate, or something. He pirates videos.

PETER. *(After a beat, half-heartedly, like a pirate.) Aaarrrrgh. (Brief pause while they look at the stars.)*

KARI. I suppose you should get going. It doesn't look like anything else is gonna happen.

PETER. No, it doesn't, does it? *(After a beat.)* Probably the minute I leave, though, there'll be some huge cosmic event, right, like fireworks in the sky and stuff.

KARI. Probably.

PETER. That's how my life usually works, anyway. I'm always missing things by just a few crucial minutes.

KARI. Seventeen degrees.

PETER. Yeah.

KARI. Me too. *(Brief pause.)*

PETER. *(With a sigh.)* Well ... I guess ...

KARI. You could stick around for a minute or two, maybe —

PETER. *(Jarred.)* Oh, sure ... I could do that. No one's expecting me.

KARI. What about your girlfriend?

PETER. *(Totally taken aback.)* We don't live together, who told you I had a girlfriend?

KARI. I don't know, everyone in town who comes into the bank always feels compelled to tell me every little thing about you whenever they hear something.

PETER. You've known I've got a girlfriend all night?

KARI. Sure. Her name's Lou Ann or something?  
PETER. Lou-Marie. But could we —  
KARI. (*Rushing over his previous line.*) And she's a painter or something, right?  
PETER. Yeah, but could we really not talk about this?  
KARI. What does she paint?  
PETER. Why didn't you say anything?  
KARI. I was waiting to see if you'd bring her up, what does she paint? Tell me.  
PETER. Still lifes.  
KARI. Like fruit in a bowl and shit?  
PETER. Yeah, like fruit in a bowl. And shit. But very realistic, it's not quite as dumb as it sounds. It's like you can reach out and touch everything she paints. Like her apples? — are very convincing.  
KARI. That must be so great for you.  
PETER. Look, I'm the one who said I didn't want to talk about her!  
KARI. I know!  
PETER. Don't pick on me when you're the one that asked —  
KARI. And she's kinda young, isn't she?  
PETER. Kari —  
KARI. Isn't she?  
PETER. I don't know ... what is young nowadays?  
KARI. How young is she? Someone else in town'll tell me if I really want to know. How young is she? Thirty?  
PETER. (*Ashamed.*) Lower.  
KARI. Twenty-eight?  
PETER. Lower.  
KARI. Twenty-seven?  
PETER. Twenty-three.  
KARI. *Twenty-three?!*  
PETER. Yep.  
KARI. Oh my God, Peter, what does she see in you?  
PETER. I don't know, what did you see in me?  
KARI. Somebody my own age! God!  
PETER. I think —  
KARI. This is astounding!  
PETER. Thank you for saying that, I think what the deal is, is ...  
KARI. What?

PETER. I don't know. I think she's too young still to really get how fucked up I am.

KARI. Oh, come on, she must know.

PETER. No, she doesn't.

KARI. Oh, she must.

PETER. Trust me, she doesn't.

KARI. So why didn't you bring her?

PETER. Why are you even talking to me? *(The Narrator traces another shooting star across the sky.)*

KARI. Peter, look! Did you see that?

PETER. Yeah ...

KARI. *(After a beat.)* So why didn't you bring her?

PETER. Oh Jesus, I don't know, Kari. I didn't bring her because ... because I think we're kind of breaking up; or I'm kind of breaking up or something.

KARI. But you two have been together for like a while, right?

PETER. Three years.

KARI. So why are you breaking up with her, is she pregnant?

PETER. *(Taking the hit.)* No, it's just stopped being right.

KARI. Things with Hans and I stopped being right about ten years ago, Peter, we haven't let that keep us from wasting each other's lives, why are you breaking up with her? She's young, she paints fruit. Is there somebody else?

PETER. Kinda.

KARI. What does that mean? You just have your eye on somebody? Who is she? *(Brief pause.)*

PETER. Could I maybe have a little, umm ... champagne?

KARI. Oh, sure. *(She pours him a glass.)* One of the little perks of being on the food committee. Knowing where they hide the champagne.

PETER. Where is it?

KARI. Like I'd tell you. *(Brief pause, while they drink.)* It's under the stage. So who is she?

PETER. You. *(Brief pause.)*

KARI. God ...

PETER. What?

KARI. I'm gonna go. *(She rises.)*

PETER. Don't! Forget I said it!

KARI. How can I? God! Peter, you are such a mess, do you know that?

PETER. I know, I'm a mess because I'm not with you!

KARI. No, you're a mess, period! Look at yourself! You're thirty-seven years old, you're here with that stupid guitar, and you're telling me these things and I'm married! God, I swear, you are the only person I know who works in the field of mental health and you are the most screwed-up person I know! I mean, tell me something, that song you sang tonight, the one you wrote —

PETER. You didn't like it?

KARI. No, it's not that, how can you write such a beautiful song — this is such a mystery to me — how can you write a beautiful song like that ... and still be so stupid about everything, to think you could come back and say something like that?

PETER. Everybody's stupid about everything!

KARI. Oh, is that what you tell people down in the Cities? Is that what they pay you to tell them, that everybody's fucked up and don't worry about it?

PETER. Well, aren't they? Deep down? About what matters?

KARI. Not everybody! A lot of people have it together!

PETER. Who? Are you at the same party I'm at? Who here tonight has their shit together? Who? Really?

KARI. Denise Charbonneau.

PETER. How could she? Her father was murdered when she was six.

KARI. Oh yeah —

PETER. Remember, she got that special award at graduation for being such a survivor?

KARI. I totally spaced it out —

PETER. She's never had a steady relationship in her life, she obviously hasn't come to terms with her sexual orientation —

KARI. You don't think so?

PETER. No —

KARI. I don't think so either —

PETER. — she drinks like a fish, and in the meantime, she spends her time traveling the globe, stamping out drugs!? You saw her going after Cookie tonight, I thought she was going to arrest him, what kind of life is that?

KARI. It's a life, don't judge!

PETER. I know, but is this a woman with her shit together?  
KARI. Denny and Sonya have their shit together!  
PETER. Kari, Denny has been sleeping with Tina Hawkenson ever since grade school!  
KARI. How do you know that?  
PETER. He told me tonight! The way Denny sees it, he's cheating on Tina by being married to Sonya, not the other way around! And he's really torn up about it, he had me in the corner for twenty minutes pouring his heart out —  
KARI. That doesn't make any sense —  
PETER. Sure it does, I feel that way about you with everybody.  
KARI. Okay, I got it!  
PETER. What?  
KARI. I know who has their shit together.  
PETER. Who?  
KARI. Me.  
PETER. You've got your shit together.  
KARI. I do. In my way. I go to work every day, I go home, I go to work, I do my thing, I don't complain.  
PETER. And you're happy with Hans.  
KARI. That's not the point! The point is, I don't complain! You know, everybody, Peter, they come down into the box where I work, and they complain, they tell me their troubles, you know? For the past twenty years, I've been listening to people complain. It's a lot like your job, I bet, except at your office the secrets are in the people's heads, and where I work, they keep them in boxes, but the dynamic's the same, "blah blah blah blah!" They come down there when they're getting divorced, or when somebody dies, or when they just want to see their stuff, you know, when they feel a little nervous about their valuables, and there I am right, I must not have anything to do or say, I'm just Kari, I've been there forever, I'll be there forever, so they come down there and they open their boxes and "blah blah blah blah!" But see, I don't put other people through that, I don't complain, I don't even open my box, I just leave it all in there where it's safe and I shut up and do my job, you know? I don't make everybody else pay for my problems, they're mine! And maybe, according to you, that's not having your shit together, but as far as I'm concerned,



given how fucked up the universe is, it'll do!

PETER. But you're not happy!

KARI. Nobody's happy like they thought they'd be!

PETER. So you don't even think happiness is possible?

KARI. Like you mean it, probably, no.

PETER. How do you think I mean it?

KARI. Like "la dee dah dee tra la la!"

PETER. But see, that's not what I mean, I just mean that it's exciting and —

KARI. Bearable?

PETER. No, better than bearable!

KARI. How could it be, Peter, it's life! Bearable's the best we can hope for!

PETER. See, I can't believe that! I won't!

KARI. Really, this morning, Hans was *inside* me, right? (*Peter smiles tightly, not really ready* — ) Just listen, he was inside my *body*. If there's anybody else on earth I can tell this to, it's you. I get one life, right, and one body, and this morning Hans was inside it. And we were all finished, but he was still on top of me and I could tell he was thinking about something. So I said, like a dope, "What are you thinking about?" And he said, "A really difficult hole." And it wasn't even a joke. That's what I live with. Me and that, alone every night in a split-level pro shop with beds for the human beings to rest on in between rounds! On a good day, it's bearable. On a bad day, you don't know.

PETER. What?

KARI. He's *so* mad, Peter. In his mind, he rescued me from the jaws of ill repute, right, because you'd dumped me and I'd had an abortion and "oh God," right, and he brought me out to be the Baroness Von Nine Iron of the most beautiful executive golf course in Becker County! And he *did* rescue me, kind of, see, that's the real problem, he did! And he was really sweet about it too, I mean, I can see his point, because I had been really lonely ever since you broke up with me, and Hans was so chivalrous about it, he took me out around town like it was all perfectly normal even though everybody always looked at us funny. One time he took me to The Voyager and he announced to the whole bar that we were getting married and he bought everyone a round of drinks. And Arne Neubeck was

really drunk, like he always is, and he came over and said to Hans, "You just made the biggest fucking mistake of your life." And Hans punched him so fast and so hard, he knocked the wind out of that entire room and I got a dozen roses the next day from Arne with an apology. So Hans was really sweet, and he rescued me, and all he ever wanted from me in return, the way he sees it, all he ever wanted from me was a "motherfucking baby" ... and I wouldn't give him one, and *I won't give him one*, and his parents are all pissed off at me about it, but he's too nice to leave me and I can't change, it's just ... *bad!* It's such an *awful, bad, home*. (*Very long pause.*)

PETER. (*After a beat.*) Hey.

KARI. What?

PETER. Listen. You get this much time in your one life, right?

KARI. Yeah?

PETER. Like you said, with your body, only this much. And you get this many people. Only this many. And out of the time and the people you're given you make what you make, and that's your life, right?

KARI. Right ...

PETER. But what if there's such a thing as destiny, do you ever think about that?

KARI. There isn't.

PETER. But what if there is in the sense that, what if there was a person who could unlock the key to your life precisely because of what you did to them or what they did to you, or because you were stupid like me and you just missed it the first time around? Destiny like that, nothing cosmic. What if ... what if it's like life, where when you're young you think it's gonna be about a lot of things and you prepare yourself for it, thinking, "Life is gonna be so wild, there's gonna be so much coming at me from every direction, how will I ever keep up?" That's what I always thought, and let me tell you, I sat down all ready to get my hair blown back by this explosion of millions of experiences that never ever came. And so the question becomes, what if you open your eyes after that and there's suddenly just one person, and it turns out that in some sense your entire life is really all about what you're gonna do about this one person and then what if you made a mistake? Are you telling me there's only one chance?

KARI. Doesn't it seem that way?

PETER. The whole world exists so that everyone gets just one chance?

KARI. Yes!

PETER. One chance is enough of a reason to make a whole world? You're telling me there's no mercy, there's no forgiveness, there's no air in the system to breathe and no room to move and we're just trapped in the net of what we've done forever? Look, I was young and I was scared and I made a mistake. A big mistake. And I know it hasn't cost me what it cost you to live without that baby, but it's cost me a lot. It has. And when I look at you now, Kari, and I see those little wrinkles around your eyes...? And I realize I've missed so much of you already...? The thought that I won't see the rest, that I won't get to know you any better and hold your hand and see you smile ... and then one day you'll be gone forever? That breaks my heart.

KARI. Peter ...

PETER. I can't live any further into my life without *you*. Please. Come back to The Cities with me tonight. Get a divorce. Marry me. Or live with me. Or let's have another baby and just be friends, I don't care, let's ... just ... come on. We'll start over.

KARI. Peter, we can't.

PETER. Look, whatever we've done, both our lives are a mess, right? A mess! And I've got a car and a full tank of gas. (*After a beat.*) Are you coming?

KARI. (*Amused at his bravado.*) Who do you think you are?

PETER. I am the guy who sang "Mandy" in Swing Choir. I am the guy who played Lancelot in *Camelot*. I am one half of the Cutest Senior Couple and I'm leaving and I want you to come with me! Come on!

KARI. No!

PETER. Why, because you'd rather stay married to Hans, who hates you? In this town where they burn things down that oughta last forever? Or is it that you'd rather have me feel lousy forever than be happy for one more minute yourself?

KARI. Do you ever think about anything but you?

PETER. Yes, I'm offering you a way out!

KARI. To YOU! I need a way to ME!

PETER. Can't I be a way to you? You're a way to me!  
KARI. Not everybody sees people like that, Peter! Just you!  
PETER. All I want is a chance to start over!  
KARI. Peter, for you and me to start over, the entire universe would have to begin again. *(Brief pause.)* What?  
PETER. Say that again.  
KARI. For you and me to start over, the whole universe would have to begin again. *(Long pause. Peter turns and glances at the narrator, who looks away. Peter looks back at Kari, who is quietly living with the simple sadness of the impossibility. And then Peter gets up — )*  
KARI. Where are you going?  
PETER. Hang on a second. *(He goes to the narrator. Stands by him for a moment. To narrator.)* Hi.  
NARRATOR. *(Gracious but taken aback.)* Hello.  
PETER. Listen, can you start the entire universe all over again?  
NARRATOR. No.  
PETER. No, come on, sure you can, you just say ... "This is the way the universe begins" and all that other hocusy-pocusy shit, right?  
NARRATOR. No.  
PETER. You *can* do it, right, you just *won't*.  
NARRATOR. What exactly would be the difference? To you?  
PETER. Come on — just this once —  
NARRATOR. It's not possible.  
PETER. Because you won't *let* it be.  
NARRATOR. No, because it's simply not. I could start another universe, if you like, a different one ... with a different voice and different words, but not this one again. Not these stars, not this world, not this Pavilion.  
PETER. Would she and I be in the new universe if you did that?  
NARRATOR. No.  
PETER. Then what would be the point?  
NARRATOR. Exactly. Don't you see, I don't make the rules? I'm working within limits just like you. I'm not in charge!  
PETER. Bullshit!  
NARRATOR. It's true! Time only goes in one direction, that's your problem! It's not you, it's not her, it's time. I'm sorry.  
PETER. No, don't apologize, that's great —  
NARRATOR. It's just that you're asking the wrong person for the

wrong thing. I could try something else if you wanted —

PETER. No! That's fine! Fuck it! I don't need you! I'll do it myself! Let's see. (*Brief pause. To audience.*) This is the way the universe begins, a raindrop drops, uhh, now but backwards, boom, sloop, up, it's a little pavilion —

NARRATOR. (*To audience.*) Just so everyone's clear — the universe isn't actually starting over.

PETER. Water, continents, insects, creatures —

NARRATOR. Time only goes in one direction ...

PETER. — the tea leaf of consciousness, the primitive mind —

NARRATOR. ... and this is just a desperate ploy.

PETER. — love, morality, whoosh, it's a little pavilion! Europe, time, the Renaissance, time, the steam engine, my family, me —

NARRATOR. Look away! I mean it, look away! It's bad magic!

PETER. Uhh, oh, umm, my great-great-grandmother wrote a book, it's called *Pioneer Days*, it's in the Library of Congress, there's a house on the hill on the shore of the lake — that's you — this is The Pavilion and this is a play about time! (*Brief pause. And then, remembering what he'd somehow forgot ...*) This is a play about time. (*Brief pause. To Narrator.*) That didn't change a thing, did it?

NARRATOR. No.

PETER. (*To Kari.*) You're still married to Hans?

KARI. Yeah.

PETER. And I'm still me. (*Very long pause. Finally, Kari speaks. Simply. Not sympathetically. This is about her.*)

KARI. It's okay. (*After a long beat.*) I don't want the universe to start over.

PETER. You don't?

KARI. No, I don't. (*After a beat, very gently.*) Do you remember that day in the spring of junior year...? It was really hot ... and you came and got me out of study hall and we skipped out and went to The Sandwich Hut for a crunch cone? And we walked down here by the lake, and I told you I was hot, and you *picked me up*. Do you remember that?

PETER. Yeah.

KARI. You picked me up *just like in a movie* and you kinda dipped me back into the water so I could get my hair wet. And when you did that ... I saw the sunshine upside down making ...

glittering little bubbly patterns on the water, like I was on a ferris wheel, kind of, and, boom!, it was like all the feelings in the lower parts of my body swooshed back up into my head, and as you lifted me up out of the water, I tilted up and all my thoughts, swoosh, all my sensibility rushed down into my underwear and I looked at you and you looked so handsome, Peter, I just suddenly knew it was the right time. And I felt so silly because just like ten minutes before I had said all that stuff to you about how I was always going to be a virgin, and I *just* didn't see why people thought sex was *so* important. And we walked back to my house holding hands and your hand was shaking so hard. *God. (Brief pause.)* To be held like that, at that age; to see those shining things; and to walk that mile with you right down the middle of the street ... I don't want to lose that. I don't want the universe to start over. I just want to let it *go*. I want to let it go *on*. Okay?

NARRATOR. *(To the audience, exactly as at the beginning, without special emphasis.)* This is the way the universe begins.

KARI. *(To Peter.)* Okay? *(Peter lives with the pain of Kari's words for a long moment.)*

NARRATOR. *(To audience.)* At every single moment, the whole creation is beginning again, stretching the tent of the present moment to bursting. And the waves that push up through the oceans, and the waves that push up through the stars; and the waves that push upwards through history are the same waves that push up through us. And so we *have to say yes to time*, even though it means speeding forward into memory; forgetfulness; and oblivion. Say "no" to time; hold on to what you were or what she was; hold onto the past, even out of love ... and I swear it will tear you to shreds. This universe will tear you to shreds. *(Brief pause.)*

PETER. Kari, I'm really sorry that, uh, we only get one life, and that I wasn't better to you.

KARI. I know. *(Long pause.)*

PETER. *(After a beat.)* The day you told me you were pregnant I went home and told my dad, and he was, like, "Son, here's what we're gonna do," and I knew it wasn't right; I knew that he had married my mom when she got pregnant and he had always been mad about it, and he wanted me to ... it doesn't matter what he wanted, I just knew it wasn't right, but I did it. And I'm sorry.

KARI. I know.

PETER. But I want you to know, I feel really lucky that I got the chance to know you, and to see the way you are as a person; and I just hope that maybe someday, after we die or something, who knows, you know, maybe we could ...

KARI. (*After a beat.*) ... hang out?

PETER. Yeah, maybe we could hang out and ... just remember how it was.

KARI. I don't really think we'll be able to remember anything.

PETER. I'm going to. I'm going to remember everything. (*The Narrator abruptly enters the scene as Kent.*)

NARRATOR. (*As Kent.*) Hey, you guys.

KARI. Hi, Kent.

NARRATOR. I'm sorry, you guys, but you gotta clear outta here. The fire department wants to start setting up the pumps on the lake.

KARI. Oh, so that's how they're gonna do it.

NARRATOR. Yeah. This is gonna be the biggest fire Pine City's ever seen. The trucks can't hold enough water. Besides, it gives the guys a chance to use the equipment. It's fun for 'em.

KARI. God, Kent, can you imagine The Pavilion not being here?

NARRATOR. No.

KARI. And some big ugly concrete thing?

NARRATOR. I know. I didn't vote for it. Cookie said he'd get me Hank Williams Jr.'s autograph if I'd get behind it, but what do I care about that? This is where everything happens that matters.

KARI. Kent, did you ever ... find Cookie?

NARRATOR. Yeah. He's funny.

PETER. Yeah he is.

NARRATOR. I've never been funny.

KARI. (*After a beat.*) You didn't ... kill him, did you?

NARRATOR. No ... I didn't ... I didn't do anything. I saw him and I ... didn't do anything. You guys —

KARI. What?

NARRATOR. I love Angie so much. I love her so much. But I've wasted so much time, I mean, shit, this is our twenty-year reunion! Twenty years I've been with her, but where have I been really, I don't know! And how much time is left, I mean, you know what I mean? I'm not making much sense, probably. Cookie got me high.

KARI. Kent, you're the Chief of Police!

NARRATOR. I know I am!

KARI. And you got high?

NARRATOR. What can I say, it's complicated. It's all complicated. When I woke up this morning, I thought there was a God, I thought there was justice, I thought there was a right way to live. And now, all I know for sure is I haven't loved Angie as much as I wanted to when we were young and now that's all a mess and time's running out and I look up at the stars and I don't see anything but ... stars. *(Long pause.)*

PETER. They're kinda beautiful anyway, though, huh?

NARRATOR. *(Still disappointed.)* Yeah, they'll do. *(Long pause.)* I'll settle for stars. *(Brief pause.)*

KARI. *(To Kent.)* Hey, Kent, can *you* tell time by the stars?

NARRATOR. Actually, Kari ... Hari-Kari ... I bet no one's called you that for a while ... I can. *(To the audience, as Narrator.)* It's twelve o'clock. *(Lights shift. Glitter ball starts. Music begins. To techs.)* Thank you. *(To the audience.)* And that means it's time for the sweetheart dance everybody

So find that old flame and give it one last go, and then we'll burn the place down

Goodbye!

If you want some pot, later, I can get you some, all you want  
There's a chance we won't ever see each other again

I tried taking in a daycare kid, but you know, this is going to sound unkind — I didn't like him

This is my wife, Karen; Karen, this is Andrea

And they've already created photons in the lab that can surpass the speed of light

They look cute together *(Peter and Kari come together to dance.)*

But you don't like being at home with your kids? — see, that's such a shame, because I would give anything to be able to stay at home with our kids

It's gonna be two hours to get TO the airport, and then two hours to get THROUGH the airport, so, yeah

We should go

Of course I still love you; but God forgives me for that, don't you think?



You dip three fingers into the Sambuca and then you light  
them on fire — ouch! — while you shoot the rest

Yes that would mean time stands still for the person on the ship  
but not for the observer

Hold me tighter

I read somewhere that repentance is being in the same situation  
later and not doing it

I've tried it twice, just can't get it started

And what if we were living during the long, slow end of the  
world, or a paradigm shift, or an axial age?

I'm thinking of starting my own business

I saw the way you looked at him

Because I'm sick of teaching piano

Either way, how can there not be a tremendous collapse on the  
horizon?

And these are our three little boys

if I could just get my act together, I'd go back to school, and  
get a master's or a doctorate

something I can believe in, you know?

God, I don't believe in anything sometimes I look up and won-  
der if anybody's really watching

We should probably go back in, it's the last dance, people will  
start to wonder

It's different, we have fun, we go out

No, it's not what it *was*, what I *thought* it would be, but it's good

Don't let me go, please, don't ever let me go

And the great thing is we have deer in the yard on a regular basis!

We're planning on moving

Yeah, getting out

someday

Hold me

Maybe someday

Yeah, I'm still waiting tables, but the money's great and I have  
lots of spare time

Oh, I'm just glad to be a happy survivor of the good old days,  
you know?

I'm singing in a band, and painting, you know, in my spare time

God

spare time  
like, who will ever remember what it was like, you know, when  
we're gone?

I'm divorced

Staying up at the cabin

I'm divorced

Just two little kitties named Sadie and Sylvia (*Peter and Kari  
separate. Kari exits.*)

And who will ever remember I loved her that way, or the way  
she looked that day?

I see him with her now, I can't take it

Bow-hunting, golfing, fishing, you know, jack of all trades,  
master of none

The children keep us pretty busy, but we'll have plenty of time  
for ourselves in four more years

Five more years

Oh, maybe ten more years

No, I know exactly what you mean, because sometimes I swear  
I can almost feel myself being remembered

And the fact that we'll all be gone and not a trace left behind

I meant to do more with my life, you know?

Hurry up!

There are so many things we don't say

I wish you could stay

I wish we could too

Goodbye!

(*Peter Exits.*)

Goodbye!

Goodbye!

Goodbye!

Of course my heart's broken but all in all I'm very happy  
because life's been good.

**End of Play**

# Down In The Ruined World

Lyrics by Craig Wright

Music by Peter Lawton  
and Craig Wright

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in treble clef, key of G major (one sharp), and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music, each with a line of lyrics underneath. Chord symbols are placed above the staff at the beginning of each measure. The lyrics are: "Come my dar-ling, come my love we'll go down in the rui-ned world of strip malls, ci-ga-rettes, rub-ber gloves and Cal-i-for-nia girls. In ev-'ry cor-ner in ev-'ry car there's a coal grey cou-ple curled; the peo-ple make love the way they can down in the rui-ned world. So, come my an-gel come my prize we'll go down in the rui-ned world. Don't veil your face, don't hide your eyes see the oil in the wa-ter swirl. The". The score includes measure numbers 5, 9, 12, 14, 16, and 19 at the start of their respective staves. The music features a mix of 4/4 and 3/4 time signatures, with some measures containing triplets.

G G/F# Em Bm C G D

Come my dar-ling, come my love we'll go down in the rui-ned world of

G G/F# Em Bm C G D

5 strip malls, ci-ga-rettes, rub-ber gloves and Cal-i-for-nia girls. In

Bm Em C C/B Am7

9 ev-'ry cor-ner in ev-'ry car there's a coal grey cou-ple curled; the

G G/F# Em Bm C D G

12 peo-ple make love the way they can down in the rui-ned world. So,

G G/F# Em Bm

14 come my an-gel come my prize we'll go

C G D G G/F# Em

16 down in the rui-ned world. Don't veil your face, don't hide your

Bm C G D

19 eyes see the oil in the wa-ter swirl. The

Anyone wishing to hear a recording of "Down in the Ruined World" may download it from THE PAVILION page on the DPS website at [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com).

*Down in the Ruined World, p. 2*

Bm Em C C/B Am7

22 scent's en-ough to spin your head, but oh how the co-lors curl. We

G G/F# Em Bm7 C D G

25 set-tle for a beau-ty sunk in chains down in the rui-ned world. And with a

C G C G C G

27 lone-ly kind of heart-break we look a-round, do a dou-ble take. Is it Ba-by-lon or E-den in a

D C G C G

30 mist? There's no way of know - ing. Is the great world just a black hole or e-ter-ni-ty's great goal?

C G D

33 I felt sure our names were on the list. But where are we go - ing?

C G D C G

35 Down in the rui-ned world. There's no way of know - ing. Down in the rui-ned

D G

38 world. Down in the rui-ned world. So,

G G/F# Em Bm

41 come my dar - ling, come my dear. we'll go

*Down in the Ruined World, p. 3*

43 C G D  
down in the rui - ned world. \_\_\_\_\_ Where the

45 G G/F# Em Bm  
an - swers are for - ev - er \_\_\_\_\_ near \_\_\_\_\_ and they're

47 C G D  
real as cul - tured pearls. \_\_\_\_\_ If the

49 Bm Em C C/B Am7  
world is what the eye can see then God's a pret - ty girl, \_\_\_\_\_ and the

52 G G/F# Em Bm C D G  
on - ly free - dom is to give down in the rui - ned world.

55 C D G C D G  
Down in the rui - ned world. Down in the rui - ned world.

## PROPERTY LIST

Bouquet of flowers (PETER)

Guitar in case (PETER)

Box of chocolates (PETER)

Champagne bottle, glasses (KARI)

## SOUND EFFECTS

Dinner music

Water-skiers

Microphone pop and squeal

Dance music