

NOW SAY HELLO

By Ben Barber

SCENE ONE

*(The heart is monologuing about hesitation and fulfillment. We wait for something to ripple the water. The heart is drowning. He can't tell you he loves you, but he loves you.)*

*A phone chime. Pick up. A voice rises from the darkness.*

**PAX** Hello? This is Pax.

*Pax is cut short as a train blares down a stone passageway. It starts moving, leaving the station behind. Quick, long footsteps try to catch it. Every time a train passes, the dialogue can be heard by the audience but not the characters.*

**HIM** Crap!

**HER** (laughing) The Q doesn't wait for anyone. I'm Jess. You're welcome to wait here with me for your train.

**HIM** I've got work in 20 minutes. It'll be my head if I'm late again.

*He sits down.*

**HER** I think I've seen you almost every week. But in the city, it's all hustle and bustle.

**HIM** I rarely meet anyone new- that's crazy to think about in a city of millions of people.

*A train starts coming down the track. It reaches its peak volume during the next line as it hisses to a stop. She tries to overtake the train's volume but her words are swallowed.*

**HER** Exactly, I am on my way to Beacon General, I get so many patients every single day but I rarely get the chance to learn their names.

*The train's doors open with a ding.*

**HIM** I'm sorry- what did you say?

*The train's doors close with a second ding. It begins to pick up speed and the volume grows louder and louder until the end of her line when it fades away.*

**HER** Oh, sorry. I rarely get the chance to talk with my patients because I'm running in and out of rooms. (train fades away)  
That's just how it is at Beacon General.

**HIM** Beacon General! So, you must be headed North. I'm South bound.

**HER** And where do you work, Mr. Fancy Briefcase?

*A train horn in the distance. This one will not stop here.*

**HIM** Oh, this isn't a briefcase: it's a computer!

*He opens it to show her. The train is passing through the station at what seems like 10,000 mph. His words are lost.*

**HIM** It's a startup downtown. Breaking down complex codes and shooting out simpler, faster versions. (the train fades away) Basically, I'm a tech wiz.

**HER** Oh, sorry. I didn't hear everything. You're in tech? Cool!

**HIM** (laughing) It's very lucrative- maybe someone should design a sound muffler for these trains!

*They laugh. A pause. A train sounds its horn.*

**HER** Hey, would you maybe want to- (the rest is said under the following audio) get some coffee sometime?

*The train sounds its horn louder than ever before. It screeches to a stop, ending in two dings as the doors open.*

**HIM** The Q! Gotta go. Lots to do.

**HER** (sadly) Alright. I'll see you next week...

*Dinging indicates closing doors, and the train silently pulls away from the station and transitions to children laughing as they run outside for recess.*

SCENE TWO

*(Work was boring. Where did you get those bruises? You don't remember. You find a jar of bruise cream and a can of stewed tomatoes. Maybe a salad?)*

*Children laugh and yell as they rush outside for recess. Pax's voice reaches from the void.*

**PAX** -Then okay. (to himself) Where were you? I needed you.

*The teachers are left alone in their elementary school classroom. A stack of paper is dropped on the desk.*

**MISSUS** Recess is the only time I can think around here.

**MISS** Might as well get some grading done before the heathens come back.

*A long pause as they begin shuffling and grading papers.*

**MISS** Omigahd- look at this! This kid, James, can't even spell "Kindergarten."

**MISSUS** Yeah... It's a shame he can't even spell his own grade. Must be his parents' fault. Did you hear? They're going through a nasty divorce.

**MISS** Shame. Kid caused his parents' divorce!

*Both laugh hysterically. We hear a distant crack of a baseball bat and a thunk as a ball hits the wall. This cuts their laughter short.*

**MISSUS** (to Miss) I'm gonna kill 'em. (to window, sweetly) Hey! Move away from the building to play ball! (to Miss) This is why you don't smoke when you're pregnant.

**MISS** One day, they're gonna break something, I swear. What'd ya bring for lunch?

**MISSUS** A salad.

**MISS** Pretty bland.

**MISSUS** It's for my rheumatoid arthritis. Sprinkled with a little miracle drug to fix me right up. No bruise on me!

**MISS** DAMMMNNNNNNN! You go girl.

**MISSUS** Does wonders for the skin. Hell, makes me a way better teacher. These kids are just a few IQ points shy of stupid.

**MISS** God! Here's another. No, Jacqueline, the capital of Michigan is not Land-Sing.

**MISSUS** What the hell is wrong with these kids? Hey, wanna know what happened last night between me and James's dad?

*They both giggle like school children. The giggling then turns evil. Children taunt and laugh as they connect a baseball bat with human bone.*

SCENE THREE

*(Mother is pretending she hasn't seen anything. You wanted to prove there was one safe place. You have not found that place yet. You have not made that place yet. You are still right here.)*

*Evil laughter and a whack of a bat against human bone. Pax's voice rises from the darkness.*

**PAX** ...could you...be a safe place?

*The door slams behind SON as he enters. He sniffles.*

**MOM** (on the phone) --Jade has always been wonderful! Of course, I can recommend her to the Jones's.

**SON** Mom?

**MOM** Not right now. Can't you see I'm on the phone? (to phone) I am terribly sorry, please continue.

**SON** Mom, Jake- (his voice falters) Jake hit me with his bat. He called me gay and hit me with the bat.

**MOM** (laughing) You crack me up!

**SON** Can't you see the bruises on my neck? The blood on my cheek? Mom!

**MOM** (to SON) Please! I am on the phone. Go to your room, I'll see you shortly. (to phone) Oh, it's nothing. Just Joey being Joey. So, are we good for brunch on Saturday?

**SON** (quieter) Mom, I am sorry for whatever I did. I'm sorry you can't love me. Truth is: I'm alone. All the friends I did have are disappearing. I'm losing everyone, I can't lose you, too.

**MOM** (to SON) Didn't I tell you to go upstairs? Mommy is on an important phone call. You can wait. (to phone) Just heading outside! Have you seen the Henderson's rose bushes?

*A sliding glass door opens, MOM steps outside and shuts it behind her.*

**SON** Alright, the only safe space left. I'm my only home.

*The floorboards creak as the SON slowly makes his way up the staircase. The creaking turns into crickets and the low hum of an idle car. A soft, peaceful rain begins to fall.*

SCENE FOUR

*Sounds of crickets fade away leaving only the patter of rain. The air is still. The idle car continues to hum. Pax projects his inner thoughts.*

**PAX** Rain pours over the entire car. Thoughts rise from my stomach into my heart. Am I gonna be sick?

*A buzz of radio static plays and another voice hums along. PAX exhales a sigh of relief.*

**PAX** My favorite song. I love you- No. You love me? Trembling, shaking- a prayer- excitement?

*Radio and humming dissipate.*

**PAX** A thousand decisions in a thousand lifetimes. Maybe, just maybe we are my safe space. Nothing is the same as before. Not then, not now. This is our now.

**PAX** Out of your head, out of your head. Right there is forever. Reach out, , claim it, allow it to enter. Who do I want to be?

**PAX** This is our sanctuary, holiest of holies. Who do I want to be? He looks at me. (beat) The darkness blankets me, but here you are. (beat) He touches me. Right...here. I have no words for you. (beat) Who do I want to be? Yes. (beat)

**PAX** (eyes closed, inhale, exhale) Now say hello. (eyes open)

END OF PLAY.