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TRACKS

By
PETER TARSI



Dramatic Publishing

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(TRACKS)

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Tracks was first presented on March 2, 2006, at the Robert H. Bray Auditorium at Attleboro High School in Attleboro, Massachusetts, under the direction of the author. The cast was as follows:

THE HOMELESS GIRL Lauren Bamera
THE OLD MAN Kyle Eames
THE LAWYER Allison Girczyc
THE PROFESSOR Troy Pepicelli
THE NUN. Karina Villa-Duran
THE BUSINESSWOMAN Brittany Fiske
THE BUSINESSMAN Jeff Grenier
THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL Veronica Tumavicus
THE HIGH SCHOOL BOY Chris Michaud
THE WAITRESS Angela Kelley

Stage Management by Katelyn Schoonmaker
Set Design by Mandie Provost
Lighting by Lindsey Levesque
Sound Operation by Alan Friedlander

Understudies Vanessa Blanchette & Aleia Morin

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CHARACTERS

THE HOMELESS GIRL – about 20 years old, afraid and unsure of herself. After running away from home, she has been staying in the subway station for almost three years. She tries to tune out the conversations of others in the station, but can't help contributing. This results in increased frustration and insecurity. She is trapped in a vicious cycle.

THE OLD MAN – a tired man, in his early 80s. He is a Korean War veteran who walks with a limp from a war injury. After living a long, decent life, he has been battling cancer. Despite everything that has occurred, he has very little regrets and is willing to accept his destiny.

THE LAWYER – a single, driven prosecuting attorney in her late 30s. She has dedicated her life and career to the pursuit of justice, but in doing so is unable to look at others without criticizing their faults. This high standard she has for others is still below the standard she holds for herself. She assumes total responsibility for every case she has lost.

THE PROFESSOR – a confident, friendly professor of literature in his early 50s. His charming demeanor has made him quite popular with his students. Thus, he is extremely devoted to his job, perhaps at the expense of his wife and his son, who is almost done with college.

THE NUN – after being a self-proclaimed “hooligan” in Catholic school, she devoted the next fifty years of her life to her faith, which has gotten her through all difficulties in her life. Though she does not wish to force her faith upon others, she

is always willing to offer a helping hand to those who may have lost their way.

THE BUSINESSWOMAN – a married woman in her mid-30s, with two young children at home with her husband. She reluctantly returned to a career after her husband was laid off from work. Though she understands the responsibility of providing for her family, she feels guilty about all the time spent away from them.

THE BUSINESSMAN – a married man in his mid-40s, with two teenaged daughters. He works at a mid-level job for an insurance company and struggles to make ends meet. Always worried about how he is perceived, not only by his employers but by everyone else, he often comes across as nervous, anxious, guilty or even paranoid.

THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL – a senior in high school, ranked near the top of her class. Very smart, with a level head on her shoulders, she will be headed to college soon, and cannot wait for the opportunity to escape from her hometown. Though she wants to move on, she is afraid how it will impact her boyfriend.

THE HIGH SCHOOL BOY – her boyfriend, also a senior in the same high school. He is not ranked near the top of his class, and if further education is in his future, it will be at a local community college at best. He procrastinates and clings too much to his girlfriend.

THE WAITRESS – a woman in her late 30s from “the wrong side of the tracks.” She has lived a hard life, her deadbeat husband having left her. She has been forced to take a string of jobs to keep herself and her daughter afloat. She tries to live her life as calmly and honestly as possible but has occasionally released a gesture of thoughtlessness.

NOTE: See Properties List at end of play.

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(The play opens with the sound of a subway train leaving the station. Ideally, the sound comes only from stage right. The stage is awash with red light as a strobe light flickers. The frequency of the strobe decreases as the sound effect softens—i.e., the train is getting farther away. Simultaneously, the remainder of the stage lights slowly rise to reveal a dirty, run-down subway station.

The D edge of the stage serves as the edge of the subway platform. Across the length of the stage is a wall. Center stage are two stairways leading upward out of the station. Only the bottom few steps of each staircase are in view, the rest masked by another wall, DC of the main wall. There are three benches: A short (6' or so) bench in front of the C wall, and two (8' to 10') benches on either side of the stairs, creating a completely symmetric space. Symmetry is broken, however, by what is on the walls. Subway maps, torn advertisements and graffiti may appear on the walls, but must not give any specific locations. The station either should not be named or any name should be sufficiently obscured.

The lights have come up to reveal two figures on stage. One is a young woman, the HOMELESS GIRL, some-

what anxious yet lethargic, standing DR. She has been waiting in the station for a long time, unsure of herself. She holds an unlit cigarette that she has debated whether or not she will smoke. She wears dirty, torn clothes covered by a dirty, torn, unkempt coat. Her hair may be somewhat disheveled.

Lying down on the L bench is an OLD MAN, who is sound asleep. He is clearly a senior citizen. He is dressed in a hospital gown or bathrobe, but this is difficult to see since his body is blanketed by newspapers. However, it is clear to see his stockinged feet are shoeless and a cane is within his reach.

Before the sound effect fully fades, a professionally dressed female LAWYER rushes down the L stairs trying to catch the train. She realizes, much to her dismay, that she has missed it. She turns toward OLD MAN, turns away in subtle displeasure, glances and then glares at HOMELESS GIRL, looks at her watch and resigns herself to sit on the C bench. She sits facing R, laying her briefcase on the bench beside her. She opens the case and oddly stares at its contents—only a single legal-sized file folder. Shaking the oddness off, she removes the folder from the case and studies the papers inside.

Next, the PROFESSOR, smartly dressed in a shirt, tie and sweater vest, comes down the R stairs. He sees the HOMELESS GIRL and confidently approaches her. She glances at him and he gives her a quick smile. She nervously paces away, fiddling with her cigarette. The PROFESSOR sees this, reaches inside his jacket pocket

to find his lighter and steps over to her. All the while, LAWYER has been observing.)

PROFESSOR. Would you like a light? *(Still searching for his lighter but unable to find it.)*

HOMELESS GIRL *(startled)*. Wha...?

PROFESSOR. I have a lighter somewhere. For your cigarette.

HOMELESS GIRL. Oh, this. *(Looks at cigarette.)* Uh...no.

LAWYER *(has been slowly rising, but speaks overlapping HOMELESS GIRL's "no")*. With all due respect, I have no interest in breathing any second-hand smoke. Besides, I believe state law prohibits smoking on train and subway platforms.

(HOMELESS GIRL steps away. By this time, a NUN has descended the L staircase. She wears a typical black and white nun outfit, complete with habit. Upon seeing OLD MAN, she holds her rosary beads over him and prays. She must be finished praying before HOMELESS GIRL announces that the cigarette is her last.)

PROFESSOR *(to LAWYER)*. Let me guess. A lawyer.

LAWYER *(rolls her eyes)*. Yes. A good one too, so I recommend you not violate state law in front of me.

PROFESSOR. The lady doth protest too much, methinks. *(Only he himself chuckles.)*

HOMELESS GIRL. Lay off it. I didn't want a light, okay? I don't want to smoke it. I'm...I'm saving it. It's my last one.

NUN *(has finished praying and stepped D)*. My apologies, but I couldn't help overhearing. *(Steps toward HOME-*

LESS GIRL.) You're saving your last cigarette? May I assume you're quitting the habit?

HOMELESS GIRL (*after a quiet, yet somewhat all-knowing, groan*). I guess you could say that.

NUN. Congratulations, and have faith, dearie. I will pray for your success.

OLD MAN (*unexpectedly opens his eyes and speaks without sitting up*). Yeah, those things'll kill ya! (*Laughs, but it trails off as he passes out again.*)

(The others all looked in OLD MAN's direction when he spoke, but then looked at each other uncomfortably. The awkward silence is broken by a voice coming down the R stairs—a BUSINESSWOMAN speaking on her cell phone. She is dressed in a business suit and pants ensemble.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. ...running late again, so just tuck the kids in and kiss them good night for me. And please make their lunches for school tomorrow. I'll be leaving early tomorrow for a presentation to a client. Stephanie likes her sandwiches cut into triangles, but I'm sure you already know that, honey. (*There is no answer on the other end.*) Honey? (*Looks at display on phone.*) Damn. No signal down here.

(She looks around for help. The others, with the exception of OLD MAN and HOMELESS GIRL, quickly look away from her so as not to appear to have been listening. Upon the line "no signal down here," HOMELESS GIRL is shaking her head and sadly grimacing as if she knows something the others don't. After fiddling with

her phone, holding it aloft, and stepping to slightly different locations in order to try to find a place with some signal, BUSINESSWOMAN gives up on her phone. She examines the others and approaches LAWYER.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. Excuse me. Do you by any chance have a cell phone I could use for a few moments?

LAWYER. I usually get reception in the subway. Hold on.

(LAWYER puts down her folder and searches through her case for her phone. PROFESSOR smiles at BUSINESSWOMAN when she looks at him, so he searches through his pockets, but can't find his.)

BUSINESSWOMAN *(sitting beside LAWYER)*. I'm not exactly sure when mine went dead, so I don't know how much of the message my husband got, and... *(Sees a puzzled look on LAWYER's face.)* Any luck?

LAWYER. That's odd. I can't seem to find it. *(Continues searching to no avail.)*

PROFESSOR *(approaches BUSINESSWOMAN)*. I usually keep mine in my coat pocket, but oddly, I don't seem to be wearing my coat. Sorry.

BUSINESSWOMAN. I just want him to tell my kids I love them, and that I'm sorry I missed tucking them in again.

NUN. Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. How many children do you have, dearie?

BUSINESSWOMAN. Two.

NUN. I'm sure he'll tell them for you.

BUSINESSWOMAN (*rising, addressing everyone*). Did anyone happen to see a payphone anywhere in the station?

(With the exception of HOMELESS GIRL and OLD MAN, the others provide indefinite answers. HOMELESS GIRL again reacts oddly—she shivers and groans.)

HOMELESS GIRL. Payphone down here? Yeah, right.
(Puts cigarette to her lips nervously.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. What about upstairs?

NUN. Dearie, don't worry about it. It sounds like your husband is an expert at this kind of thing.

BUSINESSWOMAN. He is, he is. I just wanted the kids to hear me say good night on the machine before bed.

OLD MAN (*like before*). That would be a long-distance call. *(Passes out like before.)*

(Again, the others look awkwardly at OLD MAN. PROFESSOR takes a few steps toward him.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. Maybe I'll get home in time to see them. Ben had a Little League game tonight. My husband sometimes takes them out for ice cream afterward. Maybe Stephanie won't fall asleep in the car. Does anyone know when the next train comes?

(HOMELESS GIRL turns away from them, looking up to the ceiling, puffing quickly on her unlit cigarette. She wants to tell them something but is aware it's better that

they learn it themselves. LAWYER and PROFESSOR both look at their watches.)

LAWYER. Should be any minute. I just missed a train when I got here, and that was... *(Trails off, looking at watch.)* My watch has stopped.

PROFESSOR. Mine too.

BUSINESSWOMAN. It's all right. I'll go upstairs and look for a payphone.

(She starts toward the R stairs but backs away as a BUSINESSMAN rushes down the stairs, almost plowing through her. He wears a coat over his shirt and tie. He is gasping for breath and clutching his wallet to his chest. He almost stumbles into BUSINESSWOMAN.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. Oh!

(BUSINESSWOMAN quickly steps out of the way as BUSINESSMAN staggers to the C bench. LAWYER collects her belongings, not so much to clear a place for the man, but to preserve her important work. Slowly, the NUN approaches BUSINESSMAN.)

BUSINESSMAN *(still panting)*. I think I lost him.

NUN. Don't talk, son. Catch your breath.

(PROFESSOR looks up the stairs to see if anyone is coming.)

PROFESSOR. I don't see anyone coming.

BUSINESSMAN. Good. *(Puts his wallet in his inside coat pocket.)* When's the next train?

PROFESSOR. It should be soon.

LAWYER. Were you running from someone?

BUSINESSMAN. I was at an ATM when some guy pulled a knife on me. He told me to give him my money, but I took off. I cut through Central Park and came down here.

BUSINESSWOMAN. Central Park?

LAWYER. Central Park—as in New York City?

(With the exception of HOMELESS GIRL and OLD MAN, everyone slowly steps away from BUSINESSMAN. What he is saying does not make sense to them. They look around concerned and confused. They know they are not in New York City.)

LAWYER. That's not possible.

BUSINESSMAN. What? Why not?

LAWYER. Because we're in Chicago.

BUSINESSMAN. Chicago? Now that's not possible. This is New York.

BUSINESSWOMAN. But...but it's Seattle. How...?

PROFESSOR. California. I teach English and European Literature at U.C. Berkeley. *(Turns to NUN.)* And where do you think we are?

NUN. The other sisters and I were vacationing in Rome. I've wanted to go there all my life. I was sitting in my room reading up on the cathedrals we were going to see tomorrow. I...I believe I dozed off.

BUSINESSWOMAN. This doesn't make sense. I was walking to the bus stop, talking on my cell phone.

Maybe I wasn't paying close enough attention to where I was going, but I am positive I never entered a subway station.

OLD MAN. Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

PROFESSOR (*goes to OLD MAN*). If you have something to contribute to this conversation, then please do so.

OLD MAN (*swings his legs and sits up, revealing his attire to a shocked audience*). Are you sure you want my contribution?

LAWYER. You were here when I arrived. You must know where we are.

OLD MAN (*reaches for his cane and starts walking forward*). Where we are? We're in a subway station that happens to connect to several different places, including a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. (*Points at himself*) Don't you think that's odd?

BUSINESSWOMAN. This is ridiculous. It must be a dream or something.

BUSINESSMAN. I'm not dreaming. I ran across Central Park. I know that for a fact.

OLD MAN. Oh, that's right. (*Limps over to BUSINESSMAN*.) You escaped a mugging. Have you checked your wallet?

BUSINESSMAN. My wallet? What's that got to do...?

OLD MAN. Look in your wallet, sonny.

BUSINESSMAN (*gets and opens his wallet. Inside is no cash or credit cards, only an ATM receipt, which he holds up*). All my money...gone? What? How?

OLD MAN. Maybe you didn't get away. Consider that.

BUSINESSMAN. So what does that mean?

NUN (*to OLD MAN*). The poor man has been robbed.
Show some compassion.

LAWYER. It still doesn't answer where we are, or how we
all could've gotten here!

BUSINESSMAN (*stuffs the ATM receipt in his pocket*).
The only way he could have taken my money is if...is if
he stabbed me. (*Shrugs the idea off*.) So how does that
work? Did he stab me? Then what am I—dead?

(There is a disturbing silence as they all look around, contemplating the moments before they arrived in the station. Meanwhile, HOMELESS GIRL has been wrestling with her conscience since the OLD MAN started speaking to BUSINESSMAN—she has fiddled more anxiously with her cigarette than before. She puts it in her mouth, but removes it to speak, keeping her back to the others.)

HOMELESS GIRL. We're all dead.

LAWYER. That can't be true. I think I'd remember if I
just died.

BUSINESSMAN. After you die, you go to a subway station? That's ridiculous.

NUN. They do say the Lord works in mysterious ways.

BUSINESSWOMAN. This is crazy. Whatever this place is,
I have to get home to my family and away from you
people. I'm going to find a phone—even if I have to go
back up to the street—and call my husband. (*Has already vanished up the R stairs.*)

HOMELESS GIRL. You won't find one. (*But BUSINESSWOMAN has gone.*)

PROFESSOR (*walking to DL part of stage, looking L down the "subway tunnel"*). People who've been clinically dead but resuscitated have claimed to see a bright light in a dark tunnel. (*Pointing down the "tunnel."*) When's the next train come?

OLD MAN. That's clever thinking. (*Approaches PROFESSOR.*) Hadn't thought of that.

LAWYER (*to PROFESSOR*). So you're going to accept without proof that we're dead and that the afterlife is a subway station? I won't. I am not convinced beyond reasonable doubt that we're all dead.

PROFESSOR. Spoken just like your kind.

OLD MAN. Look at the evidence.

LAWYER. What evidence?

OLD MAN. Stopped watches, phones with no reception. How could we all have gotten to the same subway station from so many different places? And why didn't I put some clothes on, for Pete's sake?

LAWYER. All circumstantial. I'm still not convinced.

HOMELESS GIRL. It doesn't matter if you're convinced or not. You're still dead. We all are.

LAWYER. Why do you believe him? (*Points to OLD MAN.*)

BUSINESSMAN. She's been brainwashed. I know what this is—some kind of government experiment. Or alien abduction.

PROFESSOR. Let's not jump to conspiracy theories here. They may be telling the truth.

OLD MAN (*points at HOMELESS GIRL*). She was here before I was.

BUSINESSMAN (*steps to HOMELESS GIRL*). So you knew this when we all got here?

HOMELESS GIRL. Yeah.

LAWYER. Yet you withheld that information from us?
How dare you.

NUN. She is not to blame for our passings. (*Takes HOMELESS GIRL, who's shaken up, to R bench.*)

PROFESSOR. What was she supposed to say? Nice to meet you, and by the way, you're recently deceased. You wouldn't have believed her.

LAWYER (*has gone to her briefcase and starts packing up*). I don't believe her. Maybe this is all a bad dream. I knew I shouldn't have stayed at the office so late. I'm getting out of here and calling a cab.

(LAWYER tries to leave using the R stairs but is stopped by BUSINESSWOMAN who has returned. She is noticeably stunned, almost trance-like.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. There's no way out.

LAWYER. What?

BUSINESSWOMAN. No stairs up to street level. Just stairways down to the platforms.

BUSINESSSMAN. That can't be possible. How did we get in then?

PROFESSOR. If we're dead, does it matter? Our spirits, or whatever we are, were brought to this place. I would assume we materialized upstairs, or something to that effect.

BUSINESSWOMAN. But my kids...how will they...?
(*Sits on C bench and breaks down.*)

NUN (*approaches BUSINESSWOMAN to comfort her*).
There, there, dearie. Their father loves them and will get them through this.

BUSINESSWOMAN. That's not the point. If we're dead, then I'm never going to see them again. As it is, I haven't seen them much since my husband was laid off and I went back to work. I've missed the past four years of their lives, and now I'm going to miss the rest.

NUN. I'm sure they know you love them.

BUSINESSWOMAN. But I haven't been there for them. What kind of parent have I been?

OLD MAN. Ah. We've passed denial and now we're into guilt. (*Returns to L bench.*) Wake me when the train comes. (*Lies down.*)

NUN. You've tried to provide for them the best you can. You've done nothing wrong.

LAWYER. Your family needed money to get by, and you took care of that, I assume. What you did was honorable.

BUSINESSWOMAN. You don't get it, do you? You must not have kids.

(LAWYER shakes her head. BUSINESSWOMAN looks at the men—BUSINESSMAN turns away to take the ATM receipt from his pocket and study it.)

PROFESSOR. I have a son. He's an engineering major in college. He's a good man. My wife... (*twisting his wedding band*) ...we're very proud.

BUSINESSMAN. Two daughters, both in high school. (*Turns to NUN and kneels.*) Sister, I need to make a confession.

NUN. What is it, son?

BUSINESSMAN. I don't regularly go to church, but I've done something terrible.

LAWYER. What are you doing?

BUSINESSMAN *(rises)*. If I'm dead, I'd like to get my sins off my chest.

LAWYER. Now I'm not Catholic, but isn't that something you're supposed to do before you die?

PROFESSOR. Given the circumstances, it's better late than never.

HOMELESS GIRL *(has been fidgety since BUSINESSMAN asked to confess)*. No. Don't do it.

BUSINESSMAN. What now?

HOMELESS GIRL. You don't want to go there. It's only going to make this place worse.

NUN *(to BUSINESSMAN)*. Excuse me, one moment, son. *(Approaches HOMELESS GIRL.)* Dearie, tell me what's bothering you.

(HOMELESS GIRL tries to resist but collapses into NUN's arms and barely speaks. The others congregate DL.)

BUSINESSMAN. What's her problem?

PROFESSOR. Something must be troubling her.

LAWYER. Probably withholding more information from us. She obviously knows more about this place.

PROFESSOR. Why must everyone be a hostile witness to you?

BUSINESSWOMAN. How old do you think she is?

(They all glance over to HOMELESS GIRL.)

PROFESSOR. Early twenties, I'd say.

BUSINESSWOMAN. Her poor parents. No one should see their children die before them.

(Voices are heard coming down the L stairs. The others stop speaking upon hearing the voices. From their clothing, it is clear that the two people coming down are a HIGH SCHOOL BOY and a HIGH SCHOOL GIRL. He is wearing blue jeans and a button-down shirt with the top button undone, and she is wearing a casual top and skirt, both appropriate for a date. Her hair is in a ponytail. She has his lettered varsity jacket, but is holding it over her head to avoid getting wet. They have rushed in from the rain and make their way DC.)

H.S. BOY. I can't just leave my car there, stuck in the mud like that.

H.S. GIRL. But if I'm home late, my father will kill me. Then he'll kill you.

BUSINESSWOMAN. No. *(Looks at the other adults.)* It's not fair.

H.S. BOY. How's a tow truck gonna get down there in this weather? I should be waiting with my car.

H.S. GIRL. Once you take me home, you can go back there. And I'm sorry that my parents have a stricter curfew than yours do. At least it's not raining in here.

(H.S. GIRL starts examining her oddly dry clothes as H.S. BOY looks for a place to sit. He sees OLD MAN sleeping and clutches H.S. GIRL's hand protectively. She subtly closes her eyes, shakes her head and sighs at his gesture.)

BUSINESSWOMAN (*whispers to the others*). They don't deserve to be here this young.

PROFESSOR. But they are here.

BUSINESSMAN. Should we tell them where here is?

BUSINESSWOMAN. They may be better off not knowing.

LAWYER. Are you serious? They have the right to know as much as we do.

(H.S. GIRL has been staring at her dry clothes, puzzled. H.S. BOY overhears LAWYER and takes a quick glance at the adults. By this time, NUN has joined them. HOMELESS GIRL is seated on the R bench.)

NUN. She won't say much about this place, but I think I've got her calmed down. (*Notices H.S. BOY and H.S. GIRL.*) I see we have new arrivals.

LAWYER. We're debating whether or not to share our predicament with them.

NUN. They will learn it when the time is right.

H.S. BOY (*whispering to H.S. GIRL*). Do you get the feeling everyone's watching us, or am I being paranoid?

H.S. GIRL (*looks up from her strangely dry clothing and looks around*). I think they are watching us.

(H.S. BOY holds H.S. GIRL a little closer to him and takes a step L. She is clearly uncomfortable with this, so she lets go and steps toward the others. H.S. BOY unsuccessfully tries to pull her back.)

H.S. GIRL. Excuse me, do you know when the next train comes?

(The others mumble out vague answers while NUN steps toward H.S. GIRL.)

NUN. Is there something we can help you with, dearie?

H.S. BOY. No, nothing. Just trying to get home. *(Trying to take hold of H.S. GIRL's hand.)*

H.S. GIRL *(evading H.S. BOY's hand)*. Yès, Sister. My boyfriend and I got in a little car trouble—embarrassing story, really—but I need to get home soon. Do you know when the train will get to...to... *(Looks at H.S. BOY.)* What's the closest station to my house?

H.S. BOY. Uh... *(Pauses to think.)* ...I don't know. I... don't think there is one.

H.S. GIRL. There has to be one. Why else would we have come down here?

H.S. BOY. Have we ever been on the subway before? I mean, is there even a station in our town...or anywhere near us in Indiana?

H.S. GIRL. You have a point. *(Back to NUN.)* Excuse me, Sister, but could you tell us which way this train goes?

NUN. Which way? *(Looks back at the others.)* Which way?

PROFESSOR. Now that's an enigmatic inquiry.

LAWYER. We were going to get on the next train without knowing where it's going?

(HOMELESS GIRL looks up. She is shaking her head—she knows exactly what's going to happen next.)

H.S. BOY. What do you mean you don't know where it's going?

BUSINESSWOMAN *(going to H.S. BOY to calm him down)*. It's a little complicated.

BUSINESSMAN. A little complicated? That train's our only way out of here and we don't even know where it goes? *(Starts studying the walls for some indication of the train's direction.)*

H.S. BOY. Our only way out?

PROFESSOR. As I see it, theology tells us that there are only two places the train could be headed.

LAWYER. And what are they, smart guy?

PROFESSOR. Accepting our condition for what we think it is, the train either goes... *(looks at H.S. BOY and H.S. GIRL, and then at BUSINESSWOMAN, who shakes her head disapprovingly, realizing what he's about to say. Choosing his words carefully, he continues)* ...up or down.

H.S. BOY. Up or down? What does that mean?

BUSINESSWOMAN. Nothing. Ignore what he's saying.

H.S. BOY. What are you people talking about?

H.S. GIRL *(pondering, slowly putting the pieces together)*.
Up or down?

H.S. BOY. What a crappy way to end the night. First the car rolls down the hill, and now we're stuck with you wackos. All I want to do is get my girlfriend home.

H.S. GIRL. I don't think you're getting me home tonight.

BUSINESSWOMAN *(goes to H.S. GIRL)*. Sweetie, don't say that.

H.S. BOY. Say what?

H.S. GIRL. The rain came unexpectedly. I know the brake was on, but...

H.S. BOY *(defensively)*. The brake would've held if the ground didn't get muddy so fast.

H.S. GIRL. It's all right. There was nothing we could do.

H.S. BOY (*pausing in realization that maybe he didn't do all he could*). I wasn't supposed to let anything happen to you. I promised! You're father's definitely going to kill me now!

H.S. GIRL. No he won't.

LAWYER. How could you miss a hill? Were you drinking?

H.S. BOY (*somewhat shaken and has not yet fully processed his death*). No!

H.S. GIRL (*coming to his defense*). We do not drink!

BUSINESSWOMAN. Leave the kids alone. This can't be easy on them.

LAWYER. Sorry. You must know the underage drinking statistics.

H.S. BOY. All I wanted was to take her out to dinner for our anniversary and then overlook the town afterwards. I didn't plan on my car sliding down a hill and crashing.

PROFESSOR. Your anniversary?

H.S. GIRL. Yeah. (*Shivers and holds the jacket tighter around her as she thinks about the length of their relationship*.) Eight months. So it's true, right? We're really...well...?

PROFESSOR. I'm afraid so.

H.S. GIRL. That's why the two of us aren't soaked, right?

PROFESSOR. I would suppose so. You're very bright for your age, and you seem to be handling the news better than some of the adults around here.

H.S. GIRL. Thanks, I guess.

H.S. BOY (*to H.S. GIRL*). Baby...if we're...you know...then is everyone else too?

H.S. GIRL. Probably. (*Turns to PROFESSOR*.) So what happens next?

PROFESSOR. Excuse me?

H.S. GIRL. The train. Which way is it going? (*Points for emphasis.*) Up or down?

PROFESSOR. We haven't determined that yet. How ironic. When I assigned Dante's Divine Comedy to my students last semester, I never imagined I'd soon experience it.

BUSINESSMAN. There's not a single clue anywhere here. Not on any of the walls. How are we supposed to know?

LAWYER. That's what she's not telling us! (*Turns toward HOMELESS GIRL.*) You know which way the train goes.

HOMELESS GIRL (*quietly, and shaking her head*). No.

LAWYER. You're withholding information again. You know where the train's heading. That's why you haven't gotten on board yet.

BUSINESSMAN. You mean, she knows it's going to Hell, so she won't get on?

LAWYER. Clear case to me.

H.S. BOY. We're going to...down there?

HOMELESS GIRL. No! I don't know where it goes!

BUSINESSMAN (*crosses to NUN*). Sister, I want to make my confession now.

NUN. Go ahead, son.

(BUSINESSMAN kneels. HOMELESS GIRL rises, gesturing to stop him and perhaps utters some words in protest, but this does not stop BUSINESSMAN's dialogue.)

BUSINESSMAN. I work for an insurance company, in the accounting department. I know what you think—the industry is known for ripping people off. That being said,

I came across an error of twenty-five thousand dollars in the company's favor. I told my supervisor, but he didn't want to hear it, so he brushed me off. If the company didn't want to acknowledge its existence, well, I thought I could...you see, my oldest daughter starts college in a year, and with tuition being what it is, I...

LAWYER. You embezzled it.

(All look away, not so much in contempt, but in contemplation. Since BUSINESSMAN did something wrong, they start thinking about their own transgressions. Only HOMELESS GIRL keeps looking, shaking her head, playing with the cigarette, fighting back tears.)

BUSINESSMAN. I wired it to my bank account, and it worked. A few days went by, and no one seemed to notice.

LAWYER. Thou shalt not steal. Even I know that's a commandment, not just the law.

BUSINESSMAN. But I wired it back this morning! I...I felt awful about what I did—I felt dirty, like a criminal.

LAWYER. Hate to break it to you, but what you did qualifies you as one.

BUSINESSMAN. I gave it back. *(Takes out ATM receipt.)* I checked my account balance after work! The money wasn't there anymore—it was back. I gave it back.

LAWYER. It's still a crime.

NUN. You did correct your sin. Perhaps in God's eyes, you will be forgiven.

BUSINESSWOMAN. Is that enough to change the direction of the train? I'll admit I wasn't always there for my kids, but I love them. Why should I be doomed for Hell?

LAWYER. Ask her. (*Turns to HOMELESS GIRL.*) She has the answer.

HOMELESS GIRL. I've told you I don't! I don't know where this train goes!

LAWYER. Yet you refuse to get on?

NUN. Please have some mercy on her.

OLD MAN (*has woken up due to the commotion*). I missed the last train. (*Stands up.*) Dozed off, but I was gonna get on—no matter which way it was goin'.

BUSINESSMAN. Don't you want to know which way?

OLD MAN. Sonny, I've lived my life. Spent the end of it in a hospital bed with the cancer. I'm ready to move on. Could be Heaven, could be Hell. Who knows? I tell ya, I've seen Hell. I fought in Korea. A buddy of mine stepped on a landmine near me. Sent a piece of shrapnel into my leg and gave me this limp. (*Taps his injured leg with his cane.*) My fighting days were over. Yeah, I killed people, maybe some of them innocent, or guilty of nothing more than following their country's orders like I was. I've spent the rest of my life trying to make good for that. Been a good husband, father and grandfather, lived a clean life, ran my own business, done volunteer work, so maybe I'll get into Heaven, but nothing can change what I've done. So I'm prepared for the worst. That way, if the train does go to Heaven, I'll be pleasantly surprised.

H.S. BOY. You don't wanna know?

OLD MAN. I've lived my life. It's behind me, and there's nothing I can do to change it. You young folk don't have that life experience yet. Betcha that's why she won't get on. (*Pointing at HOMELESS GIRL.*)

BUSINESSWOMAN. She's scared. That's it.

HOMELESS GIRL. Don't you see? There's nothing we can do. That train goes somewhere, but no one knows for sure which way! What if it goes to Hell?

NUN (*approaching HOMELESS GIRL*). But what if it doesn't?

HOMELESS GIRL. But what if it does?

H.S. BOY. I may not know much about this stuff, but we've got a nun here. Isn't that like enough to say it's going to Heaven for sure?

NUN. Oh, sonny, when I was your age, I did some things I'm not proud of. In Catholic School, I was a real hooligan.

H.S. BOY. I don't know what that is, but aren't you in with God or something?

NUN. Who knows? I smoked cigarettes, cheated on tests, taunted my teachers, threw rocks through some windows at school, even shoplifted bubble gum. Since then I have served the Lord, so yes, I believe that I have made peace with Him.

BUSINESSMAN. And you're content with the possibility of going to Hell?

NUN. If that's what the Lord has chosen for me, yes. But I have faith that's not the case.

H.S. BOY. She says it's going to Heaven, so it must be. We have a nun here!

PROFESSOR. We also have a lawyer here.

LAWYER (*to PROFESSOR*). Go to hell.

PROFESSOR. Looks like a fifty-fifty chance.

LAWYER. What is your problem with me?

PROFESSOR (*sighs*). My wife recently filed for divorce.

LAWYER. Blatant stereotyping. I'm not a divorce attorney; I'm a prosecutor.

PROFESSOR. That explains why you've treated us all like criminals.

BUSINESSMAN. So what happened, Professor?

PROFESSOR (*touches his wedding band*). Well, you see...

BUSINESSWOMAN (*notices his wedding band*). You had an affair, didn't you?

PROFESSOR (*nods ashamedly*). With one of my students. (*Looks at LAWYER, who regards him disapprovingly.*) She was a graduate student—a consenting adult.

BUSINESSWOMAN. That doesn't make it right.

PROFESSOR. I understand that, but my marriage hasn't exactly been working for a while. After my son left for college, my wife and I grew more and more distant, and then there was this girl...

BUSINESSMAN. And your wife found out.

LAWYER. For all we know, she could've killed him and sent him here.

PROFESSOR. I know what I did was wrong, but it's not a crime. Don't I deserve some happiness?

LAWYER. You complete the unholy trinity—stealing, killing and now adultery. (*Looks at BUSINESSMAN, OLD MAN and PROFESSOR respectively.*)

H.S. BOY. Oh, we are so screwed.

LAWYER. A moment ago, you were convinced we were going to Heaven. Not so convinced now. What are you hiding?

(H.S. BOY backs away and clings to H.S. GIRL, who does not seem happy with his clinginess.)

NUN. We shall let the Lord, and not each other, judge our actions.

PROFESSOR. I'll admit I made a major transgression, but otherwise I'm a good person.

LAWYER. We get it. You were dedicated to your son, your job, your students—a little too dedicated to one of them, perhaps, but...

PROFESSOR. Those who live in glass houses shall not throw stones.

HOMELESS GIRL (*quietly*). Stop it.

PROFESSOR (*to LAWYER*). Why don't you share your history with us?

HOMELESS GIRL (*a little louder*). Please stop.

LAWYER. It's no one else's business.

HOMELESS GIRL (*again louder, almost in tears*). Stop.

PROFESSOR. Pleading the fifth, I see. Are you afraid it's your presence here that sends the rest of us to Hell?

HOMELESS GIRL. Shut up both of you! Now do you get it? I don't know where the train goes because of this! Is this person good? Is that person bad? There's no way anyone can figure out which way it goes if you keep fighting with each other. I've been here, and I've seen enough other people go through exactly what you're doing, and still no one finds out which way it's going! How can they get on without knowing?

(NUN tries to console her, but HOMELESS GIRL goes back to the R bench. H.S. BOY clears away from HOMELESS GIRL and returns to H.S. GIRL.)

OLD MAN. She's right. The last folks wouldn't stop yapping like you folks. I wanted nothin' to do with them, so I took a little nap. None of them had the decency to

wake me when the train finally did come. Good, bad, who cares? Just get on the train and move on, I say.

BUSINESSWOMAN. Have you noticed that we've all done something we're not proud of, but otherwise we seem to be relatively decent people?

PROFESSOR. A dichotomy, so to speak.

H.S. BOY. A what?

H.S. GIRL. Dichotomy. Possessing two sides that are contradictory.

(H.S. BOY looks confused at her while PROFESSOR nods and smiles in acknowledgment.)

H.S. GIRL. SAT word.

BUSINESSMAN *(getting an idea after H.S. GIRL said "two sides")*. That's it! Subway stations have two sides—two platforms. *(Rushes D and points out into the audience.)* We can't see the other side because of that wall, but there's got to be something over there.

LAWYER. Since when are you the expert on the afterlife?

BUSINESSMAN. Hear me out. Whichever way the train on this side goes, the train on the other side must go the other way.

(At some time during the ensuing discussion, the WAITRESS pokes her head out from behind the L stairway wall, unnoticed by the others.)

H.S. BOY. So you're saying if this train goes to Hell, the one on the other side goes to Heaven?

BUSINESSWOMAN. Or vice versa. There was another flight of stairs up there. It probably goes to the other side.

PROFESSOR. Are you suggesting we send someone to the other platform and try to discover where they're going?

BUSINESSMAN. Exactly! If we know where they're going, then we know where we're going.

(WAITRESS opens her mouth in shock—the idea is all too familiar to her. Shortly after, she flips past the first page of her order pad and surreptitiously starts taking notes on the second page.)

LAWYER. So who do we send?

PROFESSOR. Not you. We don't want them thinking they're bound for Heaven.

BUSINESSMAN. And we don't want them thinking they're bound for Hell. *(To NUN.)* So I guess you'll stay here, Sister. No offense.

NUN. None taken. I have faith we're on the correct side.

OLD MAN *(waking, which causes WAITRESS to hide behind the wall)*. An expedition. Sounds fun. Wake me up when you get back. *(Dozes off.)*

H.S. GIRL. I'll go.

H.S. BOY. No you won't. *(Tries to hold her hand.)*

H.S. GIRL. I'll be okay.

H.S. BOY. You're not going alone, and I'm staying put.

H.S. GIRL. I can take care of myself. It's not like something can happen to me. We're dead, remember?

PROFESSOR. Look, I'll go with her.

H.S. BOY *(to PROFESSOR)*. You're not going anywhere with my girl.

BUSINESSWOMAN. I know the way. I'll go. All right?
H.S. BOY (*nods, then turns to H.S. GIRL*). I won't get on the train without you, so come back. Promise?

(H.S. GIRL nods. H.S. BOY tries to kiss her on the lips, but at the last possible moment, she turns and he gets her cheek instead. He crosses R, dejectedly. WAITRESS has reappeared before this and saw the exchange, noting it on her pad.)

H.S. GIRL. Sorry about that. He's a bit overprotective.
BUSINESSWOMAN (*puts her hand on H.S. GIRL's shoulder*). It's all right.

BUSINESSMAN. Just go get information. Try not to give too much away about us. Then come back.

HOMELESS GIRL. You won't like what you find.

BUSINESSMAN. You're not being helpful.

(BUSINESSMAN and the others are looking toward HOMELESS GIRL. H.S. GIRL stops BUSINESSWOMAN before they ascend the L stairs.)

H.S. GIRL. My boyfriend means well, he really does. He wants to hold on so tightly because I'm leaving for college in a few months and he isn't. I'm hoping I'll go and we'll painlessly drift apart in time, but then I feel awful because I think I'm leading him on. I want to be on my own, find my own life next fall, but I don't have the heart to tell him it may be without him. I'm afraid he'll be devastated, and the last thing I want is to hurt him. Does this make me a bad person?

BUSINESSWOMAN. No worse than the rest of us. You have to be true to yourself, even if that means moving on when others don't. May I ask why you're confiding in me?

H.S. GIRL. I...I get the feeling you're a good mom.

(BUSINESSWOMAN smiles and follows H.S. GIRL up the L stairs. This causes WAITRESS to back down the R stairs and into NUN.)

WAITRESS *(in a Texas accent)*. Excuse me, I...I didn't see ya there.

NUN. Quite all right, dearie.

WAITRESS. Um...er...does anyone know when the...uh... next train comes?

(WAITRESS holds the order pad behind her back while everyone fumbles with an answer. Everyone, that is, except for LAWYER, who naturally eyes WAITRESS suspiciously.)

NUN. Soon, dearie, soon.

WAITRESS. Thanks.

LAWYER. Is something bothering you?

WAITRESS *(nervously avoiding eye contact with LAWYER)*. No...uh...why do you ask? *(Fidgety, tries to place the pad in the pocket of her apron without anyone noticing it, but drops it.)*

LAWYER. You seem a little stressed. *(Picks up the pad.)*

WAITRESS. Gimme that. *(Reaches for the order pad.)*

LAWYER (*steps away before WAITRESS can reach the pad and starts reading it*). Oh, are you hiding something?

PROFESSOR. Not again. (*To LAWYER.*) Don't you remember innocent until proven guilty?

LAWYER. Interesting. Looks like she's taking notes on us.

PROFESSOR. What?

BUSINESSMAN. Why would she be doing that?

WAITRESS. I'm just tryin' to figure out who you people are. To see if you're different than us over there.

BUSINESSMAN. Over there? You mean you're from the other platform?

(*WAITRESS nods. H.S. BOY jumps up.*)

H.S. BOY. You're from the other side? Is my girlfriend okay?

WAITRESS. Haven't met her. I saw the two of 'em go up as I came down.

LAWYER. You say you came here to see if we're different than you. Why?

WAITRESS. The same reason you sent them. Tryin' to find out which way our train goes.

BUSINESSMAN. You don't know?

WAITRESS. No. We were hopin' you knew.

OLD MAN (*genuinely impressed*). Nice puzzle. (*Sits up and looks up to the ceiling.*) Good sense of humor you've got! (*Looks at the others.*) I hope the train gets here soon so I can finally rest in peace. (*Lies back down.*)

BUSINESSMAN. You seriously don't know which way your train goes?

WAITRESS. We're just a bunch o' dead folks who might be good or bad. Same boat as you, huh?

PROFESSOR. Yes.

BUSINESSMAN. Damn it. If they don't know, how are we supposed to?

WAITRESS (*nods at NUN*). Howdy, Sister. They'd love to know you're over here. We've got a fireman from Omaha over there. Died in a fire after rescuin' two kids and the family dog.

BUSINESSMAN. Oooh...that's good. (*Looks around to see others, especially the NUN, glaring at him.*) Sorry. Didn't mean it that way.

WAITRESS. But he cheated on his income tax. (*Looks toward LAWYER.*) We also have a lawyer. He says he gives to charity, but he seems real sleazy.

PROFESSOR (*gestures at LAWYER*). Ours isn't sleazy. Opinionated maybe, but not sleazy.

LAWYER. That almost sounds like a compliment.

WAITRESS. He bragged about people he's saved from jail time, but they didn't sound like high-class citizens, if ya catch my drift.

LAWYER. A defense attorney?

WAITRESS. Yeah.

LAWYER (*heading toward stairs*). Let me talk to him. Then I'll tell you which side's going to Hell.

PROFESSOR. That's it. You lost a big case. (*LAWYER stops in her tracks.*) Because of a defense attorney.

LAWYER. I was trying a drug dealer. He was selling to kids. I knew he was clearly guilty. I'm sure the judge knew it. I'll even bet the jury knew it in their minds, but his lawyer blew holes in all my evidence. Said some of it was circumstantial, some inadmissible, even made my

best witnesses look unreliable on the stand. He got the jury to doubt the legality of the arrest warrant. Enough reasonable doubt to acquit.

BUSINESSMAN. Couldn't you appeal, or arrest him on a separate charge, or something like that? They do it all the time on TV.

LAWYER. I've been working on that. Late nights alone at the office, ordering take-out for dinner. Next thing I know, I'm here.

PROFESSOR. Do you think you choked?

LAWYER (*defensively*). I tried that case to the best of my abilities...

PROFESSOR. No, on your dinner.

LAWYER. Maybe. I guess. Not that it matters now. My point is that he's free to roam the streets. He's going to keep doing what he does. What if some unfortunate kids overdose and die because I couldn't get a guilty verdict? That will be on my head.

NUN. Dearie, you did what you could. The Lord will not fault you for that.

PROFESSOR. She's right, and I would doubt anyone here faults you.

(Everyone mutters that they don't fault her or shakes their heads accordingly.)

LAWYER. But I fault myself. The people trust in me to keep them safe by putting criminals behind bars. In this case, I failed.

PROFESSOR. We've all failed, it seems, in our own ways.

WAITRESS. Just like us. I work in a greasy truck stop off the interstate in Texas. The guys try to grope me while

I'm servin' their food. I grin and bear it 'cause it pays the rent after my daughter's deadbeat father left. But today there was this one scuzzball who wouldn't get the hint I wasn't int'rested. So I spit in his tuna melt. Wanted to do that many times but never been pushed that far till tonight. Must've been all the overtime. I was real cranky, fallin' asleep on my feet. The last thing I kinda remember is slippin' down the back stairs and hittin' my head. Then I'm over there. Talk about bad karma. (*Reaches into her apron pocket and holds up her waitressing pad.*) And I still got his dinner check in my apron.

BUSINESSMAN (*looking across the "tracks"*). So which side is which? What kind of place is this?

HOMELESS GIRL. I tried to tell you, but none of you would listen. You wouldn't have had to send anyone over there if you had just listened to me, but no, you blew me off. Don't listen to the crybaby.

H.S. BOY (*to BUSINESSMAN*). She's right. My girl shouldn't be over there.

HOMELESS GIRL. I've spent time on both sides of this awful place, and no matter which side I'm on, it's always the same. I listen to all of you confessing, feeling guilty about your lives, and I'm tired of it!

LAWYER. Then don't listen.

HOMELESS GIRL. No matter how hard I try, there's no way to tune you all out. There's no where to hide. And with only this platform and that one, there's nowhere else for me to go.

OLD MAN (*woken up by HOMELESS GIRL's outbursts*). I disagree.

HOMELESS GIRL. Oh yeah? Where else can I go?

OLD MAN. Onto the train.

HOMELESS GIRL. Nuh-uh. No way.

OLD MAN. That's what we're supposed to do. That's why we're here. Wherever the train goes must be better than the uncertainty of this place.

PROFESSOR. So now you're a philosopher?

HOMELESS GIRL. I'd rather take my chances staying put. I'm not getting on that train. You don't know my life. You don't know the pain I've been through and caused. I can't imagine I have any chance of getting into Heaven, so I must be going to Hell. And I don't want to go there, but I can't figure out which side would keep me away from there. You all discuss and argue and confess, and I've even seen groups think they've figured it out. As much as I want to believe them, I never buy it. What if they're wrong?

BUSINESSMAN. Figured it out? We're no closer than we were when I got here.

H.S. BOY (*looking up L stairs, toward where his girlfriend went*). Please come back.

PROFESSOR. Why do you think you're bound for Hell?

HOMELESS GIRL (*after some internal struggle and hesitation*). I ran away from home when I was sixteen because my parents wouldn't let me date this older guy. Said he was bad news. They turned out to be right, but I didn't listen, so I dropped out of school and ran off with him. Dumb move. We both got jobs at a burger joint to pay the rent. Almost a year later, I thought I was pregnant. Turned out I wasn't, but when I told him, he hit me and left, taking all the money we had. He even told my boss I had been stealing money from the registers,

when it was him doing it. I was fired. I had no job, no money and nowhere to live.

LAWYER. Couldn't you go back home?

HOMELESS GIRL. I wanted to, but I was young and stupid. I didn't think my parents would want to see me again. I said some really nasty things to them, so I thought I couldn't go back there. Lived on the streets for a couple years. Did so many bad things to get food, money, cigarettes. (*Holds up her last one and looks at it.*) I was going to give them up after this one—give it all up and straighten out my messed-up life. Then I was here. I don't know how I died—exposure, accident, who knows? What's worse is that I don't know if my parents know I'm dead. And they definitely don't know I'm sorry for what I did to them.

PROFESSOR. When was this?

HOMELESS GIRL. Two, maybe three years ago, I guess.

WAITRESS. You've been here that long?

HOMELESS GIRL. Hard to tell in this place, and it feels longer. It's always the same thing over and over, and I'm tired of reliving my life story to every new group that comes through here.

NUN. There's a way you can break that cycle, dearie. Come on the train with us.

HOMELESS GIRL. I'm not going! I told you! I don't deserve to go to Heaven, and I don't want to go to Hell.

NUN. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.

H.S. BOY (*pointing at HOMELESS GIRL while backing away, toward DL*). What if she's right? (*Turns to look down "tunnel."*) What if this is the train to Hell?

PROFESSOR (*crossing to H.S. BOY*). We still don't know that for sure.

WAITRESS. And we sure don't. (*Points across "tracks."*)

H.S. BOY (*steps toward HOMELESS GIRL*). I think she's right. (*Turns back to PROFESSOR.*) I don't deserve to go to Heaven either.

BUSINESSMAN. What makes you say that?

NUN. What happened wasn't your fault, dearie.

H.S. BOY (*sullen*). Yes it was.

LAWYER. That's not what you said before. Was it indirectly your fault?

H.S. BOY. I guess. The emergency brake on my car doesn't always stick. It's an old car. My dad kept bugging me to get it fixed. Heck, I could've brought it to the auto shop at school—some of my friends might've been able to fix it, but I didn't get around to it. I kept putting it off and putting it off until I practically forgot about it. What were the chances we'd be parked on that hill during a freak downpour? But I can't help thinking that if my brake had been fixed, the car wouldn't have slid down the hill. And then it wouldn't have hit the tree or whatever, and I wouldn't have gotten us killed.

(H.S. BOY is standing in such a position that he will not see H.S. GIRL and BUSINESSWOMAN come down the L stairs.)

NUN. You don't know that for sure.

H.S. BOY. But I know my brake didn't work right. I didn't get it fixed when I could've. Maybe it wouldn't have stopped the rain and mud, but it might've saved our

lives. So it is all my fault, you see? (*Turns around in shame.*) I got my girlfriend killed.

(After the H.S. GIRL entered, the station becomes eerily silent—people's eyes shifting between H.S. BOY and H.S. GIRL, who they all noticed, though he didn't. H.S. GIRL grows more distraught, eventually clinging onto BUSINESSWOMAN—her "replacement mom." When H.S. BOY turns, he finally notices H.S. GIRL.)

H.S. GIRL. What? (*Takes off his jacket.*) Why didn't you...?

H.S. BOY. I'm so sorry.

H.S. GIRL. If only I had told you sooner... (*Gives him the jacket.*)

H.S. BOY. What are you talking about?

H.S. GIRL. I...I don't think we can go to the same place. (*In tears, she starts up the stairs.*)

H.S. BOY. Wait!

(H.S. GIRL has left. H.S. BOY tries to follow, but BUSINESSWOMAN stops him.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. Let her go. Let her move on.

H.S. BOY (*pointing up the stairs*). But I promised her I'd take care of her. (*Finds his car keys in his jacket pocket and jingles them in his hand.*) I couldn't even get that right. (*Sits on C bench with head in his hands.*)

BUSINESSWOMAN. Maybe we should all move on, to wherever the train takes us. I think that's what we're supposed to do.

(OLD MAN nods in agreement.)

BUSINESSMAN. What did you learn about the other side?

BUSINESSWOMAN. Different people, but the same issues we have. *(Sees WAITRESS.)* But I guess you've already figured that out.

WAITRESS. Yep. I'm headin' back. *(To H.S. BOY.)* I'll check to see if your girl's okay.

BUSINESSMAN. You're going back? Does that mean you think that side's the right one?

WAITRESS *(shrugs)*. Can't tell the difference. I don't think I deserve eternal damnation, but I'd rather stick with where I first wound up.

PROFESSOR. The devil you know is better than the devil you don't. *(Sees the others looking at him.)* So to speak.

(WAITRESS starts up the closest stairway. PROFESSOR approaches H.S. BOY.)

H.S. BOY. I promised her. I promised her.

PROFESSOR *(sits beside H.S. BOY)*. Many of us make promises like that, in a variety of phrases. Mine to my wife was "Till death do you part." I broke that years before I arrived here.

H.S. BOY. But you didn't kill your wife.

PROFESSOR. Physically, no, but perhaps I did emotionally. We all make choices in life, and sometimes these choices take us too far off track. In the end, what are we left with? An opportunity to reflect upon our lives. Have you ever noticed how effective humans can be at punishing themselves?

(A faint rumbling sound is heard in the distance, off L.)

LAWYER. I think that's the train. *(Goes to OLD MAN.)*

BUSINESSMAN. So that's it? Just like that? We have to decide right now? There's no way of knowing exactly which way it goes!

HOMELESS GIRL. Now do you understand? You all can do what you want. I'm staying here.

LAWYER *(gently shakes OLD MAN's arm)*. Wake up, sir. *(Returns to her belongings to start packing them up.)*

OLD MAN. Thanks. *(Slowly rises.)*

BUSINESSWOMAN *(goes to PROFESSOR and H.S. BOY)*. Are you two getting on?

H.S. BOY. Not without my girlfriend.

PROFESSOR. I'll stay awhile with him. It looks like he—and I—might need some more time to think.

OLD MAN. Suit yourself. Glad I'm not missing this one.

NUN *(approaches HOMELESS GIRL)*. What about you, dearie?

HOMELESS GIRL *(fiddling with her cigarette)*. I told you I won't. I can't. What if...?

NUN. This is your chance to be free of reliving the doubt and the guilt.

HOMELESS GIRL. But what if it goes to...?

NUN *(takes HOMELESS GIRL's hand)*. Then I will be there with you.

HOMELESS GIRL *(double-checking)*. Even if it goes to...?

NUN. Even if it goes to.

(The oncoming "subway car" squeals.)

HOMELESS GIRL. You...you'd do that for me?

NUN. If you can't have faith in God or this place, then have faith in me. I will go with you, wherever the train goes.

HOMELESS GIRL (*nods her head*). No one's ever done anything like that for me, not since I left home anyway. I...I don't know what to say.

NUN (*leading HOMELESS GIRL to the edge of the "platform"*). Just say you have faith.

(HOMELESS GIRL nervously puts the cigarette to her mouth, but stops, looks at it, looks at NUN and then flicks the cigarette onto the "subway tracks." Meanwhile, the others, excepting PROFESSOR and H.S. BOY, make their way to DC. BUSINESSMAN hedges, joining them and then turning around. The "subway car" has gotten a little louder.)

BUSINESSWOMAN. It's unfortunate that they won't join us.

NUN. It takes a little more time for some to overcome their guilt and find their faith, I presume. (*To HOMELESS GIRL.*) Right, dearie?

HOMELESS GIRL. I hope they don't stay long and put themselves through the same hell I went through for three years.

LAWYER. What did you say?

HOMELESS GIRL. Uh...I hope they...

LAWYER. After that. You said "put themselves through hell." (*Looks around.*) You don't think...

BUSINESSMAN (*after overhearing the previous lines, joins them*). Do you mean that maybe this place is...?

OLD MAN. Well I'll be...

BUSINESSWOMAN. So then do both trains go to...?

NUN. Perhaps. I pray our counterparts across the way
(*points across the "tracks"*) have found some faith of
their own. I've been telling you that's all we need.

*(A strobe light from off L starts flickering. The subway
sound gets louder as the lights fade, except yellow light
bathing the set. The strobe light slows with the sound ef-
fect of a subway car pulling into a station and then...)*

BLACKOUT—END OF PLAY

PROPERTIES LIST

In the world of this play, everyone arrives in the subway station afterlife with a physical representation of the thing for which they were most guilty in their lives. Thus, it is imperative that the following props be present and assigned to the appropriate characters. All other props should be kept to an absolute minimum.

HOMELESS GIRL: Cigarette

OLD MAN: Cane

LAWYER: Briefcase with one legal-sized folder

PROFESSOR: Wedding band

NUN: Rosary beads

BUSINESSWOMAN: Cell phone

BUSINESSMAN: Wallet with ATM receipt

HIGH SCHOOL GIRL: Varsity jacket

HIGH SCHOOL BOY: Car keys (inside jacket pocket)

WAITRESS: Order pad & pen