

The Memory of Time

ACT IScene 1

*Lights slowly rise of four columns of grey folding chairs. Fog is heavy in the air. Actor 1 is seated in in the row of the columns, kneeling as if to not be see, looking out an airplane window.*

ACTOR 1

Something is wrong. We are in rapid descent.  
We are all over the place.

OPERATOR

*offstage*

Can you look out the window and tell us where  
you are?

ACTOR 1

I see water. (beat) I see buildings. (beat)  
We are flying low. We are flying very, very  
low. (beat) Oh my God we are flying way too  
low. Oh My God!

*Blackout*

Scene 2

*Lights rise. A projection of the words "September 10th, 2001" is shown over the stage. The four columns of folding chairs remain on stage. They are sporadically filled with actors. USL is a coat rack and a small table. ROB, a man in his mid forties, enters, takes off his coat, and sets his keys on the table.*

ROB

*Shouting as if to another room*  
Honey, I'm home. Sorry I missed your phone  
call, I was underground.  
(beat)  
Hello?

*SAMANTHA enters DSR. She is  
beginning dinner for the  
family. ROB crosses to USR and  
sees her cooking.*

ROB

*Walks up behind SAMANTHA and  
covers her eyes with his hands*  
Guess who?

*SAMANTHA*  
Hmmm... warm hands, a calming voice, the  
smell of subway. It must be... Rob!

*SAMANTHA turns around gives  
ROB a quick kiss and then  
turns back to what she was  
doing*

ROB  
Whatcha making?

*SAMANTHA*  
Just something quick tonight. It's monday,  
you know the drill.

ROB  
Right... Alex has baseball practice at 5 and  
Jess has dance at 4:30. I Love Mondays.

*SAMANTHA*  
I have to get back into work by 6:30 for a  
meeting tonight. It won't take long but I'll  
have to leave the same time the kids do. Do  
you mind playing chauffeur tonight?

ROB

No problem, we got more done today than we thought, so my night is fairly open. Hell, maybe I'll even go full out and put on my suit to drive them around too.

SAMANTHA

That'd be a sight to see (beat) but save it for halloween ok?

ROB

(Sighs) I guess.

*With another quick kiss, ROB begins to help Samantha with dinner. SAMANTHA looks up to see the time on the oven.*

SAMANTHA

It's about time to go pick up the kids from the bus isn't it?

ROB

Looks like it. I'll be back in a few.

*ROB exits the way he enters, grabs his keys and walks out the door USL. SAMANTHA begins to set the table, and begins humming a random tune as the lights fade to black on either side of the stage, however, the columns of chairs remain lit.*

### Scene 3

*A spot light rises on ACTOR 1 as she stands for her chair.*

ACTOR 1

Students were just coming into my classroom that morning and the days lesson began quickly. I teach in an elementary school in rural Pennsylvania, third grade. It was such a beautiful day, not a cloud in the sky, and

(MORE)

## ACTOR 1 (cont'd)

still fairly warm. School had just begun a few weeks ago, and I was glad that the kids had a chance to get out on the playground for a few more weeks before it started to get cold. I started the day with English and somewhere about halfway through the lesson there was an announcement for the faculty to report to the gym for about five minutes for an important announcement. As confused as we all were, we all did as instructed. I told my students to read ahead in their books, and be ready to talk when I returned. As I entered the gym I saw the projector screen dropped and a hook up to the cable system in the school.

## ACTOR 2

I watched as my faculty filed in. They all had the same confused and worried look to them. I stood there wondering what to say, how to console them, how to put what had happened into words. (beat) This morning, we suffered a huge tragedy to our county. New York City has been attacked, and there are rumors of more incidents still taking place. (beat) I brought you here because I felt that you had a right to know what has happened before you got home at the end of the day.

## ACTOR 1

He turned on the projector and those pictures, still etched in my mind, were shown to us. The towers, both still standing, were spilling smoke. Everyone was speechless, some gasped, some cried, but most of us just sat there in silence. We sat there in horror for a few moments. Then the unthinkable happened; one of the towers collapsed. Chills ran over my body, my jaw dropped. This was hell.

*As ACTORS 1 and 2 sit, the lights fade to a dim haze over the seats.*

Scene 4

*Lights come up DSR, SAMANTHA and ROB are cleaning up from dinner.*

ROB

(Yelling over his shoulder) Kids! Let's go, you're gonna be late.

(To SAMANTHA) I swear, we go through this every week, and they never learn.

SAMANTHA

They're kids Rob. You were that way once too. Remember in college when I had to come over to your apartment every morning for your class?

ROB

(Sarcastically) What are you talking about? I was the one that had to wake you up.

SAMANTHA

(Gives Rob a playful nudge) Go see what's taking them so long. If you don't leave soon you're really gonna be late. And I'll be late for my meeting.

ROB

(Goes USR to yell offstage to upstairs) Alex! Jess! Let's go.

*Fast footsteps coming down the stairs are heard offstage. ROB moves back DSR to SAMANTHA*

ROB

Looks like it's chauffeur time. Have a good time at your meeting, kick some ass.

SAMANTHA

I'm not gonna be back until late tonight. Get the kids to bed; don't wait up. I know you have an early day tomorrow. Get some rest. (beat) I'll see you when you get back from work.

Scene 5

*Lights rise on the four columns of chairs. All actors have left, and SAMANTHA and ROB have taken their place. A spotlight rises on SAMANTHA as she takes an audible breath.*

## SAMANTHA

It was a Tuesday morning just like any other. I packed the kids' lunches, made breakfast and began the day. We were all just getting used to being back at school. My husband, Rob, worked in lower Manhattan, World Trade Center, South Tower. (beat) He was a broker on the 104th floor. As he left for work, he kissed me and rounded up the kids for school. I was left to prepare for my commute to work. By the time I got there the news was already on, and my coworkers were all gathered around the tv in the break room. At the time, I was unaware of what was happening, but it was quickly clear that the day was going to be like no other. Smoke was pouring out of the North Tower, I tried calling Rob, but the lines were busy. (beat) A few minutes later, my heart dropped; before my eyes the second plane flew into the south tower. All I could do was stand there, motionless. I frantically tried calling, but nothing worked. The lines were flooded. I just stood there in shock, I didn't know what to do. The phone rang and heads turned. I could feel the gaze of everyone in the room on my back. Somehow he managed to get a call through...

## ROB

## STANDS

Honey, something has happened, there was an explosion. They're telling us a plane had hit the tower below us, and I'm gonna try and get out. There's about 30 of us up here. (beat) We're going to try and find a way out. I'm safe, don't worry. (beat) I have to go. I

(MORE)

## STANDS (cont'd)

love you. (sits)

## SAMANTHA

...Those were the last words I heard from him. I tried to choke out the words in reply, but nothing came out. I just stood there, alone, as the dial tone rang through the other end of the line. I wanted to believe he was going to get out. I wanted to believe he was going to be safe, but I knew him. He was going to do everything in his power to help the others on his floor, and deep down, I knew those were the last words I would ever hear from him.

Blackout. SAMANTHA and ROB both exit.

Scene 6

*Lights rise on the columns of chairs, now empty, followed by lights USL on ALEX. ALEX, 15, and JESS, 17, have returned from their day at school and are getting ready for their evening routine. ALEX and JESS begging the scene on opposite sides of the stage.*

## ALEX

Jess! Come on, you've been in there for 15 minutes already. How hard can it be to get ready for dance?

## JESS

Shut up Alex. It takes longer than you think to get your hair in a bun.

*Lights rise USR on JESS in a leotard and sweatpants. She is finishing her hair.*

## ALEX

I have things I need to get done before practice too. Hurry up!



JESS

Like what?

ALEX

Like I need to take a shit. Taco day kills.

JESS

Grow up Alex. You're in high school now. If you ever wanna find a girl you've gotta stop talking like that.

ALEX

Whatever.

*JESS exits the space of light that is to be a bathroom and moves DSR. ALEX crosses to USR and exits. Boy band music from 2001 plays quietly as JESS begins to dance around what is to be a bedroom.*

ROB

OFFSTAGE

Kids! Let's go, you're gonna be late.

*JESS doesn't react at all. She is still dancing to the radio. ALEX re-enters from USR.*

ALEX

Jess! Turn it down. No one wants to listen to that crap but you. (beat) JESS!

*JESS walks to the radio and turns it off.*

JESS

What? Alex.

ALEX

I said turn it down. That music is crap.

ROB

*OFFSTAGE*

Alex! Jess! Let's go.

JESS

Shit. We're running behind again. I can't be late to Ballet again. Mr. B will kill me.

*JESS runs to USC and begins to cross to USL to exit, but she stops and looks back.*

JESS (cont'd)

Come on Alex. Let's go.

*ALEX quickly follows and they both exit USL. Lights fade to a blackout.*

SCENE 7

*Lights rise on the columns of chairs. Actors again are scattered throughout the chairs with many left empty. However, they are not sitting in the same seats as before.*

ACTOR 1

9:03, the South Tower was impacted by United Airlines 175.

ROB

I saw a ball of flame rush past my window as our tower shook. We all knew something was terribly wrong. Smoke came rushing up the stairwells and filled the floor, and we began to break out windows to let air in. The heat began to get to our floor, and I began to make sure everyone on our floor was safe. Trying to find a way out, I started down the stairs, only to find the first three cut off. I returned to my floor finding the scene becoming more desperate. I was losing hope, but I tried the last stairwell. It was clear. As I began to help my floor out. I tried to

(MORE)

ROB (cont'd)

get word out. (beat) Through the smoke I found my phone, and called my wife. I reassured her that I would be fine, told her I loved her, and hung up the phone. I knew what I was telling her was a lie. (beat) The power went out. I followed my coworkers down a few flights of stairs, stopping at each floor, to alert everyone that there was a safe passage. Then, I turned back. I climbed to the top, and allowed others to find safety. Five floors from the top, I found an elderly woman, she was weak and unable to walk down 100 flights of stairs on her own. Everyone on her floor had left. All but her, and her boss, who had stayed with her in hopes for rescue. We carried her down around 50 floors when a firefighter took over. Her boss followed. I, returned to help in the rescue.

ACTOR 1

9:58, The South Tower of the World Trade Center Complex collapses.

ROB

It was a moment of pure weightlessness, like floating on air. (beat) But reality set in quickly, every ray of light was gone in an instant. Then before I knew it. There was light again. It was different though; (beat) it was like a light I've never seen before, a warmth I've never felt. It seemed impossible. That in this time of pure terror, I could be so calm. I looked down, I could see a cloud of smoke and ash below me, and I realized what had happened. I tried to go back, fight the force that was drawing me away. They needed my help, I could save them. (beat) What about my family. It was no use. I was lifted away, my duties completed in His eyes.

*Blackout*