

A Bright New Morning

by  
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A BRIGHT NEW MORNING

Sound of thunder.

Sound of three umbrellas opening,  
simultaneously.

Sound of rain.

Lights up on Melinda, Jake, and  
Phillip, standing under umbrellas.  
Jake and Phillip are each on small  
islands, only a few feet wide. Melinda  
is on a ledge or island, that will also  
allow her to exit the stage. Jake and  
Phillip are equidistant from Melinda.

They wait in the rain.

JAKE

It'll be all right. It can't last forever.

Phillip scoffs. Melinda smiles, her  
hopes raised for a moment. The rain  
continues.

Lights to blue. Night. Rain continues  
and fades.

Lights up, bright morning now. Each  
extends a hand beyond his or her  
umbrella, sees it has stopped raining,  
closes umbrella (in order: Jake,  
Melinda, Phillip). Phillip sits amidst  
many empty liquor bottles and starts  
writing on scraps of paper from his  
pockets. Jake's island has a bunch of  
small pieces of wood on it.

JAKE

Go look again.

MELINDA

I can't find it.

JAKE

Go look again.

MELINDA

But--

JAKE

It has to be there.

MELINDA

I looked. It's a jumble of wreckage, of junk. But I would have seen it.

JAKE

Look again.

MELINDA

Jake.

JAKE

Please.

MELINDA

Fine.

She exits. Jake fidgets with the pieces of wood.

JAKE

If she can't find it, maybe I can make a raft.

Phillip looks over, shakes his head sadly.

PHILLIP

Yeah. Good luck.

JAKE

You never know. If I found the right pieces. Something.

Phillip keeps writing. Crumples up a page, tosses it into the water. Starts another.

JAKE

What are you doing?

PHILLIP

Rescue note. Message in a bottle. That sort of thing. Bottles, paper, pen: voila, possible rescue.

JAKE

Message in a bottle?

PHILLIP

I can't get the wording right. I mean, what do you say? "Help!" In big letters, that seems the proper way to start. That's the easy part. What next? Do I give the address? What use is that, now? We know we're here, but who could even recognize it? I'm not even sure the notion of "here" has meaning. Do I list our names, for posterity? Phillip Lynch, Melinda Lynch, Jake Palmer? We were here.

(MORE)

PHILLIP (cont'd)

There is some record of us. Today's date? Do you know what day it is?

JAKE

I have no idea. It doesn't matter. We're not staying here. She's going to find the boat.

PHILLIP

It's gone.

JAKE

No, see, I tied it up real tight, and the rope was long, so it will have floated, up near the back of the building. She'll find it, and then we'll get some help.

PHILLIP

That's nice. That's why she wants to marry you. Because you're an optimist. (beat) There is no help. Everything is flooded. Think of how long it took the government to help after Katrina. That was nothing compared to this. The storm and the icecap, all at once. Biblical. Biblical.

Melinda enters, carrying a fishing pole and a red cloth or t-shirt.

JAKE

What's that?

MELINDA

A fishing pole. I thought maybe we could catch something to eat. I don't know. Or maybe bring in some useful flotsam. Or jetsam. Whichever. And this shirt. Red attracts attention. When the helicopters come by, I'll wave and scream. (waving and screaming) Help! Help! We're down here. Come and save us! Help! We need help! Someone help us!

She stops waving, exhausted. The men are unimpressed.

JAKE

Did you find the kayak?

MELINDA

It's not there.

JAKE

It has to be.

MELINDA

No, it doesn't, Jake. There is no boat.

She starts trying to assemble the fishing rod.

PHILLIP

The boat is gone. I sold it.

JAKE

You what?

MELINDA

Not funny.

PHILLIP

When it first started raining, before I even knew about the ice... It was just a rainy day. This guy came up to me, and said, "I'll give you five hundred bucks for your boat."

JAKE

That was my boat.

PHILLIP

He didn't know that.

MELINDA

How could you... That was supposed to be our... Phillip, you stupid, stupid, stupid boy. Could you just think, for once in your life? Could you do the right thing, one time in your life? I want you to think back, retroactively, and ask yourself if you have ever, in your entire history on this planet, done the right thing?

PHILLIP

I'm sorry.

MELINDA

Sorry? Sorry is what you say to Mom and Dad when you write on the walls with a Sharpie when you're four years old. Sorry is what you say when you crash the car the night before I'm supposed to use it to drive myself and my date to the prom. This is not sorry. This is way more than sorry.

PHILLIP

Shall I drown myself?

JAKE

You've killed us. Do you understand that? You've killed us. That was our way out of here. Writing notes in a bottle is not going to save us. Just be glad that you're way over there. Otherwise I'd drown you myself.

MELINDA

Jake.

JAKE

What?

MELINDA

That's enough.

JAKE

I'm serious. I could kill him. I could wrap my hands around his neck and strangle him.

MELINDA

He's my brother. Soon to be your brother-in-law.

PHILLIP

Wedding's canceled, sis.

MELINDA

Oh, no. I don't think so. There are boats out here. Boats with captains, and captains can marry people, and they are going to find us, and we are going to be married. We are not going to let the end of the world ruin our lives. Do you understand me? (to Jake) And you will not kill my brother. He made a mistake. He said he was sorry. You need to forgive him.

JAKE

But you said--

MELINDA

Jake Palmer.

JAKE

Okay. Phillip, I forgive you for selling the boat that would have allowed us to escape to higher ground and live to someday conceive and raise children that might ultimately repopulate the earth.

MELINDA

Thank you. Phillip?

PHILLIP

I promise I won't do it again.

MELINDA

Fine. Good. Everyone's happy. There's got to be something we can do. There is more stuff down there. I'll find something that will help. Let me go--

JAKE

I'll swim for it.

MELINDA

It's too dangerous. Look at those currents. Once you're in the water, who knows where you'll end up. Last night, I saw a body, in the moonlight.

(MORE)

MELINDA (cont'd)

The way he moved in the water, bobbing in the waves, it made me think that he was swimming, but when he got close and I reached out to help him, the flesh came right off the bone. He was swollen and putrid. Stay out of that water. I will find a way. If you can get over here, we can fish, we'll have room. There's shade at the other end of the roof. I'll go back down and see what I can find. Stay right there.

She exits.

JAKE

It's not like we're going anywhere.

PHILLIP

Ha Ha.

JAKE

I meant what I said.

PHILLIP

About what?

JAKE

That I could kill you for selling that damn kayak. When I get my hands on you, I will pummel you. I will reduce you to a small, steaming pile of baby brother. Afterwards, I will apologize to you and to your sister. But first I'm going to flatten you.

PHILLIP

That boat was only big enough for two.

JAKE

We would have come back for you.

PHILLIP

Right.

Melinda re-enters, carrying a ladder.

MELINDA

Look what I found. Not exactly recipe for a rescue, but I at least can have some company, and you'll both have a little more room.

She starts to extend the ladder towards Jake's island.

PHILLIP

Susan Templeton.

JAKE

Shut up.

Melinda withdraws the ladder. Jake  
grabs for it but misses.

JAKE

Honey. Put the ladder over here.

PHILLIP

Melinda.

MELINDA

(to Phillip) You're messing things up for me right now.  
Don't do that.

JAKE

Ladder. Don't let him play these little mind games. Just  
pass the ladder over here. Please.

PHILLIP

He said he'd kill me. For selling the boat. Not just kill  
me. Hurt me. I understand that you trust him. Which makes  
sense. You feel you should trust him. Because that's how  
you are. The sun shines, it's a bright new morning. But.

MELINDA

But?

PHILLIP

Susan Templeton.

JAKE

Melinda.

MELINDA

You would not do that to me. I know you would not do that to  
me. And not with that tramp. Could her hair be any more  
bleached? Or those breasts any more fake? Always spilling  
out. She looks completely unnatural. And that laugh, all  
snorting and sniffing. I know men look at her. I've seen  
them look at her. Gawking. The things she wears. I've even  
seen you do it. Sidelong glances. Subtle, but I see you.  
I pretend not to notice, because I know who you prefer.  
Because I trust you.

PHILLIP

Tuesday nights. She lives on Tremont Street, lived on  
Tremont Street, just the other side of Mass Ave. Where does  
Jake go on Tuesday nights?

JAKE

I go to the gym on Tuesday nights.

PHILLIP

Oh, I'm sure you got a workout.