

UNITITLED ELEGY PLAY

by Andrea Stolowitz

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SYNOPSIS:

Twelve characters (played by 5 actors) gather to share stories of a pandemic. At the opening the characters are separate, detached. As the individual narratives unfold, a community is created.

BACKGROUND:

UNTITLED ELEGY PLAY is a commissioned play from Mark Wing-Davey and NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in collaboration with New Dramatists. The play uses text from over 40 interviews conducted during 2020-2022. The play has been workshopped at NYU, New Dramatists, Fishamble Theater: The New Play Company in Dublin, Corcadorca Theater Development Center in Cork, Ireland, and the UNC-Chapel Hill "Process Series". *ELEGY PLAY* received an Irish Arts Agility Award in the 2022 cycle.

LOCATION:

A gathering place. Maybe a community room, maybe a theater.

PERFORMERS:

This piece is made for **five** performers each of whom will play 2 or 3 characters.

Because each performer plays multiple characters, identities and genders are meant to be to some extent, fluid and allows for great variability in casting. There are some identity-specific casting requirements. The play needs:

- 1) At least one performer who identifies as a native or heritage Spanish speaker (any gender)
- 2) At least one performer who identifies as Black

Notes on Theatricality: This is not naturalism. It is not meant to be naturalism.

*The performer is always themselves and at the same time the character they are playing.

*The character of “AIRPORT CLEANER” is mostly in Spanish and must be played by a native speaker with attention to details of where the character comes from (actor choice). Currently one actor is given the task of “translation” though it could certainly be a group effort. The task is not really “translating” as much as it is a dynamic form of storytelling designed to help the other characters understand what Airport Worker is saying. In other words, *the translation is active and necessitated by the fact that the other characters need a translation. It is part of the forming of the community.*

*There is little artifice in this piece. The artifice that does exist is that the characters, actors and audience members at the beginning of the show are separate, not yet a community. As the show journeys through shared story telling, connections begin to form, the characters/actors become more attentive to each other, and a community develops. The connective tissue of “forming a community” must be developed organically in rehearsal, though places are notated in the script. A director is welcome to use those or find others that work for that specific cast.

CHARACTERS:

HOSPITALIST : Any actor

BAND TEACHER : Any actor

FUNERAL DIRECTOR : Any actor

BRIGHTON BEACH MERMAID : Any actor

PLAYWRIGHT WITH A COVID DREAM : Any actor

ISS ASTRONAUT : Any actor

NEW MOM : Any actor

GROCERY CART OBSERVER : Any actor

ASSOCIATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR : Black identifying actor

GUY WHO GETS HIT BY A CAR : Any actor

SERVER : Any actor

AIRPORT CLEANER: Spanish speaking actor

Cast breakdown: These are suggestions that allow each actor to have a pause before becoming a different character. Each performance team is welcome to re-imagine the casting breakdown, but do note that it might require moving the speeches around to accommodate.

Actor #1: Hospitalist, Guy who gets hit by a car, leader of translation of airport worker

#2: Band Teacher, Assoc. Museum director

#3: Funeral Director, Airport Cleaner, Grocery Cart Observer

#4: Brighton Beach Cold Water Swimmer (Mermaid), A Playwright

#5: International Space Station Astronaut, New Mom, Server/Waiter

The actor playing the hospitalist enters or, if already present in the space, begins to speak.

HOSPITALIST -1

I had a weird start to COVID. I mean I was supposed to be on vacation when it all started. And so my travel plans obviously got canceled, but I was still on vacation so I wasn't working. So I reached out and I was like, "I'm here; I can help" and they said "no no you stay home because we're going to need you very very soon and right now we have enough people, but in two weeks time, when these people, well when these people, you know ...well when they can't, um, work...well we want you to be ready to take over for them."

The characters wait. Who goes next? Finally-

BAND TEACHER -1

We had a band concert in March of 2020 and all the parents were calling in and they said, “you know I, I don't know, like is this is the safe thing to do, to have them come in” and I was like, “look, I don't know, like I am not in charge of any of this. I don't know if this is safe” and then the next day we get a call from the superintendent and he says, “the concert is off, we will just do it in-house on Friday.”

And that was the last time I ever saw those kids in person.

A pause. We wait while the next character decides to share.

Maybe two characters start at the same time.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-1

We were overwhelmed.

Completely overwhelmed.

We were getting calls non-stop all day for weeks and we had to get a refrigerated truck in order to house some of the, some of the bodies.

You know normally when someone dies a family comes in and we set up a service for the deceased.

There's a 48-hour turnaround from when the body is brought from either the hospital to the funeral home or from their own home to the funeral home.

We had a six-week wait.

So we had to get a refrigerated truck. And we got to a point where we just, well we just couldn't take in any more bodies.

Funeral Director looks at the others. Maybe they meet someone's gaze?

BB COLD WATER SWIMMER (MERMAID)-1

I went away from here for like 40 years to travel like the prodigal son, and really circumnavigate the globe maybe seven or eight times, 10 times, I don't know.

And just before COVID, I kind of got stuck in this apartment, which is where I was born.

And across the street is Brighton Beach.

When I go out the door I don't just go out as one person. I go out as like 18 different ages, and that can be confusing.

I'm going to take you on a walking tour of the apartment.

Imagine a long hallway with tiny rooms. This is my Papa.

This is a painting that I did of him, when I had a Halloween store in Boston and costumed 10,000 people.

And now he died and gave me an 105-year-old magic company.

And I'm now the director of the sinking ship which publishes the world's most prestigious and oldest magic encyclopedia.

Brighton Beach Mermaid smiles a bit, directs her next text to one of the other actors or the audience (they knows it's kinda funny)

In eight volumes.

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION ASTRONAUT- 1

When we first came up here, it was before COVID started.

And we found out about COVID just after the start of our time up here. It was a very surreal experience. To find out about this virus.

And to know that we were probably the only three individuals who were completely unaffected by the virus, probably the only three humans in presumably the entire universe, who were not being affected by COVID.

It was very odd looking down on the earth, knowing that it wasn't changing physically in any way, but knowing that the people that we loved were going through something very difficult. And actually, that's that's that's not strictly true.

The earth physically did change a little bit during the time of COVID. Given that everyone was inside and social distancing, pollution actually went down during that time.

And we started to see airflow over many major cities like LA, New York and Beijing for the first time. We could see it from the space station, airflow.

PLAYWRIGHT WITH A COVID DREAM-1

So the dreams started on March 23 the first night I had a fever, and I've had this same dream every night ever since.

The fever started and it was pretty bad.

I was pretty much sleeping around the clock.

And of course, nobody could come and help me.

And it was very early. So even the doctors didn't know much then. The deal was you couldn't go to the emergency room, unless you had a fever over 102 or you had trouble breathing.

I had lost 10 pounds and even my phone didn't recognize me.

I had to force myself every day to eat half a banana or, or a cup of soup, which sometimes I didn't even bother to heat up.

It took me three days to finish a protein bar. So I was basically eating nothing.

I'd wake up, I'd go back to sleep. I didn't know if it was night or day. I'd have these chills and cold sweats. I'd be sweating through my clothes.

And finally, finally I started coughing up blood

That was April 2 and the ambulance took me to the hospital.

And it was like a cashier's line at Trader Joe's.

ASSOCIATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR-1

So before this, well before this, I mean in my industry I just, well I just didn't have the tools to say what needed to be said.

You know? I mean really I did not literally have the vocabulary.

I mean what I wished I had said to that museum that hired me to increase diversity and then fired me when Black and Brown people didn't come to their African-American sculpture exhibit, was like, "don't hire me to fix your problems in one year, when you spent 40 years, or rather 400 years making them."

I wished I had said that but I just didn't have the tools. I didn't know enough about myself. I mean they fired me anyway. And I had a lot of pain about that. To be dismissed like that.

Now though, now I'm in a position of leadership. It all happened after George Floyd. Like suddenly everyone in museum curation wanted to work with me. Suddenly they were all like "what do you think", "we want to hear your thoughts" "we're submitting this big grant, you should be on it". I got promoted as part of a leadership transition plan. Big salary bump. *(the other characters respons to this)*

New mom sits down next to one of the other characters. She nods to them. They acknowledge each other. She begins her story.

NEW MOM-1

So I gave birth to Danny at the very beginning of the pandemic. So he was born on March 27, 2020.

So that was about a week after the shutdown and it was so early that we went in, you know, a couple of days before to check everything out and no one was wearing a mask.

And then we go in a couple of days later to deliver the baby and everyone's wearing a mask. That's how quick it was.

And how early it was that, you know, just a few days before I was supposed to give birth, masks weren't even mandated.

And then, suddenly the world just changed pretty much overnight. Um, and it was scary.

HOSPITALIST-2

The unit was just a hallway with 12 beds. And I remember one day looking down at my phone and I had 30,000 steps. And I was like, I literally have been in this one hallway, all day. 30,000 steps in one hallway.

I worked at some point I think 11 days in a row 7am to 7pm and doctors are not designed to do that. I mean humans are not designed to do that. You're not supposed to work that much, but we didn't, you know, we weren't really thinking about that.

The hospitalist moves their chair closer to other. Someone offers Hospitalist a glass of water.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-2

We had, we even had bodies coming in from as far away as Watertown, New York, which is on the Canadian border six, six hours away. And early on, early on in the pandemic, we were getting phone calls from funeral homes as far away as Oklahoma and Wyoming asking us, you know, “is this serious? Is it really as bad as what you see on the news? Is this true?”

And I had to say yes, yes, it very much is.

BAND TEACHER -2

At first we were posting on this thing called “google classroom”. So we would just post assignments and the kids would read them and they would, you know, hopefully, do them. And and we also made videos. Dan helped me with the video; we almost got a divorce just making that video. It was awful. And I'm like, I'm asking him to help because he knows a lot about computers and I don't know anything about computers, but I do know that Dan doesn't always know what he thinks he knows and that he doesn't know a lot about Google classroom. So I told him “you don't know. You don't know and you don't even understand what you're even talking about. You have no idea.” And that was a BIG fight. But I did it. I made the video so the kids could tune their instruments.

Then, once we came back to school like live, well virtually live, I mean on zoom, instead of conducting I'm playing along with them and I tell them to play along and, and I think they're doing it, like, some of them are doing it and I can't really tell because some of them have their videos off which the district allows them to do. They allow them to have their

videos off. Which is stupid. It's stupid. And they could be
looking at porn for all I know. I don't know.

And I, you know, I don't care.

No I care.

I care.

I give my eighth graders a lot of shit about it.

“You know”, I say, I tell them, “if you go through life with
your heads down and your cameras off, you are not going to
get much out of life.”

*By the end of this speech several actors are gathered
together. Maybe a bowl of chips has been set out.*

HOSPIATLIST - 3

I have a picture from that time that I took of a non-identified patient, I mean they are not clear in the picture and we were proning them. We would flip them over onto their stomachs because it helped them oxygenate better. And you know it takes a team of people in all their gear and in this room there's four or five people proning this patient and on the TV, that's running in there for who knows what reason, on the TV there is this headline saying "Las Vegas is about to reopen casinos".

FUNERAL DIRECTOR -3

I want to say that we trust each other in this profession and when a funeral director calls from somewhere in the middle of the country to a random funeral home in New York City to find out if this is true, well I think two things. 1) I think any professional in this business would trust another professional in this business regardless of their personal beliefs and 2) there were people in this country who really did not know how bad it was here. Which was so hard for me to imagine because it was, it was overwhelming.

Thankfully, since then it's..it's depreciated a bit, but certainly, at the beginning, it was a very overwhelming process.

NEW MOM-2

You know, it's scary going into labor in the first place.

But, but, you know, also with everyone wearing masks and I could only see this much of people's faces. Um, it just felt like I was in some dystopian reality.

I also didn't know until the last minute whether or not my husband could even come into the room with me.

But he did. He was able to come in.

I feel like I've waited for Danny my whole life.

And I wouldn't, I wouldn't trade this time for anything because he came to me when he was supposed to come to me and everything happens, the way it's supposed to happen, don't you think? But it just made me sad that you know he comes into the world and there are no balloons. There is nothing cheery and it just felt like the realities didn't match.

All characters are now center stage, part of the same universe of storytelling. Perhaps they share coffee casually?

PLAYWRIGHT COVID DREAM -2

There were rows and rows of people doing quick triage and they were just bringing people in and then I was being rolled around these hallways and every inch of the hallways was filled with people on gurneys. Hundreds and hundreds of people, and it was unbelievable. And people were coming up and they were taking tests on me for the next six hours, and most of them were wearing all kinds of gear.

But one woman didn't and I asked her, and I said, "Where's your shield and your robes and everything". And she said, "well, you know, we're all going to get it."

BAND TEACHER -3

I'm was on all of these message boards with these other music teachers and and they, they were doing assessments every week...every week...and I had 200 students and they only had 50 so it's a little bit like I feel like "what's wrong with me"

Like Facebook, you know, how you feel on facebook?

Like I have this friend, you know, she's the violinist in my trio and she says, she says to me, "You know Jane, Jane I really wish I had your life, I see your pictures on Facebook and you just look so happy" and I say, "Rebecca, you know I didn't put that knockdown drag-out fight I had with Dan about google classrooms, you know I didn't put *that* on facebook. It's not true, it's not true what you see on facebook'.

Anyway. You can't believe what you see on facebook normally and especially during a pandemic.

But then that's all I was seeing. Message boards and facebook.

GROCERY CART -1

So I was walking kind of early in the morning and I had just moved into this neighborhood, and it's getting kind of gentrified and all that, and it was cold as fuck and gray and sad and everything was terrible.

I moved in right when this thing started. I was paying people to move my shit and then everything shut down.

So I was walking, like, just in my neighborhood and on the corner there's an Aldi and then there's also a Walgreens like caddy-corner and I'm crossing the street and I see from down in the parking lot at Walgreens I see a man, pulling a shopping cart from the front side and there's a woman behind it kind of limping, with her hands on the shopping cart. I mean they were both Black and I thought they were together but there was something rough about what was happening.

Something different.

PW WITH COVID DREAM-3

They told me they were going to admit me, but then, then at midnight, this nurse came in wheeling this little 15-pound machine. She said, "Can you handle this machine? And do you have money to get home?" And I said, I did. So, next thing you know, I'm out in the street at midnight, and I'm so weak and I haven't eaten anything the whole day, really the whole week. And there's a line of taxis and I go to a taxi, but I'm so weak, the taxi drivers are both asleep and I can't wake them up like, I can't tap on the window hard enough to wake them up, so I had to call a lyft.

Still to this day, I don't know why they didn't admit me. If they forgot, or they didn't have room, or what.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-4

We have an online service now where you can do the process from start to finish, but it used to be that people would just come in off the street carrying one of those garment bags, with the clothes of the deceased.

And what you'd normally have to do is you'd have to stop everything, you know, extend your sympathies, offer a glass of water. You wouldn't just get right down to the business right off the start.

You want to make sure that they're okay. So you extend sympathies and figure out where, where they're coming from emotionally and figure out what the past week for the deceased has been.

On zoom though, you can't offer them anything and you already have been informed of the cause of death. So it's hard. Harder to connect.

BRIGHTON BEACH COLD WATER SWIMMER

(MERMAID)-2

I'll start off with where it was the most miserable.

Let's see, my son who's 17 went to Germany to be with his father. My mother got stuck in Florida, and that's not a euphemism, and the boyfriend of six years decided to just never call again as a way to break up. Because we loved each other too much and wanting to separate he's like "oh, you know, cold turkey is a good idea. Bye."

So me and solitude became really good friends. And I felt like an anime character like with this long coat. I put five pound weights on my ankles. I was like punching the air like a boxer I was in the sand tilting against the wind and the winter at night trying to lose weight you know trying to just burn as many calories as I could and cross-train with my own body which is crooked so I had to do different things on each side, and all kinds of upside-down things and I was pulling up some deep depression and one-handed things, but mainly I was just trying to get through it. I couldn't walk around during the day because I was scared of the virus. Of meeting people. So I walked at night. Sometimes all night.

ASSOCIATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR-2

And yet, and yet...

Last week this thing happened. Well this person, this board member, wrote an email to the head of donor relations at the museum I work at and highlighted all the ways that I shouldn't be the one to represent the museum at the upcoming gala. She said I was too pushy and would make the donors feel judged. She said my tone and my manner is often dismissive. She said that in her experience I don't create a collaborative atmosphere. She said I shoot down people's ideas. Board members ideas.

The head of donor relations called me in and shared the email with me. And I like flipped out. It was like I was dealing with that other museum all over again. With that other job, I went home and cried. This time I flipped the fuck out. Like I could feel that artery in my neck just throbbing, I could feel my throat tighten. I took a breath and then I calmly explained that I won't tolerate this racist white supremacist bullshit gaslit view of myself anymore. I called that shit out on facebook, IG, snapchat. I didn't name her, but people, everyone, you know, in the museum world in New York and LA and London, everyone knew who I meant.

HOSPITALIST - 4

The same day we had our first patient extubated and survive and leave the ICU, 10 minutes later we had our first death on the unit. When the first patient got extubated we were all standing outside the glass door. The family was on FaceTime we were all cheering. The resident flipped around the iPad and we were all standing outside cheering and it was just like we all felt this moment of “some people are going to survive and this is really really great” and literally 10 minutes later we were in another room because we knew that this other patient was going to pass. We had been talking to his husband and his sister for a while. And we had decided to basically tell them he wasn't going to make it and that he was going to pass away. They wanted him to be comfortable and we had them on the phone they said their goodbyes over FaceTime, but they didn't want to be there when it actually happened.

PLAYWRIGHT COVID DREAM -4

The dreams started right at the beginning when I first had a fever. They were really...They were neon and bright colors. I have had the same dream every night, ever since and the location changes and the cast of characters changes, but the plot is always the same. So every single night, I am hanging out with my friends, trying to solve a small problem.

We are in the lobby of a theater waiting to go in, or we lost our rehearsal space and we're trying to find a new rehearsal space, or we are in an airport and the gate has changed. And so we have to get to the new gate.

And so there's always a problem to be solved, but it's always a minor problem. So it's not scary or anything.

So basically, every night I hang out with my friends and, and I've been keeping a list and it is now over 80 people that have visited me in my dream and I always jot down their names and it's been really...It's been, it's been a real great joy. That's was my only social life for a long, long time..

ISS-2

We receive questions up here from people on earth. We can receive email and messages. I think one of the questions that we received most frequently from people recently is how to deal with isolation.

And so we, we started making some videos explaining how we go through the process of onboarding the mission. There's three things that we want you to take away from our videos. When you're in isolation, three things that you should, should bear in mind is you should keep a specific schedule. Or, or know what you are going to do with your day.

Exercise frequently and eat as healthfully as you can.

And if you're living with others, be a good roommate.

That's actually a really important one for for astronauts.

When you're training to become an astronaut your expertise is not the only thing that's taken into consideration before you are put in a shuttle to go up to the station. I know plenty of qualified individuals who are turned down to become astronauts because they didn't have good living habits. They are not allowed to become astronauts simply because they were not good roommates. So we tell people "be a good

roommate” and in a wider sense, we mean that on the quarantine level but really it’s how we should exist on the earth, in our communities, etc. Be a good roommate

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-4

And then normally you'd ultimately transition into the conversation about what they want the ceremony to be like, but under COVID, we didn't have ceremonies or if we did they were small. Mostly we used ZOOM or YouTube.

Interestingly enough we had all sorts of trouble with ASCAP, that's the musician's union, over music licensing. I mean normally we can use the music, but once it's being live-streamed or recorded...well no one knew what to do and we would put up a memorial service for the family to watch and an hour later YouTube would take it down. It was very very very frustrating. Eventually, we figured it out but this went on for a long time. It was a disgrace. ASCAP taking down funeral services.

PW COVID DREAM-5

The, the week I was the sickest and I coughed up blood,
that's when COVID came to me in a dream.

And it came in the form of a giant leech. It was black and,
and two feet long and it grabbed my arm and started sucking.

And I was, I was trying to pull this leech off, and then it
would grab another part of my body. And that was really the
only nightmare I have had.

Then the night before I went to the hospital I had a dream
that my parents who are both deceased came and visited me.

And that night. That was the worst night. That was the night I
was the sickest. And I don't remember what they said.

But I remember thinking I might be joining them soon.

And that was okay. It was okay, that I might join them.

And also my deceased cats have shown up a couple of times.

One in particular little Sophie showed up. And this is the
most vivid dream I've ever had. And I knew she was visiting
me from someplace else. And she was brown in real life but
in the dream, she was kind of reddish-brown, a burgundy, in
the dream and I'm going to cry.

I knew she had chosen to come visit me. She was the sweetest cat ever. never met a lap she didn't like. And in my dream. She snuggled up and I petted her and petted her and it was so real. It was realer than real, it was how she felt. I knew this was a gift that I had been given to have a little bit more time with Jenny and I woke up crying and I cried, and cried all day.

HOSPITALIST-4

So me and the nurse went in and we sort of stopped all the extra stuff, the life support stuff, but we didn't know how long it was going to take for him to actually pass away, and at that time we were being told not to spend any more time in the room than you have to, but we weren't really willing to leave him there alone.

So we stayed in the room for a while and we were holding his hand knowing he couldn't really, didn't really know that we were there, but it made us feel a little bit better.

His family had asked people to send him text messages so we read all the text messages aloud to him.

And since we had his phone we decided to put on a playlist of his most played songs.

And I was thinking like “oh my god if someone listened to my most played songs and decided that that was what I should hear when I was dying, I mean I don't know that's that what I would want to listen to.” But we didn't know what else to do to make it feel a little bit more sort of like what a good death might look like for that person.

And so we read all his messages:

The Hospitalist pulls out his phone, reads

“I’ll tend to the begonias”

“Remember the fishing trip we took in Idaho and how I was scared I would drown”

“Thank you for helping me pay for my college even though we both knew it was too expensive and probably not worth the money”

“I still have the “Bull Durham” movie poster”

“Thanksgiving won’t be the same without your sweet potato pie”

The actor stops. He can’t continue. We wait. The characters look at each other. Finally the New Mom goes to the Hospitalist, comforts them, takes the phone, and continues reading. The Hospitalist watches,

NEW MOM

“Remember when we thought we would open an interior decorating business and then a travel agency. So glad we never did. It was worth all the laughs”

“Lining up at 5 AM to buy U2 tickets with you...”

“I love you”

“I hope you tear up the streets of heaven with that 1991

Mazda MX-5 Miata”

HOSPITALIST

and we played some of his music and we waited and
eventually, eventually he passed.

SERVER-1

The people from Florida. Ugh, god. Trash. These people came in and filled out their contact tracing information. And it said Florida, but they didn't say when they got there on the paper. So, we had to seat them. So, they sit down, and I can't remember... I remember them being super difficult... oh, like, half of their meal, they sent back. And not because it wasn't good. They took one bite and said literally verbatim, "Oh, I'm just not in the mood for this anymore. Bring me something else." And wanted it taken off the bill. It was a seven top! Like seven people wanted half of their food taken off the bill because they weren't in the mood for it anymore. And wanted it to be free. Like, think of all the waste. And it's one of those things, like, we're in the middle of a pandemic. I feel like I have to be, like, extra nice to people. 'Cause I really need the money.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-4

It's been a complete, almost violent upheaval in how we work. There just hasn't been a plan. It's been almost a mass fatality situation and it's been all up to us, up to small private funeral homes to step up and take care of the dead and the grieving. It's completely upheaved everything that we do and how we handle death and how we arrange funerals and really how we're able to lovingly and helpfully serve the families.

In terms of vaccines, that's one of my pet peeves, because in the beginning, when they were giving them out, they seem to have forgotten about us. We are the last responders, and they forgot us.

BB MERMAID-3

Consistency is the hardest thing for me, being in the flow is the easiest thing. And I noticed a bunch of older people here that are very consistent being on the beach every day. And they noticed me losing weight and I noticed them being 95 years old with crutches going in the cold ocean every day. Then there's Sarah who's 82 and goes in, naked in Brooklyn, twice a day. And when you see her doing that you're like, hmm, if Sarah can do it, I can do it. And then that's what happened.

So, the people here go in the ocean for health. They're from Siberia. They're Jews, they have been through everything. They look at it like "hey we're Jewish we went through 10 plagues, this is just one more."

I realized finally in the end when I stopped being afraid, that it's about consistency

They just said, "we're going to stay, we're going to stay with our practice of, you know, of staying by the sea, you know, walking, jumping in the cold ocean with our friends and encouraging each other."

GROCERY CART OBSERVER-2

And from across the street I can see the man pulling the shopping cart so fast that the woman can barely keep up and I was like “something’s wrong here”. and I’m basically just staring at the situation when this car pulls up, this black SUV and there’s another man with very dark skin and this huge white beard and he he rolls down the window and he says something in this really thick accent that I can’t understand, and he keeps repeating it to the man who is pulling the shopping cart. And I’m just staring.

And I’m like thinking “wow, they must all know each other. It’s incredible. they’re just all family or friends and just part of a community”.

And then I hear the man repeat the words and this time I understand them. “let her go”, he says and he stares at the man who is at the front of the cart. Then I realize that the man at the front of the cart is the Aldi security guard. He’s got the same accent as the man in the car. “she’s stealing” he says. and the woman doesn’t say a word and the guy in the car says “let her go” again and the Aldi employees is like “I can’t, like I gotta do this thing” and he says one more time in this way “let her go” and he was driving like a Mercedes, a

black Mercedes and so the Aldi guy just throws his hands up goes “whatever” and walks always and the woman with the shopping cart who was maybe like 5 ft tall, with this intense limp and a huge shopping cart full of groceries, just scurries away like a rabbit without saying anything to anybody.

ISS-3

When we returned to Earth it was the first time that I started to really worry about the virus really, because when you return to Earth, after living in a microgravity environment, your immune system slows down and your T cells are much lower, which makes you more susceptible to viruses and disease.

And also, since you are in a microgravity environment for such a long period of time when you return to Earth gravity feels much, much stronger and your, your body parts feel extremely heavy. So when you return in the capsule, in the Soyuz capsule you, you land in Pakistan. And then a rescue team comes to get you. Someone has to carry you out of the capsule because your body feels so much heavier, because you've been living in zero gravity environment.

When our Soyuz capsule landed back on Earth the rescue team had to carry us out of the capsule which obviously cannot be done socially distant, everyone was wearing masks as well, I didn't see a full face, without a mask, on Earth until I returned home and saw my wife and kids

which was awesome. It was actually kind of nice that the first
human faces that I saw were my family.

BAND TEACHER-3

Some of the students. I think, I think they are really struggling. Um, I have this lovely student. Her name is Greta. She is just this really unusual kid, you know, deep, she's got this deep soulful talent and and she struggles and one of the things she's struggling with, is that the kids just keep their videos off and her parents told me that the way that she learns is through discussion and interaction and it is, it is the way that she learns. And so I just feel so bad and she's having some depression. And really suffering and some physical ailments, which I think are related to kind of her mental wellness and it's so sad.

And sometimes these parents, they get involved and they defend their kids and I have this one parent who called in and said, you know, my child doesn't like your music choices. And that's why he is not turning in his work and I'm like thinking, "well usually students don't get to pick what the music is". But I said, whatever, just record the song you want and I kid you not, he turned in a video of himself on saxophone playing *Happy Birthday* in a dog costume.

Like, I didn't think I had to say, pick a song that is remotely interesting and maybe don't wear a dog costume, just didn't think I needed to say it.

The other characters nod/laugh at this.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-5

I think a lot of people have this conception that the only people coming into the funeral home are the elderly or those who have been recently sick. Have COVID, all that.

But you get all manner of people coming in to be buried. I mean just the other week we had a family, whose 13-year-old died by, died by suicide. And that's something that they're dealing with and I mean, even today, today is the 33rd anniversary of my own son's death.

BRIGHTON BEACH MERMAID-3

At the very beginning of the protests us dancers were hanging out underneath the Thunderdome on the day where the curfew started at 8pm and it was a full moon, and I'm like, "Okay, I'm not going home and they're like, I'm not going home" and we walked all night up and down the boardwalk. And we did it the next night. And the next.

And I realized then that it's actually up to each of us to create our own visions of what we want this world to be and to actually just make those visions permeable and invite other people into them. And that's what's been missing.

We call this place "be right on" beach, and if you're not "right on", then you can "be" elsewhere.

GUY GETS HIT BY A CAR-1

Crossing the street at 147th and Amsterdam, less than three minutes away from my apartment, I was struck by a car. An unstoppable force pushed against my legs as the front of the car hit me from behind and flipped me upwards.

I bounced off the roof and landed on my back.

The car didn't stop for one second, completely driving through me. I was lying in the middle of the road. witnesses all around me yelled and screamed.

SERVER-2

The other day, I was talking to this table of men, and they were flirting with me. And I was like, I really need to make this money. This guy pulled me onto his lap and stuck his hand in my shirt and started, like, feeling on my abs. And somebody at the table was like, “Oh my God, you can't do that Josh!” And I was like, in my mind, I was like yes, he can do whatever he wants as long as he's tipping me extra. And then they tipped 11%. Like literally, fuck yourself. So I told you that story because I feel like I'm always going above and beyond what I should be doing, so when the Florida people sent back half their food, I was like, “Yeah, of course! I totally get that, not feeling like eating what I ordered. Me too, I get that all the time.”

GUY GETS HIT BY CAR-2

I got up and walked to the side of the road.

Then five Black women, one with a baby stroller surrounded me.

They were checking in on me, they slipped down my mask so I could breathe. They were standing close to me, surrounding me, protecting me. They were talking to me.

They called 911 for me.

They told me to sit down when I kept standing up.

I don't want to go into the dramatics of the situation

But I was sitting on the side of the road waiting for an ambulance and I was unable to text my roommates and

I didn't want to call my parents and I didn't want to have any reaction that confirmed that I was just hit by a car.

I needed those women circling around me.

And when the police arrived they stood by me and conveyed the severity of the situation.

SERVER-2

Oh, and then, they, the Florida people, they took their shoes off - shoes and socks - and put their feet up in the chairs.

Yeah. And I told my boss, I was like, they're from fucking Florida. Do you think they just got here? And so I started probing. And I was like, well when did you get here? And they're like, Yesterday! And I was like, are you fucking kidding me? But again, I was like I need money so i guess I'll fucking risk it.

So, I go through the whole shebang and they're like super difficult like you have to split everything seven ways on seven different checks. Anyway, so i did it for them and they all sign and I go and collect it before they all leave and all the tips are like 0 with a line through it 0 0 0. And I went and tried to do the sympathetic approach first. This was very tactical. Like, hey guys I just wanted to check, was everything okay with service tonight? Was anything wrong? And they were like, no sweetie you were great, everything was fantastic.

ASSOC. MUSEUM DIRECTOR-3

I'd really like to be done curating BIPOC art for white people and white institutions. That's what the pandemic has given me. And I don't mean that offensively. I just mean it like a fact. I don't care. I really don't care if they want to see the art I want to see. Agree to disagree.

Maybe in the end it's going to work out that we'll have Black-only museums, like the way HBCUs operate in relation to white universities. Maybe we'll just have a network of historically Black museums and if white folx want to come see our art and our history they can come to our museums. I mean I can't speak for everybody. I am just personally done with this bullshit. I just want to put art together in a way that I would want to see it. In places that I would want to see it. That's it.

AIRPORT CLEANER (when the Spanish text begins one of the other characters will organically begin to help translate the story for the other characters. This should be a dynamic performance of shared storytelling, not “a translation”)

Ok, I'm, I'm cleaner.

I working for airport in the building fourteen.

I'm cleaner. In the building fourteen, Port Authority.

Uh, I do for eleven years. Ok. Before the pandemic-

Is more easy because I know how to do more, more spend

like the, the Lysols-

Clorox and everything, you know? And how to do the

cleaning, I use, use the towels, the gloves or I go to clean the

bathrooms, I use the ufi, all things I use something. Now-

I have to use the mask any time-

So, the difference, is you have to wear gloves all the time.

Also. all the all the hours.

All the time and have to wipe everything mostly, every hour

and have to take care and check and everything is ok because

everybody wants everyone wiping. Wiping any time. That's

the difference, that more- more time to clean, clean, clean.

Pass the wiping, pass the sprays, everything.

I always have-

bueno

The, the place now is more- it's alone. So the now and before
is more alone, alone, alone.

After this ends...Ok, uhh. I think the people never learning
about this.

Because, they don't take care.

And try they do like, whatever, like what I want. That's what
my say, my think. And uh, I think this take time, take time to
do big changes.

To change, the-

I think people have to try to change like, thinks. Think.

They don't think. Like sometimes is real or no like this, this
virus-

Ok, yo creo que la gente piensa que esto no es real.

(Ok, I think that people think that this is not real.)

Entonces, hacen las cosas como si, como si no estuviera
pasando nada.

(So then, they do things like, if nothing was a matter.)

Estoy aquí más de veintitrés años, vamos.

And I've been here for more than 23 years, so.

Dreams? Un sueño de la pandemia...No.

A dream about the pandemic...no.

Oh, pues, really, pues I tried to go back- pues siempre tenía como pensado que iba a ir de vacaciones a, yo tenía planea- planeado ir a Dominican-

Well, I always thought that we were gonna go on vacation to, I had planned to go to the Dominican Republic.

Por el, ehmm, estar en vacaciones. Por dos semanas iba ir a conocer y todo, a raíz de esto-

Being in vacation, for two weeks. I had to learn, due to all of this-

Pues, se tuvo que suspender las vacaciones. Íbamos a ir toda la familia-

That, well the vacation had to be canceled. The whole family was going.

Pues, iba a venir gente de Colombia, íbamos a ser un paseo muy grande, pues tocó suspender todo esto a raíz de la pandemia.

So, people from Colombia were coming, it was gonna be a big trip, well we had to cancel everything due to the pandemic.

Recuerdo yo la vida antes de la pandemia que podíamos estar afuera libres y pasarla bien.

I remember life before the pandemic, that we could be outside freely and have a good time.

No había nada que nos detu- que nos detuviera.

Nobody could stop us.

A dónde queríamos ir, íbamos. Lo que queríamos hacer, hacíamos.

If we wanted to go somewhere, we went. If we wanted to do something, we did.

Todas esas cosas, que que rico. Que volvieran. Porque esa es la vida.

All of those things are so nice, we want them to come back because that's life.

Esto que estamos viviendo ahora, es algo que realmente pues cortó, cortó muchas muchas- no corta solamente vidas sino que cortó sueños.

What's happening now, it's something that truly cut, it cut a lot, a lot- of not only lives, but it also cut dreams.

Corto el sentido de la gente para seguir adelante.

It cut people's willingness to move forward.

Porque el estudio ahora no es igual.

Because not even schooling is the same.

Yes, nosotros- nosotros que tenemos algo como dicen que
somos esenciales,

Yes, us- us, that people call essential,

eh como es, nos dicen trabajadores esenciales porque
tenemos que estar ahí todos los días en esos lugares.

***they call us essential workers because we have to always be
there, every day in those places.***

Eh, donde no sabemos quien viene enfermo, quien viene no.

Eh, where we don't know who's sick, or who's not.

Entonces, eso nos lo hace un poquito más difícil porque

So then, that makes the job a little harder because

a veces a nosotros nos mandan a limpiar, si te dicen “Oh,
queremos que limpien bien este lugar”

***sometimes they tell us to clean, they say “Oh, we want you
to clean this place up really good”***

pero, no nos dicen el porque.

but, they don't tell us why.

Osea, mas adelante sabemos que aquí estuvo alguien que
estuvo enfermo o alguien que salió positivo.

***I mean, later on we find out that there was someone who
was sick or that tested positive.***

Osea, al principio de esta pandemia, a nosotros no nos decían bien que pasaba.

I mean, at the beginning of this pandemic, they never told us what was happening

Y no nos mandaban con protegidos.

And they didn't give us anything to protect us with.

Ahora si, mantenemos todas las cosas, las máscaras, los guantes y todas esas cosas.

Now, yeah we have all the things, the masks, the gloves and all those things.

Y todo eso que nos ha ayudado bastante.

and all those things. And all those things have helped us a lot.

Pero, no es fácil estar afuera.

But, it's not easy being outside.

Más que la gente no quiere cuidarse.

Epecially when people don't take care of themselves.

De verdad.

It's the truth

Cuídate, pues and thank you

SERVER-3

And I was like, okay well I was wondering because no one tipped. This is a seven-person table and usually if you don't tip it means that something's wrong and you're saying that nothing was wrong so I'm just wondering why you didn't tip.

And she straight up was like, "That didn't happen." So I gave them the whole maybe you don't understand how the service industry works - I totally gave up the whole sympathetic approach, like, oh let's connect on a level- like maybe you don't understand how this works. I work for tips, it's the middle of a pandemic, if you don't tip me I don't get paid so I don't understand what the problem is here. And then I just looked at them and I thought fuck this--fuck this capitalist bull-shit grinding the ass of the worker, I was like, all polite, all smiling and said, "it's about closing time so you need to get the fuck out of my restaurant."

But what I should have fucking said was, "that's okay if you don't want to tip me I'm sure the governor will be happy to take your money I'll give him a call since I have your contact tracing information. enjoy your 200 dollar fine bitch.

GUY GETS HIT BY CAR-3

I say thank you a thousand times over to those five women.

Thank you to my two journals and the complete works of William Shakespeare that were in my backpack, cushioning my fall, thank you to the man across from me at the hospital who helped me to smile, thank you to the LYFT driver who safely took me home and waited until I got inside to leave.

Thank you.

ASSOC. MUSEUM DIRECTOR-4

I hope for a future beyond the binary. Not sure we'll ever get there.

But whatever. I got some power now and I'm never gonna let it go and I am gonna use every piece of influence I have to support Black voices. That's it. Maybe that woman, that board member was right. Maybe I had it out for her. That's what she said. Maybe I was coming for her. And maybe I will come for everyone. Maybe I will come for everyone and everything that made this stupid unfair system and everything and everyone who keeps it the way it is. But there is only so much one person can do, you know?

BRIGHTON BEACH MERMAID-4

I'm trying to make a film at this moment on Gary Maples, who if you don't know him you should. It is nearly his 5000 day in a row of straight running and jumping in the ocean that's 13 straight years, and as a person who struggles with consistency, he is my model of consistency. I spoke to him today, I filmed him today.

He inspires everybody around here and Sarah, the 82 year old who goes in twice a day naked, inspired him so it's like this symbiotic thing and I don't really want to leave this bubble. everything else feels less profound to me.

Yeah, and I kind of worry that things are going to be starting to be less profound because they have been quite profound through COVID.

You know, I have had nightmares in this house since I was a kid.

And strangely enough, last week I threw out the bed that I had as a child in this house and when I brought out that bed, I started stuttering.

And I told the people who helped me bring it outside. I told them...

I was like, “I hate this bed. I hate this bed” and yeah I just,
Well now the house feels a lot clearer without it.

We had made this clubhouse at the back of the beach. It's
hard to explain but when COVID started we wanted to
exercise anyway and have a place to meet, so we built this
clubhouse on the beach. And we kind of dug it into the sand
using an old park's department structure as the walls, and we
called it “the hole”.

And it had tennis courts and everything.

And furniture

And beds

And I was like, because we also had homeless people living
there, I asked my friend Anton who helped me bring out the
bed, I was like, “Anton, do you want this bed for the hole”
and he said, (Russian accent) “No. The hole is too good for
that bed”

And that is how I know he is my true friend.

You know, everybody was brave in some way.

I wonder will we keep on being brave, will I keep on being
brave?

FUNERAL DIRECTOR-6

So- the cremation. What you receive back looks like ashes.

They're not technically speaking ashes.

What happens is the body of the deceased is put into a wooden casket, which is then put into the cremation chamber which is called the retort. R-E-T-O-R-T.

You turn that on and then after a couple of minutes what you're left with is just the bones and if there's any metal left in the retort we use magnets to remove those pieces.

And then what you have left are the bones and then the bones are ground down into a, sort of a, sand. Not like chalk.

People think it is ashy. It's not . It's just, it's just a very, very granulated sand.

What you receive back is is really just the bones of the deceased.

ISS-4

A Story For the Future: Once upon a time on the space station, there was only one table on the Russian side. After several years the Russians exchanged it for a new one, and the American astronauts asked permission to install it on the U.S. side, in Node 1. When they had dinner together, they'd have maybe six people around the table. The rest of the time the table was in the way, protruding into their passageway, and people were bumping into it pretty hard.

One Sunday one of the crew members was in there having lunch or dinner and he was alone and was looking at this table trying to decide what was wrong. Then it hit them.

They had installed the table like you would in your house—with a surface parallel to the floor. But on the space station, it doesn't make any sense. There is no floor. I mean, there is one, but it's just for reference. But because by definition a table is parallel to the floor, it was installed that way. Now it just took up a lot of space.

So he detached it from the wall and moved it around and found a way to place it on the wall, not perpendicular but tilted, so they could still hang around it comfortably but it wasn't blocking the passageway.

There are a lot of things that happen in life that we try to address in the same old way. We don't understand that we need to do something else. Make something else. A new way. In these days of coronavirus, for example, we can stop trying to do what we can't, and try something that was not apparent before. Make something new.

The table stayed like that, happily tilted, for years.

Later, though, a group of engineers designed and installed new table, and sure enough, they made it to be installed parallel to the ground, because there's no other way, right?

HOSPITALIST-5

Early in the pandemic we had a bunch of letters sent to us from kids. I am going to read you some excerpts because this one is my favorite.

She says:

“learning and building up your education to become someone who can help treat others during the months of COVID is tough, so me and many others decided to write a letter to you and maybe your co-workers to at least show a little of how much we all cheer you on! I even almost said that things were tough for me but when I put myself in your shoes I now realize that people in our community are doing their best to prevent further disaster. I'm jealous 1) because you and many others are doing more to help others than staying home and healthy, and 2) I have to stay all stocked up at home no fresh air, although I should appreciate my parents for keeping me safe. I mean, I don't know any better so that's that I guess.

I'm writing this letter to prove my gratitude.

At the end of the day, it's okay to win some and lose some.

I'm talking about your coworkers not coming into work and how accomplished you will feel after saving so many people.

You can't save everybody but you already know that.

You don't have to be guilty for an accident because they happen. if you make a mistake it's fine because you're human too. NASA made an error by using the wrong units and ended up killing everybody in the departing ship.

We all make major and minor mistakes.

And that has both pros and cons. stay safe out there. Helpers can be helped too, you know.”

When I read it, I started to cry.

PLAYWRIGHT COVID DREAMS-4

Um, what do I think of the future.. Well, I think there will be a lot of bad zoom plays. And I think there will be a lot of bad pandemic plays.

Um, after 9/11 there were so many plays written and some of them have risen to the top, but most of them. I think it was just people getting stuff out rather than making art. So I think that the great 911 play won't be written until 50 years from now.

I've been pretty prolific this year. I got a commission last fall, and I was doing a play based on the Decameron. But now, everybody is doing something based on the Decameron, so I changed topics.

Don't know what the future of my health will be, will this affect my heart.

My lungs, my arteries. I, I believe my life will be shorter for having had
COVID.

My grandmother was able to reach 102 and I can't imagine that happening to me.

I can't imagine it not affecting my heart in some way.

But

On the other hand, I've been given an extra chance

It could have easily gone the other way.

So I wake up pretty happy and there has actually been a lot of
joy.

So I will bring that forward.

BAND TEACHER-4

I wonder what this will be like long-term for us. Where are we going? I mean where are we going when friends believe that you post your inner life on facebook, where are we going when students are anxious and depressed and just missing? Where are we going when teachers can not teach and parents can not parent and kids can not be kids? So where are we going? Down to the basement to be on the computer all day or to be there as people with each other together, making, making change. Making the world better, yes better. I guess we all, well we all have to choose if we are going to go through life with our heads down. With our cameras off or if we are going to you know...show up. Are we going to show up?

NEW MOM-3

I wanted to have a natural birth, but then in the last minute, my doula wasn't allowed to be in the room with me. And I also went in at night and I was so tired and and you know so by, like the next night, I was in labor for 27 hours, and I was like, "I need an epidural" and I felt so shitty about it.

I have tremendous hope for the future. I mean when I look at Danny sleeping in his little bouncy chair with his head kind of leaning to the side, I do have hope.

Well, first what there is, is guilt. You know, it's like I brought a child into all of this and you know it might just be contributing to, you know, killing the world faster. And also, is he going to be a sociopath? I think about that all the time. But also I feel like him and his generation and the younger people that are growing up are going to realize they're not going to have the things that I had just like I didn't have the, the things that my parents had but-

So they're going to have a whole different set of circumstances but he will adapt and he will make the most of it. And I think that him and the rest of the younger people will look around and say, "wow you really made a mess of this" and and i think they're going to fix it. I hope they're

going to fix it. I need to look at the world the way that he
looks at the world. Fresh. And New. And Open. Because my
generation, well we did not do it right. We did not.

GROCERY CART-3

So I'm still standing outside the ALDI, and they all leave and then I walk back home thinking "what kind of idiot am I"? I basically didn't understand anything, so much so, that I couldn't even understand what was happening. This other guy pulled up and knew what was happening within two seconds. He saw the dynamic and intervened in a way that I was like, "this is what it takes to actually live in a community in these days where people are going to be stealing food and needing to steal food and needing someone to show up for you."

HOSPITALIST-6

I know that I want to be cremated. I decided that a long time ago. I imagine my funeral hopefully to be more fun than a downer, but I say that now as someone who's young and hasn't really had to go to that many.

I want it to be fun. A party.

This is a very South Asian sort of thing, but funerals are a celebration of life, everyone wears white and it's a very different sort of philosophy of death. you don't go to death kicking and fighting. You go to death with open arms when it's your time. Death is not considered a failure. I think western culture considers death a failure in many ways. You didn't fight hard enough or you didn't beat it, which is a really hard way to think about death, because it's going to happen to all of us at some point. You can't really win against death.

BRIGHTON BEACH MERMAID-5

Andrea.

I wanted to call you real quick. I hope this is your number.

I hope it's not too late for your play. Are you still writing that play? It was a good idea I thought.

Anyway, I hope this isn't too late.

You'll love this.

I hope this is recording. Is this recording?

Remember I told you about 'the hole'; you know our COVID clubhouse...

Today I saw it burning as I rounded the bay in from the sea ...from the water I could see a giant plume of smoke coming from the hole extending like a ¼ of a mile up into the sky.

Slide of the clubhouse/fire

Thousands of hours of tending by Anton. His sports equipment and all the gathered furniture for the community covid clubhouse and the tennis court...all burnt up. All gone.

I arrived in yellow flippers to 28 grit-covered firemen winding up their hoses and I smiled and said "thanks"

And there I was, a mermaid blinking into the sun, and there they were, dusty firefighters, and the whole moment, us

standing there together, with the burnt up clubhouse behind
us, it was just utterly and profoundly surreal and we all just
stood there on the beach, looking out to the bay. These
firefighters, these first responders, we all just stood there on
Brighton Beach smelling the salty air, blinking into the sun,
crowds of kids yelling
splashing in the water,
Breathing.

Slide of The Winter Swimmers

ASSOCIATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR-5

My funeral. For my funeral, I want a bagpipe player. I don't know why. Well, I do...I mean it's so loud and so mournful and so emotional and so comforting. And my dad was in the military. When I go, I just want people to gather, have some cocktails and have a bagpipe player. And then later maybe karaoke. And joints. I want people to smoke joints. Joints were something that we couldn't have during the pandemic. For one thing, we couldn't share them. For another, we couldn't attack our lungs. I mean under COVID was not a good time to be ruining your lungs. Yeah.

I want people smoking joints.

And telling jokes

And eating food I like to eat, which I will tell you, sometimes

IS barbecue.

And telling stories about me

And all that I did

And all that I will still do

Funeral Director-7

We had the funeral for, for the owner of La Mama. Do you know that theater? Down, down, down here, in the village. A famous theater.

Yeah.

Yes, she, she passed away. We did a service for her that was at St. Patrick's.

And what's wonderful about a funeral for, for actors is you know that for her, for her they had six, six actors carrying her into the church and the moment she entered, everyone lept to their feet. They gave her a standing ovation. Applause. 600 people in the cathedral on their feet, and then singing or chanting....Standing there in that crowd. Feeling the energy just carrying her forward.

that's a really powerful, powerful experience.

To come together like that.

*New Mom begins to hum a hymn, perhaps "Here I am lord".
And we are there. At the funeral.*

To be unified.

ASSOCIATE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

To grieve.

PLAYWRIGHT

To memorialize.

HOSPITALIST

To sing.

*The moment ends. They look at each other. Is this the end?
Do we end with a funeral or? ISS looks around, speaks to
audience.*

ISS-5

A lot of people ask me if I could share one thing with people who are not astronauts, what it would be.

I would say it is the overview effect on the International Space Station. We have a part of a module in the station where you can see 360 degrees and from there you can see the entire earth. And you go up there at sunset and you are bathed in this red light, and you look down and you see this dot and there it is floating there.

ISS space station red light illuminates the space

You don't see geopolitical borders, you don't see people, you, you see only this, this pale blue dot where every human being who has ever been loved, is loved and ever will be loved, exists.

And that just makes you want to share that love with everyone else.

I mean doesn't it?

Thank you.

(END OF PLAY)