

BENCHWARMERS

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DRAFT 1.0

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RUTHIE
 JOHN HENRY
 GENÈVRE
 PEDRO
 MARIA
 JC
 GERRY

A couple of benches, a trash can, and a bus stop.

SCENE 1: WARMING THE BENCH

(Ruthie and John Henry sit on one of the benches passing a quart bottle of beer back and forth between them. Genève and Pedro are on the other. Maria enters stage right and walks up to them.)

RUTHIE

I would stop right this minute, really I would but my DR said not to. Said that could put me at risk. So what can I do? Gotta listen to my doc don't I.

(Ruthie looks around for support from the others.)

JOHN HENRY

hmmph! Doctors! Best thing is to stay away from them that's what I say. I never had any trouble til they dragged me off to that bloody hospital. Now look at me! Not even half the man I used to be. That's what you get for listening to doc-

MARIA

Excuse me. Have you been waiting long?

(Pedro laughs.)

PEDRO

Hey. I aint been here so long but these others are already here quite a while.

(Pedro scootches over on the bench toward Genève and pats the space next to him.)

PEDRO

C'mon, take a load off. I'm Pedro.

(Maria nods and smiles as she sits.)

MARIA

Maria. Thank you.

RUTHIE

Hi Maria, welcome to the gang. You new here? And what happened? You look pretty banged up.

GENÈVRE

Hi! I'm Gen.

MARIA

Yes, I am new. I used to live in Toronto but now, well...

JOHN HENRY

Toronto?! You mean Hogtown. I was there once in the 70s. Not my kind of place.

MARIA

Oh I liked it fine but, well, anyway. I guess it just got to me after a while, living in one of those condo towers where everyone just looks straight ahead in the elevator as if the worst thing that could possibly happen is an interaction with a neighbour.

RUTHIE

Did someone hit you? Is that it? Is that why you came here? To get away.

(Ruthie opens a package of cigarettes, tosses the wrapper in the trash and offers them around. Everyone takes one except Maria who shakes her head.)

MARIA

No. No thanks. I never got the habit. And no, nobody hit me, not ever. It was just

(pause)

MARIA

just an accident.

(pause)

(Genèvre gets up and goes to stand near Maria. She reaches out and gently strokes her sleeve.)

GENÈVRE

I like your sweater. Did you make it?

MARIA

No. It was a gift. From my sister. A friend of hers knits. Everyone she knows has one. At least it fits.

GENÈVRE

I like it.

(Pause in which everyone quietly smokes and Genève scrutinizes Maria.)

GENÈVRE

Y'know, you kinda look like my mom. I think it's the hair.

(Genève gestures to Pedro with the hand holding the cigarette.)

GENÈVRE

Don't you think?

PEDRO

I dunno. Maybe.

GENÈVRE

Or maybe the nose. Look at her nose. Don't you think her nose is like Mom?

(Pedro shrugs.)

PEDRO

I had enough of this shit. Sitting around just waiting and waiting. It's bullshit. I'm going to take a walk.

(Pedro crushes out the cigarette under his foot, and looks slowly from person to person. No one speaks. He stands, hikes up his pants, clears his throat, spits and then grins.)

PEDRO

Anyone else?

(No one replies.)

PEDRO

Yeah well fuck you too.

(Pedro lights another cigarette and then exits stage left with a huff and a puff.)

RUTHIE

Buhbye!

(pause)

That is one angry man.

GENÈVRE

He has his reasons. He wasn't always like that. I'm the one who messed him up. If it weren't for me, he'd probably be fine.

(Gen sits down again with a slump and shakes her head sadly.)

GENÈVRE

I mess everything up. Always did. I'm just that kind of loser.

(Gerry enters stage left carrying a notebook and a bottle. He wanders around jotting things down, taking a swig from the bottle, and looking over at the group now and then. Ruthie offers cigarettes around and everyone sits smoking and watching Gerry.)

(pause)

(John Henry leans forward and addresses Gen.)

JOHN HENRY

It isn't your fault. He told me all about it. It was going wrong before. If anyone is to blame, its the doctors. And that stupid woman.

RUTHIE

What woman? His mother?

(Gen looks over at Ruthie and shakes her head sadly.)

JOHN HENRY

No, not her.
The other one. The one who wished him dead. "If only he would get hit by a bus or something". That's what she said. It does damage y'know, saying crap like that.

(Ruthie watches Gerry as he gets closer and closer to the group on the benches. When he is a few feet away, she shouts.)

RUTHIE

HEY BUDDY!?! YEAH YOU WITH THE NOTEBOOK.
You want to join us? I SAID, DO YOU WANT TO JOIN US?

(Gerry smiles nervously and takes a step forward, then stops and jots something down.)

RUTHIE

C'MON! It's OKAY. We are as messed up as you think we are but we don't bite. I SAID WE DON'T BITE. Come sit down.

(Gerry takes another step toward the group and hesitates...)

RUTHIE

C'mon, c'mon. HERE, have a cigarette.

(Ruthie holds the package out and now Gerry finally sidles up, like a timid dog, and takes one. John Henry offers him a light.)

GERRY

Thanks.

(Gerry sticks the notebook in his pocket, looks around nervously and thrusts the bottle forward as an offering. John Henry takes it and has a swig before offering it to Ruthie.)

RUTHIE

Vodka? Blech! Not for me thanks. That stuff'll kill ya.

GERRY

I'm not sure if I should be here. It might - I mean I - um- do you know if-

JOHN HENRY

What?! Spit it out already!!

RUTHIE

HEYYYYY!!!! JESSICA MY FRIEND. I was beginning to give up on you!

(A middle-aged woman enters stage left. She looks dishevelled and confused.)

JC

Ruthie? Is that really you? Here??

(JC looks from person to person with an expression of increasing shock and anxiety.)

omigawd omigawd this is so wrong. What are you doing here? And you??! Any of you? This is a mistake. This is not for me, not now and not ever. No fucking way. i absolutely cannot be here. FUCK FUCK FUCK i cannot believe it! And how long will this all take? Anyone???!

(Gen jumps up and gives JC a hug and then smiles nervously. JC smiles back and speaks, a little more calmly, to Gen.)

JC (CON'T)
 i need to go back, y'know, like to leave
 as soon as possible. Like right now in
 fact. Get back to what i- well, to the
 uh, get back to my job. That's what i
 need, get back to work.anyway, i really
 really think it's the wrong and-

JOHN HENRY
 So leave.

JC
 What?

JOHN HENRY
 You can leave Jessica. You said you want
 to go. So leave already. No one is
 stopping you.

GERRY
 I could go with you.

JC
 What?
 And don't call me that. i prefer JC.

GERRY
 If you want. I mean, if you're really
 leaving. I'd go with you.

(JC looks around from person to person. Nobody, except
 Gerry, will look at her. They all look down or away.
 Ruthie pulls out the pack of cigarettes and passes them
 around.)

(JC screams. A very loud bloodcurdling scream. - pause-
 She stands trembling and glares at the group on the
 bench.)

JC
 You fucking arseholes.

(JC turns to Gerry with a grimace.)

JC
 So are you coming or what?!

(JC stalks off with Gerry trailing behind.)

(Lights fade to black.)