

Elementary

by Ben Hauck

.....

WANDERER

MEMBER 1

SUPPORT HOST

Leader of Wanderer's support group.

MEMBER 2

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

WIFE

Wanderer's wife.

SELLER

Sells milk at a milk stand.

YOUNG GIRL

Elementary school student.

DOG

A dog, portrayed by an actor in costume.

MEMBER 3

CONTESTANT #1

Voice.

GAMESHOW HOST

Voice.

PINK ELEPHANT

A woman in a pink elephant costume.

JAMAICAN CONTESTANT

Voice.

POLICE INTERCOM

Voice.

JAILOR

OPERATOR

Voice.

.....

[In the support group. Five members sit around the SUPPORT HOST.]

WANDERER

[In darkness, Spotlight on face:] Oh dammit I'm missing Wheel of Fortune!!!

[Lights up, group laughter.]

MEMBER 1

So I *slam* on my brakes, and the deer is hyperfocusing on *me*! And then I realized: Deers have A.D.D. too!

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

Wait, maybe I set the VCR this time. Yes. No. Yes. Ahhhh—no, because, *Shoot!*, the toast popped, bagel, buttered—

[Lights up, group laughter.]

SUPPORT HOST

Anyone else? Anyone else have a—

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

Vanna ... Vanna ... [Like '80's Pat Sajak:] "Oh, Vanna" ...

[Lights up, group laughter.]

MEMBER 2

And I was struck with the revelation that *bird poop*, when fresh on the arm, has no attention span either, just dripping down and around, like this:

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

Vanna Vanna Bo Banna, Banana Fanna Fo Fanna—

[Lights up, silence.]

MEMBER 2

[Pantomimes the drip of bird poop around the arm.]

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

Fee Fie Fojak, ... Sajak.

[Lights up.]

SUPPORT HOST

John? John?

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

[Mimicking:] "John? John?"

[Lights up.]

SUPPORT HOST

Are you with us, John?

[Back to darkness.]

WANDERER

[Mimicking:] "Earth to—Oh—"

[Lights up.]

WANDERER

Yes? I—I—I'm sorry . . .

SUPPORT HOST

No.

WANDERER

I'm sorry.

SUPPORT HOST

No No. We here—

WANDERER

I get—

SUPPORT HOST

We here all are embracing—

WANDERER

I get distracted.

SUPPORT HOST

Yes, we all do. That's why we're here.

[Pause.]

WANDERER

I got distracted.

SUPPORT HOST

Yes, I know. And we're going to help you.

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

I can't read. I'm fully literate, love to read big words aloud at rapid pace, but I haven't the foggiest idea of what I'm saying. I'll tear through a sentence of Shakespeare with emphasis and emotion, blurt out news on websites about what's happening in the Middle East, but ask me a question about what I just read and all I can say is, "Um, *yeah*." I have no reading comprehension.

[At the office.]

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

[Urgent:] Here. Read this.

[WANDERER accepts a sheet and starts to read.]

Can you believe that? Well the stuff sure has hit the fan. I think you should jump on this A-sap. Here: Here's a phone. Call them and tell them to eat you.

WANDERER

I—What is this?

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

Read it.

WANDERER

What do you want me to do?

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

Don't you listen? CALL THEM.

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

I'm a good listener. I just don't listen. I get distracted. My mind is taken over by the immediate. If I'm talking to someone and someone who looks like Elvis walks by, I'm gonna look at Elvis. It's now. A conversation can wait. And I'm screwed if I don't look at Elvis, he's gonna be gone. And then all I think about is how Elvis just passed by, and whom I'm gonna tell, all the while nodding and smiling to the person and *thinking* I'm listening.

[On the sidewalk.]

WIFE

[Onstage, Over phone:] John?

WANDERER

[Onstage, Over phone:] Hon'?

WIFE

John.

WANDERER

[Nothing.]

WIFE

John, are you listening to me, are you there.

[A PINK ELEPHANT person skips by John, holding a portable tape player.]

WANDERER

[A beat.] —Yeah!—

WIFE

John ...

WANDERER

—Yeah, yeah—I’m—

WIFE

John, bring home some *milk*.

[The PINK ELEPHANT person flirts with WANDERER from afar.]

WANDERER

[While watching elephant:] Okay. *Thank you*. Alright.

WIFE

Love you ...

WANDERER

Love you. B’bye.

[The PINK ELEPHANT squeals like an elephant—a loud, boisterous recording of one that the actor only ever pantomimes. The PINK ELEPHANT pushes play on the tape player and flirts, but does not clap during the audio recording:]

[An audio recording.]

“If you’re distracted and you know it, clap your hands.”

[WANDERER stands there; Clap clap! on the recording but not from WANDERER.]

“If you’re distracted and you know it, clap your hands.”

[Clap clap!]

‘If you’re distracted and you know it then your face will surely show it, If you’re distracted and you know it clap your hands!’

[Clap clap!]

[The PINK ELEPHANT exits, flirtatiously.]

WANDERER

...That was a *pink elephant!* HA!

[A street corner. A milk stand with a shouting SELLER. A YOUNG GIRL jumps rope. WANDERER watches.]

SELLER

Get yer Ice Cold Milk!, Cold Milk Ice!, Icy Milk!, Milky Milk Milk-Milk! ...

YOUNG GIRL

‘If Jack goes back
To get his sack
And Jill goes git
Her pack,
Then heart attack
Will attack Jack
And Jill goes git
His will—

WANDERER

[Suddenly:] Hello.

YOUNG GIRL

[Stops.] Hello. ‘If Simon takes a rhymin’ to his girlfriend Selma Diamond—

WANDERER

You’re a good jumproper.

YOUNG GIRL

[Stops.] Thank you. ‘Then her hymen will start chimin’—

WANDERER

WHAT?!

YOUNG GIRL

[Stops. Stares.] ‘Then the lemon with her limon—

WANDERER

“Then the lemon with her limon, will *cut* the grease and grimin’

BOTH

“And the timin’ of his mimin’

Makes Simon timin’ mimin’ hymen chimin’ Selma Diamond.”

SELLER

Two percent, One percent, No percent, Fat Free, Vitamin D.

[Pause.]

WANDERER

You’re a good jumproper.

YOUNG GIRL

Thank you—

WANDERER

Can I jump?

YOUNG GIRL

[Pat:] Mommy said I shouldn’t talk to strangers.

SELLER

You talk to me.

WANDERER

You talk to the milk guy.

YOUNG GIRL

I know you.

SELLER

You don’t know me.

WANDERER

Just for a minute:

[Pause.]

[YOUNG GIRL hands it over. WANDERER starts to jump rope.]

WANDERER

What’s your name?

[The YOUNG GIRL stands silent.]

WANDERER

You're cute. I like your hair. [Jumping rope:] 'The Turkey on my Thai and the Chile on my China ...

SELLER

Sir, you need some milk?

[WANDERER stays focused.]

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

[Jumping rope:] Okay, if, if I, if I have something right there immediately in front of me, a physical task, or a piece of info that I need to get me to the next level, a bullet could hit me square in the head and I wouldn't jar. I can sometimes hyperfocus. For me, it's when I'm obsessed with something, learning something, I don't think of anything else. And that's when, they, what they point to when they say I don't have A.D.D. They say I don't have A.D.D.

[In the kitchen.]

WIFE

You don't have A.D.D.

WANDERER

I'm sure of it.

WIFE

You're just lazy you use it as an excuse.

WANDERER

I get so distracted—

WIFE

You use it as an *excuse*. Try harder.

WANDERER

I *do* try harder. I try hard.

WIFE

You *don't* try hard. I tell you to *try* and remember this, and you don't remember it. I write it down on a sheet of paper and you forget to read the paper.

WANDERER

It's because I get, I don't think about it—

WIFE

Did you get the milk?

WANDERER

[Embarrassed beat.] You said that: When?

WIFE

John!—

WANDERER

—I'll go get some milk now.

WIFE

John, I told you to get some milk!

WANDERER

I saw a Pink Ele—I was *talking*—

WIFE

I tell you one simple thing and you *don't do it!*

WANDERER

I need to write it down.

WIFE

You just *told me*—

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

Okay okay *OKAY*, so you're watching this play. And I'd make a fair guess to say that seventy-five percent of you are following along. Seventy-five percent. "Seventy-five percent" you say?? Only seventy-five percent?? You mean, twenty-five percent *aren't* following this play?? Twenty-five percent *aren't following*??

And then I'd say that that level has increased to about ninety percent, given that I've made this play immediately more relevant to the twenty-five percent, the twenty-five percent who have attention deficit disorder.

[Beat.]

Do you need me to repeat that? [Beat.] Oh, *milk* . . .

[In the night.]

[WANDERER runs. Signs reading "MILK," "Milk here," "Skim Milk," "Milky Milk Milk Milk," etc., fly by him as if in a nightmare, perhaps as a projection behind him.]

WANDERER

Now where am I gonna find milk at this hour?

[The YOUNG GIRL appears behind him, jumping rope, singing:]

YOUNG GIRL

"Pease milk hot, Pease milk cold...

WANDERER

I WAS AT THE MILK STAND!! [Strikes forehead.] That milk stand guy prolly isn't open.

[SELLER appears behind him, calling out his spiel for customers.]

SELLER

[As if to a bevy of customers:] Sorry, I'm closed. Nope, sorry, closed. Closed. Milk tomorrow!

YOUNG GIRL

[Overlapping:] "Pease milk in the carton, Nine days old ...

WANDERER

We get, We get, we get *skim*, right?

SELLER

[Overlapping:] *Yes*, I have skim. But not today! CLOSED! Tomorrow, tomorrow ...

[A DOG, played by a costumed actor, starts chasing him, barking. The other characters start rhyming and calling out, respectively. They do not culminate into rhythm, but into a chaotic orchestra.]

YOUNG GIRL

[Overlapping:] ‘Some like it hot, some like it cold ...

SELLER

[Overlapping:] TOMORROW! TOMORROW! ...

[The DOG barks more viciously.]

YOUNG GIRL

[Overlapping:] ‘Some like it in the jugs, Nine days old ...’

[The chaotic orchestra converges on WANDERER and collides. He falls to the ground, in terror.]

WANDERER

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ahhhhhhhhh!!!

[Darkness.]

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

A Thought.

It emerges.

In your brain.

“A thought is born.”

You think of *Milk*.

And you have a siphon.

The thought is channeled into the siphon.

Into words.

The thought is channeled into words.

And they pour out.

You pour your thought out into words.

And the words pour out.

Onto your cereal.

A bowl of Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes.

Your words pour out onto flakes.

The flakes get soaked, take in your words.

They are heavied.

No longer flakes—but something else.

Milk pours out, and soaks flakes.

[Pause.]

I am a milk-resistant frosted flake.

[Lights up.]

[In the kitchen.]

WIFE

Dog.

WANDERER

Yes.

WIFE

COME ON!

WANDERER

It was *chasing me!*

WIFE

COME ON!!

WANDERER

And the milkstand guy wasn't open.

WIFE

A gas station. *A gas station!*

WANDERER

Oh.

WIFE

A gas station.

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

He doesn't listen. And I'm perfect.

[Nowhere.]

YOUNG GIRL

[Jumping rope:] ‘I dot the i and I C the C
 But all of the meaning escapes me
 While sentences build into paragraphs
 I watch the syntax while U stand and *laugh*
 I double the U then drink all the T
 U ask me ‘Y?’ and ‘A?’ says me.”

[She stops jumping rope.]

Johnnie runs around class all class long. Missez Wanderer says Johnnie’s ‘hyperactive.’ She told me in secret. She says you can’t give Johnnie sugar else he runs around. He kicks like a video game. One time he punched Missez Wanderer and Missez Wanderer took it. I want to run around like Johnnie. I have a pretty red rain slicker and I want to run around in it. I want to run around and be the Red Devil. And I would punch Johnnie on the arm and tell him he shouldn’t eat sugar. And I’d make him sit down and sit still and stop running around and stop kicking and stop hitting Missez Wanderer. And I’d take my big red lasso and tie him up with it and tell him to sit down and now listen to *me*. And I’d kiss him and make him love me and be my bride.

[The street corner.]

WANDERER

So you want to kill Johnnie.

YOUNG GIRL

[In all seriousness:] Yes.

WANDERER

You want to ...kill ...

YOUNG GIRL

Yes, I want to kill him, hurt him, then kill him.

WANDERER

Because he’s ‘hyperactive’?

YOUNG GIRL

Because he’s, bothering me, he bothers me. He drags his nails on the chalkboard. He doesn’t cut his nails.

WANDERER

Lemme see your jumprope. [Beat.] [Teasingly:] *Pleeease?*

[She gives him the jumprope. He starts jumping rope.]

YOUNG GIRL

Johnnie spells his name J-O-H-N-N-I-E.

[Beat.]

WANDERER

Why do you think Johnnie's hyperactive?

YOUNG GIRL

I don't know. [Seamless shift:] It's dark out.

WANDERER

Yes. It is. The dark has a smell to it.

YOUNG GIRL

What does it smell like?

WANDERER

Romance.

YOUNG GIRL

Can I have my jumprope back?

WANDERER

Um.

YOUNG GIRL

They're shutting off the lights. The gas station's closing.

WANDERER

Thee—Oh. [Drops jumprope and runs off.]

[Lights out.]

[In the kitchen.]

[Strauss's new millennial music plays. Silhouette of WANDERER as a door abruptly opens. He lifts his arm slowly, bearing a quart-sized carton. Closes the door. On the second flourish of the music, he puts the carton in the fridge and closes the fridge door.]

[The lights flick on.]

WIFE

Did you get the stamps?

WANDERER

What stamps?

WIFE

I told you to get stamps.

WANDERER

I don't remember your telling me.

WIFE

I told you to get stamps.

WANDERER

At this hour?!

[WIFE opens the fridge.]

WIFE

JOOOOOOOHNNNN!

[Pause.]

WANDERER

What.

WIFE

[Holding it up:] BUTTERmilk.

[WANDERER bolts.]

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

Okay, at this point, I'm thinking some credit must be given: I ran out chased by a dog and went to a gas station and bought *buttermilk*. Who woulda thought they'd sell buttermilk at the gas station? ? I mean, you can't lift a piano and do a complex math equation at the same time. Under duress, we cannot process. At least not to our maximum capacity. Else we get the math equation wrong, or we drop the piano on our big toe.

Input Pressure, Output Gobbledygook.

[In the support group. Five members sit around the SUPPORT HOST.]

SUPPORT HOST

This exercise is designed to improve our ability to concentrate on important things. Richard, remember when you asked me why we had to sign a release for a support group? This is why.

MEMBER 2

[Who has maintained eye contact the whole time:] I'm sorry, were you talking to me?

SUPPORT HOST

Now, John, I'd like you to get up, You will be our guinea pig.

[WANDERER stands.]

Alright. Now, I'm going to give you this passage to read aloud. [She does.] You're going to read the passage aloud, [She walks to a closet and opens it.] and I'm going to hand out these padded billy clubs to your supportmates. [Out of the closet in her hands emerge menacing padded, spiked clubs.] You will start to read the passage—Here you go, Richard—

MEMBER 2

[Sinisterly:] Thank you.

SUPPORT HOST

You will start to read the passage, and every time you trip up on a word, the group will strike you with the billy clubs.

[WANDERER just stands there, with anxiety.]

Group, you need to really pummel him. A few times a stammer is good. Any questions? Good.

MEMBER 1

Wait—[To another:] what do we do?

SUPPORT HOST

LEAVE. [Arrows him out.]

[MEMBER 1 leaves, shocked.]

SUPPORT HOST

Okay, John, begin . . .

[Pause.]

[WANDERER stands there for a moment, eyeing the billy-club-armed support group. The SUPPORT HOST arms herself with one as well, and gets into a ‘professional’ stance.]

WANDERER

‘The dog—

[MEMBER 2 pummels WANDERER—a false start. Then everyone else does too, including the SUPPORT HOST.]

SUPPORT HOST

No, Group, when John stammers.

WANDERER

[Stunned:] ‘The dog sat by the tree.’

[Looks up.]

‘The tree stood in the yard.’

[Looks up.]

‘The prol-prol-

[They clobber him.]

[Quickly:] ‘The prolixity of the Dachshund’s vociferous barking inculcated the specific, terrific, magnificent sentient mentionings modified by the dried papaya fryer, ergo, yielding a toasted boasting banana fritter tittering on the inchoate infrastructure inherent in the inning in Indianapolis, Indiana.’

SUPPORT HOST

[Poised to strike, Surprised to put down guard:] *Well* ...Not bad, John. Put with a task in front of you, you accomplished it. Our pressure didn’t sway you. Congratulations. Now, Tell me what you read.

[Beat.]

WANDERER

You didn’t *ask me* to do *that*.

[They pummel WANDERER.]

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

I don't care if he listens to others he just has to listen to *me*. [Sees DOG.] Comere, boy.

[The DOG runs in.]

[The DOG does tricks—rolls over, jumps, barks, breakdances—a quite apparent pull of focus during the following.]

It's a matter of *respect*. It's *respect* for me, to remember things. A good dog comes when you call him. He's obedient. He listens to you. Don'choo, boy?

[The DOG makes no particular reaction to or not to her comment.]

So you know, my birthday is on the twenty-eighth. It's my thirty-second, but I tell everyone it's my twenty-fifth. My social security number is 268-00-9862 and my Visa number is 4892-1398-7168-9247 and my checking account number is 759-260-278-9292-6192-87384. I have ten fingers and ten toes which makes for twenty phalanges. Or twenty digits. Remember Remember Remember that that that. Remember that.

[The street corner.]

[WANDERER enters the ensuing conversation and simply watches.]

SELLER

Snap Crackle Pop were the characters for Rice Krispies . . .

YOUNG GIRL

[Nothing.]

SELLER

You don't know about Snap Crackle Pop? Oh jeez, I guess I date myself. The commercials? Don't they have commercials for Rice Krispies?

YOUNG GIRL

No.

SELLER

Alphabet Soup? Spaghetti-O's?

YOUNG GIRL

Nope.

SELLER

Oh Gosh, No Spaghetti-O's commercials. I remember way back seein this one Spaghetti-O's commercial, they pan in close to a bowl of it, and you think they're just a jumble of letters, but I SWEAR TO YOU, they *musta* arranged it, they had to've, but they go in really close with the camera and you see the word "DOG GUTS" in it. "DOG GUTS." I told my friends about it who'd seen the commercial and they thought I was crazy. You don't just have "DOG GUTS" accidentally appear in your Spaghetti-O's. I mean, it was hard enough to get "ASS" to spell out . . .

YOUNG GIRL

[Pauses.]

SELLER

Alphabet Soup, while you're spelling out words, your soup gets cold. Then your kids don't wanna eat it. They wanna look at the words they spelled. *Some invention.* That's corporate American genius, make a product you buy because it's fun and edible, but the edible part's not taken advantage of. Take *Milk*. Milk has an expiration date. You gotta use it before it expires. You buy it *for* milk, not for spelling or some math lesson. You plan your week around it.

YOUNG GIRL

[Slowly jumping rope, Overlapping:] A, B, C, D, E, F, G ...

SELLER

[In a female voice:] —"Better get some milk, at the store." Or cooking stops when your milk's expired, You eat out. You pick up the jug with the latest expiration date and all the other milk is left behind ...

WANDERER

[To SELLER:] Hey.

YOUNG GIRL

...H, I, J, K, L—Can milk kill you? [Noticing WANDERER:] Hi. [Beat.] Can milk kill you?

WANDERER

I suppose anything can kill you?

SELLER

It can.

WANDERER

It could fall on your head.

SELLER

It could fall on your head. [Chuckles.]

YOUNG GIRL

I don't mean that.

WANDERER

A *feather* could kill ya, if you choked on it.

SELLER

Hey, Hey—Did you ever see that Spaghetti-O's commercial that spelled out 'DOG GUTS' in the bowl?

[Beat.]

WANDERER

I think I have . . .

SELLER

I know someone, a whole wall of canned beans fell on him. At the supermarket. Didn't die though.

WANDERER

[To YOUNG GIRL:] You have a morbid world view.

YOUNG GIRL

'Morbid.' Is that funny?

WANDERER

It's, *disenchanting*.

WANDERER

Why do you want to know if milk can kill you?

YOUNG GIRL

I don't know.

WANDERER

Do you still want to kill Johnnie?

SELLER

Is Johnnie the fella—

YOUNG GIRL

Shhsh!

[Pause.]

WANDERER

Oh . . .

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

I don't drink milk even a day past the expiration date. It's *expired*.

[A separate nowhere.]

WANDERER

We were talking about this one night at eleven fifty-three. I pulled the milk jug out of the refrigerator and set it on the table. We talked for ten minutes. During the course of our conversation, *the milk had expired*.

And she criticizes *me* ...

WIFE

Did you get milk?

[WANDERER runs out.]

[The street corner.]

[WANDERER holds a gallon jug of milk with a red bow on it.]

WANDERER

This milk, if it stays out, it will taste bad. And I'll give it to her. I'm in no rush to get home. She's picky like that. She waits two days for me to get milk instead of her getting it herself, she's gonna have to deal. And if it makes her sick to her stomach, it makes her sick to her stomach.

YOUNG GIRL

I wanna *hurt* Johnnie.

WANDERER

It's that it's a *mindgame*. She can tell me *Everything* then *expects* me to remember it. I don't remember any of it. *AT ALL*. Then I realize she can tell me *Nothing* and expect me to remember that too. So she can have an advantage, so she can put me in the wrong. She *never* said go get stamps, but because she knows I have no memory, she can play that card and make me the deficient one and thus have me under her finger.

YOUNG GIRL

She sounds mean.

WANDERER

It's like she wants me to read her mind, but the book hasn't even been published yet! And to top it off, Say she hasn't told me something but her mind insists she has: She doesn't have the humbleness of perspective to realize that what *she* remembers could be wrong, that *she* might misremember, that not everyone remembers as well as *her* ... Instead, her memory is *absolute*, her perspective is *right*, and I can't correct her *because I have a bad memory!!!*

YOUNG GIRL

What is 'humbleness ...of—

WANDERER

'Humbleness'? I—? Oh, 'humbleness,' 'humbleness of perspective.' What did I say. It's thee, *appreciation* that you can't be right about everything, that someone else might have a better, more-informed view than you. People think they're right. *People assume they're right.*

YOUNG GIRL

Milk can kill you . . .

WANDERER

Welllllll, might make her sick.

YOUNG GIRL

How can I get Johnnie to listen to me?

WANDERER

I don't know. I thought you wanted to hurt him.

YOUNG GIRL

I guess. That's a pretty ribbon.

WANDERER

Would you like it? In your hair?

YOUNG GIRL

[Pause.]

WANDERER

Here, let me put it in your hair.

[He unties the bow, sets down the milk, and ties the ribbon in her hair, with care.]

WANDERER

There—

YOUNG GIRL

Thank you!

WANDERER

You look different!—

YOUNG GIRL

Who do I look like?

WANDERER

I—I— [Beat.] I have to get going. I have a meeting. [Leaves.]

YOUNG GIRL

[After a pause, Calling after:] You forgot your milk!

[WANDERER re-enters.]

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

I had the most magnificent dream. I had a dream I was the center of the world. All of the birds and the apples and all of the planets swirled around me. They fed me. They served me. I was beautiful. I was heavenly. I saw all, and all saw me. But I saw first. I had the perfect perspective. And Fabio was in front of me and he took me in his arms and said, “You are my woman” and lifted me onto his hips and I felt the insurgence of the power of being the only two people important in this world, the only one person important alive.

[A separate nowhere.]

WANDERER

I had this horrible nightmare. I dreamt she was the center of the world.. And I orbited her. I was a satellite of my wife. I would see all around her, every crevice, backside and front, but she wouldn't be conscious when I was behind her. But because I circled her, she felt important. She felt right. She was the center of the world. And she'd thrust her six-hundred pound arms out and swat at me as if it were her purpose to keep me off balance, going around her. And I'd slam into brick or cement walls and my face was all bloodied up, nose busted up, The credits began rolling at the end of this dream and they said my role was I was Second Assistant to the Gaffer's Monkeychild . . .

[In the support group. Milk sit under his chair.]

SUPPORT HOST

Well, John, the reason we set up this arrangement of chairs in a triangle, with me at head, the "Important Position," is to accentuate Focus, to point out that I'm the Adjusted One, that I have the kind of attention that you aspire to have. I didn't really *intend* to tell you that, I think I should be honest.

MEMBER 3

What's pi?

MEMBER 1

Three-point-one-four-one-five-nine . . .

SUPPORT HOST

SH! I'M TALKING!!! If we set this up like a circle, I wouldn't be focal, we'd all be facing random people, *Equals*.

WANDERER

Okay, I have a question: *Why* do I aspire to be you? What if I'm completely content that I can't focus on things, that that's *my* way of thinking, of seeing the world, and that I don't really give any special care about how Apt you are at seeing things?

SUPPORT HOST

Well, because *I'm Teacher*. Because I Have The Degree. Because I have studied Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder in children, young adults and adults, and Because I have accumulated volumes and volumes of data on the subject, that validates my perspective and informs my opinion that you have a *problem* and you suffer in life because you don't have the ability to Focus as other people do, as Normal People do. And Because you have Sought Me Out and come for my assistance to adjust you along my Path of Enlightenment, and Because I offer you the Best Support Group In Aiding You To Better Your Attention Span.

WANDERER

[Respectfully:] Yes, but I've lived these X-many years dealing with it, What if I've come up with my own ways to deal?

SUPPORT HOST

No.

WANDERER

If I give up this support group today, what will happen to me?

SUPPORT HOST

You will remain forever lost.

WANDERER

Forever lost.

SUPPORT HOST

Forever lost.

[Brooding trance music. Thumping bass. DANCERS dance wildly—as does WANDERER, more so than the others. The dark stage swirls with disco colors. A disco ball slowly lowers and WANDERER dances in front of it. The DANCERS gather around it and start to circle counterclockwise. All continue to dance wildly, with WANDERER wildest. WANDERER eventually joins them. The bass thumps harder, the trance intensifies. The YOUNG GIRL jumps rope clockwise around once. The PINK ELEPHANT dances around clockwise, following after the YOUNG GIRL. The bass thumps harder, the trance further intensifies. WANDERER pulls from the circle and dances wildly up front, the wildest, most uncontrolled joyous movement yet. The DANCERS begin circling WANDERER as the disco ball slowly pulls out. WANDERER, in short bursts, screams with ecstasy.]

[WIFE emerges from the back and the lights come up sharply. All freeze, WANDERER slows to a stop.]

WIFE

[Restrained:] JOHN. I FOUND THE MILK IN THE CUPBOARD. THE CUPBOARD. THE MILK WAS IN THE CUPBOARD.

[Blackout.]

End Act I.

[Nowhere.]

[The television program plays in voiceover, on a dark stage.]

CONTESTANT #1

K.

GAMESHOW HOST

Sorry, there's no K. ["Sorry" music flourish.] John Wanderer, you spin the wheel.

[Sound of Wheel spinning.]

GAMESHOW HOST

Six hundred.

WANDERER

L.

GAMESHOW HOST

There are 2 L's. [A flourish of 2 bings, for each letter.]

WANDERER

I'll spin.

[Sound of Wheel spinning. Audience Ooo's.]

GAMESHOW HOST

One thousand.

WANDERER

P.

GAMESHOW HOST

There are 63 P's. [A flourish of 63 bings, for each letter..] Keeeeeep turnin' those letters ... *Yep* ... [When we get the point...]

[Lights up, as if out of a dream.]

[In the car.]

WANDERER

Uh-huh.

WIFE

...Well, Mary wouldn't take any of that. She had to have her crucifix back. So Georgia McGovern and Lady Loo confronted Mary on the back entrance to the portico to the foyer, the right side, not the left side, the yellow side, That's the place where Aunt Gracie gouged out her coat buttons with her curling iron, And let's not forget that this was not Monday, not Wednesday, not Thursday, not *Friday*, not even Saturday or Sunday, but this was *Tuesday* and the Crenshaws hadn't even bathed poor Sybil and Little-Georgia, ... Mary grimaced like a dirty girl who'd done something naughty, eaten all her Thin Mints, and said *This is my crucifix and if you want it you had better tell Jesus that you're reclaiming his special prize for your mission!* ...

Nurse Sandra about had a *coronary* at this. She poured her whole bottle of scotch in the waiting room palm tree which spilled all over the new Good Housekeeping, Jackson rushed in and proceeded to do his thing—"Guard the brinks, She's coming out *plastic!*"—setting everyone ablaze, [Correcting:] every *thing* ... Mary's crucifix was dangling around her wrist intertwined with her Medic Alert bracelet, all these bees swarming around her because of the honey, I could see Guilded Gary striking not even six p.m. and all this turmoil *surely* affected them. You know?

WANDERER

Yeahhhhhh. [Pause.] [Looks at her briefly:] Yes. Amazing.

WIFE

You weren't listening.

WANDERER

Yes I was. Crucifix is one of those weird words. The plural of 'index' is *indices*. Shouldn't the plural of crucifix be *crucifeces*?

WIFE

JOHN YOU JUST MISSED OUR EXIT!

[WANDERER brakes to a halt immediately. Horns honk and cars swerve by instantaneously.]

WANDERER

—Oops—

[He starts to drive the car again.]

WIFE

JOHN! What are you doing?? *Turn around!!*

WANDERER

This is the expressway! I'm not going to turn on the expressway!

WIFE

If you do it real fast!—What?, you can stop to a dead stop but *not turn around??*

WANDERER

Ex-spress-waaaaay.

WIFE

Sometimes the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Or just turning around.

WANDERER

Oh: *Genius, Genius* comment. *Brilliant.*

[THE PINK ELEPHANT appears out of nowhere. It throws up its arms.]

WIFE

JOHN!! WATCH OUT!!—

[Elephant squeal, WIFE screams, *CRASH*. Lights out.]

[Nowhere.]

[Lights up.]

WANDERER

My A.D.D. has its advantages. When I'm driving, it's an excellent excuse, because If I'm distracted away from the road, If I have to listen to a conversation, I could hurt somebody, get in an accident and such. So is this case. I come out fine, my wife sustains **pretty serious** head trauma and is slightly amnesiac, and this woman-it-turns-out who's the Pink Elephant I saw earlier, who happened to be standing on the shoulder of the expressway, is the bedside I gravitate to.

[At the hospital. The PINK ELEPHANT lies in a hospital bed, her right arm in a sling and shoulder bandaged, her elephant helmet at her bedside. She still wears her elephant costume, though. She laughs boisterously, even though in some pain.]

WANDERER

..I saw you earlier.

PINK ELEPHANT

[Laughing loudly:] I'm laughing with the guy who hit me with his car!

WANDERER

You have to admit seeing a pastel pachyderm flying through the air into a drainage ditch is pretty funny, especially if there are no serious injuries.

PINK ELEPHANT

Shoulder sprain!

WANDERER

I'm sorry.

PINK ELEPHANT

I should *hate* you!

WANDERER

Do you?

PINK ELEPHANT

[Laughing:] *But I don't!!!*

[WANDERER laughs too.]

WANDERER

I think I hit your funny bone.

[PINK ELEPHANT continues to laugh loudly.]

WANDERER

You could sue me for peanuts.

[PINK ELEPHANT continues to laugh more.]

WANDERER

A sprained shoulder and a broken trunk.

[PINK ELEPHANT's laughter peaks. WANDERER laughs too, and they fade together.]

PINK ELEPHANT

You're a dork.

[Beat.]

WANDERER

Excuse me?

PINK ELEPHANT

You heard me.

WANDERER

I'm a dork.

PINK ELEPHANT

[Makes an elephant squeal.]

WANDERER

[Laughing:] Okay, I'm the dork?

PINK ELEPHANT

No, I'm not a dork. I'm a freak. I dress as costume animals. I get paid to host kiddie parties. You make bad jokes that aren't even funny.

WANDERER

But you laughed.

PINK ELEPHANT

Sense of humor.

WANDERER

You afraid of mice?

PINK ELEPHANT

Oh, well as if I've never heard *THAT* pick-up line at the bar ...

WANDERER

At the *bar*?

PINK ELEPHANT

Look, you're cute, I'm flighty, can't do anything for real, I make *balloon* animals. I like to eat *sugar*.

WANDERER

I'm married.

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

What are you talking about? [Beat.] I like to eat sugar, and I drive a purple Volkswagen Beetle.

WANDERER

What's your name?

PINK ELEPHANT

Puddintane.

WANDERER

[Dryly:] Ha, Ha. I'll look at your chart—

PINK ELEPHANT

DONT NOT look at my chart.

[Pause.]

WANDERER

Okay. I won't. Sorry.

PINK ELEPHANT

Sorry? Sorry's a board game. I don't like board, I like to keep it interesting . . .

WANDERER

All my sorries aside, why *were* you on the side of the road?

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

I was "fixing" something. [Seamless shift:] You're "married." Where's your wife?

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

We take for granted that because we speak, we're heard. It never ceases to amaze me that people think words have meaning. Words don't have meaning, *people* have meaning. Words are sounds, parrots can mimic them, little babies can say "poo-poo" but not know what they're talking about. I called a *girl* a son-of-a-bitch when I was younger.

Words don't have meaning, people have meaning. My A.D.D. really locks me onto the words sometimes, not the meaning—the *Sounds*. Crucifeces, He just said "whom," Is "reciprocity" a big word or are they just stupid, like that . . . I hear songs and sing along with the lyrics but I have no idea what they're saying . . . Ask me what a song's about, I'll tell you it *sounds good* . . . Almost everything I hear is "Mama Se Mama Sa Ma Ma Co Sa."

Just because you make sounds, don't think I automatically understand them!

But sometimes someone awakens my interest . . . *Hyperfocus* . . .

[In the car. The PINK ELEPHANT still sports a sling for her sprained right shoulder, elephant helmet in her lap.]

WANDERER

Seriously?

PINK ELEPHANT

Seriously.

WANDERER

I think I have A.D.D. too.

PINK ELEPHANT

Yeah?

WANDERER

I'm pretty sure I do. I go to support meetings. They're not very confidence-inspiring.

PINK ELEPHANT

Well, Mister A.D.D. Too, this is really nice, *odd*, odd-nice, that you're driving me home. I'll have to tell my lawyer for when he calls you.

WANDERER

Yes. Yes. You'll be taken care of.

PINK ELEPHANT

Aaaaa, this should heal in a week or so. I've been hurt worse before.

[Pause.]

Do you like monster trucks?

[Beat.]

WANDERER

That was rand—

PINK ELEPHANT

Demolition derbies? I should take you to a demolition derby.

WANDERER

That would be most appropriate, given the circumstances.

PINK ELEPHANT

I'm not going to sue you. This is all gonna be insurance. I like battle wounds. You just have to see me.

WANDERER

I'm just realizing that I'm talking to you and I was distracted talking to my wife when I hit you, but I feel as if I'm completely listening to you driving now.

PINK ELEPHANT

You feel fine?

WANDERER

Yeah.

PINK ELEPHANT

I think that's a sign.

WANDERER

What kind of sign?

PINK ELEPHANT

[Gesturing out the window:] A stop sign.

[WANDERER slams on his brakes.]

WANDERER

My fault.

[Pause.]

[The PINK ELEPHANT grabs his neck and pulls him in for a kiss. They hold into the next scene.]

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

[To audience:] Time for the quiz!

What's my checking account number? [Beat.] *I told you my checking account number.*

What's my social security number? *I told you my social security number.*

What's my Visa number? *I told you my Visa number, GOD, YOU never listen!!*

Why is that? Why is that? I could recite it back to you right now, CAT scans later, my head feeling metal-plated, **all this trauma, trauma, head trauma**, *I'm even amnesiac!*, I could tell it to you all! I remember your birthday, I remember all your friends' names, I *listen*. I *care*. You don't *care!* If you'd care, you'd listen, you'd write it down, you'd remember because you'd know it's important to me, and you care about me, *don't you?* I don't think so. I'm beginning to wonder if you even love me. Sometimes I just *hate* you. I really, really *hate you*. You said you don't even remember our first kiss.

[A separate nowhere.]

WANDERER

I *do too*. It was on a park bench next to the swingsets in Serendipity Park, about forty degrees, you were wearing your pretty red rain slicker, red ribbon in your hair, it was just after two in the morning, *DONT YOU DARE PULL THOSE TRICKS ON ME, I REMEMBER!!!*

WIFE

I tell you what I'm doing on Friday night on Monday, and then you ask Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, up until Friday night on Friday night and you still haven't absorbed it—

WANDERER

I'm listening for different information each time—

Sometimes I'm just, I need to know first if You're doing *something*, then sometimes it's *What* you're doing, sometimes it's *The start time*, sometimes it's *How long*, sometimes it's *If you'd rather do something different*. All sufficed by the question "What are you doing Friday night?"

WIFE

But you *DONT LISTEN!*

WANDERER

No, I listen for different things. It's *selective*—You have serious head trauma, I'm not talking to you.

[The same nowhere.]

[Beat.]

WIFE

I don't love you.

[Silence. WANDERER stands, frustrated. He wells up.]

WANDERER

AAAARGH!!!

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

Okay.

I don't know what awakened me more. The ridiculous yelling fits, or that kiss by the Pink Elephant. But suddenly I can see. Suddenly, I can read. I can absorb things, hold onto things. I'm remembering . . .

The Pink Elephant, whose name I still don't know (her little game), has told me numerous little details about her life, little tidbits, things that percolate my mind (if a mind can percolate), but it's the coffee, she drinks coffee, she bubbles about a million bubbles a second, boiling and dangerous and twisted and all the while she works children's parties and goes to monster-truck rallies? And goes to bars dressed as an elephant.

I'm now drinking a lot of caffeine. I can't figure it out if that's helping me think, helping me focus, or it's that I'm finally interested in someone, that someone interests me. Cuz what is my wife? She criticizes me, She has my ring, She thinks it has value. I tell you words don't have meaning, *people* have meaning. The ring is a symbol, a word, a vow, and to me, right now, it feels meaningless.

She takes for granted that I listen. She takes *me* for granted.

[Beat.] She fortunately doesn't remember what we hit in the car accident. Short Term Memory Loss!

[The park bench. Night. The PINK ELEPHANT's helmet rests on the bench at her side, still in a sling. She laughs. The both have coffee cups.]

WANDERER

[A bit fearful:] This is psychotic.

PINK ELEPHANT

[Giggling:] This is not psychotic, this is cool. Cheers!

WANDERER

Cheers. [They tap coffee cups and sip.] *This is where my first kiss was*, this is psychotic.

PINK ELEPHANT

Oh, come onnnn. You're removed from that. Aren't you? You're married, but you're not, right?

WANDERER

No, I'm still very much married. My wife just says she doesn't love me.

PINK ELEPHANT

You're not married, you're separated.

WANDERER

Until we're separated, until the word is said, we are still very much married. Why am I talking about this?, I've got nothing to hide. [Referencing coffee:] I'm wired.

PINK ELEPHANT

Mee too!

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

I used to kiss boys on the playground during recess. Then I'd beat them up. It was my little game of saying, I Want You But You Can't Have Me. I loved that.

WANDERER

Why? Why is that?

PINK ELEPHANT

I don't know.

[Pause.]

WANDERER

My wife loves drama. She pretty much beats me up. She goes for the lowblow by calling me names, making me feel like a worthless, like a worthless person.

PINK ELEPHANT

I don't play that. [Smiles at him.]

WANDERER

GOD, do you make me feel sooooo . . . I just know that this furrow on my brow, it's not there when I see you. It melts away.

PINK ELEPHANT

I'm a furrowed-brow unfurrower.

[They approach for another kiss. No kiss; an elephant squeal.]

WANDERER

[Covering her mouth, Cracks up.] *Shhh!* I don't want the police to catch *this*. The park's closed.

PINK ELEPHANT

HO-HUM, THE PARK'S CLOSED, *That's* why we're here, John! *DANGEROUS*. Don't you feel it? The electricity? Between us? John. John John John John John, ... Oh, hmmm ...

WANDERER

What.

PINK ELEPHANT

Viva la Elephant:

[She kisses him, again.]

[Police sirens, then headlights beam on them. They break, startled and in shock.]

POLICE INTERCOM

Aaalright, you two lovebir—love- *elephants* ... uhh ...

YOUNG GIRL

I can't sleep. Johnnie was acting up again today at school, then that dirty Randy Acres said he was going to kill him. He said in front of *everyone*, "Johnnie, I'm going to kill you!" Then he said, "I'm going to throw you out the window and kill you!" I was scared, he was serious. Johnnie was scared too. I never liked that Randy Acres kid. H writes bad words on his papers, and he gets F's. And he has dirt all over his arms, like he doesn't wash his hands. Johnnie washes his hands, I like to drink out of the water fountain after him. It—It—I, I can't sleep. I can't stop thinking about today. My teacher send Randy Acres to the principal. Johnnie left too, but I don't know where he went.

[At the precinct. The PINK ELEPHANT, jailed, stays deep in the cell at profile to WANDERER, while WIFE with a big white bandage on her head goes ballistic on him. A JAILOR stands nearby, as WIFE tries to sign papers, reeling.]

WIFE

—AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT AT TWO IN THE MORNING?! I WAS WORRIED THAT YOU WERE MURDERED OR MUGGED OR GOD FORBID *DISTRACTED!*

WANDERER

Honey, I'm just really tired.

WIFE

TIRED?? YOU THINK I'M NOT TIRED?! I HAD TO GRADE PAPERS UNTIL TEN O'CLOCK TONIGHT AND I WORE HEELS TODAY, SPLITTING HEADACHE FROM THIS DAMN HEAD DRESSING, I HAD TO SEND A STUDENT TO THE PRINCIPAL FOR MAKING DEATH THREATS AND WAIT UP FOR MY HUSBAND WHO DIDN'T COME HOME, UNTIL THE POLICE CALL AND TELL ME HE'S IN JAIL!!!! AND I HAVE TO BE UP TO TEACH IN A FEW HOURS!!!!

WANDERER

Hon'—

WIFE

AND THIS IS MY BIRTHDAY WEEK!!!

WANDERER

Honey, I'm really tired. Can we talk about this in the morning?—

WIFE

NO! NO! NO!—

WANDERER

Can we talk—

WIFE

NO! NO!—

WANDERER

Can—

Here I am, a *prisoner*. What an interesting metaphor. No, no metaphors, only Reality. I want *Reality*, gimme Reality. Haha, and lookee here, of *course* I want Reality, I'm dressed as an animal. I can make a unicorn out of a balloon. *There's* the metaphor: I can make something fictitious out of something real. But I can't seem to make something real out of something I've imagined. How to make that step, that jump . . .

I've seen him for a long time, he just doesn't notice it. I saw him at a party his wife had for her class at a Fun Zone. He was there with her, looked nothing but misery, and I couldn't take my eyes off him. Not that he had something that everyone would look at, just something *I* wanted to look at.

I learned his name by this: I approached one of the kids in the class and asked what her teacher's name was. "Missez Wanderer." Since she gave no first name, I took to the internet and found too many Wanderers who live here, but I found a first name for her through the school district's website. I was then able to tie her name to a John in another internet search, captions of photos from a teacher picnic. Bingo. Then I could find their address, phone number, an old email address that led to old messageboard postings John did on the internet, learned about some of his interests based on some things he said he liked—computers, Thai restaurants, that he once lost his wallet and a shoe on the highway and had to survive a trip like that, that he'd grown up in Ohio and played baseball in high school, Joseph L. Taylor High School, graduated top of his class, It snowballs. *It's addictive*. I was holding all this information about him but never had talked to him. I could shake his hand and then tell him all I knew about him, or just shake his hand and try to contain myself. I drove by his house once and saw his wife's car being worked on, so I visited the school that week after it let out and waited for him to drive by and pick her up. *The thrill*. Of being able to put together clues and get it right. It's really too easy, *that if you want to find out information about someone, there's a way to do it*, if you have the perseverance.

John calls it hyperfocusing. I call it obsessive-compulsive. He doesn't know yet how much I've tracked him. I don't know credit card information or his social security number or anything, just personal, day-to-day information, some of his history. It's like I own pieces of him. No, I've moved into pieces of him, occupy those times from afar.

I feel so alive. He likes it. He *must* know something. He said he's seen me. I tried to make myself visible, "accidentally." And I avoid certain questions he asks about me, the why's. Gotta keep mysterious ... He's intrigued that I'm intrigued. And that makes me all the more intrigued.

I had to kiss him: Just do it. Enough of these bars, enough holding back, enough of the hurt, Let The Lion Out.

[Beat.]

Now *that's* a metaphor. [Roars, into next scene.]

[In the kitchen, arriving home.]

WANDERER

[Blending, In an angry roar:] *IIIIIII AM AN ADULT!*

WIFE

WHY WERE YOU OUT, JOHN?? WHY WERE YOU ARRESTED??

WANDERER

I COULDN'T SLEEP!! I HAD SOME COFFEE!

WIFE

YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE REALLY TIRED!! SINCE WHEN DO YOU DRINK COFFEE??

WANDERER

I DON'T NEED THIS!!

WIFE

I WANT AN EXPLANATION!!!

WANDERER

I DON'T HAVE TO GIVE YOU AN EXPLANATION!!

WIFE

WHY WERE YOU IN THE PARK?

WANDERER

I WAS THINKING!

WIFE

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

WANDERER

I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT NOW!

WIFE

WE HAVE TO COMMUNICATE!!!

WANDERER

WE DO?? WE DO??

WIFE

YES! WE DO!

WANDERER

WELL—

WIFE

WELL??

WANDERER

I'M IN LOVE.

WIFE

YOU'RE—

[Silence.]

WANDERER

There. [Pause.] Goodbye.

[WANDERER leaves, slamming the door.]

[WIFE holds her hurting head.]

[Nowhere.]

[WANDERER picks up a jumprope. Over him plays the ‘If you’re distracted and you know it’ song from before, looping, getting louder and speeding up demonically as it plays. WANDERER jumps rope quickly, suddenly doing as many double-jumps as possible. Tries triple-jumps. Collapses, face to the floor, letting go of the jumprope.]

[In the support group.]

[The support group forms around him, all looking down at him in shock. They hold padded billy clubs.]

SUPPORT HOST

[Syrupy:] Congratulations, John. John. John?

WANDERER

[Lifting head:] huh?

SUPPORT HOST

John, Congratulations. You’ve passed. You Are Better.

WANDERER
what did i just do?

SUPPORT HOST
What did you just do??

WANDERER
why am i on the ground?

SUPPORT HOST
John...

WANDERER
why am i on the ground?

SUPPORT HOST
John, you're on the ground...

WANDERER
where am i?

[Beat.]

SUPPORT HOST
I take that back. [Beat.] Nevermind. Up Up! Who's next?

[Suddenly, the group backs off , scared.]

[In the kitchen.]

[In front of a cake with twenty-five candles lit.]

WIFE
happy birth-day to. me. happy birth-day to. me. happy birth-day. da, da, da. happy.
birth. day. to. me-e-e-e-e-e.

[She inhales to blow out the candles, but breaks down.]

[She pours the last half cup of the milk out into her large glass, and stares at it.]

[In a hotel room.]

PINK ELEPHANT

There's no bible in the drawer.

WANDERER

[Seated:] I wanna be normal.

PINK ELEPHANT

No you don' t, you wanna be different.

WANDERER

I wanna be *acknowledged*.

PINK ELEPHANT

Why do you wanna be acknowledged?

WANDERER

Because I don' t feel ~~here~~.

I feel apart, I feel disjointed from everything I say. I *don'* understand the simplest things that regular people understand, that *stupid* people understand. I wanna be taken account for. That there are more perspectives like mine. I feel like I' m pledging allegiance—

PINK ELEPHANT

Can I tell you what I want?

WANDERER

What do you want.

PINK ELEPHANT

I wanna be around a lot of friends, but I want to be absolutely totally completely alone.

No, that' s what I fear: *Don'* want to be around a single soul, but I have the horrific and consuming fear that I will be alone forever.

I feel pulled. Torn.

WANDERER

Hence?

PINK ELEPHANT

Hence? Hence I gravitate to populated places but don' t want to talk. Hence I go to places where no one is and make friends with freaks. Hence I attract people but once I get their interest I shut them out.

WANDERER

I thought this was about *me*.

PINK ELEPHANT

This *is* about you. I don' t know how it is I feel about you . . .

WANDERER

"How it is I feel about you ... "? About me? How you *feel* about me?

PINK ELEPHANT

Yes. Hence I can' t speak straight.

WANDERER

I think we' re perfect for each other.

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

You think we're perfect for each other.

WANDERER

[Nervous:] Yes.

[The PINK ELEPHANT turns away and leaves, without eye contact.]

[At the office.]

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

[Urgent:] Here. Read this.

[WANDERER accepts a sheet but doesn't read, distracted.]

Can you believe that? Well the stuff sure has hit the fan. I think you should jump on this A-sap. Here: Here's a phone. Call them and tell them to eat you.

WANDERER

I—What is this?

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

Read it.

WANDERER

What do you want me to do?

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

Don't you listen? CALL THEM.

[The phone rings. FELLOW EMPLOYEE grimaces an 'I told ya so' and leaves him with the call.]

WANDERER

Hello?

WIFE

[Onstage, Over phone:] John.

WANDERER

[Startled pause.]

WIFE

I want you back.

WANDERER

[Nothing.]

WIFE

John, I want you back, I'm not sure what it is you're mad at me for, or who you're in love with, why you got arrested, why all of this change in attitude, John, I don't know any of this or why you're not telling me, You missed my birthday, we ran out of milk, I felt *so alone*, I don't know how I kept from calling for so long and I don't know where you are and I can *only hope* that you're not in any trouble, I am so scared and I want you back. John, I love you, I *love you*, I love you and I want *so bad* to have you come home. John? Do you hear me?

WANDERER

Yes.

[Pause.]

WIFE

..And?

[Pause.]

WIFE

...And?

[Pause.]

WANDERER

I'll be right home. [Hangs up the phone.]

[FELLOW EMPLOYEE re-enters.]

FELLOW EMPLOYEE

You told them to eat you, Yeah? 'Hey O'Brien & Finkelstein, *EAT ME!!*'"

WANDERER

In so many words.

[WANDERER hands over the phone to FELLOW EMPLOYEE, and leaves.]

[Nowhere.]

[The television program plays in voiceover, on a dark stage.]

GAMESHOW HOST

John Wanderer, you spin the wheel.

[Sound of Wheel spinning.]

GAMESHOW HOST

Ten *thousand* dollars! Alright! What letter is it gonna be?

WANDERER

[Thinking aloud in a mumble:] l, m, n, o, ... *p* ... *Q*.

GAMESHOW HOST

[Pause.] There are *no Q's*. Leenda, your turn to spin the wheel.

JAMAICAN CONTESTANT

BIG MONEy! BIG MONEy!

[Sound of Wheel spinning, then fades.]

[Lights up, as if out of a dream.]

[WIFE holds WANDERER's one hand while he stands stoically. She still wears the head bandage. She sits.]

WIFE

And I will be more caring, I'll be more appreciative of you, of your way of seeing things, I won't criticize you anymore, I'll repeat things for you, more than once if you need to. I won't yell at you anymore, I won't embarrass you in public, I won't call you and nag you, I'll keep quiet, I won't say *anything* unless you ask for my feedback. You want to know how I feel? *Just ask.*

[WANDERER coughs but makes no eye contact. He stands stoically.]

WIFE

If you put milk in the cupboard, I'll still sleep with you. I won't try to manipulate you—call me on that. *If I am manipulating you, call me on it.*

[WANDERER coughs again.]

WIFE

Don't say anything, I understand. If you want me to repeat *any* of this, I will. Do you want me to repeat any of this? John?

WANDERER

[Coughing:] I think /// I'm sick.

WIFE

[Standing:] Would you like me to go out and get something? What can I get you?
[Leaves.]

YOUNG GIRL

Missee Wanderer?

Missee Wanderer?

Missee Wanderer.

Missee Wanderer.

Missee Wanderer.

Missee Wanderer.

Missee Wanderer.

[Wheel spinning.

GAMESHOW

HOST in dark.

WANDERER

visible.]

Missee Wanderer.

GAMESHOW

HOST

One hundred.

Missee Wanderer.

Missee Wanderer.

WANDERER

Ahhhh: W.

Miszez Wanderer.	GAMESHOW HOST Two-hundred eighty six W's!	
Miszez Wanderer.	[Bings for each letter.]	
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
[More aggressive approach:] Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	SUPPORT HOST —But your husband is not showing any improvement.
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE I want to make sure you turn him away.
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	SUPPORT HOST I require him to stay until he's fully adjusted.
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE He's not going to be "fully adjusted." He's " <i>this</i> way." He's—
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	SUPPORT HOST No, that is where you're <i>wrong</i> . He can be helped. He can be taught to think and listen as we do.
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE <i>I DO NOT</i> think as you do, thank you, <i>ma'am</i> . And if I hear that he's attended another meeting after this point, you ... <i>You</i> .
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	SUPPORT HOST So you want him

		maladjusted forever? [Pause.]
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE I think you've hit the nail on the head ... [Door slams.]
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer?	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer?	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer?	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE What!
Miszez Wanderer.	<i>Bing</i>	
[Pause.]	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE I am sorry. [Beat.] Yes?
	<i>Bing</i>	
Miszez Wanderer, Johnnie is being hyperactive again.	<i>Bing</i>	
	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE Leave him be.
He pulled my hair.	<i>Bing</i>	
	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE He probably just likes you.
It hurt!	<i>Bing</i>	
	<i>Bing</i>	[Pause.]
	<i>Bing</i>	WIFE Well, if he does it again, please tell me, and I will talk to him.
Can't you tell the principal?	<i>Bing</i>	
	<i>Bing</i> [thru WIFE's	WIFE Listen: Johnnie will

monologue]

learn not to do that.
He will see that it's
hurting you, and if
he doesn't want to
hurt you, he will
stop. He has to
know that it is
hurting you though.
That you don't like
your hair pulled.
And you have to
show you're happy
when he's not doing
it. Don't criticize
him, else he'll keep
pulling because he
doesn't like to be
criticized.

I don't understand.
You said he's *Bing*
hyperactive.

Bing

WIFE
Well, maybe you
don't understand,
but just remember
what I said. Okay?

[Pause.]

Bing

Okay.

Bing

Bing

Bing

[Pause.]

WIFE
Do you know where
that binging is
coming from???

[Pointing in
direction of *Bing*
WANDERER, but
not at:] Over there.

Bing

SUPPORT HOST
Your wife has told
me not to let you in.

Bing

WANDERER
Huh?

SUPPORT HOST

Bing We both know
that's not a good
idea. I told her that
you ...John?

[Pause.]

Bing

Bing

WANDERER
World Wide Web,
Woodrow, Wilson,
Wow, Whippoorwill,
...

Bing

SUPPORT HOST
[Snapping fingers in
front of his face:]
John. John.

Bing

WANDERER
Wanderer,
Williwaws,
Willowware,
WYSIWYG, What
you see is What you
get . . .

Bing

Bing

Bing

SUPPORT HOST
He's Lost . [Leaves.]

Bing

Bing

Johnnie pulls my
hair but my teacher
won't do anything
about it.

Bing

Yes. He *has* to.

Bing

Bing

WANDERER
Is he a bully?

[Yes:] Nooooooooo ...

Bing

Bing

Bing

WANDERER
Do you like him?

WANDERER
Pull *his* hair back.

OKAY!

WIFE

Miszez Wanderer!

Bing

John!

WANDERER

Bing

[Caught offguard:]

Hi!

[Pause.]

[Pause.]

[Pause.]

Bing

WIFE

Bing

[To WANDERER:]

You know each other?

This is my teacher,
Miszez Wanderer.

Bing

[The binging ceases. WANDERER looks at his WIFE in shock at the connection. WIFE says nothing. They all three stand together awkwardly. WANDERER coughs a little.]

WIFE

John? You know her?

[Silence.]

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

[Sighs.]

What have I said to this little girl? What has my wife said to this little girl? How are these things we've said affecting how she regards this hyperactive Johnnie kid? Or how are the things we've said to this little girl affecting how my wife and I are dealing with ourselves?

It goes back to the teaching, doesn't it. If I preach tolerance now, this girl will likely be more tolerant in the future. No guarantee for sure, but why preach *intolerance*? That is, with regard to my A.D.D., I could educate this *one person* into understanding that there is more than one perspective on the world, That not every ear and every eye experiences the same thing you're experiencing, and sometimes perfectly legitimate and intelligent people just don't work the same way you do. And it's not about criticizing them until they submit to your ways, but it's *more* about learning how to work *harmoniously* with all perspectives. The humbleness of *your* perspective, stop assuming your perspective is Right and The Only Way.

Oh: I am not really sick. I have not heard from the Pink Elephant. I am out of sorts. *Fill Voids in Conversation, Times you have nothing to say, with Coughs.*

[Sudden shift:] Okay, *do you know what I just did??* That was thee most vulnerable I have ever made myself in my life. Thee most emotionally accessible I've ever made myself. Thee most open. With her. "The furrowed-brow unfurrower." [Indicating it:] My heart feels as if it's been exploded inside-out, and I have a whole cavity in my chest. A heavy one. A stray bullet randomly picked my heart and exploded it. My nerves feel deadened around; I feel numb. My mind has been set to Pink Elephant ever since I hit her with my car. She just *slammed* into me. And now she's disappeared.

There's a psychology book all about White Elephants. It tells you to try not to think of a White Elephant. "Don't think of a White Elephant."

I find Pink a more difficult animal.

[At the office.]

[The phone rings. WANDERER picks it up.]

WANDERER

Hello.

[Click. He hangs up. Pause. *69. He listens:]

OPERATOR

[A voice:] "For a charge, we can connect you with your last caller. Press Two—"

[He does. The other phone picks up, but immediately clicks.]

[He hangs up. He picks it up again, and does *69.]

OPERATOR

"For a char—"

[He presses 2. The other phone picks up but no one answers.]

WANDERER

Hello? Hello? You just called? Is this ...Is—"

[Click. He hangs up the phone hard, picks it immediately up and does *69. He hesitates for:]

OPERATOR

"For—"

[and the phone starts to ring. It rings six times.]

WANDERER

DAMN!

[It rings two more times, and he hangs up.]

[The phone rings. He picks it up.]

WIFE

[A voice:] John?

WANDERER

Yes?

WIFE

Hi honey, Guess what I got so you don't have to? *Milk*. And not Buttermilk.
[Smilingly:] Ha ha.

[WANDERER stands still.]

WIFE

John? Are you—

[He hangs up on her.]

[Nowhere.]

WIFE

I get my bandage off today! I'm better, all better. I don't really know what was the motivation behind **keeping it on so long**, but [Shrugs.] the doctor knows best. I still know my credit card number, telephone number, checking account, all that stuff. Don't worry: I know you don't need to know them. I'm not going to quiz you; I know better.

John has been acting funny. But I love him more than I ever did. He's not better, but he is Himself. That is my feeling. I had a dream: I see him for the Real Him, the man I married, and it's just a matter of rediscovering that kernel of Something that I saw when I first met him, when I first kissed him. I'm gonna put a red ribbon in my hair. He was my first love, was that clear? I will love him forever. Forever. Forever.

[Trance music: A happier take on the brooding mix of before. Thumping bass. DANCERS dance wildly—as does WIFE, more so than the others. They remove her head bandage in the dance, making a ritual of it. The dark stage swirls with disco colors.]

A disco ball slowly lowers and WIFE dances in front of it. The DANCERS gather around it and start to circle counterclockwise. All continue to dance wildly, with WIFE wildest and liberated of her bandage. WANDERER eventually joins them. The bass thumps harder, the trance intensifies. The YOUNG GIRL jumps rope clockwise around once. The bass thumps harder, the trance further intensifies. WIFE pulls from the circle and dances wildly up front, the wildest, most uncontrolled joyous movement yet. The DANCERS begin circling WIFE as the disco ball slowly pulls out. WIFE, in short bursts, screams with ecstasy.]

[WANDERER emerges from the back and the lights come up sharply. All freeze, WIFE slows to a stop.]

WANDERER

[Restrained:] I FOUND THE MILK IN THE CUPBOARD. THE CUPBOARD. THE MILK WAS IN THE CUPBOARD.

[Blackout.]

End Act II.

[Lights up.]

[On the sidewalk.]

[The PINK ELEPHANT inflates a balloon, not wearing her elephant helmet but still in the sling. WANDERER bursts in.]

WANDERER

YOU!

PINK ELEPHANT

[Letting go of balloon:] AA!!

[The balloon zooms around, deflating.]

WANDERER

You. I found you.

[The PINK ELEPHANT stares guiltily at WANDERER.]

WANDERER

You left me. You turned and walked away. At my most vulnerable moment. *Poof!* Gone. You don't do that. You don't do that. That is not something you do to someone. To someone like me. I am not obsessed. I am heartbroken.

[Pause.]

Aren't you going to *say something*?? SAY something!

[Pause.]

You're inflating balloons on the street.

PINK ELEPHANT

Balloon. One. It just deflated.

WANDERER

Tell me. Tell me *something*. Something, so I can move on. I'm fixated on it all, On you, On why you left, I can't shake this. For someone so distracted all the time, I can't get that way when I need it. My mind is *swimming*, it's doing freestyle while my stomach's doing butterfly.

[Silence.]

PINK ELEPHANT

I wrote you a note. [Hands it to him.]

[WANDERER opens it and looks overwhelmed by its verbiage.]

WANDERER

I ...I can't ... *Read—*

contents of note: PINK ELEPHANT

You know. Hm. I'm lactose-intolerant.

[Pause.]

I cannot drink milk.

Sometimes, you just can't be tolerant. There are some things you cannot like. You can't teach lactose-*tolerance*. Some people have an inherent lactose prejudice.

[WANDERER looks restless.]

PINK ELEPHANT

[In a flurry:] I. I. I have this thing. I can't let you get too close. John. You cannot come close. You haven't seen me outside this get-up. I won't let you. I don't want you to see this, what's behind this. Sometimes you get so hurt by someone, there is no help for it. There is no help. It's an intolerance. [Driving forward:] You are something, John. To me. You are something that was interested in me. I didn't punch you. I *kissed* you. I

could feel something coursing through me when I first kissed you. You were ...it was like a complete circuit, this wild electricity that screamed from my toes out my lips and all the way through you. It was as if I could feel all of you, I was dancing inside you. When I first saw you ...it was all goosebumps, all over my skin. My hair was standing on end.

[Calmer:] But. I cannot tell you. I cannot have you close. I, you'll just have to make peace with that. Falling in love is stupid. I am scarred. Forever scarred. Forever.

WANDERER

[Beat.] I do not know your name. You surely know this.

PINK ELEPHANT

Do you want to know?

WANDERER

You don't want me to know. You are not 'Forever scarred.' You will heal. Falling in love is *NOT* stupid, don't *EVER* convince me or *ANYONE* of that, If you feel that, *keep that feeling to yourself*. But falling in love: GOD ... it involves trust in another person, making someone else happy (who makes you unbelievably happy in return) ... a sense of security ... feeling attractive ... maintaining a relationship you care about ... caring, caring, caring ... affection, touch, someone to hold at night ... someone who can turn you on and likes to, someone for you to turn on who likes you too ...

You are a work of art. I do not know who hurt you. But I have fallen for you. I have left my wife. When I'm with you, I don't have A.D.D., My thoughts don't scatter. I want you to know that I have sought affection from you, my body has sought it from you, and I *have to* hear whether you feel there is any potential for anything between us.

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

You take me aback.

WANDERER

Let me know. [Beat.] ...Yes?

PINK ELEPHANT

John. John ...

[Silence.]

WANDERER

I see.

PINK ELEPHANT

I'm sor—

WANDERER

—*No*. No. Don't apologize for your feelings. I hear you.

[The YOUNG GIRL enters.]

YOUNG GIRL

Mister Wanderer! [Sees his face.] Are you okay? [Seeing PINK ELEPHANT's costume:] Hey, aren't you Delilah the Elephant?

WANDERER

Your name is Delilah . . .

PINK ELEPHANT

[After a beat:] Yes. Very good. I should be wearing my head.

YOUNG GIRL

Where is it?

[Pause.]

PINK ELEPHANT

[To WANDERER:] I fear I've lost it.

YOUNG GIRL

Mister Wanderer, guess what? I told Johnnie I liked him.

WANDERER

You *WHAT?!*

YOUNG GIRL

I told him I liked him.

WANDERER

Congratulations!

YOUNG GIRL

It's funny. He was pulling my hair. I told him that he should pull my hair in the movie theater. He stopped and he stood there. I told him, "Johnnie, I like you." He still stood there. Then I punched him in the shoulder and I ran.

WANDERER

When was this?

YOUNG GIRL

Just now. He didn't look hyperactive then. [Devilish grin:] I think I *shocked him!*

[Nowhere.]

WANDERER

I bet she did shock him. She grabbed his attention. He's hyperactive. She's gonna have to work hard to keep it.

[Beat.]

I'm not in shock.

I think that a person with A.D.D. has a troublesome time, possibly more than most, in a relationship. In our relationships. We are only human. We may get truly distracted, but we can also dedicate an unimaginable amount of affection for someone captivated by us. You be the judge. But we are capable of amazing things. No one likes to be criticized. No one likes to be reminded of your faults, your inadequacies, where you've gone wrong. These are weights that hold me back, and ultimately bring me down. Drive down my self-esteem and you drive me away. *Please*, if I can say anything: Because I don't see something as you do, Because I don't hear something as you do, doesn't mean I'm wrong.

It's a consideration that I think many heretofore haven't made.

I hope they do, starting right now:

Opens note and reads it, see Page 53 or so...

[Blackout.]