

limitless bliss

deirdre burton ~ tom davis

dramatis personae

MORTIMER / OBERON

MRS PRIMROSE / TITANIA

PACO / PUCK

GRIMSBY / FAIRY

LILIA / HERMIA

ELAINE / HELENA

TOBY

JAMES

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1 act one: dream

1.1 whither wander you?

PACO: How now, spirit! whither wander you?

GRIMSBY: Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere.

PACO: Cool. Still working for the Prince of Darkness?

GRIMSBY: Mostly. Sometimes. When I feel like it. What do you do?

PACO: Oh, you know. Mess with things. Invent stuff. Push back the frontiers of technological possibility. That sort of thing.

GRIMSBY: Like what exactly?

PACO: Well, I invented this.
He produces a glow stick and makes it shine.

GRIMSBY: That's a light stick. It's been done already!

PACO: Yeah, I know. But this one makes you invisible.
Look.
He takes another from his bag (already glowing) and wraps it round his neck.

See?

GRIMSBY: Er, I can still see you.

PACO: Yeah, I know. It only works on human beings.
Look, I'll show you. Put one on.
He gives her another pre-lit one. She puts it on..
Now, we need a human being.

He produces a remote and clicks it. Enter JAMES, walking backwards and talking to himself soundlessly.

PACO: Oops. Wrong button.
He presses various buttons, trying to find the right one. JAMES goes into fast forward, fast reverse, and so on. Eventually PACO gets it right, and JAMES becomes normal: talking to himself silently, gesticulating. PACO waves his hand in front of JAMES'S face. No response.

See? He can't see us.

GRIMSBY: What's he saying? Turn the sound on.
PACO presses a button.

JAMES: —to be frank, I was never really that interested. I'm sorry I have to break it to you this way, but it's the kindest thing to do, a clean break, short and sharp—
PACO turns off the sound.

GRIMSBY: Who's he talking to?

PACO: His girlfriend. She dumped him this afternoon. He was devastated. He's doing a fantasy replay.

GRIMSBY: Weird.

PACO: Very. They all do it. Look.
Presses buttons. Enter, from different directions, backwards, TOBY, LILIA, and ELAINE, all talking soundlessly. GRIMSBY presses buttons to animate each of them in turn.

TOBY: —well, of course I do. Sort of. I mean, it's complicated, isn't it? I do like you, definitely, at least, well—

ELAINE: *sings, wistfully:*
I just want to be loved by you
I just want you to see me through

Love me tender, love me true
I just want to be loved by you

LILIA: —no, I understand, absolutely. You need freedom.
Of course, everyone needs that, it's completely
understandable, and I think I'm going to die—

GRIMSBY: What a mess. What a shambles.

PACO: Yes. Very. However, I'm going to fix it. Will you
help?

GRIMSBY: No. Maybe. It's possible.

PACO: That's a yes, then, is it?

GRIMSBY: No. It's not. How are you going to sort them out?

PACO: Like this.

*He picks up a microphone and speaks into it.
ELAINE, LILIA, TOBY, and JAMES react,
independently of each other.*

Hello, are you receiving me?

They nod.

You have all suddenly become really interested in
amateur theatricals. Right?

Chorus of agreement.

Especially Shakespeare, right?

Chorus of agreement.

And in particular, that wonderful play, *A
Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Chorus of agreement.

Well, the Somesuch Theatre Society is looking for
actors right now for a production of the *Dream*,
aren't you lucky?

Cries of joy.

So off you go, quick quick, and maybe, just maybe,
you'll get a part.

Presses buttons. They rush off.

GRIMSBY:

You do like to mess with people, don't you?

PACO:

Yes. I do. I do.

1.2 in your dreams

Enter, from one side, the actor playing OBERON; from the other, the actor playing TITANIA. The actors are rehearsing; they have scripts. Two other actors, LILIA and ELAINE, are sitting in a corner with their scripts, waiting to work.

OBERON: Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA: What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

OBERON: Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

TITANIA: Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest Steppe of India?
The actors freeze.

LILIA: It's a weird play.

ELAINE: It's a play. All plays are pretty weird.

LILIA: No, this is different. This is—odd. I'm getting these
strange dreams.

ELAINE: Oh, right. Fairies and love potions?

LILIA: No. But strange... Anyway. I've decided. I'm going
to do something about it.

ELAINE: About what?

LILIA: My man problem.

ELAINE: Oh, that. Everyone has a man problem. Where would life be, without man problems? What would we talk about?

LILIA: I'm going to fix it. I'm not going to leave it to chance. I'm going to go to one of those computer dating things. There was a flyer in the green room, did you see it? I'm going to find my ideal man, who loves me, and live happily ever after.

ELAINE: Aren't you worried that people might think you are ever so slightly—pathetic?

LILIA: Oh, you're so last century! Really cool people use dating agencies these days. They don't have time for anything else. Come with me. Your world can change too, you know.

ELAINE: No chance! I don't want a perfect man, I prefer the imperfect kind. You know: disposable. Throw away after use.

LILIA: Suit yourself. I'm going to find him, wherever he is. Mr Right: the real thing. Damn it, it must be possible: it must.

ELAINE: In your dreams, darling; in your dreams.

1.3 no way

LILIA (HERMIA) and ELAINE (HELENA) are rehearsing, TOBY and JAMES sitting waiting.

HERMIA: Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

HELENA: So methinks;
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.
They freeze.

JAMES: No way!

TOBY: Why not?

JAMES: Because not, that's why not; a *dating* agency!

TOBY: It's different. They promise; they use a computer;
they do special tests. They give an absolute
guarantee.

JAMES: What bullshit!

TOBY: Look. Shut up. I have been looking for love, for real
love, for the real thing, all my adult life I think. It
has never happened. Not once. Not with any
woman I've ever been with. Everything else:
passion, affection, desire, fun, one night stand, one
year stand, all of that; but not the holy grail. Not
love, as such, the love the poets go on about.
Never. Ever. I want to see if it exists.

JAMES: From a dating agency!

TOBY: Why leave it to chance?

JAMES: Well, no way am I coming with you. No way in the
world.

TOBY: Why not?

JAMES: Because, my son, you are chasing a fairy tale.
That's what this play is about, can't you see that?
Love is a joke. A stupid dream.

TOBY: I think it's possible. It *must* be. If it is, I'm going to
find it.

JAMES: In your dreams.

1.4 love and fairyland

PUCK (PACO) and FAIRY (GRIMSBY) are rehearsing; MORTIMER and MRS PRIMROSE discussing.

PUCK: How now, spirit! whither wander you?

FAIRY: Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
Freeze.

MRS PRIMROSE: I'm sure I've met you somewhere before.

MORTIMER: Quite possibly.

MRS PRIMROSE: You don't like this play, do you?

MORTIMER: No. Well, it's not one of the bard's better offerings, is it?

MRS PRIMROSE: You think not?

MORTIMER: I think not. Foolery and fairyland. Unreal. He's clearly decided the whole thing is a waste of time.

MRS PRIMROSE: What whole thing?

MORTIMER: Well, everything, really. The human world. The trivial pursuits that we pursue. Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends; it's all vanity, all in vain. We are poor players, strutting and fretting, an hour upon the stage and then curtains; that's all there is. He knew that.

MRS PRIMROSE: So what's the play about?

MORTIMER: Nothing. It's about nothing. It's a way of passing the time.

MRS PRIMROSE: And love?

MORTIMER: Please! Love and fairyland, one and the same thing. Surely you don't think otherwise?

MRS PRIMROSE: Well, yes, I rather do, actually. In fact I am rather committed to the opposite point of view, I'm afraid.

MORTIMER: Really? Your life is governed by love, in some way?

MRS PRIMROSE: Well, yes, in some way, yes. I have a day job, you know.

MORTIMER: A day job?

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes. I run a dating agency.

2 act two: turn around

2.1 what do I do now?

Throughout Act 2, PACO and GRIMSBY are on stage, wearing their invisibility necklaces—they are mischievous observers, learning what it is to be a human being.

LILIA centre stage, in spot light. MRS PRIMROSE moves around her, half in light, half in shadow.

LILIA: Hello? Hello? Where are you?

MRS PRIMROSE: Don't mind me, dear, pretend I'm invisible. Just turn and face the bright light, please.

LILIA: The bright light?

MRS PRIMROSE: For the camera.

LILIA: For the camera?

MRS PRIMROSE: Just a couple of little snapshots for the database.

LILIA: Oh.

LILIA turns to face the audience and remains facing that way.

LILIA: So what do I do now?

MRS PRIMROSE: Well, you have to express yourself.

LILIA: But I can't do that! That's just what I can't do! That's the whole of my problem, right there!

MRS PRIMROSE: It says here you're an actress, dear.

LILIA: Only amateur dramatics! Only from a script! I don't do improvisation! It scares me!

MRS PRIMROSE: Calm down darling, everything is going to be fine. What is the name of this agency?

LILIA: Er, er, I'm embarrassed, now, I feel confused, I don't know what to do.

MRS PRIMROSE: Deep breath. Deep breath, darling, one, and two, that's it, deeper, three, that's it, now, think of your happy place.

LILIA: My what?

MRS PRIMROSE: All right, never mind, we'll do the happy place thing later. Now, what's the name of this agency?

LILIA: Limitless Bliss.

MRS PRIMROSE: Exactly! Perfect! And that, my love, is what we offer. That is what we dangle in front of you, dear, guaranteed, no quibbles, nothing else, whatsoever, but: limitless bliss. Now, does that sound good, or not?

LILIA: Well, it *sounds* good. But—

MRS PRIMROSE: It sounds good, because it *is* good. Limitless bliss. Now, let's have a little go at self-expression, shall we?

LILIA: And then what?

MRS PRIMROSE: And then, when we feel we are seeing your essence, your absolute centre self, we film it.

LILIA: You film it!

MRS PRIMROSE: We film it. Don't worry, it's quite painless. No bit of your soul is used up in the process. You go back out with everything you came in with, we promise.

LILIA: And then?

MRS PRIMROSE: And then, we apply some very complicated algorithms, to produce your unique personality profile. And then, after meticulous post-processing, we compress the profile, and the film—

LILIA: You compress it!

MRS PRIMROSE: Don't worry, it's all digital, it doesn't hurt at all— and then we put it on the internet, and out it goes,

all over the world, snaking around the songlines, sizzling through cyberspace, at the speed of light. And, without doubt, by the iron laws of statistics, out there will be the One.

LILIA: The one?

MRS PRIMROSE: The ONE. The one and only. Your perfect match. The one you really want, dearest, the one you really need. Your significant other. And he will know. Er, it is he, isn't it?

LILIA: Of course it is!

MRS PRIMROSE: Right, just checking. Yes. He will know. Deep in the DNA, coded in the chromosomes, he will yearn towards you, like, like, like a whale.

LILIA: A whale!

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes, a whale, singing, beneath the frozen ocean, calling like to like, each to other, all round the world. So romantic! And we will arrange a meeting, and you will know too. You will know. And then—

LILIA: Yes, yes: and then?

MRS PRIMROSE: Limitless bliss. Writers have dreamed it, readers have fantasised it, we guarantee it: you will be happy ever after. No two ways about it. One way, in fact: our way.

LILIA: Wow.

MRS PRIMROSE: Wow indeed, my dear. Now, if you could perhaps express yourself? Just a little? Just to get started?

2.2 free fall

ELAINE centre stage, facing audience.

ELAINE: How exactly do I express myself?

MRS PRIMROSE: We have a special technique. We call it Free Fall.

ELAINE: What, like sky diving?

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes! Exactly!

ELAINE: Sounds very scary.

MRS PRIMROSE: It is, a bit; it's also very safe. We catch you, you see. Don't worry: we catch you.

ELAINE: I should hope so too. What happens, then?

MRS PRIMROSE: You give up. You let go. You turn round, and round, and leave all of everything behind, and go into free fall. When you do that, you will find your essential story.

ELAINE: My what?

MRS PRIMROSE: Your essence: the story that makes you you. Your inside script.

ELAINE: I don't have one.

MRS PRIMROSE: Like everyone else, you think you don't have one. You do. You have to. Otherwise, you would not be. The world, the human world, you see, is entirely composed of stories. It is woven from narrative, threads that cross, all colours, a tapestry, those entangled tales; just imagine it, my dear. All the stories there are, or could be, plausible, implausible, the dance of fictions, here, everywhere, the air you breathe, the life that you live. Dreams.

ELAINE: Dreams? What have dreams got to do with it?
Anyway, I don't dream. Ever.

MRS PRIMROSE: Everybody dreams, my dear. Everyone. We have
to: we have a built-in need for improbable fictions.
And that's why we like stories so much, need them
so much. You die if you don't dream, did you know
that; and you die if you lose your inside story.

ELAINE: I don't have one. I think I have died. That's why I
feel so bad. That's why no-one will love me.

MRS PRIMROSE: The answer to that, my love, is no, and no, and no.
I can see your story in your eyes, you just need to
fall, to free fall, and find it.

ELAINE: Help me.

2.3 water

LILIA centre stage, facing audience.

LILIA:

(Turns round twice) Oh! I am under the sea—no, under water, anyway; my hair floating round me like a cloud, and, oh: blue, everything is so blue. A swimming pool? No, not that kind of blue, not at all; blue like the dawn sky, on a day that will be hot: limitless blue.

I live here. This is where I live! In this blue depth. All by myself. I have everything I need. Such quiet, here, and I am completely embraced and held and comforted and lifted up, completely, by the blue water.

I feel... wonderful!

2.4 once I was

JAMES centre stage, facing audience.

JAMES: Bullshit!

MRS PRIMROSE: Really?

JAMES: Yes, really bloody really. This is a dating agency, right? In we come, looking for love, tell you our preferences, what are our hobbies, do we want brains or beauty, what's our favourite novel, can we talk about anything except football, and the computer goes burp burp and in an instant matches us up, and away we go. Off for the trial date, the rest of our life starts here. Right? Right. I'm not paying for all this crap about free fall and stories. Definitely not. So: do it. Find me a love object. Clear?

MRS PRIMROSE: Could you just, please, turn round?

JAMES: What?

MRS PRIMROSE: Just—turn round. Humour me. Please. Then we can hear all about your hobbies, every one of them.
Just: turn round.

JAMES: Dear god, I don't believe this. *Exasperated: turns round.*

MRS PRIMROSE: And again, could you, please, just once more?
He turns again, and changes; goes inside himself, and then looks up, a different person.

JAMES: Once I was an angel, a long time ago. That, indeed, was limitless bliss. No time was; seamless, it seemed, a flow of joy, everything happening at

once, nothing happening at all, rich as a plum cake,
pure as perfection itself, living in god's own smile.

And then I had an interesting thought. Alas. A
thought, rising inside, like a bubble, a blip in
infinity, rising, rising, until: it burst. And there I
was. Pop. Me. In all my glory. Me.

And I couldn't put it all back together again. Burst
open, in all directions, all over the place. I couldn't
find the answer, because *I* was the problem. Very
tricky. Fascinating, actually, and the more
interesting it got, the more *I* was, more, and more,
and now here I am.

But, truly, nothing is more true, I was an angel
once. A long time ago.

*He stops, looks up, back in his persona;
bewildered.*

MRS PRIMROSE:

Thank you, my dear: thank you very much.

2.5 tower

ELAINE centre stage, facing audience.

ELAINE:

(Turns round twice) I live in a tall tower, all alone, all alone. Me and my mirror, broken, alas – the mirror, that is: I am not broken. I am perfect. Me, and my mirror, and my window, through which one day someone will come to save me. From what? I don't know. Don't ask these questions. Saviours save. What else can they do. I would like to be saved.

Until then, I look at myself, in my cracked glass, I play with my hair, as he will, one day, the saviour; and I see myself split in the mirror.

Or, I look at the river that runs below – riverrun, sliding by – and think, maybe he will come by water, in moonlight, dangerous. Or maybe a traveller, on a wild horse. A minstrel. An actor. A travelling healer. A strange magician. Such fun, not knowing, but knowing still that he will come.

2.6 Toby

TOBY centre stage, facing audience.

- TOBY: I suppose you want me to turn round twice?
- MRS PRIMROSE: Do I?
- TOBY: Well, that's what my friend said. She said, they make you turn round twice and say the first thing that comes into your head and it's quite strange and weird.
- MRS PRIMROSE: So she recommended us, did she, my dear?
- TOBY: Well, not exactly. She said it was a laugh. But she was quite drunk at the time.
- MRS PRIMROSE: So you came for a laugh, did you?
- TOBY: Yes (*laughs*). Well, OK, no. No. I came for something quite specific.
- MRS PRIMROSE: Which is?
- TOBY: Well, I felt. Erm. I felt, sort of, that things weren't the way they should be. Do you know what I mean? That it's all so – random. I mean, there you are, you go to work, you go out for a drink, you meet someone, friend of a friend, some girl, who just happens to be there. Totally by chance, do you see what I mean? And maybe it's OK, maybe it's crap, maybe it's a complete non-starter, maybe you wake up next morning and think, oh my god, or maybe it's all right; maybe even better than all right. For a while, anyway. But it's so random, isn't it?
- MRS PRIMROSE: Yes. Completely.

TOBY: So I thought, hey, come on, get a grip, take control of your life. Find some meaning in things: some sort of shape, do you know what I mean? So I obviously thought: computers. That's what they do: they sort things out, don't they, they are not, definitely not, random. Are they.

MRS PRIMROSE: No, they are not.

TOBY: Here I am. Feed me into the computer, press the buttons, make it all happen. Limitless bliss. Go for it. I'm all yours. Up to a point, that is. Do I do the turning round thing now?

MRS PRIMROSE: if you wish.
Turns round. Is transformed.

TOBY: Ah. So that's who I am.

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes.

TOBY: Yes. How nice to be—awake.

2.7 Mortimer

MORTIMER centre stage, facing audience.

MORTIMER: Hello.

MRS PRIMROSE: What are you doing here? You're not on my list.

MORTIMER: Well, that is surprising.

MRS PRIMROSE: Is it?

MORTIMER: No.

MRS PRIMROSE: Nothing surprises you, does it?

MORTIMER: No. Nothing.

MRS PRIMROSE: Why are you here?

MORTIMER: Look, will you come where I can see you, please? I don't like talking to thin air.

Enter MRS PRIMROSE.

Thank you. Now; When I heard about your little enterprise, I thought I would drop by. I thought I would come and sort you out a little. Out of the pure kindness of my heart.

MRS PRIMROSE: Is there anything I can do to stop you?

MORTIMER: No, not really. Not at all, in fact. I am not the stoppable kind. In fact, you can probably see, I am not any kind at all. I am a one-off, you might say.

MRS PRIMROSE: Well, since you're here, I will ask you the usual questions. Firstly, would you like to introduce yourself?

MORTIMER: Yes, I would like to, actually, I would enjoy that. So I will do it. Not otherwise, do you see?

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes. I'm sure I've seen you somewhere before, you know.

MORTIMER: Quite possibly. Now. I am MORTIMER. I am in charge of—various things. Human resources, yes, I do human resources. I do health and safety. And, therefore, of course, illness and danger. Terminal illness, deadly danger. Do you see?

MRS PRIMROSE: Oh, yes, I'm afraid I do.

MORTIMER: Oh, no need to be afraid. I take a little getting used to, that's all. I am, actually, quite cuddly (*smiles, ferociously*).

MRS PRIMROSE: Would you mind turning round twice, please?

MORTIMER: No, not at all, I would enjoy it.
Turns round once, the wrong way. Smiles.

MRS PRIMROSE: That's the wrong way!

MORTIMER: I know.
Turns round again, the wrong way.

MORTIMER: I am the emperor of what is. I am the way things actually are, I am the bad news, the news you assume you will never hear, though you know you will. What you think will never happen to you, is me. There you are, trotting along, in the sunshine, thinking about all the crap people think about, life, love, what's for dinner, and then I step in, children, and tell you the bad news. I announce myself. I make myself noticed. I am suddenly here to stay. I am the oil slick on the road, then the fireball. When you look out of the little round window, and see the wing breaking off, that's me, my dear, that's me you're looking at. The bad verdict, after the long wait, in the doctor's surgery. Me.

MRS PRIMROSE: Welcome.

MORTIMER: Oooh, I don't know about that. Anyway, enough of this idle chat. It's time.

MRS PRIMROSE:

Time?

MORTIMER:

Yes. My time. It's my turn now.

3 act 3: choices

3.1 have faith

TOBY, LILIA, ELAINE, AND JAMES (in that order) are standing centre stage facing the audience, blindfolded. MRS PRIMROSE (stage left) and MORTIMER (stage right) are standing, facing each other.

MRS PRIMROSE: Now, my dears, please turn round twice just once more (*they do so, and end up facing each other in pairs: TOBY/LILIA, ELAINE/JAMES*). Now, please take off your blindfolds.

General consternation as they recognise each other.

LILIA: What's going on? We all know each other! And we know you, too!

MRS PRIMROSE: Yes, isn't the computer remarkable!

JAMES: What? What is this nonsense? What's going on?

MRS PRIMROSE: The computer has unerringly chosen the perfect partner for each of you, out of the millions at its disposal; and it just happens that you already know each other. Well, not surprising, is it; think of the interests you have in common.

JAMES: Just wait a minute—

MRS PRIMROSE: Have faith, my dears; just have faith, and wait and see.

JAMES: But—but—

MORTIMER: (*Menacingly*) Have faith...

JAMES is silenced.

LILIA: So what do we do now?

MRS PRIMROSE: Now, my dear, the rest of your life begins.

MORTIMER: For better, or for worse.

LILIA: Ooh, that sounds scary.

MRS PRIMROSE: Nothing ventured, nothing gained: true love is worth it, isn't it?

LILIA: Er, I suppose so. Does it hurt?

MORTIMER: Always.

MRS PRIMROSE: In a good way. Always in a good way, my dear. Now, the test begins.

LILIA: I always failed tests at school. I was lousy at exams.

MRS PRIMROSE: Don't worry: these are different skills. And I have my assistant here to help you. PACO, where are you? Where is that dratted boy, he's never around when you want him.

PACO is wearing his invisibility necklace. He takes it off. The rest of the cast (but not MORTIMER) react, amazed to see him suddenly appear.

PACO: I'm here; obviously. What do you want?

MRS PRIMROSE: I want you to do some work. If you feel up to it, if you feel completely rested.

PACO: Sarcasm is the refuge of the impoverished spirit.

MRS PRIMROSE: Sorry about this. He thinks he's Oscar Wilde. But he's actually quite good at what he does. Aren't you, my little cherub.

PACO: Yeah. Maybe. Whatever. What do you want, anyway.

MRS PRIMROSE: I want you to take this nice lady and introduce her to true love.

PACO: OK. No problem.

MORTIMER: Well, of course, there will be a problem: this is a test, isn't it? A problem-solving exercise, my dears. And problems are very much my speciality. And I

too have an assistant. GRIMSBY! Where are you?
GRIMSBY!

GRIMSBY: *(Appears magically, by taking off her necklace. The rest of the cast (but not MORTIMER) reacts)* Hello.

MORTIMER: Don't you want to introduce yourself, my dear? Tell these nice people who you are, and what you do?

GRIMSBY: No.

MORTIMER: No, of course you don't, rebellious spirit; but you will if I tell you to, won't you. So: do it.

GRIMSBY: I am the silver glimpse, in the corner of your eye. I am the needle in the haystack, the elegance of the unexpected, the dazzling brightness, the exceptional. I am the slip, between the cup and the lip. I am why you touch wood. I am dangerous. Without me, everything would be known, and nothing would be beautiful. I shimmer; I am difficult. I am what it is, when you can't get what you want. I am the dream you can't remember, and long for; the interrupted poem; the unsatisfactory narrative.

MRS PRIMROSE: Good. Excellent. The stage is set: the story begins. Your story, my dears: your *love* story.
All exit except PACO and GRIMSBY.

GRIMSBY: Did the computer really match up those four out of millions?

PACO: What do you think?

GRIMSBY: I think—not.

PACO: You are—right. We only have four clients. You have to start somewhere...

GRIMSBY: Ah.

3.2 beach

TOBY, PACO

TOBY: Where am I?

PACO: A seashore. At midnight.

TOBY: Really?

PACO: Do yourself a favour: suspend disbelief.

TOBY: OK then. Is it a sandy beach?

PACO: Yeah, whatever.

TOBY: What am I doing?

PACO: Waiting. Patiently, right?

TOBY: Oh, right. For what, exactly?

PACO: Patience asks no questions.

TOBY: Why not?

PACO: There's no non-violent way of answering that. I suggest you imagine moonlight.

TOBY: OK.

PACO: The dark sea, the moon's reflection, silver, dazzling; the waves roar, break, hiss, recede.

TOBY: Yes, yes, I'm getting it.

PACO: Thank god for that.

TOBY: You are on my side, aren't you?

PACO: Up to a point. Don't push it. Now. Out of the water emerges—

TOBY: Yes—

PACO: A form—

TOBY: Yes!

PACO: It's a beautiful woman—

TOBY: Yes!

PACO: A dream—

TOBY: Yes!

PACO: A mystery—

TOBY: Yes!

PACO: Romance has entered your life.

TOBY: Yes! Yes!

LILIA enters, led by GRIMSBY; TOBY and PACO are looking in the wrong direction.

LILIA: Hi.

TOBY and PACO jump, turn round.

PACO: The sea is that way!

GRIMSBY: The sea is *that* way.

LILIA: You called.

TOBY: Did I?

LILIA: I heard you.

TOBY: Did you?

LILIA: There in the water, a mile below the surface.

TOBY: Really?

LILIA: I heard you calling. calling, calling.

TOBY: Really?

LILIA: Yes. And here I am.

TOBY: But, er— (*dithers*).

PACO: Would you turn around twice, please? *He dithers some more.* Look, just do it, will you?

TOBY: (*Turns, is transformed: radiant*). Ah: ah! *Looks at LILIA: loves her. They approach; hold hands; a beautiful moment.*

PACO: There you are, that's those two sorted. *They continue to stare into each other's eyes.*

GRIMSBY: Hold on.

PACO: What?

GRIMSBY: There's a test, remember.

PACO: Oh, right. OK, do it.

GRIMSBY: *(Taps TOBY on the shoulder.)* Ahem.

TOBY: *(Jumps).* What?

GRIMSBY: She's pregnant.

TOBY: *(Immediately back in his everyday persona)* She's what?

LILIA: Am I?

TOBY: But—but—we haven't, er, we didn't—

GRIMSBY: It's not yours. Idiot.

LILIA: Well whose is it then?
GRIMSBY looks at her.
Oh. Oh, that. Oh dear. Are you sure?
GRIMSBY looks at her.
Oh.

TOBY: What? What?

LILIA: Er, I had a little accident. An unsuitable encounter. Alcohol was involved. No big deal. Or so I thought.

TOBY: Who was it? Who's the father?
Enter JAMES. LILIA looks at him. TOBY sees her reaction to JAMES, and looks at him too, as do they all.

JAMES: What?
Exeunt.

3.3 tower

ELAINE, PACO.

ELAINE: It's really cold, in this tower.

PACO: It's an imaginary tower. How can it be cold?

ELAINE: I have a really powerful imagination.

PACO: Whatever.

ELAINE: So where is he then, what's happened to him?

PACO: Who knows? Maybe he's changed his mind.

ELAINE: Don't say that! He's my knight in shining armour, my prince, my poet: he will make me real and set me free and make me glad forever!

PACO: Yes. Possibly.

Knocking.

ELAINE: Enter, enter, whoever you are.

Enter TOBY, led by GRIMSBY.

ELAINE: What are you doing here? What's he doing here?
What's happening?

PACO: Beats me. *To GRIMSBY:* this is your doing, is it?

GRIMSBY: Not directly, no. Well, yes.

TOBY: There's been a complication. The other two have an issue to sort out. They are having urgent discussions.

ELAINE: An issue? What sort of issue? He's supposed to be rescuing me!

TOBY: Well, it turns out that he is the father of her unborn child.

ELAINE: What!! That's impossible!

GRIMSBY:

You've been spending too much time in a tower,
you know.

3.4 bliss

All are assembled on stage.

ELAINE: What I want to know is, what are we going to do now?

JAMES: *Goes over to LILIA, kneels, takes her hand tenderly.* Please: will you marry me?

LILIA: Are you really offering?

JAMES: Yes, I really am.

LILIA: To have and to hold, in sickness and health, till death us both shall part? That kind of thing?

JAMES: Yes. Indeed. That kind of thing.

LILIA: Thank you, but no thanks.

JAMES: Oh. What are you going to do, then?

LILIA: I'm going to go and live by the sea, and look out at the waves, and have my baby, and teach her not to have impossible dreams. And you?

JAMES: Oh. Me. I will go and live in the world, and try to remember what it is to be an angel. Perhaps I can come and visit you some time, by the sea?
He holds out his hand to her – a deliberate echo of the ending to High Fantastical. She hesitates – another deliberate echo – then takes it. A tender moment.

LILIA: You may. *They exit.*

ELAINE: But what about me? And my tower? And my prince?

TOBY: Is it nice, in the tower?

ELAINE: Well, yes, actually. Cold, but pure.

TOBY: Sounds good to me. Will you stay there?

ELAINE: Yes, for now, I think I will. I feel myself. I feel clear and free. What will you do?

TOBY: I think I will try to wake up. And stay awake. Can I come and visit you, some time, in your tower?
He holds out his hand to her exactly as James has done. She hesitates exactly as Lilia has done, and then takes it. Another tender moment.

ELAINE: Yes. That would be nice. I will make you tea.

TOBY: Thank you. *They exit.*

MORTIMER: And that would appear to be that. A rather limited kind of bliss, wouldn't you say?

MRS PRIMROSE: I would. Is there any other kind?

MORTIMER: Would you care to turn around?

MRS PRIMROSE: I beg your pardon?

MORTIMER: Try it. Just try it.
Mrs Primrose turns around twice. A magical transformation. She looks at Mortimer.

MRS PRIMROSE: Oh.

MORTIMER: Oh indeed.

MRS PRIMROSE: Now I remember. Now I know where we've met before. It was you, wasn't it?
MORTIMER nods.

We were driving up a hill in our little car, my best friend and me, waiting at the traffic lights on a busy afternoon, chatting, laughing, making plans. A sudden loud noise and a sharp sensation as the car was hit from behind. *(She indicates that she knows it was Mortimer who crashed into her)* A long silence, an endless waiting, but somehow, strangely, waiting for nothing, nothing. All expectations dissolving mysteriously into the pure

thin air. Can you still call it waiting if you have cut loose from the future. Cut loose from the past?

*(If this play is performed after High Fantastical)
enter BRECHT. He pays attention.*

Such freedom. Such unimagined bliss. All the time in the world. And no time like the present. Then another loud noise as we hit the car just in front of us. Then a sudden storm of sounds as we were back in everyday time. Glass breaking, seats collapsing beneath us. People wanting to help.
Pause.

MORTIMER: And then?
MRS PRIMROSE: Happy to be alive. Alive and unharmed.
MORTIMER: And?
MRS PRIMROSE: I don't have the words to tell you.
MORTIMER: Try it. Tell me.
MRS PRIMROSE: I had been cut loose from language too.

*(If this play is performed after High Fantastical)
VIRGINIA appears and listens.*

In that microsecond of waiting. The endless pause between being hit from behind and hitting the car in front of us, all preferences disappeared. All differences. All similarities. All those words, all that syntax, the concept of "me" "you" "here" "there" "if" "but" "good" "bad" . . . meaningless. No, beyond meaningful and meaningless. Unimaginable. Inaccessible. Simply, quite simply, unnecessary.

MORTIMER: And what remains?
MRS PRIMROSE: What remains, as you very well know, is limitless bliss. And the still sad music of humanity. And the wish to be kind. And the deep delightful knowing that all is well.

MORTIMER: I told you I would sort you out. From the pure kindness of my heart.

MRS PRIMROSE: You did. You have.
He starts to leave
Don't go.

MORTIMER: I'll be back. Though of course I never really leave. I'm always right here. Always waiting for an opportunity to - to -

MRS PRIMROSE: Dance!

MORTIMER: Dance? What on earth do you mean?

PACO and GRIMSBY: Turn round twice.
MORTIMER and MRS PRIMROSE turn round twice. MRS PRIMROSE tap-dances beautifully and effortlessly across the stage towards MORTIMER.

MORTIMER: I think I'm in love. Do you know, I really, really, think I'm in love.

MRS PRIMROSE: Obviously. *They dance together, and exit.*

GRIMSBY: It must be strange, to be mortal. Dancing, dancing, under the shadow of death.

PACO: Yeah, well, you know. What else is there? You must go on, you can't go on, you go on.

GRIMSBY: Did Oscar Wilde say that?

PACO: No. He didn't.

GRIMSBY: Shall we?

PACO: Shall we what?
GRIMSBY tries out a few, tentative dance steps. PACO tentatively joins her. They roar with laughter. (If this play is performed after High Fantastical:) Paco waves at the sound box: the High Fantastical song begins. Enter the cast of Limitless Bliss and High Fantastical, in role, tap dancing. They dance until the song ends, then bow.