

WATER ON THE MOON

(Excerpt)

By Emily Bohannon

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CHARACTERS

BEX, 28, female, any race: runs a pirated radio station out of a closet in her apartment, lesbian, insomniac, would like a job talking about music all day but temps instead

JO-JO, 28, female, any race: Bex's roommate, Southern accent, actress and caterwaiter who steals wedding cake toppers from wedding receptions, lies to get a role in a play

PETE, 28, male, any race: Bex's best friend, DJ at the radio station, jazz pianist, needs a fresh start

KEVIN, 28, male, any race: DJ at the radio station, sings in an alt-country band called El Diablo, likes girls

ANDY, 21, male, any race: DJ at the radio station, senior at NYU, looks like a hipster but is deeply unhip, energy personified

CALLIE, 28, female, any race: Jo-Jo's castmate, lesbian, loves Bex's radio station, heartbroken

CHRIS, 28-48, male, Serbian, any race: superintendent of the building, an expert in fixing leaks who has finally met his match

**When I say "any race" that means characters can be played by any person of any race, but they should not all be white. Your cast should reflect the multiethnic population of NYC.*

TIME + PLACE

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A NOTE ON SOUND

When a character wears headphones, we hear the music they hear. When they remove the headphones, the music stops the way it would if you took headphones off. It's recommended that all music we hear in the show follows this rule, including music during scene transitions so that there is never sound that one of the characters can't hear. This creates "living transitions" in which music turns on and off with headphones, and if there is no music playing, we hear drips, the radiator clanking, the mystery roommate's music - the sounds of a New York City apartment in winter. In the show's first production, even the intermission soundtrack was 80s rock playing from Chris's iPod as he moved the stage into its transformation at the top of Act One, taping plastic bags to the floor, bringing out the shower curtain, etc. which Bex turned off to begin Act Two.

PRESHOW PLAYLIST

Bex DJs during pre-show with Pete sitting on the sofa on his laptop. He can't hear the preshow music, but she can and she listens actively, reacting and dancing. She turns off the music at the end of "Fake Empire" and starts her first speech.

Milk Man - Deerhoof
Where Is My Mind? - The Pixies
The King of Carrot Flowers, Pt. 1 - Neutral Milk Hotel
Jennifer Louise - Of Montreal
Race for the Prize - The Flaming Lips
Fake Empire - The National

ACT ONE MUSIC

What is Not But Could be If - The Silver Jews
About Today - The National
A Poem on the Underground Wall - Simon & Garfunkel
December 1963 (Oh, What a Night) - The Four Seasons
Where Are You? - Sonny Rollins
Ashes on the Moon - Riviera
Party Up (Radio Edit) - DMX
Wannabe - The Spice Girls
Western Sky - Grand Fury

ACT TWO MUSIC

I Won't Back Down - Johnny Cash
Solitary Man - Johnny Cash
Solitary Woman - Della Reese
Stormy Weather - Etta James
Party Up (Radio Edit) - DMX
To the Ramones - Dustin's Bar Mitzvah
Who'll Stop the Rain? - Creedence Clearwater Revival

POSTSHOW PLAYLIST

Wake Up - Arcade Fire
Baby Baby - Amy Grant
There is a Light that Never Goes Out - The Smiths
Happy Together - The Turtles
Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head - Burt Bacharach

WATER ON THE MOON: A STORY IN SONG

Who'll Stop the Rain? - Creedence Clearwater Revival
Fixing a Hole - The Beatles
The More You Ignore me, the Closer I Get - Morrissey
Pipes you See, Pipes you Don't - Pipes you See, Pipes You Don't
Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head - Burt Bacharach
Black Water - The Doobie Brothers
Black Mold - The Dirty Noises
No Ceiling - Eddie Vedder
We're Not Gonna Take It - Twisted Sister
Danger Zone - Kenny Loggins
One Man's Ceiling is Another Man's Floor - Paul Simon

A FINAL NOTE ON THE WATER

You don't need water dripping from the ceiling to do this play.

In fact, I prefer it that way.

If you've got a massive budget and can have water pouring from the ceiling at the end, go nuts.

But - the fun of our imaginations filling in the story of the water is why we love going to the theatre.

If we see someone put down a metal pot and hear the sound of water hitting metal then replace it with a plastic bucket and hear the sound of water hitting plastic, our minds fill in the visual of water falling from the ceiling.

If the actors react to the water, look up and see it, dodge it, etc., our minds accept that there's water falling from the ceiling just as they accept that these are real people onstage.

It's thrilling to watch the soundscape of this play grow from the first faint drip to the final pop of the lights with your imagination activated in a way that doesn't happen if every gap is filled in.

Trust your audience. Take them on the ride. Use lights, sound, props, the set, and the actors to tell the story of the water.

Because it's the closest thing to real magic we get in this life.

Lights up on an apartment in Manhattan Valley. We see something that can only loosely be called a "living" room, with a hand-me-down couch you'd find on the street (not a nice street).

PETE, a 28-year-old guy, sits on the couch tapping away on his laptop. He needs a haircut and wears unhip glasses and an old man cardigan. There's a coffee table covered in old issues of Time Out New York and the top of a wedding cake, half eaten. Around the wedding cake is a collection of cake topper ornaments: brides and grooms of every shape, color, and inclination. An Asian groom and a black bride. A black groom and a white bride. Two Asian brides. Two Indian grooms.

In the kitchen, there's a sink full of dirty plates and a refrigerator completely covered with magnets. A hallway to the back of the apartment sits by a closed door that dominates the center of the room, as it's the only surface that looks remotely clean.

On the other side of the room, the door to the living room closet has been taken off its hinges to house the radio station. Every inch of closet wall is covered with rows of CDs. Radio equipment sits on a table with a laptop and microphone by a desk lamp that is never turned off.

BEX, a 28-year-old girl, sits in the closet DJ'ing, wearing a men's plaid shirt and nibbling out of an enormous bag of pistachios. She sucks on the shells as she eats, then adds them to a pile of shells in a large bowl. The pile is impressive.

BEX

If you're up and still listening to this...what are you waiting for? What do you think's going to happen? Nothing's going to happen. It's the same every night. You hit refresh on your email one more time. Get up to wash your face and then remember something someone told you to look up that day, some article to read or some video on Youtube or...and half an hour later, you're still awake.

And then you remember something you read that you want to read again, so you go find the book, but while you're looking for the book, you see the piano. So you sit down to play a song, but notice that the keys are dusty, so you go into the kitchen to get a paper towel. But then you see the peanut butter. And while you're eating peanut butter straight from the jar with a butter knife, you start reading the copy of Time Out from three weeks ago that's still lying open on the table. You read about that concert you should've gone to, and this film that came out, and you think, "I should see that," and maybe you even cut out the review. Then you go back to your room and look up movie times, but one of your West Coast friends has loaded new baby pictures on Facebook, so you gawk at these terrifying baby pictures, and wonder how this was genetically possible, when you realize...oh, it's four in the morning. What did I do tonight? Where did the last seven hours go? I didn't do anything. Nothing actually happened. And yet, here we are. Still awake. Waiting for something to happen.

She sucks a pistachio shell as she queues up a CD.

BEX (CONT'D)

Ah. The train crashed. It was going somewhere interesting for a moment. Or maybe not. I don't know what time of day they wrote this song, but I'd like to think they wrote it at -- 3:25 am. Cause that's when I always want to listen to it. I read one time that Morrissey says more in a title than most pop stars say in an album. I'd say that these guys say more in one line than most pop stars say in a lifetime.

She plays "What is Not but Could be If" by The Silver Jews. She listens to it for a moment, then takes off her headphones and leans out the door.

BEX (CONT'D)

(to Pete) You know how they say not to wander around bad neighborhoods late at night?

PETE

Yeah.

BEX

The same thing applies to my brain. After a certain hour, like, maybe 9:45, it should stop running. Like the B train.

PETE

Why is 3:25 ringing a bell?

BEX

Finals? Freshman year? The rollerblading incident?

PETE

Oh, God.

BEX

Let us never speak of the rollerblading incident.

PETE

Except we always say that and always speak of it again.

BEX

They say you have to relive trauma in order to heal.

PETE

Ten years, man.

BEX

Doesn't mean we're old.

PETE

It kind of does. (beat) I gotta go home.

BEX

Stay here.

PETE

I've got a...I got a call from NPR today.

BEX

Are you renewing your pledge?

PETE

They want me to come in and talk to them.

BEX

Pete! What the fuck, man?

PETE

It's just a meeting. There's no job. It's. For the future, you know.

BEX

You hate NPR.

PETE

I don't hate NPR.

BEX

You call their Saturday night jazz hour the Gizz Hour.

PETE

It's just that one guy. You know that guy. Mister Saturday Night Oh Listen to my Velvety Voice Guy?

BEX

Well, that's...great they called? I mean, if someone would pay me to make mix CDs all day.

PETE

Yeah.

BEX

I mean, if you could put "Professional Appreciator" on a resume.

PETE

Yeah.

BEX

NPR. That's, like, the Broadway of Radio.

PETE

Yeah.

BEX

What if there's a job?

PETE

There's not.

BEX

But if there is, you'd have to quit, right?

PETE

I'd do both.

BEX

You're my best...DJ.

PETE

They already told me there's no job.

BEX

So how come they called you?

PETE

I sent them a letter? Awhile back?

BEX

Okay.

PETE

Just a, "Hey, I'm a jazz geek, here are the things I like." Things I'd like to research. Those kind of things.

BEX

That's impressive.

PETE

Not really. Everyone does it.

BEX

I don't. Did you just write to NPR, or...?

PETE

A few places.

BEX

Where?

PETE

I don't know. The affiliates here. And in Chicago.

BEX

Chicago?

JO-JO, a 28-year-old girl, pads down the hallway wearing a tattered Ole Miss sweatshirt and shorts with sorority letters stamped across the butt. If she were a doll, her name would be "Motel Pool Barbie." She opens the fridge door and rootles around inside.

JO-JO

Y'all seen my fig stuff?

BEX

Fig stuff?

JO-JO

It's for crackers. You eat it.

PETE

No.

JO-JO

Bex?

BEX

Nope.

JO-JO

It was in here.

BEX

When?

JO-JO

Recently.

BEX
Maybe the new girl ate it.

They look at the closed door.

JO-JO
I haven't seen her yet. It is a her, right?

BEX
I wasn't here when she picked up the keys.

JO-JO
How'd she get in?

BEX
Oh, yeah. (to Pete) What's she like?

PETE
How would I know?

BEX
You let her in.

PETE
No, I didn't.

BEX
I gave you the extra keys to give to her.

PETE
And I gave them to Andy.

BEX
Why did you give them to Andy?!

PETE
I had to pick up a shift at the restaurant.

BEX
Great.

PETE
Ask him tomorrow.

BEX
It's Kevin tomorrow.

PETE
No, Andy, then Kevin. We switched the rotation, remember?

BEX
Oh, God.

JO-JO

At least someone we know has met her. So she's technically a friend of a friend now.

BEX

Not really.

JO-JO

Well, I'm comforted. Andy wouldn't let a total freak in.

PETE

Have you ever met Andy?

JO-JO

Yeah, Andy's cool.

PETE

If you define cool as someone who bought a camouflage van to reenact the A-Team, then yeah, Andy's cool.

JO-JO

What about her rent check?

BEX

I haven't gotten it from her yet.

JO-JO

So neither of us has actually met our new roommate?

BEX

You interviewed her.

JO-JO

No, she was one of yours.

BEX

No, all of mine were freaks. So who...?

They look at the door again.

JO-JO

You probably just forgot. After years of interviewing roommates, they all kinda blend together.

PETE

That room's too small. Only a psychopath could live in there.

BEX

She's probably some girl from Ohio who wants to be an actress, but'll end up a nanny or a hooker before the year's out.

JO-JO

Do you see something wrong here?

BEX

Other than the roommate neither of us has met?

JO-JO

We have like, 800,000 magnets and only one piece of paper.

She reads from the piece of paper.

JO-JO (CONT'D)

"In the event of an emergency, please call your super. Christ." Hey, wasn't Christ supposed to come today?

BEX

Supposed to.

JO-JO

I felt this cold nasty water fall in my hair when I was brushing my teeth.

BEX

I called the office. They said he was coming. I gave up a temp job and waited all day. No Christ.

JO-JO

Well, he needs to come. That leak isn't fixing itself. Ugh! Where is the fig stuff?!

PETE

If you left it there, it's in there.

JO-JO

It's not.

PETE

Look in the back.

JO-JO

I looked in the back. It's not there.

BEX

I haven't seen it.

JO-JO

Are you sure? Do you even know what I'm talking about?

BEX

Yeah. I hate figs.

JO-JO

I guess she ate it. Whatever her name is.

BEX

Bitch.

JO-JO
There's nothing else to eat.

BEX
You've got crackers.

JO-JO
But I don't have the fig stuff!

BEX
There's Welch's.

JO-JO
That's vile.

BEX
It's in the Condiment Hall of Fame.

JO-JO
The fig stuff cost like six dollars.

BEX
Really?

JO-JO
It's made from organic figs grown by the Adriatic Sea. Figs that lived joyful lives in the Adriatic sun. They were plucked and cradled in the loving hands of Italian farmers.

BEX
Still... Six bucks.

JO-JO
I wanted to treat myself.

PETE
Was it good?

JO-JO
It's like if an angel and a unicorn made jam together.

BEX
It better be. Six bucks.

Jo-Jo looks for a fork. She can't find a clean one, so she takes a dirty one from the sink and wipes it on her shorts. She pads over to the couch and picks up the wedding cake topper.

BEX (CONT'D)
How long's that been sitting there?

I dunno.

JO-JO

Figure it out.

BEX

Well...this was the Flanagan wedding.

JO-JO

She holds up a cake ornament of two brides. The Flanagans.

BEX

So when was that?

JO-JO

Saturday. What's today?

BEX

Tuesday.

JO-JO

Oh.

She takes a bite of cake.

PETE

That's disgusting.

JO-JO

People save it and eat it after a year.

PETE

In the freezer! It's been frozen for a year. Not sitting out on a table.

JO-JO

If you scrape off the crusty part, the inside's good.

BEX

You should steal some real food. Mini-quiches or--

JO-JO

But my collection isn't finished! I need two Indian brides, a black groom and an Asian groom--

PETE

Is Manhattan Caterwaiters R US run by total fucking idiots?

JO-JO

My supervisor's a dumbass. Keith.

PETE

They're going to catch you.

JO-JO
No, they're not.

PETE
They're going to catch you and fire you. Those cake toppers are a big deal.

JO-JO
Nooooo.

PETE
Yes! There are whole companies, like, a whole industry devoted to these things. Kids have gone to college on the cake topper millions.

JO-JO
How many kids?

PETE
A lot!

JO-JO
Did you go to college with any of them? Was there a special dorm at Sarah Lawrence for the Daughters of the Cake Topper Revolution?

PETE
I went to Oberlin!

JO-JO
Whatever. Oh, Bex! I have an audition tomorrow!

BEX
What for?

JO-JO
This really good play. I mean, I think. It's really funny.

BEX
What's it called?

JO-JO
Something about hags and fags?

BEX
What are you gonna do?

JO-JO
I dunno. Maybe Chekhov?

PETE
Seriously?

JO-JO

Or, you know. Whatever I feel like when I get there. Are you waiting for Christ tomorrow?

BEX

Can't. Got a temp job, and I really need to take it.

JO-JO

Doing what?

BEX

I don't know. The lady just told me to show up and they'd find something for me to do.

PETE

Can't be worse than last week.

JO-JO

The Verizon thing? That wasn't too bad.

BEX

I had to dress up like the genie from Aladdin! That mask was terrifying. All these little kids kept bursting into tears.

A huge thump comes from behind the door. They creep up to it and listen through the door. Nothing happens.

JO-JO

Do you think we should knock? Like, introduce ourselves or something?

BEX

I don't really like talking to people I don't know.

JO-JO

Yeah. Let's just live with her instead.

BEX

I've gotta finish this playlist.

JO-JO

Did you ever figure out if you have any, you know, listeners?

BEX

Pete listens.

JO-JO

Pete records the sound of leaves blowing in the park. Leaves.

PETE

I actually did some cool shit with that!

JO-JO
The sound of leaves.

PETE
Bite me.

JO-JO
Do people even listen to the radio anymore? Don't they just listen to their iPods? And those oddcasts or godcasts or--

PETE
Podcasts.

JO-JO
And I hear the new iPhone thingee plays music like an iPod.

PETE
So?

JO-JO
So what's the point if no one's listening?

PETE
That is the point. We don't broadcast because someone's listening. We do it for ourselves.

JO-JO
Aren't you scared you're gonna get arrested or something?

PETE
No.

JO-JO
Like that movie.

PETE
Pump Up the Volume.

JO-JO
No. With Christian Slater in it.

BEX
Pump Up the Volume.

JO-JO
Is that what it's called?

PETE
Yes.

JO-JO
I'm getting it confused with the one about the monkey heart.

JO-JO

I know. Every time I hear that song, I still get excited. Sometimes I even listen to it while I'm--

BEX

Bed!

JO-JO

Alright. But you should play it. For Pete.

PETE

No!

BEX

Good night, Jo-Jo.

JO-JO

G'nite!

She exits down the hall.

PETE

You gonna go to bed?

BEX

In a minute. You coming by after the interview?

PETE

It's a meeting, not an interview. And yeah. Why wouldn't I?

BEX

I don't know. (beat) I can't do this without you.

PETE

Nothing's gonna happen. And if it does...you know.

BEX

What?

PETE

I know you think there's nowhere you can work as a DJ--

BEX

There's not.

PETE

You could look around.

BEX

Pete. I looked.

PETE

Look again.

BEX

Why? I know what I'll find. A bunch of dudes who think I'm not edgy enough or girly enough or. Apparently being a lesbian isn't enough. You have to be a hip lesbian or an edgy lesbian or a funny lesbian or. You know?

PETE

How do you know if you don't look?

BEX

Well, I figure there are a lot of people who have early career success, like, put out one great album or write one great book and never do anything again. It can be paralyzing. So I'm just trying to avoid that kind of early career success. I'm shooting for, you know, mid to late career success.

PETE

I see.

He opens the door.

BEX

If you move to Chicago, what would happen with the trio?

PETE

The trio's not...together anymore.

BEX

Since when?

PETE

We're taking a break. It's not a big deal.

BEX

It is a big deal.

PETE

A gig every other month is not a big deal.

BEX

So you gonna find some new guys, or...?

PETE

I'm actually gonna...take a break.

BEX

From piano?!

PETE

Yeah.

BEX

Whoa! Why haven't you said anything?

She closes the door.

PETE

Just decided this week. I've been thinking about it awhile.

BEX

Okay...

PETE

I want to be a part of the dialogue, and that's just not happening right now as a pianist.

BEX

Is that the public relations answer?

PETE

No, it's the real one. I don't want to be one of a million guys who are pretty good. I want to be relevant.

BEX

You're better than pretty good.

PETE

But not good enough. I feel like I'm lying when someone asks what I do and I say pianist. What I'm thinking is waiter.

BEX

So what have the last seven years been for? Waiting tables, working your ass off to...what?

PETE

Exactly. I don't know. (beat) Look, I gotta go. It'll be four by the time I get home.

BEX

What time's your interview?

PETE

Four.

BEX

You've got twelve whole hours.

PETE

And I need to sleep for 8 of them.

BEX

Wuss.

PETE

Insomniac.

BEX

You, too.

PETE
Yeah, well... What time do you work?

BEX
Nine.

PETE
You should go to bed.

BEX
Where's the fun in that?

PETE
Night, Bex.

BEX
Good luck.

PETE
Nothing's gonna happen.

BEX
Okay. Good luck anyway.

PETE
Bye.

BEX
Bye.

He exits. Bex returns to the closet and puts her headphones back on. The last bit of "About Today" by The National plays. She listens until it's almost over, then stops the music abruptly.

BEX (CONT'D)
(into the mic) That reminds me of something. Wait for it.

She plays the first few beats of "A Poem on the Underground Wall" by Simon and Garfunkel.

BEX (CONT'D)
And then.

She plays the first few moments of "About Today" then stops it.

BEX (CONT'D)
Not exactly alike, but you can see what I'm getting at. There's a heartbeat. (beat) When I was 12, I thought that living in New York would feel like a Simon and Garfunkel song.

I listened to "Bookends" the same week I read "Catcher in the Rye," and I knew somewhere in the elixir of those two things was New York. The idea of New York at least. Maybe that's all New York is. An idea. What's Chicago? Chicago's... not New York. That's all I have on Chicago. I can't imagine what would have to happen to make me want to leave New York. That would probably be the worst day of my life. Don't tell anyone I said that. But it would be.

She hears the faint sound of the drip from the bathroom, then rifles through a stack of CDs:

BEX (CONT'D)

Pete will catch the tail end of this when he gets home and curse my name. But I'm curious now. When my dad was growing up, my grandma burned his Ray Charles records and called it the devil's music. She also thought Christ was coming back on October 24th, 1977, but as I learned today, he still hasn't come. And the drip in our bathroom continues, joining the ranks of mysterious drips all over New York City. So in honor of you, Pete, and drips everywhere, and anyone who loves sex songs, give this a listen and tell me if you think the devil approves.

She plays "December 1963 (Oh, What a Night)" by the Four Seasons.

END OF EXCERPT