

GIN: You're two years older than Dalton.

DALTON: Mother.

PACE: Almost.

GIN: He's been seeing a lot of you these past weeks.

DALTON: Can we have some more tea?

PACE: You ever hear of Cugnot, Mrs. Chance? Nicholas Cugnot. Made the first steam machine that moved. Crawled two mph before it blew up. That was in France. 1769, I think. The government put Cugnot in prison. Explosion didn't hurt anyone. Never understood why they put him in jail.

GIN: My son doesn't know a thing about trains.

PACE: I think they were afraid. Not of the machine, but of Cugnot. They'd never seen anything like that moved by steam. Just plain old water (*Makes the sound of steam.*) into steam. It must have changed them somehow. Just to see it. They couldn't forgive him.

GIN: What do you want with Dalton?

DALTON: Christ. We're just having tea.

GIN: Hush up. (*Dalton shuts up. He puts his head in his hands.*) We're a family here, Pace. A regular family. My husband, Dalton and me. Lots of trouble out there, lots of bad weather. But we take care of each other; nothing out there we need. I want you to know that.

PACE: You know the Union Pacific? They're gonna build the biggest steam locomotives in the world. The engine and tender'll weigh over five hundred tons. Colossal. They'll be 4-8-8-4 articulated locomotives with two sets of driving wheels, each with their own cylinders. (*Gin just stares at her.*) I'm sorry. Mrs. Chance. But me and Dalton. It's none of your business.

GIN: Cylinders, huh? Driving wheels. Articulated locomotives. If you're thinking to trick my son—

DALTON: I can't believe this...

PACE: Mrs. Chance, I'm not sweet on your son's locomotive system, if that's what you mean. We've never touched each other. I've got nothing to be ashamed of. Though I did tell him to take off his clothes once, down under the trestle.

GIN: To take off his—

DALTON: Pace!

PACE: (*Interrupts.*) Shut up, Dalton. (*Beat.*) And then once on the tracks. A

hundred feet up. Wasn't a train in sight. It was kinda chilly that evening, but it was safe.

GIN: I think you better leave now.

PACE: He doesn't like me, really. He says I'm loud.

GIN: (*To Dalton.*) You took off your clothes?

PACE: He's your son. He does what he's told.

GIN: Why would you do such a thing? Anyone might have seen you.

PACE: Yeah. I did. And he's not like an engine at all. Nah. Dalton's pale. Real pale. No steam. How's he keep warm? Doesn't know the first thing about cylinders. And he's so light, what keeps him where he stands? On the track, slip, slip, slip. No traction. Now, the Big Boys, the new ones, they'll need near ten tons of coal per hour in their firebox. And the grate where the coal'll be burned is bigger than a kitchen. (*Ginny just stares at her.*) Imagine it. That's what we're coming to.
(*End of scene.*)

SCENE SEVEN

Dalton and Pace at the trestle.

PACE: Let's start here. On this tie.

DALTON: What tie? The track's up there.

PACE: Imagine it, stupid.

DALTON: Right.

PACE: See, this tie's marked with a red X.

DALTON: Maybe I want to start on this other tie.

PACE: Look. It's tradition, Okay. Besides, Brett made this X so let's use it. Now, you crouch down like this. Go on. Yeah. That's right. Like at a track meet. Point your skinny rear to the stars. Got it.

DALTON: I'll count down.

PACE: Now when you say "Go" we run like crazy to the other side. But don't check your feet. You'll trip if you check your feet. Just trust that your feet know where to go.

DALTON: I hear you.

PACE: You're playin' chicken with the train so you keep your eyes on the engine headed towards you. It'll look like she's real close but she won't

be. If you start when I tell you to, you'll have enough time to make it across and have dinner before she starts over the trestle. Ready?

DALTON: Pace?

PACE: Yeah?

DALTON: My legs are shaking.

PACE: This is practice, Dalton. There's no train down here.

DALTON: My legs aren't so sure.

PACE: On the count of three. Come on.

DALTON and PACE: One, two, three—

DALTON: Wait!

(Dalton seems to be looking over an edge.)

PACE: Don't look. You'll lose your nerve.

DALTON: It's a long way down.

PACE: Why don't we just walk it. Give me your hand.

(Pace takes his hand and begins to walk him.)

DALTON: God we're high up.

PACE: *(Smacks him.)* Keep your eyes on the other side. Pretend that we're running.

DALTON: We are. I'm out of breath.

PACE: We're almost there. Yeah. Yeah. Grease those knees. And now you trip.

DALTON: What?

PACE: You trip.

(Pace trips him so he falls to the ground.)

DALTON: Hey! What the— You tripped me. Hey—

PACE: It might happen.

DALTON: Why'd you—

(Dalton tries to get up. She knocks him back down, hard.)

PACE: You might trip. Anything's possible. We got to be ready for it.

DALTON: But I wouldn't've tripped! You pushed me!

PACE: Don't get up. Just sit there. Like you tripped. Let's say I'm flaggin' behind and you look over your shoulder to see how I'm doing and you trip. And just as you trip you hear her coming around the hill.

(Pace makes the sound of a train whistle.)

DALTON: You sound like a kitten. It's like this.

(Dalton makes an even better and more frightening whistle.)

PACE: Yeah! And you can hear her cold slathering black hell of a heart barrelling towards the trestle and it sounds like this.

(Together they make an engine sound, surprisingly well.)

PACE: But you've twisted your ankle.

DALTON: Yeah. And I can hardly stand. It feels like my foot's coming *(Makes a painful gasp.)* I try to run but I can only hobble. And the she's just about to cross.

PACE: And then there I am. At your side.

DALTON: No. I'd slow you down and you know it. You just pass me *(Makes the sound of an arrow flying.)* Like an arrow. You've got to your own skin.

PACE: Yeah, but I can't just leave you there.

DALTON: Yes you can.

PACE: You'll be killed.

DALTON: I'll be torn apart.

PACE: So I put my arm around your waist and start to drag you down tracks with me. It's hard going. We've only got fifty feet or so 'til v clear.

DALTON: But the train. *(Dalton lets out a terrible scream of a whistle.)* So drop me.

PACE: No.

DALTON: You drop me and run. You run for your life.

PACE: No. I don't leave you. I—

DALTON: You make it across. Just in time. Alone.

PACE: I drag you with me.

DALTON: And as you clear the tracks, you feel the hurtling wind of her rushes by you, so close it's like she's kissing the back of your neck close she pulls the shirt right up off you without popping the buttons *(Beat.)* And then? And then you hear me scream.

(Dalton lets out a terrible scream and at the same time Pace screams.)

PACE: I save you!

(They are silent some moments.)

DALTON: The train, she disappears over the trestle and on down the t

(Beat.) You, Pace Creagan, are standing there, breathing hard—

PACE: My heart jumping jacks, yeah, shooting dice in my chest. Snake But I'm alive. Alive!

DALTON: As for me, well, you know I'm dead. You're certain. But still have to go back and have a look. To see what's left. Of course th almost nothing left.

PACE: Yeah there was. There was a lot left.

DALTON: No. Just some bits of. Meat. And a track shoe. That's all.

mashed potatoes now. Just add some milk and stir. And you were right, Pace my friend. My life has changed. Completely. Only I'm not around to enjoy it.

PACE: He wasn't wearing track shoes.

DALTON: Hey. Take a look at my face. I'm talking to you: I'm dead.

PACE: Brett was wearing boots.

DALTON: And now maybe my Mom will be able to scrounge up some new shoes for the funeral. If she can find my feet.

PACE: *(Calmly.)* Shut up. Just. Shut up. Have you ever put a shell up to your ear?

DALTON: What?

PACE: A conch shell. One of those big ones. It's not the ocean you're hearing.

Or even the blood in your head. *(Makes the sound of a shell over one's ear.)* That's the sound. You know it. And it's been going on for years. Even now you can hear it. Listen. It's this town. Our future. You and me. *(Makes the sound again.)* Empty. No more, no less. Just. Empty.

DALTON: I want to change my life. But not like this. I'm going home.

PACE: Wait.

DALTON: *(Leaving.)* Not this time.

PACE: Take off your clothes.

DALTON: Why?

PACE: Because you want to. *(Dalton begins to undress. Pace watches him. He's about to take off his underwear.)* Stop. There. Yeah. That's enough. *(They both watch each other. Pace moves closer to him, but not that close.)* Are you cold?

DALTON: A little. *(Beat.)* Well. Are you gonna touch me or what?

PACE: No. I just wanted. To look at you.

DALTON: Once you take your clothes off. Something is supposed to happen.

PACE: It already has. *(Beat.)* Get dressed.

(After a moment, Dalton slowly starts to get dressed. End of scene.)

SCENE EIGHT

Gin and Dray. He sits immobile. She uncovers a small stack of plates. She tosses one to him. Suddenly he comes alive and they are tossing a plate back and forth between them as they speak. They've done this before.

GIN: You got to get out.

DRAY: I'm movin'. You just can't see it.

GIN: At the WPA office. They're helpin' people find jobs.

DRAY: A handful.

GIN: That's better than nothing.

DRAY: I don't know.

GIN: I went by the Council. They got kicked out of the church basement. Got a room in the Watson storehouse. More like a closet than a room.

DRAY: The Council. They're not government.

GIN: No, they're not. Just people out of work. Tryin' to get things going. Lots of talk about the Plate Glass factory.

DRAY: It's closed down.

GIN: Talk about opening it up again. Building it back up. Running it themselves. Machinery's still there. Most of it. It's a mess but it's all still there.

DRAY: We've got what we need. The three of us. Under this roof.

GIN: I know that.

DRAY: Sounds like you're getting involved.

GIN: No. I'm not. I'm just listening.

DRAY: My father worked there when he was a boy. There'd be explosions now and then. He wore eye wear. A lot of them didn't. Once the glass hit him in the mouth. Long thin pieces of glass. He pulled them out his cheeks with pliers, like pullin' fish bones out a fish. *(Beat.)* That place doesn't belong to them, Gin. Sounds like communists.

GIN: People, Dray. Just people tired of not working. Tired of waiting for the WPA to hand out the jobs. Tired. Just tired. You know that kind of tired.

DRAY: Can't remember when I wasn't.

GIN: I remember. When you were a boy.

(Dray almost drops a plate, but catches it. He becomes more playful.)

DRAY: You lie, Miss Ginny Carol. I was never a kid.

GIN: Yeah you were. And so was I.

DRAY: Nah. That was just a fancy idea we had about ourselves.

GIN: You didn't bring me flowers like other girls got. You brought me tomatoes.

DRAY: You can't eat flowers.

GIN: And corn. You were nineteen.

DRAY: A bucket of frogs, too. I made you close your eyes and put your hands in it. You didn't scream like most of them did. You went dead pale. I