

NOTICE

A short play by Peter Snoad

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NOTICE

CHARACTERS

(Two actors play all roles between them. The actors can be of any race or gender. Pronouns in the script should be changed accordingly.)

TRAVELER ONE
TRAVELER TWO
TRAVELER THREE
TRAVELER FOUR
ACTOR ONE
ACTOR TWO

SETTING

A bus stop on a city street; a bare stage

TIME

The present

NOTICE

A bare stage; a bus-stop sign down center.
 TRAVELER ONE, wearing a tee-shirt bearing the slogan “Writers Notice”, waits for a bus. After a moment, TRAVELER TWO enters and joins TRAVELER ONE at the bus stop. They both hunch over their cell phones.

TRAVELER ONE

Four minutes. According to the app.

TRAVELER TWO does not respond. Beat.

(Indicating tee-shirt)
 What do you think?

TRAVELER TWO

Cool.

TRAVELER ONE

Some people ask me what it means.

(Beat. No response.)

Like it’s not obvious?

TRAVELER TWO

Where did you get it?

TRAVELER ONE

I had it made.

TRAVELER TWO nods.

I read it in a blogpost, and I thought wow, that is so true, because that’s what writers do, right, they notice things that other people don’t.

Beat. No response.

Like a friend of mine had this poet staying with her, like an Air B and B thing, and the apartment is on the third floor, and there are trees outside the windows, and in the summer you’re kind of surrounded by all these leafy branches. And the poet says, “It’s like living in a tree house up here”. And it was, it was exactly like that, but it had never occurred to me before.

TRAVELER TWO

But why put it on a tee-shirt?

To connect. TRAVELER ONE

Connect? TRAVELER TWO

With writers. TRAVELER ONE

You mean, like a hook-up thing? TRAVELER TWO

Oh no, no, just, you know, artistically, intellectually. I mean, if it turned out that, you know...but no, I mean, I'm just fascinated by how writers create a whole world outside of themselves, their thinking, their process.
(Beat.)
Are you a writer? TRAVELER ONE

I write e-mails. TRAVELER TWO

Gotta start somewhere. TRAVELER ONE

Has it worked? TRAVELER TWO

We're connecting. TRAVELER ONE

I'm not a writer. TRAVELER TWO

You could be. TRAVELER ONE

Pigs could fly. TRAVELER TWO

I've had a few bites, but nothing that has like, you know.... TRAVELER ONE

How long you been doing this? TRAVELER TWO

Three months. TRAVELER ONE

Three months? TRAVELER TWO

I know I should quit but I just, I don't know.... TRAVELER ONE

You want to be noticed. TRAVELER TWO

Yeah. I guess. TRAVELER ONE

My ex- didn't notice me. TRAVELER TWO

Really? TRAVELER ONE

I noticed everything about her. TRAVELER TWO

Like what? TRAVELER ONE

Saying thank you when she didn't mean it. Constantly. Filling the Silence. She couldn't stand silence – always had to say something, anything. The way she looked at herself in the mirror and fussed with her hair. It was all about her. I was just part of the furniture. TRAVELER TWO

See, you are a writer. TRAVELER ONE

I'm a data manager at a slaughterhouse. TRAVELER TWO

So? TRAVELER ONE

You are a writer. TRAVELER TWO

TRAVELER ONE

No. I mean—

TRAVELER TWO

It's obvious. You notice people, you listen, you have stories to tell.

TRAVELER ONE

Thanks. I'm trying. Following my bliss.

(Beat.)

You want to get a coffee or something?

The bus arrives. TRAVELER TWO says nothing, smiles and hurries offstage to board the bus. TRAVELER ONE gives a little wave.

See you around!

SHIFT to next scene. The same. TRAVELER THREE, wearing a "Writers Notice" tee-shirt and earbuds, stands at the bus stop listening to a podcast on a device. TRAVELER FOUR enters, waving and calling to a friend offstage.

TRAVELER FOUR

Dream on, dude! See you at seven!

He sees TRAVELER THREE's tee-shirt and laughs.

Oh man, that is awesome. What is it?

TRAVELER THREE

(After removing earbuds)

Excuse me?

TRAVELER FOUR

What's the notice?

TRAVELLER THREE

It's not a notice.

TRAVELER FOUR

It says Writers Notice.

TRAVELER THREE

Yeah, like writers observe?

TRAVELER FOUR

You're kidding me. That is like so lame.

TRAVELER THREE

I don't think so, I think it's perceptive.

TRAVELER FOUR

It's a waste! Think what you're missing! Think of the possibilities!

TRAVELER THREE

I'm sorry, I—

TRAVELER FOUR

It's like a prompt. Writers' Notice. That's it, that's all you got, you don't know what the notice is, who wrote it, what it says. You need an apostrophe, by the way, before or after the s. And you got to imagine it, bring it to life!

TRAVELER THREE

You know what—

TRAVELER FOUR

Let's do it!

TRAVELER THREE

I don't think so.

TRAVELER FOUR

Don't think, just do! Stream of consciousness, spontaneity, go!

(Beat)

Okay, I'll start. This notice is a...flyer! About a writing workshop led by a local writer who writes five-hundred-page gothic novels that are like J.K. Rowling on steroids and are hugely popular in Sacramento, Seattle, Saskatchewan, Siberia, in fact any place that begins with S. Or...or...it's a... legal notice! A sub-poena. A bunch of writers – journalists – are trying to get their hands on a secret government health study that shows, definitively, that being human is a pre-existing condition.

TRAVELER THREE

Well—

TRAVELER FOUR

A suicide note! A mad trapeze artist thinks she's the reincarnation of Virginia Woolf—

TRAVELER THREE

Got it. Thing is right now I'm listening to this podcast, so...?

TRAVELER FOUR

Oh, hey, go right ahead. I'm just wading in the weeds of my mind.

TRAVELER THREE re-inserts earbuds.

TRAVELER FOUR continues to stare at the tee-shirt. After a moment, TRAVELER FOUR taps

TRAVELER THREE on the shoulder. TRAVELER THREE removes earbuds.

Can I have it?

TRAVELER THREE

Have it?

TRAVELER FOUR

I'll pay you. Whatever. I mean, I know it's kind of—

TRAVELER THREE

No, no, it's fine. I get this all the time.

TRAVELER FOUR

You do?

TRAVELER THREE

Oh it's insane, people love this shirt.

TRAVELER FOUR

Hey, I'll wear it twenty-four-seven.

TRAVELER THREE

Even though it doesn't mean what you think it means?

TRAVELER FOUR

Like you know what it means?

TRAVELER THREE

I should, I designed it.

TRAVELER FOUR

Oh yeah?

TRAVELER THREE

Writers notice things.

It doesn't say things. TRAVELER FOUR

It's implied. TRAVELER THREE

Not to me it's not. TRAVELER FOUR

I like ambiguity. You can have it for seventy-five. TRAVELER THREE

Seventy five bucks for a used tee-shirt with a confusing message? TRAVELER FOUR

Limited edition, hand-dyed organic Egyptian cotton, I sell them on Ebay for one twenty. TRAVELER THREE

And don't tell me, you're a writer. TRAVELER FOUR

I write for myself. TRAVELER THREE

And what do you notice about yourself? TRAVELER FOUR

The bus arrives. TRAVELER FOUR exits to board the bus. TRAVELER THREE shrugs, replaces earbuds.

SHIFT to next scene. The same. ACTOR ONE and ACTOR TWO, both wearing "Writers Notice" tee-shirts, enter at the same time from opposite sides of the stage and head for the bus stop.

Oh my God! ACTOR ONE

No way! ACTOR TWO

Why did you....? ACTOR ONE

ACTOR TWO

I don't know, spur of the moment.

ACTOR ONE

Me, too!

ACTOR TWO

I was in the dressing room and I thought, what the hell, wardrobe doesn't want it back, so I may as well keep it on—

ACTOR ONE

And see what happens at the bus stop.

ACTOR TWO

Yes!!

ACTOR ONE

Wow.

ACTOR TWO

I know.

ACTOR ONE

This is like, very weird.

ACTOR TWO

But in a good way.

ACTOR ONE

Oh definitely, but still, I mean...

ACTOR TWO

Yeah.

(Beat.)

So what do you think? Can life imitate art?

ACTOR ONE

Are we going to have a meaningful encounter with some lonely eccentric?

ACTOR TWO

Obsessed with an ambiguous tee-shirt.

ACTOR ONE

Lusting in vain for literary connection.

ACTOR TWO
Stranger things have happened.

(Beat.)

I'm going to miss this show.

ACTOR ONE
Yeah.

ACTOR TWO
Who will you miss the most?

ACTOR ONE
You mean the characters?

ACTOR TWO
Yeah.

ACTOR ONE
Unrequited lust.

ACTOR TWO
Really? Why?

ACTOR ONE
He persevered.

ACTOR TWO
Desperately.

ACTOR ONE
At bus-stops.

ACTOR TWO
Pretty extreme.

ACTOR ONE
You think?

ACTOR TWO
Don't you?

ACTOR ONE
It's creative.

ACTOR TWO

Let's hear it for creative desperation.

ACTOR ONE

Who was your favorite?

ACTOR TWO

The one who thought that Writers Notice was an actual notice.

ACTOR ONE

See, I didn't buy that whole thing at all, it felt totally contrived to me. I mean, who would think that?

ACTOR TWO

Someone who sees the world differently.

ACTOR ONE

Okay, but then why does he have this thing about the tee-shirt?

ACTOR TWO

Why do we?

ACTOR ONE

Because we're goofing around.

ACTOR TWO

Right.

(Beat.)

ACTOR ONE

Where is this bus?

ACTOR TWO

There should be a cute ending to this.

ACTOR ONE

Not too pat.

ACTOR TWO

No, no, but I mean it is a great set-up. Two actors meet at a bus-stop wearing the same tee-shirt they wear in a show they've been doing about strangers meeting at a bus-stop. And then....

ACTOR ONE

After marveling at this amazing karmic coincidence, I say: You wanna get a cup of coffee?

And I say no. ACTOR TWO

No, no, you say yes. ACTOR ONE

I do? ACTOR TWO

Absolutely. ACTOR ONE

But that is so cliché. ACTOR TWO

And we wouldn't want that. ACTOR ONE and ACTOR TWO
(Beat.)

At least we can ride the bus together. ACTOR TWO

That's it? That's the limit of our destiny? ACTOR ONE

They look at each other. The bus arrives. They exit to board.

END OF PLAY