

Date With History

A Play in One Act

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Date With History

A Play in One Act
by Tom Moran

The Time: The present, evening

The place: A restaurant/bar

Characters

LUKE: A well-meaning everyman, late 20's - mid 30's

JENNY: Luke's smart and haughty fiancée, late 20's -
late 30's

SUZANNE: A harried middle manager, 30's - 50's

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: The Great Emancipator, early 40's

SOCRATES: Ancient Greek philosopher, 50's - 60's

AMELIA EARHART: Famed aviatrix, 30's

LUKE'S FATHER (V.O.): An offstage voice, 20's - 50's

Scene 1

(A bar/restaurant. Upstage left is a door from the street. Stage right is a bar, upstage right a door to a hall and toilet. The bar has a serving tray of dinner rolls on it, as well as some loose change.

There is a table center stage set for five, with plates, napkins, a water pitcher, etc. Seated around it are LUKE and JENNY, dressed in business-casual modern clothing, and ABRAHAM LINCOLN, SOCRATES and AMELIA EARHART, dressed appropriately for their occupations and eras. Stage right to left, the seating order is SOCRATES, EARHART, LUKE, JENNY, LINCOLN. A messenger bag or valise sits near LUKE's feet. A running clock on the wall says 7:30 PM. As the lights come up, all five sit silently for a long time. The atmosphere is awkward, and LUKE and JENNY smile nervously. SOCRATES gnaws loudly on a dinner roll. JENNY nudges LUKE.)

JENNY

(stage whisper)

You should say something.

LUKE

(stage whisper)

Like what?

JENNY

(stage whisper)

I dunno. Anything. (She rubs his back.) C'mon, Luke, I'm too nervous. Please?

(LUKE clears his throat and addresses LINCOLN.)

LUKE

So, Mister Lincoln...

LINCOLN

Please, call me Abraham.

LUKE

So, Mister Abraham, I always wondered. Why did they call you the railsplitter?

LINCOLN

Well, as a young man I used to split rails.

LUKE

(nodding)

Oh. (Pause. Stage whisper to JENNY) That's all I got, Jenny.

JENNY

(too-loud stage whisper)

No, no, good start, honey. Keep it up. How about - ask him about Ford's Theatre.

LINCOLN

(looking at JENNY)

Ford's Theatre? A delightful venue.

JENNY

(smiles nervously)

Oh, you've been?

LINCOLN

Why, I took in a production of Julius Caesar there just a fortnight ago. They staged a gripping assassination scene.

LUKE

Yeah, I hear it's a good spot for that.

LINCOLN

Why do you mention it? Are we to attend a show tonight?

LUKE

Well, no. It's just that that's where you were - or, I guess, rather, where you will be, um -

JENNY

Wait, sweetie, no, wait. (stage whisper) Sorry. We can't talk about that!

LUKE

What? Why not?

JENNY

(stage whisper)

Well, it's kind of rude, don't you think? Talking about the impending death of a guest? With the guest?

LUKE

You know, I really don't think Miss Manners ever weighed in on that one.

JENNY

Well, plus, we might change the course of history! Don't you remember A Sound of Thunder?

LUKE

(nods 'no')

Nuh-uh.

JENNY

Time and Again? Somewhere in Time?

LUKE

Nope.

JENNY

(sighs)

The Terminator?

LUKE

Oh, yeah. But I don't think anything we do here can affect the past. Can it?

(SUZANNE has entered from the hallway, carrying a large bowl of salad.)

SUZANNE

Hey, hi, sorry about the holdup, everybody - I'm afraid the waiter quit on us. Salad's up. Back in a few.

(SUZANNE turns to exit. LUKE and JENNY stand and walk toward her.)

LUKE

Hey, Suzanne, wait up.

(SUZANNE stops and turns back around. LUKE gestures to the table.)

JENNY

So, if we tell them about their deaths, will that change the course of history?

SUZANNE

(Dismissively)

What? Naw. Tell 'em whatever the hell you want.

LUKE

Really?

SUZANNE

Yeah, really, it's all good. This one guy last month spilled the beans on the entire Cold War to Stalin. And you don't hear us speaking Russian, do ya?

JENNY

Somebody picked *Joseph Stalin* as a dinner guest?

SUZANNE

(as she exits)

Stalin, Churchill and FDR. We call it the Yalta Special.

LUKE

(to JENNY)

Huh. Well, you can go ahead, I guess. Tell them.

JENNY

What, all of them? I mean, look, (points in turn to LINCOLN, SOCRATES, EARHART) derringer to the head, hemlock, and her, they never even found the body.

SOCRATES

(turns toward them)

Do you know that we can hear you?

EARHART

Yeah, and what's that about a body?

JENNY

Um. I'm so pleased that Luke picked you as a dinner guest, Mrs. Earhart. We've always admired your assertiveness and your courage. Right, Luke?

LUKE

Um, yes. That thing you did back then with the airplane, that was really something.

EARHART

What, you mean skipping over the Atlantic? Pppbh, that's old hat. I've got my sights on bigger things. Gonna cross the whole world, just me and a pair of wings.

JENNY

Oh, I know. It will be a very memorable flight.

LUKE

Yeah, people will be talking about it for years.

(JENNY gives LUKE a gentle 'knock it off' gesture.)

SOCRATES

What is this 'airplane' you speak of?

LUKE

(extra-slowly and clearly)

It's a flying machine, Mr. Socrates. People can use them to cross lands and oceans through the air. (He mimes airplane wings and makes an engine noise.)

SOCRATES

Why do you speak to me so slowly?

JENNY

We're very sorry, Mister Socrates. Luke just isn't used to talking to foreigners.

SOCRATES

Foreigners? What land are we in?

LINCOLN

You are in the United States of America, Mister Socrates. (To LUKE and JENNY) That is where we are, correct? This is not - the Confederacy?

LUKE

Nope, it's cool, Abraham. We won!

(LUKE gives an awkward thumbs-up. LINCOLN responds with a tentative and equally awkward thumbs-up.)

LINCOLN

Hooray?

JENNY

You might say that government of the people, by the people and for the people has not perished from the earth.

LINCOLN

Why, young lady, you have the manner of a poet about you. Might I appropriate that phrase?

JENNY

Oh. By all means.

(LINCOLN reaches into his pockets and searches for paper, comes up empty. LUKE sees this and pulls an envelope out of his bag.)

LUKE

Here, you can write on the back of this.

(LINCOLN nods appreciation and writes.)

SOCRATES

So we are not in Greece, then?

JENNY

No, we're all the way across the world in a country called America.

LUKE

A magical place.

(JENNY shoots LUKE a withering look.)

JENNY

(reluctantly)

Yes, a - magical place.

LUKE

Full of amazement and wonder.

JENNY

Luke, okay.

LUKE

Well, would you rather I just explain the last ten centuries to him? Because that would certainly take up dinner.

JENNY

It's more like twenty-five centuries.

LUKE

Whatever! Same problem!

JENNY

(pats LUKE's shoulder reassuringly)

It's okay, dear, I got it. (to SOCRATES) It's the year 2018. Take our word for it. People live to be eighty years old now, and we can find all the information in the world in just a few minutes, and cross the land and sea in great machines.

EARHART

And the air, too. Why, you could fly all around the world in just a few weeks if you put your back into it.

LUKE

Actually, it only takes a couple of days now.

EARHART

(disappointed)

Well, ducky.

JENNY

In fact, we landed on the moon. Almost 50 years ago. Around 30 years after your - your prime.

EARHART

You went to the moon?! Gosh. So what good am I then?

JENNY

Don't think that way. You're a pioneer. Daring people like you are the reason we've gotten where we are today.

LINCOLN

Indeed. It must take a brave and resourceful woman, to prosper in such a dizzying age.

EARHART

Why thank you.

LINCOLN

Actually, I was addressing Miss Jenny.

EARHART

(crestfallen)

Oh.

JENNY

(giggles)

Oh. My goodness. Thank you, Mister Lincoln. You're very kind.

LINCOLN

Please. I would like it if you called me Abe.

SOCRATES

Two thousand twelve years after what?

LUKE

Oh, great. Look, there's kind of a lot to explain, so maybe we should just not-

SOCRATES

Might you begin by explaining why we have been brought here?

JENNY

(To SOCRATES)

There was a contest. At a radio station.

LINCOLN

At a what?

EARHART

Radio. You can hear voices, through the air.

LUKE

Yeah, and this one station plays lots of really awesome voices, like Zeppelin and Foreigner. So this one magical voice said-

JENNY

Luke...

LUKE

So this one voice said, caller number 17 to KCLR Rock of Ages wins a dinner with three historical figures of their choice. With anyone who has ever lived.

JENNY

And Luke won. And he chose you. Right there on the spot, on the radio, he said 'I want to have dinner with the three of you.' He could've picked anyone. Jesus, Mohammed, Caesar - (gestures to LUKE to continue listing)

LUKE

- Napoleon, Michelangelo, Walt Disney. (slightly wistful) Or - my dad.

JENNY

(brief pause)

Yeah, anybody at all. But he picked you. I was so proud of him. I don't think I could have done a better job myself.

(JENNY smiles at LUKE, who smiles back.)

LUKE

Thanks.

LINCOLN

(talks to LUKE but turns gaze to JENNY)
Well, it's evident you have impeccable taste.

(JENNY giggles, smitten.)

SOCRATES

But how has this miracle come to pass?

LINCOLN

Yes, the scientific implications of this enterprise are staggering, to say the least.

LUKE

Well, to be honest, we don't really know, we just won the contest and they did the -

(SUZANNE walks back in, carrying the vegetable course.)

SUZANNE

Veggies!

JENNY

Hold on.

(SUZANNE puts the tray on the bar and turns to exit. JENNY stands.)

JENNY

Suzanne! Wait!

SUZANNE

(turns, sighs)

Jeez. Now what?

JENNY

Can you please explain to us how this whole thing works?

SUZANNE

Well, first I put out the salad, now here's the side dish, and the roast will be about 10 minutes. Water's on the table. Drinks are extra.

JENNY

(vague circling gesture)

No, I mean, *this*. How is it we can be sitting here having dinner with these people?

SUZANNE

Well, you chose 'em. (points at JENNY) And no exchanges, by the way.

JENNY

No, that's fine, but I mean, how (another vague but emphatic gesture at the table)...how are they *here*?

SUZANNE

Oh, *that*. Look, it's really just a simple mixture of time travel, recombinant DNA manipulation, holograms, animatronics and necromancy. Okay?

JENNY

Um ... sure.

SUZANNE

Great! Now if you'll excuse me, the sous chef just gave his notice, so I should really get after that roast.

(SUZANNE exits. JENNY sits back down, bewildered.)

LUKE

(sarcastic)

Well, that clears that up, huh?

(JENNY shrugs. Another long and awkward silence. JENNY again looks imploringly at LUKE.)

JENNY

(stage whisper)

Come on, Luke. New topic.

LUKE

Hmm. Oh, I know. So, Mister Socrates, I was thinking the other day. Centaurs, right. How do those work?

JENNY

What?

LUKE

(to JENNY)

Centaurs. You know. Half-man, half horse?

JENNY

Well, yeah, but...

LUKE

So whenever I look at one, I always wonder why they don't just fall over on their faces. You know what I mean? They're so top-heavy. It seems like all you have to do is give a little shove in the behind and they'd just pitch right over. You know?

(Pause.)

SOCRATES

What are you talking about?

LUKE

Well, I just figured, it's from Greek mythology, right? So maybe you have an insight. Or something.
(Pause.) So, what exactly is hemlock?

JENNY

Luke!

SOCRATES

Why do you ask all these curious questions?

JENNY

(glaring at LUKE)

No reason, Mr. Socrates. (Composes self.) Um. Can you please tell us about your belief that the social contract overrides the idea of an extrinsic universal justice.

SOCRATES

Hmm. Well, tell me, what do you think about it?

LUKE

(rolls eyes)

Excuse me.

JENNY

Well, in the past 2,500 years, there's been a great deal of refinement of governance, with many different degrees of individual autonomy...

(As JENNY and SOCRATES - and LINCOLN, who joins in - continue to talk, the conversation fades out. Lights focus on LUKE, who gets up, carrying his satchel, and walks over to the bar. He picks up a dinner roll and nibbles at it, then surreptitiously pulls a large, thin white book out of the satchel and leafs through it. The book cover bears a large cartoon caricature of SOCRATES. He reads, flipping pages, then closes the book after a little while and sits back down. Lights back up on everyone.)

LUKE

(interrupting conversation)

Yes, Mr. Socrates, I too am curious to hear more about your feelings on the social contract.

LINCOLN

(annoyed)

As matter of fact we were already engaged in a discussion on that matter. As I was saying, our constitution holds that individuals are endowed with certain inalienable rights-

(SUZANNE bursts in carrying a roast.)

SUZANNE

Roast's up! Come on over here and get yourselves served. I just had to fire the meat carver.

JENNY

What's going on with your staff tonight?

(During this conversation, LUKE has pulled another large book out of his bag and sneaks peeks at it.)

SUZANNE

Well, keep it under your hat, but we've been importing all of our kitchen help from the Great Depression.

JENNY

Really?

SUZANNE

Sure - we can pay them peanuts. Almost literally. Of course, that only lasts until they find out about inflation and they either demand a big fat raise or they quit.

JENNY

That sounds incredibly unethical.

SUZANNE

Oh, and what does that tag on your shirt say? Cambodia? Thailand?

JENNY

Touché.

SUZANNE

It's true what they say, you can't find good help these days. Eighty years ago, on the other hand...

EARHART

Excuse me, I have something. How come all the chairs are on one side of the table?

SUZANNE

We had Da Vinci in here for lunch. Any other questions for the house? Socrates?

SOCRATES

Yes. (Points at LUKE.) What is Luke reading?

(LUKE looks up and quickly shoves the book into the bag.)

LUKE

Nothing. It's a notebook. I was just making notes. In my notebook. About, um, um, Mr. Lincoln's thoughts on the Constitution.

JENNY

You were?

LUKE

Yeah. I want to, um, you know, make sure I keep careful records of this historic occasion.

JENNY

Let's see it.

LUKE

Sorry, no, my notes are my business.

LINCOLN

I must say, that volume bore little resemblance to a notebook.

(JENNY walks over to LUKE and quickly snatches the book out of the bag, then runs across the stage with it. It has a cartoon LINCOLN on the cover. She looks at it, then at LINCOLN, then back at the book, then at LUKE, who stares at the ground.)

JENNY

Oh, Luke ...

LUKE

I just needed to bone up a little.

JENNY

(reads cover)

"The Value of Respect: The Story of Abraham Lincoln."
(Opens cover.) A ValueTales book. Recommended for ages six to nine.

LUKE

I ran out of time for research. I just wanted something - straightforward.

(JENNY continues to flip through the book.)

JENNY

Straightforward. Lincoln spends half the book talking to a cartoon squirrel named Mister Nutsy!

LUKE

Who taught him a valuable lesson about respecting others! What is the big deal here?

JENNY

Luke, this is so embarrassing. I can't believe this. In front of these, of all people.

LUKE

Well, you're the one that just had to know. Now give me the book back. C'mon.

JENNY

Hold on, I'm not finished.

(LUKE moves to retrieve the book, but JENNY holds on tight. He continues to tug, until LINCOLN steps in and pulls LUKE off. He grabs LUKE and twists his arm behind his back; Luke stops struggling.)

LINCOLN

Is this scoundrel bothering you, young lady?

JENNY

Why no, Mister Lincoln. But thank you.

LINCOLN

I hope you don't think me a brute.

JENNY

Not at all. You're a true gentleman.

LINCOLN

Because in truth, I consider myself much more of a scholar. Did you know I passed the Illinois bar exam after studying for just a year?

JENNY

Really. Well, that's very impressive.

LINCOLN

I'm an accomplished man. And quite capable, too, if you comprehend my meaning.

JENNY

(blushing)

Oh, Mister Lincoln!

LINCOLN

Please. Abe.

LUKE

Hey, all right, enough! (LUKE begins to struggle again.) Let me go already! What kind of an emancipator are you?

(LINCOLN lets him go.)

LUKE

Thanks. Now what the hell is going on here?

LINCOLN

Oh, it seems your wife-

LUKE

Fiancee.

LINCOLN

Interesting. It seems your fiancee is faced with a simple choice. Conclude an awkward meal with her promised, who works as a - I'm sorry, what is your occupation?

LUKE

I'm a web designer.

LINCOLN

You mean like a spider?

LUKE

Forget it.

LINCOLN

An awkward meal with her fiancé, who reads children's books and does the work of an arachnid. Or she can perhaps retire for a nightcap with one of the most celebrated individuals in American history.

JENNY

Oh.

LUKE

What?

JENNY

My.

LUKE

That's - Jenny. You're not gonna...

JENNY

I'm - well, I mean - (to LINCOLN) A nightcap?

LINCOLN

Do I have to elaborate?

LUKE

Jenny.

JENNY

Well...

LUKE

Jenny! Honey.

JENNY

Come on, Luke. It's the - It's the log cabin president. What am I supposed to say here?

LUKE

How about 'No, I came to this dinner engaged to the love of my life?'

JENNY

Well, sure, but I mean Lincoln's from, like, this whole *other* life. Right? (Turns to SUZANNE) Right, Suzanne?

SUZANNE

In a manner of speaking. But I think this is a very bad idea.

JENNY

But this is the chance of a lifetime.

LINCOLN

Indeed - of all lifetimes. Come then, shall we see if this restaurant has a hotel attached?

(LINCOLN playfully slaps her butt.)

JENNY

Oh! (giggles.) Abe!

(She grabs LINCOLN's hand. They move to the upstage left door.)

LUKE

Jenny, don't you walk through that door!

LINCOLN

You know, Jenny, any bedroom I'm in is the Lincoln Bedroom.

(She smiles and giggles. They exit. LUKE stares at the door, dumbfounded. Long pause.)

SOCRATES

Do you think that will all work out?

(LUKE takes a few steps toward the door, then turns.)

LUKE

What the hell! (Pause. To SUZANNE) What just happened? How did this...it's Lincoln! Honest Abe! The Splendid Splinter!

SUZANNE

Uh, I think that's Ted Williams.

LUKE

I mean, I had thought of this possibility. There's a reason I didn't pick, like, Elvis! No sex appeal - definitely high on the list of criteria.

EARHART

Hey!

LUKE

(Turns to EARHART)

I mean, to women. Sex appeal to women.

EARHART

You really got a way with words there, Lukey-boy.

SUZANNE

(sheepish)

Um, yeah, listen. About Lincoln.

LUKE

(Turns to her)

What? What do you mean, 'about Lincoln?'

SUZANNE

I mean - there was a mishap.

LUKE

A mishap.

SUZANNE

Right. Well, so, did you ever see the movie 'Jurassic Park?'

LUKE

Yeah...

SUZANNE

So you remember in that movie, how they cloned dinosaurs from ancient DNA, but they didn't quite have enough?

LUKE

Vaguely.

SUZANNE

And so they had to mix in some frog DNA?

LUKE

Sure, I guess. What are you getting at?

SUZANNE

Well, Abraham Lincoln doesn't have any living descendants. And a lot of his remains are pretty degraded, as you can imagine. Found that one out the hard way, let me tell you.

LUKE

Okay...

SUZANNE

So anyway, it turns out we couldn't get a hold of the entire Lincoln genome. And we had to make some - substitutions.

LUKE

You had to what?

SUZANNE

Fortunately, we had DNA from some other presidents lying around.

LUKE

What? Oh no. Oh no.

SUZANNE

Yeah. So. He's part JFK.

LUKE

Aw, crap!

SUZANNE

(wincing)

Sorry.

LUKE

Crap! Crap! Kennedy? Kennedy?! That guy was the biggest hornball to ever sit in the Oval Office! (Pause.) Well, one of them anyway.

SUZANNE

Yeah. Sorry about that. I suppose you're probably entitled to a refund, but, you know, contest prize.

(LUKE slumps into a chair.)

LUKE

I'm doomed. I'm doomed.

SUZANNE

But say, how about a beer. On the house. Domestic only.

EARHART

Oh my god, I would love a beer. Come on Socrates, let's wet our whistles.

SOCRATES

What are you doing with a whistle?

EARHART

Luke, you want a beer too?

(No response.)

EARHART

Luke. (Pause.) Luke?

(No response. Earhart notices a penny sitting on the bar. She walks over and places it in front of LUKE.)

EARHART

Penny for your thoughts.

(LUKE picks up the penny and looks closely at its face. He then shows the face to EARHART.)

EARHART

(wincing)

Oh. right.

(EARHART returns to the bar. Luke drops the penny onto the table. Lights fade to a single spot on him, looking despondent. He stares blankly.)

LUKE

Dammit. What's Abe Lincoln crossed with John F. Kennedy got that I haven't got?

(LUKE realizes what he has just said. He moans and buries face in hands. Light fades to blackout.)

Scene 2

(The clock now reads about 8:30 PM. The food is gone from the bar and empty plates and beer bottles sit on the table. SUZANNE tidies up the bar. LUKE has not moved and stares vacantly. EARHART sits reading the children's book on SOCRATES, SOCRATES the one on EARHART. SOCRATES takes a swig of beer and belches.)

SOCRATES

Why does this Abraham Lincoln act so little like the one in this book?

EARHART

Dunno. Something about his DOA.

SOCRATES

But what if our DOA is also broken?

EARHART

(shrugs)

Maybe it is. Maybe I'm part Joan of Arc. Or Jesse James! Wouldn't that be the cat's meow!

SOCRATES

What cat are you talking about?

EARHART

Well, it just means that...forget it. (sighs and displays book) So you know you spend most of this book taking advice from a little talking Greek coin? It teaches you the value of curiosity, apparently.

(SOCRATES holds up the Earhart book.)

SOCRATES

And do you know you disappear over somewhere called the Pacific and are never heard from again?

(Pause.)

EARHART

They put that in a children's book? (SOCRATES shrugs. Another pause.) Dangit. I kind of figured there was something like that in the works. These folks here aren't exactly pros at keeping secrets.

SOCRATES

Does it bother you to know that?

EARHART

Honestly? Not really. I suppose it should. But being here, everything just feels different. It's like there are no consequences, you know? That I can do or say whatever I darn well please, and it won't really matter. (She flips through the Socrates book and displays the final page.) I mean, our stories are already over, right?

SOCRATES

(gestures to LUKE)

But. (Holds up finger.) Other stories are still to be written, yes?

EARHART

Well, that's true enough. Except this one's stuck between chapters or something, huh? (to Luke.) Luke.

(EARHART waves her hand and snaps her fingers in front of LUKE's face.)

EARHART

Hey, Lukey! You in there? Come on, come back to us. We miss you.

(No response. She pokes him. No response. She smiles and starts to tickle him. He resists at first, then finally gives in and starts laughing. SOCRATES laughs too. LUKE stands up and backs away.)

LUKE

What the hell are you doing?

EARHART

(to SOCRATES)

See what I mean? No consequences.

LUKE

Look, you're an enduring legend of aviation! You can't just go around tickling people!

EARHART

Why not? Lindbergh used to tickle people all the time. Strangers. In public.

LUKE

Really?

EARHART

Naw. History's not *that* interesting.

LUKE

Look, I'm sorry. I know you're both very accomplished and fascinating people, but you can understand if I'm not in the mood for topical discussion.

SOCRATES

If we do not hold your interest, then why did you choose us?

LUKE

Oh. It was kind of a snap decision. I mean, I'm standing there holding the phone receiver, and they tell me they need to know right then and there which three people I want.

EARHART

Seems a bit rushed, doesn't it?

Luke

I dunno. Maybe.

EARHART

Hey Suzanne, how come you need people to come up with answers so quick?

SUZANNE

It takes a while to set these things up. We need at least a week to arrange for each guest.

LUKE

Really?

SUZANNE

Naw. It takes about ten minutes. I think the guys in charge just like rushing people. More fun that way, you know? It's like, 'Honey, who's that guy who was on *Biography* last night? Vlad the Impaler? Sure, set me up!'

(LUKE has crossed to the bar.
SUZANNE hands him a beer.)

LUKE

That's a fine business model you've got there.

EARHART

(to LUKE)

So, you were saying..

LUKE

So anyway I'm holding the receiver, and Jenny's right there in the room, and the radio's on so she knows I just won, and she's jumping around, literally, from one foot to the other, she's so excited. So what can I do? I come up with three people I think will impress her.

EARHART

(snorts)

Well, one of them is clearly leaving an impression.

LUKE

Thanks. How about you just hand me a five-dollar bill while you're at it.

EARHART

Sorry.

SOCRATES

So who would you have chosen?

LUKE

Well, you know. My dad.

EARHART
(thoughtful)

Oh.

LUKE
I miss him.

EARHART
Sure.

LUKE
He just, he always understood me better than anyone else. And he never asked me to be anyone but myself. I never got the chance to tell him that. I know that's a cliché -

EARHART
No, it's not.

LUKE
So I'd just like to see him again. To thank him, and to let him know I turned out okay. And maybe to knock the hacky around.

SOCRATES
The what?

LUKE
Oh. Hacky sack. It's a sport. Sort of. It's just something we used to do.

SUZANNE
That is so sweet.

LUKE
Yeah, him and maybe. I dunno. The Rock?

EARHART
Is that a person? Do I want to know?

LUKE
(shakes head)
Probably not. And also, I was thinking, Superman.

EARHART
Superman? You mean, from the comic books?

LUKE

Sure, why not?

EARHART

He's made-up! He's fictional!

LUKE

So? I'm just thinking outside of the box.

SOCRATES

Box?

EARHART

Now I'm intrigued. (to SUZANNE) Hey Suzanne, can they pick fictional characters?

SUZANNE

Of course. Why not? Wednesday at lunch we had a guy choose Captain Kirk and Captain Picard.

LUKE

(fascinated)

You're kidding. How'd that go?

SUZANNE

They got piss-drunk and spent the afternoon singing space chanties. It was kind of amazing.

LUKE

Wow. So who was the third person?

SUZANNE

Dostoyevsky. He was pretty confused.

(EARHART stands to address LUKE.)

EARHART

Luke. I'm sorry we're not what you really wanted.

LUKE

Well that's an understatement. (Pause.) Sorry. I mean, I don't mean you. You're very nice. I meant... (he gestures vaguely at door upstage right)...you know.

EARHART

I know what you meant. So, uh, how did you and Jenny meet, anyway? Did you catch her admiring one of your webs?

LUKE

Very funny. It was just a party. Someone's apartment, some dancing, some beer. A lot of beer. We ended up sitting next to each other on the couch, and we hit it off.

SOCRATES

Hit it off what?

LUKE

And the rest is history.

EARHART

Not yet it isn't.

SOCRATES

But what was it that attracted you to her?

LUKE

About six dead soldiers, I think. But now. She's just so - impressive. She's smart. She has all of her shit together. She knows what she wants and she goes for it.

EARHART

That's for sure. (Pause.) Sorry.

SOCRATES

Is that all?

LUKE

Well, you saw her. She's beautiful, she's thoughtful. She's generous, very sweet. Well, she can be.

EARHART

When she's not ridiculing you in front of a panel of historical luminaries.

LUKE

Some couples just get along better in private, I guess. I know it's hard for you to see it.

SOCRATES

And what draws her to you?

LUKE

Socrates, did anyone ever tell you you ask too many questions?

EARHART

We're just curious, Luke.

(LUKE sits at the table.)

LUKE

I think she likes that I'm a little rough around the edges. I mean, I'm not stupid, I'm an educated guy. I just grew up in a different world.

SUZANNE

Your dad pick up hacksack on the mean streets?

LUKE

I'm just not like most of the guys she's dated. Her parents were both professors. I guess I'm just coarse, by her standards. Could never crack through that upper crust.

EARHART

Whose idea was the engagement?

LUKE

That was mine, of course.

EARHART

"Of course?" (shakes head) I guess women haven't come as far as I thought.

LUKE

Well, there was a lot of encouragement on her part.

EARHART

You know, my husband was after me for years before I finally said yes. I wasn't all that interested in being tied down.

LUKE

Guess that comes with the job, huh?

EARHART

And even when I did agree I was never too sure about it.

LUKE

(creeping doubt)

Well, I'm sure about it. I'd be crazy to let her get away. Where am I ever going to find anyone else who ranks up there with Jenny?

SOCRATES

Do you still feel that way after tonight?

LUKE

Well, I mean...(silence)

EARHART

Luke?

LUKE

Well, I don't know. I mean, this is a unique situation, right? It took the combined might of two of our greatest presidents to steal her away. It's not like she ran up there with James Buchanan and Dubya.

EARHART

(mouths to herself)

Dubya. (to LUKE) Woodrow Wilson?

LUKE

Forget it.

SOCRATES

Has it ever occurred to you she might like you for other reasons?

LUKE

I don't understand.

(SOCRATES and EARHART look at each other. EARHART sits down next to LUKE.)

EARHART

Let's put it another way. Luke, have you considered that maybe we were a mistake?

LUKE

What do you mean?

EARHART

Well, you chose us to impress her. But it doesn't sound like she loves you for your brain or for your taste. She likes something else about you.

LUKE

What?

(EARHART puts her hand on LUKE's arm.)

EARHART

Luke, you're a pushover.

LUKE

(draws arm away)

What? No I'm not! Socrates, back me up here.

SOCRATES

What is a pushover?

EARHART

Someone who lets people push him around.

SOCRATES

Oh, yes. You are a pushover.

LUKE

Hey! Come on.

EARHART

Socrates! Was that a conclusion I just heard?

SOCRATES

What else would you call it?

LUKE

Look, that's not fair. Jenny and I are equals. She tells me that all the time.

SOCRATES

Who picked out your wedding ring?

LUKE

Well, I wasn't really sure what she wanted, so I showed her some ideas, and then we went down to the-

EARHART

You're going out with Jenny to dinner and a movie. Who decides dinner?

LUKE

She's pretty picky about diet. She's got some kind of gluten intolerance thing going on, plus there's the-

SOCRATES

Who picks the movie? (Pause.) And what's a movie?

LUKE

Well, you know, I mean, it works out okay because we both like the same movies. Like, the kinds where women sit around and discuss men and their feelings and OH MY GOD you're right.

(EARHART puts her hand back on
LUKE's arm.)

EARHART

Luke.

LUKE

(quietly)

You're right.

EARHART

Luke, listen. Socrates and I - and that letch upstairs with your girlfriend, too - you know why we're sitting on top of all those top-ten lists?

LUKE

Why?

EARHART

Because we never let people tell us what to do. If I'd listened to everybody who said it was stupid or impossible I would never have strapped myself into a cockpit.

LUKE

You might have been better off, don't you think?

EARHART

I don't believe that for a second. I mean, that's what made me immortal, right? If I'd listened to all those people and stayed grounded no one would have ever remembered me. And I wouldn't be sitting here enjoying such lively company.

SOCRATES

Thank you.

EARHART

Actually, I was referring to Luke.

SOCRATES

Oh.

LUKE

Oh. Thanks. So what am I supposed to do?

SOCRATES

Do you really want Jenny back?

LUKE

Yeah. Well ... yeah.

EARHART

The first time I crossed the Atlantic I got shoved in the backseat. It was all just a big publicity stunt - they gave me a captain's patch but the flyboys up front did all the work. So next time around, I did it on my own terms, with myself at the controls. And as far as I'm concerned, that was the only one that counted.

LUKE

Hmm. So you're saying...

EARHART

I'm saying, you'll never accomplish anything if you plop your ass down in the passenger seat. Try being a little less Luke and a little more Lincoln. She'll like you better for it.

LUKE

Really.

EARHART

Yeah. And if she doesn't, forget her. You deserve better than you're getting.

LUKE

Yeah?

AMELIA

Definitely.

(EARHART and LUKE are pretty close together now, and it looks like the prelude to a kiss.)

SOCRATES

So, how about another beer?

SUZANNE

Sorry, bar's closing up. In fact, I have to get this evening's festivities wrapped up before too long. Want to shut her down by ten.

EARHART

Why, what happens then?

SUZANNE

I go home and go to bed. And you all turn back into pumpkins.

LUKE

But Jenny is still up there with John F. Lincoln.

SUZANNE

Are you still waiting on her? Give it up already. Can't you see she's moved on?

(LUKE stands.)

LUKE

What? It's been like an hour! And how can she move on with someone who's been dead for 150 years?

SUZANNE

Not very well, actually.

EARHART

What does that mean?

SUZANNE

Well, we need to put a few strategic limitations on what our dinner guests are capable of.

SOCRATES

What is it that we can't do?

(NOISE from offstage left. LINCOLN and JENNY enter. Both look a bit disheveled. JENNY is disappointed, LINCOLN is defensive.)

LINCOLN

Please, allow me to explain myself. This has never occurred before.

JENNY

Oh right, that's a new one. (to SUZANNE) Hey, I think your Lincoln's broken!

SUZANNE

Not at all. You should have read the fine print.

JENNY

What? This was deliberate?

LINCOLN

You afflicted me on purpose? This is an assault on my manhood.

SUZANNE

Oh, just keep it in your pants, Abe. (To JENNY) We were a little worried we'd start to get a reputation as a glorified escort service.

LUKE

You mean people have - gone upstairs before?

SUZANNE

Well, sure. Hell, I mean women are still sleeping with Mick Jagger. So why wouldn't people go for some of the most captivating figures in history? If we didn't watch ourselves we'd end up getting Cleopatra knocked up, or populating the 21st century with Ramses and Napoleon babies.

JENNY

Well, that's not the only thing. Care to explain why Abe here was waxing nostalgic about his Hahvuhd days and the "Lincoln Compound" on Cape Cod?

LUKE

There was a mishap.

JENNY

I should say so. (to LUKE) Nice job with the picks, Luke.

LUKE

You didn't seem to have a problem with them an hour ago!

EARHART

Do you know why he picked us? He did it for you. Come on, tell her, Luke.

JENNY

Of course he did. Otherwise, he would just have gone for, who, the Rock? Marilyn Monroe?

LINCOLN

Hey, that's an idea.

JENNY

Oh, cram it, (makes quote marks with fingers) 'Abe.'
(To EARHART) Yeah, Amelia, I'm afraid you're one of my idols, not his.

EARHART

Mrs. Earhart, if you please.

LUKE

Hey, lay off, Jenny. I've had a great dinner with these people.

JENNY

Really.

LUKE

Yeah.

JENNY

So what'd you talk about?

LUKE

History. About how important it is to take charge of your life. And about how to learn from your mistakes.

JENNY

Huh. Sounds very empowering. Look, I'm exhausted. (She touches LUKE lightly.) How about we go home and you tell me all about it?

LUKE

What? Just go home? What about you and "honest Abe" there?

JENNY

Come on, Luke, let's just pretend this never happened. This was obviously just going to be a one-night thing.

LUKE

And that makes it all right?

JENNY

Sure. Extenuating circumstances, right? You could have done the same thing. I wouldn't have minded.

LUKE

(skeptical)

Really.

JENNY

Of course.

LUKE

Okay. In that case, hold on a sec.

(LUKE turns to EARHART and pulls her into a long and passionate kiss. As they unclench he gives her a knowing smile, then turns back to JENNY.)

LUKE

(to JENNY)

All right, let's go.

JENNY

What the hell was that?

LUKE

I believe you would call it the chance of a lifetime.
Shall we? (Gestures toward door to outside.)

JENNY

We? I think you mean 'I.' (Walks to EARHART) And to
think I respected you.

EARHART

Well, it was never really mutual.

(JENNY turns back to LUKE.)

JENNY

Luke, I just - I can't believe you just did that.

(JENNY pulls off her engagement
ring and hands it to LUKE.)

LUKE

Wait, what is this now? I thought it was okay with
you.

JENNY

Oh, read between the lines, man. You should know me
better than that by now.

(JENNY advances toward the stage
left door.)

LUKE

Jenny, wait!

JENNY

Forget it, Luke. (To everyone) Nice meeting you all.
It's been real.

(JENNY exits through the door
upstage left. Pause.)

SOCRATES

Real what?

LUKE

Again: What the hell just happened?

EARHART

I'd say you're flying solo now.

LUKE

You're not helping.

EARHART

Oh, come on. Look me in the eye and tell me you're not better off without her.

LINCOLN

I believe Mrs. Earhart has a point, Luke.

LUKE

What? Now you're giving me advice?!

LINCOLN

Yes, well, I do comprehend that I have hardly earned your respect this evening. But I would like to bind up this dinner party's wounds, and achieve a just and lasting peace. I wish to apologize for my reprehensible actions. Truthfully, I haven't been feeling like myself.

LUKE

Yeah, you hit the nail on the head with that one.

EARHART

Luke, listen. You deserve better than her.

LUKE

Maybe.

EARHART

Yes. And you can find better than her. (Takes Luke's hands) Next time you're not sure of yourself, just remember that history's most famous aviatrix would happily do you.

LUKE

Oh. Wow.

EARHART

Hey, I *am* history's most famous aviatrix, right?

LUKE

Oh, um...

EARHART

Luke, the correct answer is 'yes.'

LUKE

Oh. (Long pause.) I'm not sure any of this is making me feel better about my engagement being bashed apart.

SOCRATES

And what would make you feel better?

(LUKE picks up a beer bottle, but it's empty.)

LUKE

Damn.

SUZANNE

Sorry, we're all out. That Socrates can really knock back the Coors Lite.

(SOCRATES hoists an empty bottle in a salute. A cell phone rings. EARHART and SOCRATES look around, confused. SUZANNE answers it and begins to talk.)

SUZANNE

Uh-huh, okay, good. Right outside? Great.

(SUZANNE hangs up.)

SUZANNE

Right. Luke, On behalf of the company, we'd like to apologize for tonight's little historico-genetic kerfuffle. We can't give you a refund, but we were able to cook something else up for you.

(SUZANNE walks over to downstage left door, opens it, and looks around on street. She suddenly dodges, and a hacksack flies in from the street.)

LUKE'S DAD (O.S.)

Heads up in there!

(LUKE walks over and picks up the hackysack, staring at it in amazement. He looks around the room and a smile breaks over his face. He turns to SUZANNE.)

LUKE

Thanks. To all of you. Thanks. (Turns to the door.)
Heads up yourself!

(He kicks the hackysack out the door and runs after it.)

SUZANNE

(Yelling after him)

Have fun! Bond! Don't sue!

(SUZANNE closes the door.)

SOCRATES

So was that this hackysack we spoke of?

SUZANNE

Very astute of you.

SOCRATES

So now what happens?

SUZANNE

Well, we're out of food, and out of beer, and I need to clean this place up. So I think it's time for us all to head out.

(SUZANNE starts to usher everyone toward the stage right door.)

EARHART

Where do we go?

SUZANNE

You? You go back where you came from and we'll call on you again when we need you.

(She picks up a clipboard from under the bar and scans it.)

SUZANNE

In fact, Lincoln, you're on for breakfast tomorrow. Gonna be you, Jesus and ... Steve McQueen?! Cool! Hope you guys all like Eggs Benedict.

LINCOLN

It is one of my very favorite dishes. I look forward to it. And I shall endeavor to, how did you put it, keep it in my pants.

SUZANNE

That would be greatly appreciated.

SOCRATES

So are all the meals this eventful?

SUZANNE

Naw. Mostly people just blather about politics and gossip, and stuff themselves.

EARHART

That sounds kind of fun, actually.

SUZANNE

(shrugs)

Sometimes. You know what Marx said about history?

EARHART

Groucho? Chico?

SUZANNE

He said, "History repeats itself. First as tragedy, second as farce."

EARHART

Huh. Sounds more like Zeppo.

(EARHART, LINCOLN and SOCRATES exit stage left. SUZANNE turns to exit behind them, and shakes her head.)

SUZANNE

I think Marx got it about right.

(She shuts out the light and closes the door. We hear the sound of LUKE and LUKE'S DAD laughing and hitting the hackysack around. Blackout. End of Play.)