

# Portland

by

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## PORTLAND

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*The world premiere of **Portland** was brought to the stage by OVO in October of 1999, in New York City. It was directed by Ian Rosenberg.*

### **CAST**

ED.....Will McCormack  
LI.....Mary Wigmore  
MANAGER.....James P. Engel  
COOK.....Matthew Weinstein  
CLAIRE.....Ruby Unger  
TIFFANY.....Ari Vena  
YOUNG WOMAN....Kelly Bertrand  
OLD MAN.....Bill Price  
LAWYER.....Ned Van Zandt

*A Bridge Theatre production of **Portland** was directed by Gioia Marchese in 2004.*

*In 2009, **Portland** was a winning selection of Armstrong Atlantic University's Coastal Empire One-Act Play Festival, where it was staged by the Masqueurs Theatre Troupe.*

*This play would not be possible without the Millay Colony and OVO. A special thanks to them both.*

## PORTLAND

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**Portland** came to me in a dream. During a residency at the Edna St. Vincent Millay Colony, I had fallen asleep in my wonderful studio (a converted barn). An incredibly vivid vision from my past came to me, of my first love and the room we shared in Portland, Oregon-- *after* we had broken up. I hadn't thought of her in years. The dream was an expressionist flash of frozen moments, like a slide show drenched in rain. I started writing, and once I did, I found I couldn't stop. For fourteen straight hours I wrote, finishing as the sun began to peak through my window. The script came to me fully-formed, as if it had been gestating for years. When I finally got to bed, I realized that it was Valentine's Day-- my ex's birthday.

Production note: too much furniture moving will kill this play. Instead, keep the set design open—as much as is possible, and allow scenes to flow effortlessly into one another.

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# PORTLAND

## SCENE 1

*A sparse studio apartment: a bed, a record player, a window. In the distance, rain falling, but no thunder. ED and LI, both 20 years old.*

**ED.** So this is the room.

**LI.** Yes, this is it.

**ED.** You say it always rains like this?

**LI.** Just about every day.

**ED.** You sure don't have much in the way of furniture.

**LI.** That's what I said. There was plenty of room for you.

**ED.** And that's your bed.

**LI.** Yes.

**ED.** And that's my bed, over there.

**LI.** Mmm-hmm.

**ED.** Or, that's where my bed will go. I have to fill it first. It's inflatable.

**LI.** Over there will be good, yes. *(Pause)*

**ED.** You didn't have to invite me to live here. There are plenty of places for me to go. I don't have to be anywhere. That means I have an innumerable amount of places I could be. I have a little over a thousand dollars, which is more than enough to settle yourself just about anywhere in the country. Almost anywhere. I have a car which runs relatively well.

**LI.** It can't make right turns.

**ED.** At the moment, no. But all that means is that it'll take a little bit longer to get anywhere to the right. Four left turns, to be exact. Aside from that, I'm completely free. I have an entire system of highways at my disposal, which can connect me to any place in the country I choose. *(Pause)* This arrangement could be seen as rather unorthodox. Other people would see this as rather odd, don't you think?

**LI.** I really don't care about other people.

**ED.** Neither do I, neither do I. *(Beat)* I just want to be sure that you understand. It could be an uncomfortable arrangement for you.

**LI.** It could be. But it doesn't have to be.

**ED.** *(Beat)* So it rains like this every day?

**LI.** Nearly every day. *(Fade out on rain sounds, end of scene.)*

## SCENE 2

*Fade up on sound of crickets. Night. Ed is awake, in an inflatable bed on the floor. Li is sleeping alone in her bed.*

**ED.** *(Whispering)* How different it is here. The rain. I can see a mountain outside my window. Mount St. Helens. It once erupted, when I was a child. I remember the pictures. It wasn't the explosion that killed so many, but the dust and the ash in the air. *(Beat)* She's asleep, over there. Just a few feet from me. I'm in my bed, over here. An inflatable bed. I filled it with a hair-dryer. It took almost an hour to fill it properly. *(Pause)* Not long ago, I would be in bed with her. *(Pause)* How rigid she would make me. I would make her soft, and then rigid, for a moment or two. And then she would be soft again, and would fall asleep. *(Beat)* Sometimes I would stay rigid, for hours, awake at night, while she slept. Hard as a stone; you could've hung a flag on me. *(Pause)* I'm watching her now, as she sleeps. *(Fade out sound of crickets. End of scene.)*

## SCENE 3

*Fade up on slight sound of Muzak. A Hotel lobby, which need only be signified by a desk with a bell on it. Ed approaches the desk, he hesitates, then rings it twice. Pause. He rings it again, two more times. The MANAGER appears.*

**MANAGER.** Can I help you?

**ED.** I'd like to inquire about the position of room service waiter.

**MANAGER.** Oh, yes. Well, we would like to have you fill out these application forms here, and a resume, two forms of identification and proof of...

**ED.** I can start Monday.

**MANAGER.** What's that?

**ED.** I said I can start Monday.

**MANAGER.** *(After a pause)* Um, alright. See you Monday then. Six-thirty a.m..

**ED.** Great. *(Fadeout Muzak.)*

#### SCENE 4

*Li's apartment. Fade up sound of rain in the distance, then of a door opening, rain becomes louder, then is shut out again as the door closes.*

**ED.** I got a job today. You're now looking at a room-service waiter.

**LI.** That didn't take long.

**ED.** No. In fact it was the shortest interview of my entire life.

**LI.** That's great.

**ED.** You weren't lying about the rain, were you?

**LI.** No, I wasn't.

**ED.** Did you sleep well last night?

**LI.** Just fine. And you?

**ED.** Just fine. Well, I did have some trouble falling asleep.

**LI.** You did?

**ED.** Yes. I think my bed's losing air.

**LI.** Really.

**ED.** I'm not for certain, but I think there's a leak somewhere.

**LI.** That's too bad.

**ED.** Yeah. Too bad. *(Fad-out sound of rain. End of scene.)*

SCENE 5

*Restaurant kitchen, which can be established by a spotlight and the very busy sounds of plates clinking, fryers sizzling, random food orders being barked.*

**ED.** Where are my eggs? Has anyone seen my eggs? There was a side of bacon. Did anyone see my eggs? *(To himself)* Or the pancakes. *(To others)* I had a plate of pancakes. Short stack. Anyone? Hello? *The COOK, a large man in a tall white hat, has been watching Ed, finally:*

**COOK.** What are you doing here, blocking everybody's way like that?

**ED.** I have three orders that have completely disappeared. I'm backed-up nearly seven orders. The phone's ringing off the hook.

**COOK.** Where are you putting your orders?

**ED.** On the carousel.

**COOK.** The carousel?

**ED.** Yes, on the carousel.

**COOK.** Well, that's your first mistake. No one back here pays any mind to that thing. You have an order, you give it to me.

**ED.** Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know.

**COOK.** What did you say?

**ED.** I said I was sorry.

**COOK.** Are you a sorry person?

**ED.** Well, no.

**COOK.** Then why do you say that you're sorry?

**ED.** It's just a manner of...

**COOK.** You shouldn't denigrate yourself like that. Don't ever say that you're sorry.

**ED.** I apologize, then.

**COOK.** No. You don't apologize. *(Pause)* Do you have any pride in yourself?

**ED.** Sure, sure I do.

**COOK.** You don't seem to be someone who has much pride in himself. That's the impression I get. I've seen you around here, working. You

don't give me that impression at all. You should stop denigrating yourself. You understand?

**ED.** I guess.

**COOK.** You guess?

**ED.** No, I mean, I understand.

**COOK.** That's good. Now give me those orders. And stop blocking my kitchen. Move on.

**ED.** Thank you. *(Fadeout kitchen sounds. End of scene.)*

## SCENE 6

*Li's apartment. Fade-in a dense thunderstorm, which can be heard from outside.*

**ED.** Hello.

**LI.** *(Terse)* Hello.

**ED.** How were classes?

**LI.** Classes were fine.

**ED.** What did you learn about today?

**LI.** Mushrooms. We're looking at fungus through the microscope. Analyzing.

**ED.** You're angry.

**LI.** That's right.

**ED.** At me?

**LI.** No.

**ED.** You were on the phone.

**LI.** Yes.

**ED.** You were talking to Lloyd.

**LI.** Yes.

**ED.** How is he?

**LI.** Fine. He's doing fine.

**ED.** But you're angry with him.

**LI.** Yes. Very.

**ED.** Why?

**LI.** It's very hard. He's in California, I'm here. It's a hard thing to negotiate.

**ED.** It's funny that I'm here with you, and he's in California.

**LI.** I don't think it's very funny.

**ED.** I don't mean it's funny, in the way that would make you laugh. I mean it's curious. It's odd. *(Beat)* Is he angry that I'm sharing the same room with you?

**LI.** No. He completely trusts you. You're a completely trustworthy person.

**ED.** I am?

**LI.** Yes. That's not even a question. *(Pause)*

**ED.** I guess of the three of us, I was the trustworthy one.

**LI.** Yes. *(Beat)* You were. *(Beat)* But you somehow made it a vice.

**ED.** I did.

**LI.** Yes, you did.

**ED.** I didn't know that. *(Fadeout thunder. End of scene.)*

## SCENE 7

*A knock on a door. Ed enters a Hotel Room, which can be signified by LI's bed.*

**ED.** Hello? Room service. Hello? I've got your breakfast. Is anyone here?

**CLAIRE.** *(Singsong)* I'm in the bathroom.

**ED.** I'll put it on the table, next to the bed.

**CLAIRE.** That's fine.

**ED.** I'll need you to sign. *(CLAIRE, a woman in her mid-thirties, enters wearing a bathrobe.)*

**CLAIRE.** That was quick. You're getting much quicker.

**ED.** I'm new. I think I'm just starting to get the hang of it.

**CLAIRE.** I'm starting to get used to seeing your face in the morning.

**ED.** Yeah, well...

**CLAIRE.** Nothing like a nice shower to start off your day.

**ED.** No. There isn't.

**CLAIRE.** Nice shower and then breakfast.

**ED.** I'll need you to sign.

**CLAIRE.** Can't you sit and chat with me?

**ED.** No, I really can't.

**CLAIRE.** Well, why not? Just for a minute.

**ED.** I've really got a lot of orders.

**CLAIRE.** Are you afraid of me?

**ED.** No.

**CLAIRE.** Why don't you sit here, and chat with me for a while.  
Take a break.

**ED.** On the bed?

**CLAIRE.** Yes. Take a load off. You run around too much.

**ED.** I really shouldn't.

**CLAIRE.** You're afraid of me, aren't you?

**ED.** Afraid?

**CLAIRE.** You're afraid I'll take off this robe.

**ED.** I am?

**CLAIRE.** Yes, you're afraid I'll take off this robe and bite you.  
*(End of scene.)*

## SCENE 8

*Li's apartment. Li is on her bed reading a textbook. Ed is staring out the window.*

**ED.** It's not raining.

**LI.** Nope.

**ED.** I think this is the first day it hasn't rained since I've been here.

**LI.** I think you're right.

**ED.** It's quiet. And clean. It's very clean here. From the rain. Keeps all the trash from forming.

**LI.** Yes.

**ED.** What are you reading?

**LI.** I'm reading about the Big Sur area in California.

**ED.** Big Sur?

**LI.** Yes, how it's very arid there. Dry and mountainous. No one around for miles.

**ED.** Desolate.

**LI.** Yes.

**ED.** So you're done with mushrooms.

**LI.** Yep. On to Big Sur.

**ED.** *(Pause)* This woman tried to seduce me today.

**LI.** *(Puts down book)* Really?

**ED.** Yes. Someone in a room.

**LI.** Was she attractive?

**ED.** Um, yes, I guess so.

**LI.** What did you do?

**ED.** Nothing. I left.

**LI.** Yes, you did, didn't you?

**ED.** Yes.

**LI.** What did she say to you?

**ED.** Um, she threatened to take off her robe.

**LI.** Really?

**ED.** She said she was going to bite me.

**LI.** She did not.

**ED.** She did.

**LI.** She was going to bite you, eh?

**ED.** Apparently.

**LI.** Did you want her to bite you?

**ED.** I don't know. I never considered it, really.

**LI.** That's not surprising.

**ED.** It isn't?

**LI.** You've always been strange that way.

**ED.** I have?

**LI.** Yes. You've always been strange that way. *(Pause)*

**ED.** You know, I was thinking. How it's funny that we sleep together now, but we don't sleep together.

**LI.** What do you mean?

**ED.** We're in the same room, sleeping. But we're not in the same bed.

**LI.** *(Beat)* But we never really slept together, did we?

**ED.** We didn't?

**LI.** No. I mean, we never had...intercourse.

**ED.** No. We didn't ever. That's right.

**LI.** We did everything but.

**ED.** Yes, we did, didn't we?

**LI.** That was both our decision, at the time.

**ED.** It was mutual, yes.

**LI.** I liked that we didn't. I think it made everything more intense, somehow. More pure. I liked that you were always so evasive.

**ED.** Evasive?

**LI.** Yes. I've never been with anyone like you. You were always a bit reluctant, most of the time.

**ED.** Reluctant?

**LI.** Yes. Gentle. Like it was so new. It turned me on. That newness that I sensed in you.

**ED.** You liked that?

**LI.** Very much so. *(Sound of rain beginning to fall, rather rapidly.)*

**ED.** It's coming down again. Look at it come down. In sheets. In buckets, really. Look at it come down. *(Increase the volume of rain-storm, then slowly fade out. End of scene.)*

## SCENE 9

*Fade in crickets. Li, asleep in her bed. Ed, upright in his inflatable bed.*

**ED.** *(Whispering)* There is definitely a leak in my bed. A slight leak of air. I cannot find the leak, it's too slight. The bed no longer supports my weight. It now barely meets the requirements and specifications necessary to be considered a bed. It's now more like a drooping bladder. A collapsed lung. Though it's a ridiculous thing, really no longer a bed as such; I continue to sleep on it. *(Pause)* Haven't been sleeping too well, though I am always completely exhausted. I work at least ten hours a day. Usually more. In the afternoons I go to the Cineplex and watch movies. Luckily, it requires two left turns to get there, and two left turns to get back. I just walk into whatever movie happens to be playing. they

are always changing, and they are all basically the same. I don't spend very much money, on the whole, since they are matinees. The matinees are cheaper. I have a jar of money. Of dollar bills, tens, twenties. A tip jar. It is bulging. I don't spend very much money. *(Pause)* The window is open, and the smell of gasoline seeps in through the window. There is a gas station down the street, and a huge truck is filling the thick pipes with gasoline. *(Beat)* She is sleeping very soundly. I am watching her. *(Fadeout crickets. End of scene.)*

## SCENE 10

*Sounds of kitchen, as before.*

**ED.** I've got a special order: she wants the eggs a bit runny, if you would. Got that?

**COOK.** Loud and clear.

**MANAGER.** What do you call those?

**ED.** *(Yelling)* Thank you!

**COOK.** *(Yelling back)* You're the captain!

**ED.** What?

**MANAGER.** On your feet. What are those shoes?

**ED.** I don't understand?

**MANAGER.** Those are not the right shoes.

**ED.** For what?

**MANAGER.** For the job. You're wearing sneakers. I've told you, you need a pair of brown or black dress shoes for this job.

**ED.** When am I supposed to be buying these shoes?

**MANAGER.** Sorry?

**ED.** At what point in the day am I supposed to be gallivanting around shoe stores, on a quest for brown or black shoes?

**MANAGER.** I'm not sure I...

**ED.** I've worked here for five straight weeks now, without a day off. Ten, usually twelve hours a day. I work down here, alone, taking care of nearly one-hundred rooms...I come home I eat and I fall asleep. That's

all I have energy for. I don't get it. When am I supposed to be shopping for brown and black shoes?

**MANAGER.** I...I don't know?

**ED.** Neither do I. (*Fadeout kitchen sounds. End of scene.*)

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