

SHINING SEA
Jonathan Dorf

Cast of Characters

PAC, male, about nineteen and existing in a place between street smart and naïve,
probably gay

VIOLET, early forties and, at least in her mind, fallen from some height

CANDY, male, late thirties or early forties, a predator, morally and sexually flexible

FIRST MAYOR OF NEW YORK, anywhere from her late thirties to her early sixties, a
female Machiavelli from Park Avenue

SECOND MAYOR OF NEW YORK, female, thirties or forties, and every bit a street
fighter from Brooklyn

Setting

Just after midnight in an alternate present in New York City.

Scene 1. At a homeless squat in midtown Manhattan.

Scene 2. Almost immediately after, by a nearby abandoned Winnebago.

The play should run without intermission.

Author's Notes

Shining Sea is a tragicomedy or a dark comedy or perhaps an ironic comedy. It should not be played as a straight tragedy or a melodrama or anything of that ilk. And it's important that the actors playing Candy, Pac and Violet be absolutely real in their choices to contrast the expressionistic, heightened world in which their interaction takes place.

When one character's dialogue appears to be on the same line as that of another character, they are meant to speak simultaneously.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Just before midnight in an alternate present. Spring. A dark stage. A woman's loud scream. Lights up on an unsavory section of New York City. Signs of a squatter dwelling, with squeegees, buckets and lots of junk, but nothing of value except for a TV that doesn't seem to work. VIOLET, early forties but weathered enough that it's hard to tell, wears a dress that might once have been pretty beneath a coat. She's screaming bloody murder and frantically whacking around her with a squeegee as if trying to fend something off.)

VIOLET

Get it off me! Get it off!

(PAC, nineteen, moves all around the stage, clearly looking for something. His clothing is worn at best, with jeans slung so low around the hips that if he sneezed, he'd be naked.)

PAC

Where is he?!

VIOLET

It touched me!

PAC

He's scared.

VIOLET

I'll show him scared. Filthy little pervert.

(Pac looks under the sundry clothing, blankets and other belongings, getting on his hands and knees when he needs to. He casts a nervous eye toward Violet, who hunts around the stage holding her squeegee and ready to strike.)

PAC

He won't get out again. I promise.
(beat)

Nobody would pay me today.

(Pac finds what he's looking for in Violet's belongings,
scoops it up in a blanket.)

VIOLET

It's in my stuff?!

PAC

I'm puttin' him back.

VIOLET

I gotta' burn my damn blanket.

(Pac carries his bundle over to a box with air holes that's
among his things.)

PAC

Did you hear me? If I don't make any money tomorrow, I'm goin' to the park.
(Pac dumps the bundle into the box. To the bundle)
It's OK now. You just stay in the box and play with your friends.

VIOLET

You said you weren't goin' back there.

PAC

I might have to. You can have my blanket.

VIOLET

I don't want your blanket. Probably wrap those damn rats in it all the time.
(Beat. Violet grabs her handbag and goes over to Pac. She
pulls out a handkerchief, wets it in Pac's squeegee bucket
and tries to clean his face.)

Hold still.

PAC

The water's all dirty.

VIOLET

You got the water beat by a mile.
(Pac keeps squirming away from the handkerchief, until
Violet grabs his head.)

Pac, hold still!

(Pac stops moving. Beat.)

PAC

This guy said he'd take me to California or Oregon and show me the ocean.

VIOLET

What guy?

PAC

Just some guy.

VIOLET

Probably saying it to get into your pants.

PAC

I know. But it's still a nice thing to say.

(Violet pulls out a stack of wedding invitations.)

VIOLET

Look.

PAC

Nice.

VIOLET

I sent half of them out already.

PAC

Those people aren't gonna' like it when they get postage due.

(beat)

What letter?

VIOLET

(pulls out a phonebook)

R. Long Island.

PAC

How'd you get that?

VIOLET

Library.

PAC

They closed the library.

VIOLET

It was sitting outside—in front of the door. Can't leave a phonebook lying around and expect people to keep their hands off. You need a real shower.

PAC

I used to give the guy at the Y a buck to pretend he don't see me. Now he wants ten.

(Violet does her best to tidy up the squat.)

VIOLET

You could swim in the ocean. It isn't so bad—not yet.

PAC

I'm sick of swimmin' in the ocean.

VIOLET

You never go swimming.

PAC

'Cause I'm so sick of it.

VIOLET

Maybe you'd meet a nice boy at the beach, take you someplace you could get a real shower.

(A CAR ALARM goes off. It's a number of blocks away. Violet and Pac work hard to ignore it.)

PAC

Yeah. Maybe I can invite him back to the house.

VIOLET

Wash that damn rat smell off.

PAC

Where's Candy?

VIOLET

(indicates that she doesn't know)

I invited your parents to the wedding.

PAC

Let's talk about something else.

VIOLET

Invited your parents and the mayor.

PAC

Which one?

VIOLET

The real one.

PAC

(beat)

Tell me about the Pacific again.

VIOLET

I only saw it once. I told you everything I remember.

PAC

Tell me again.

(beat)

Please.

VIOLET

(beat)

It was after I finished working in Vegas as one of those waitress girls—in the casino—this is twenty years ago. I caught a bus to downtown LA, then I hitched a ride to Venice Beach with this pony-tailed hippie. By the time I get there, it's just past lunchtime, and all these people are laying out, sleeping it off.

(beat)

Been a while since I looked like a waitress in Vegas.

PAC

Tell me about the water.

VIOLET

So I get down to the water, and it's clear blue—like somebody stuck a little piece of sky in it—and the waves are rolling in, sort of fierce but gentle, not dark and cold like here. And of course the water goes on forever, but it's more than that. It's more than not being able to see the end of it. The sun lights up the ocean, like it's gone swimming, and you can see how beautiful and clean the water really is.

PAC

(beat)

That's the most beautiful time you ever told it.

VIOLET

I tell it exactly the same every time.

PAC

I'm gonna' get there.

VIOLET

Lots of people never see it. Nothin' wrong with that.

PAC

I'm gonna'.

VIOLET

You got a book of pictures of it.

PAC

It's not the same. It's not even a book—it's just a bunch of postcards taped to a notepad. I'm gonna' get there for real.

VIOLET

Until then, stay out of the park.

PAC

I said I would.

VIOLET

And where'd you meet that guy?

PAC

What guy?

VIOLET

The Pacific guy.

(beat)

That's what I thought.

PAC

You're gonna' get caught stealing those wedding invites.

VIOLET

Two mayors beatin' the hell out of each other, and you think anybody in this city cares about wedding invites?

(Pac turns his hands into "Mayors.")

PAC

(left hand)

I'm the mayor!

(right hand)

No, I won and *I'm* the mayor!

(Pac's hands do battle.)

Die, you scum!

VIOLET

We're talkin' about the Pacific guy, not the wedding invites, not the mayors.

PAC

(stops playing with his hands)

He was nice—

VIOLET

And maybe the next nice guy takes you some place where he's not so nice and you can't scream. You think the park's—

PAC

Why you always dumpin' on the park? The park's got a lotta' good stuff. There's chess games and birds and a pond and dogs and—

VIOLET

Crackheads and crazies and perverts with fancy clothes that tell a kid anything to get him into their cars so they can . . . It's a dirty place. Maybe it wasn't, but it is now, and every time I walk through there I want to scratch my skin off.

PAC

Then maybe you shouldn't walk through. And he didn't have a car. You can't have cars in the park.

VIOLET

I thought you didn't go.

PAC

I didn't—I just walked through. What was I supposed to do—go all the way around?

VIOLET

You're there long enough to talk to some crazy pervert.

PAC

He wasn't crazy.

VIOLET

Man says he's gonna' take you to California, he's crazy. How'd he say you were gettin' there?

PAC

Airplane.

VIOLET

Like anybody in their right mind is gonna' fly now. And how were you gettin' to this airplane?

PAC

He said he had a car.

VIOLET

I thought he didn't.

PAC

I'm here—right? Can we talk about something else?

(There's a NOISE offstage—as if someone is coming and bumping into things.)

VIOLET

(hurrying because Candy is coming)

You don't understand. Every time you go there—all that filth—you bring it back here.

PAC

Don't tell Candy. I won't do it again. Swear to God.

(Enter CANDY, probably late thirties, but like Violet, hard to know for sure. He's a Fagin for a new age, and his clothing looks like a walking toolkit. He carries a squeegee and a glass bottle full of soapy water and hauls a ratty bag filled with junk over his shoulder.)

CANDY

Swearin' to God. That sounds serious.

(to Pac)

What you swearin' about?

PAC

Nothin'.

CANDY

(to Violet)

What's he swearin' about?

PAC

Nothing! She made me swear I won't ask her about the Pacific more than once a day.

CANDY

You go to the park?

PAC

No.

CANDY

Did he?

VIOLET

I look like his shadow?

CANDY

Did he go to the park?

VIOLET

He said no.

CANDY

(to Violet)

You watch the TV?

VIOLET

I missed you, Candy.

(beat)

It's right here.

CANDY

Anything happens to that TV, we're fucked.

(beat)

I got some good stuff today. Good stuff.

(Candy dumps the contents of his bag on the ground: all sorts of crazy junk—some useful, some not, and a long, stiff loaf of French bread.)

PAC

Looks like junk.

CANDY

That's 'cause you were never an engineer.

PAC

I thought you were a janitor.

(Pac pulls a ragged tennis ball out of the pile and picks up the bread.)

It's the seventh game of the series, two out, bottom of the ninth, Yanks down by one—

(He mimes crowd cheers as he assumes a batter's stance, tennis ball in his hand.)

CANDY

Careful with that bread.

PAC

Only one man can save them. Pac! Pac! Pac! They chant his name. Two strikes, but he always comes through—

(Pac looks like he's going to try to hit the ball with the bread.)

CANDY

If you hit that—

VIOLET

You'll break it. We'll have bugs all over. Ants and roaches—

PAC

Here's the pitch . . .

(He bounces the ball, takes an enormous roundhouse swing, deliberately missing the ball but throwing it offstage as if he's hit it.)

Swing and a long drive to deep left field, the crowd is on its feet—

(A CAR ALARM goes off again, a little closer this time, interrupting his reverie.)

VIOLET

Been goin' off all day.

Like what you see? Hit the back button and follow the instructions to order a perusal copy of the full script!