

Setting: A deserted street in **Elysian**, a small town which has long been declining due to lack of industry. The time period may be interpreted however. Any pronouns can be changed to fit the needs and interpretations of the actors. We open in maybe the only restaurant in town. The stage is empty except for a table and chair center stage at the beginning to represent the restaurant. Otherwise the stage should be visualized as a stretch of road, the fourth wall is one side of the street, the back of the stage is more buildings.

Characters:

Abby → **The Waiter**- a cryptic messenger, an unstable character, who exists as a sort of prophetic figure. Their motivations are unclear but probably devious.

Go Hong → **The Stranger**- a passing visitor to Elysian, exists with no identity but tries to hide that from himself. Speaks quickly as if to convince themselves of their identity

Maggie → **The Townsperson**- A romantic, passionate, figure, their character could have too many interpretations. They seem alternatively manipulative and predatory and also pathetic and lonely.

Melanie → **The Historian**- The town historian of Elysian, a gossip who helps erode the sense of identity the stranger gathers. Maybe the only character with clear motivations and identity. May need a strong character actor who can exude energy of a small-minded gossip

Waiter: Would you want any dessert?

Stranger: No thank you. Not very crowded here, is it?

Waiter: No it isn't. Nobody is staying in this town, you know. Seems like it's worse than death, to stay in all these little mountain towns. Like being buried alive or something. I feel it, sometimes, like the mountains crashing down on you. (Abruptly) Will that be all?

Take your time!

Stranger: Yes.

Waiter: You can put the check up at the register, then.

Stranger: (As if struck by something): Oh, excuse me?

Waiter: Yes?

Stranger: What is this town called?

Waiter: What? You mean to say you don't know? *← Actually confused -- Do you know who they are, or is an outside force influencing you?*

Stranger: No, well, I was only driving in when I passed this place, I didn't stop to look at the signs.



* Abby speak louder (don't swallow words)

Waiter: But how could *you* not know?

Stranger: Excuse me?

Waiter: No idea at all? *You* of all people? Look at you. How innocent. Like butter wouldn't melt in your hands?

Stranger: What? You're a real character. Funny.

Waiter: It's funny that you have no idea what's coming to you. (Have a nice day, then.

(Stranger exits. Historians enters.)

Waiter: Morning. How is the family?

Historian: Fine, most of them. Well, I spoke to my niece, and she hasn't been very cheerful, I'm afraid, since the marriage, you remember.

Waiter: That's terrible, isn't it?

Historian: Yes, well she had to leave the town away from her family. Married that man from the city who we all knew was no good. You know, what have you got if you haven't got your home? She left the town like it was dirt beneath her feet.

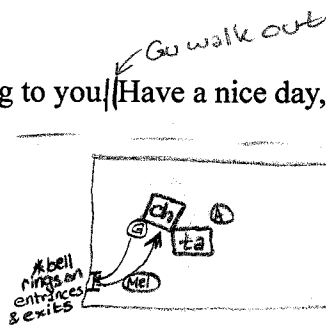
Waiter: Aren't many jobs in this town.

Historian: I know that's what they all say. Well I say, how can there be jobs if everyone leaves?. When I was young there were families all around here. Well, you can't swim upstream when everybody else is going down, I'm afraid. Say, I didn't recognize the one who was leaving as I came in. Did they say if they were from here?

Waiter: I never saw them before. Didn't like the feeling they gave me, I'll say.

Historian: I saw that *person* from the railroad tracks out in the street today. Muttering to themselves. It's hard to stay optimistic about these fine old towns. You know this place wouldn't have a property for sale hundred of years ago, everybody wanted to live here. And now you have the crazies strolling up and down the street, if you please.

Abby
cleaning
whole time
so Mel can
"talk to str"



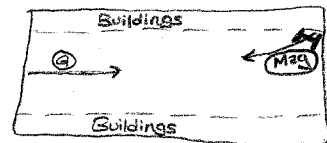
A&M
②

Waiter: There are many goings-on these days. I tell you, when these towns die every person in it seems to die with them.

(the waiter exits, and Historian exits. The Stranger enters, walking down the streets.

Each bring off a set piece & cross Gw as they enter.

CSR



3
3

Townsperson: You—you're here. How could you? Where have you been, where have you been?
You absolute—

Getting closer, up in his face

Stranger stops, says nothing, looking absolute stunned

Back up, exasperated

Townsperson: Oh my god, it's like seeing a corpse walk the streets. How could you leave me like this?

Stranger: I'm sorry, I don't know you. You're mistaken (Walks on.) (Townsperson returns around and follows them.)

X DS of (Mag) ⇒

← Running US of (3) and grabbing his shoulders (or spin him around--which ever feels most natural)

Townsperson: No- I need to see you. Come here. It is you. Why did you leave?

Stranger: I've never seen you before. Leave me alone

Townsperson: It was a year ago you left in the night... Yesterday evening, Your mother put up your picture in the square on the corner in the town square. You remember? Where would we all sit with our ice creams? Or did you forget? She put up your picture there and lit candles around it. The Greenbushes and the Johnsons and dozens of people saw it. Your mother couldn't even speak, she was crying so hard.

Stranger: What? I'm telling you, I've never been to this town.

(Stranger walks on townsperson calls after them) ← trying to exit SL

Townsperson: You can't (rapidly assumes a calmer, more sullen air) all right then, I don't know, you, I suppose. I'm mistaken. I always am. I don't know you.

(Stranger slows down. Townsperson walks beside them) ← trying to get another good look @ him

To think two people might look so alike. Your hair, your eyes, everything. I'm sorry. You know, I seemed to think I once found out what love was. When I saw the long, straight noses of the movie stars at the theater, I thought they didn't look right. They didn't look like yours. Theirs. But it wasn't you. (they break into silent tears or distress)

Stranger: I'm sorry for whoever that was (They stop, as if won over.)

Townsperson: I suppose you don't look so much alike as I thought. No, it's only I was just not thinking straight. It was a year ago today when it happened. It's been so strange, not just sad, but frightening and horrible. Like I never even knew anything at all. Like I just dreamed it all, all the years. I'm sorry, I'm talking too much. Where are you from?

Taken aback
& now
scared

Stranger: What?: I don't see how it's any of your business.

Townsperson: It's a simple question. Not many people come to this town. They only leave.

Stranger: I know, a waiter told me.

Townsperson: A waiter?

Stranger: From that cafe over there. ← Point SL

Townsperson: That's a crappy place. I wouldn't eat there if they poisoned all my other food.

Stranger: Anyway. I'm not coming here. I'm passing through. I just stopped for a bite to eat.

Townsperson: Where are you going?

Stranger: Utica. The one I look like... Did they know you for a long time?

Look to
where
these
places are
in relation
to you, or
off in the
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Townsperson: All my life. They lived one street over. I lived in a little white house, and they lived in a big brown one. Our backyards touched. We used to talk without seeing each other through a chink in the tall fence. When we were six we played all day. Everyday we would go by the creek and the old baseball fields and play until sunset. We would walk to school everyday, and would write down our secrets and put them in the chink in the old fence. Sorry, I'm talking too much, again. I'm holding you up. I'm sorry. There I go again. saying sorry. My mother told me that was insincere, apologizing so much. Meant I was a liar. I'm not.

Stranger: Well, I don't have to be in Utica until... Well, I don't have to leave here for a while. Has your family lived in this place a long time?

Townsperson: My family? I guess. This place was founded a hundred years ago, I think my mother said. I would ask, but she won't talk to me much. I live in one of the apartments by the old railroad. I should leave here., like my brother has and everyone from school, but I can't. Couldn't Not until you—they—come back.

Stranger (looks around): They left . . . and you don't know why?

Look to where their home was

Townsperson: No. I'll never know why. That night, We had a lovely dinner at home. Their home, I mean. Their mother hugged me before we left.

Stranger: Yes. Well.

Townsperson: And I saw pictures they drew of me. Of the fence. The next morning their mother called and asked if I knew where they were. If they were at my place. They said they hadn't come home in the morning. And the bed was empty, and no car was taken. No trace left. As if they disappeared. We asked everyone. Their boss. Our friends, anyone in the county, any relation to the bus stations. No one answered. No one... I never stopped looking. But I ran out of places to look.

Stranger: I'm sorry.

Had been lost in thought. Now snap back to reality curious about this stranger

Townsperson: I am, too. Why are you going to Utica?

Stranger (looks stunned, almost about to collapse)

Maybe take a few small steps back, losing your balance.

Townsperson: You look queasy now. What is it?

Stranger: It's only, I- I really don't know why I need to go to Utica (looks around as if for an answer.) I'm thinking... All I know is I have to drive until I reach Utica. I-

*Turn back around to face her

Can walk DS of Mag here to get her out of your face

Townsperson: Where are you from?

Taking a step towards him

Stranger: I- don't- know- (utterly terrified)

Let those true colors start to show

Townsperson (as if catching prey): You don't know.

Another step

Stranger: It's like- I've been driving for hours and hours and days and maybe months, but before that, I never stopped to think.

Gu becomes even more anxious

Townsperson (moves closer): What's your name? You don't know.

Slowly moving closer and closer

Stranger (backs away fearfully.): What am I? Did I ever have a name? I can't remember anything but roads and Utica and highways. Damn highways.

Trying to find something to brace yourself on

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← **Townsperson:** All my life. They lived one street over. I lived in a little white house, and they lived in a big brown one. Our backyards touched. We used to talk without seeing each other through a chink in the tall fence. When we were six we played all day. Everyday we would go by the creek and the old baseball fields and play until sunset. We would walk to school everyday, and would write down our secrets and put them in the chink in the old fence. Sorry, I'm talking too much, again. I'm holding you up. I'm sorry. There I go again. saying sorry. My mother told me that was insincere, apologizing so much. Meant I was a liar. I'm not.

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slightly sweeter now, calming him before you fully pounce

Townsperson: Try to remember... try... A white house with columns. A skinny little kid in a white sweater who would play with you in a baseball field.

Look up, confused. Who the hell is this person? You just want to get home. This scene is categorized by your annoyance.

(Stranger leaves, leaving townsperson, at the edge of the stage, biding their time. They come across the waiter in the street, downstage right.)

Stranger: You said it was funny. What was coming for me.

Waiter: What? Don't know what you're talking about, not at all.

Stranger: Yes, you do. I was in that dirty cafe, You wouldn't tell me what this town is called. And you laughed at me, said it was funny I didn't know what was coming

Waiter: I don't remember customers. I get so many. Pardon me.

Stranger: Odd, since there was no one else there.

Waiter: Guess I'm losing my mind, then. I'm old enough. You can be in a place like this, / Say, you don't look well. Not well at all.

Stranger: I was only just in the cafe. I doubt there was a single other person in there. Awful dirty place in there.

**Reference to the posters mentioned by May -- cryptic messenger!*

Waiter: It isn't my job to clean the establishment. I only work there, you know, to keep myself alive. A miracle they can still pay me in this town // I suppose I saw you there., but I can't be certain. You're not very memorable. Some faces are like sheets of paper, and you forget them just as quickly. I only remember you looked strange- in your expression.*

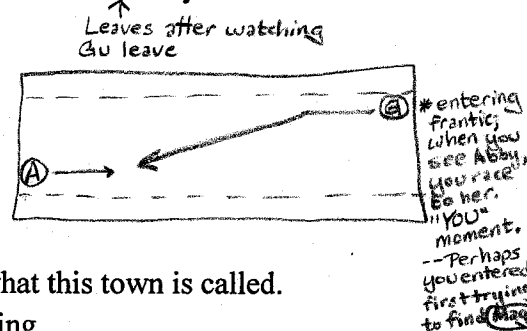
Stranger: How?

Waiter: Sick.

Stranger: What did you mean when you said you wouldn't tell me the name of the place? That I should know it?

Waiter: Don't remember that. The town is called Elysian, if you need to know.

Stranger: Elysian?



Waiter: Elysian. They said it was some old Greek thing. Named all of these dirty little towns Greek things. Like that would make them worth living in (moves away) ← Cross US of Gw

Turn to face her → **Stranger:** Look, you said some odd things to me there. And odd things are happening. I don't know who I am. I don't know my name. Where I came from. All I know is I need to drive to Utica- I barely know what Utica is. Only that I have been driving there. For how long I hardly know. Days, weeks, months, years.

Tired & fed up with this nonsense → **Waiter:** I'm not a doctor. You are sick. you should leave this place, anyhow. You know how to drive, that's enough- drive away. This part of the world wouldn't do any sick person good.

Especially the kind you are. There's always been something wrong in this part of the world, in the mountains you know. You walk alone at night and you hear strange whisperings in the dark.

Another place where this may not be you talking
G&Meg
(5)

Stranger: Wait- wait. Don't- ← Chasing after her

(Stranger breaks down, sits on the floor, roughly stage upstate left) **Townsperson** re-enters like a triumphant angel and pulls out a drawing) I must be a ghost.

(Townsperson taps their shoulder and shows them) Do you know that Elysium is Heaven in Ancient Greece?

Have Go → draw picture **Townsperson:** Look at this- look. You made it. It's us in the field
↑
showing the picture into his hands



Stranger: (stares intently at the picture) I think I *do* remember-

Townsperson: You do?

Stranger nods

(The Townsperson and the stranger might embrace) ← simply help him stand up here

Stranger: Long ago, there was a child who I would play with. There were so many sunny days where we played together and a white cat.

Is this true, or are you just going along w/ the story?

Townsperson: Yes- she was mine! Her name was Dough. We would tease her together. I never told you- you must be them.

looking @ Mag concerned

Stranger: But I can't remember anything else. All I can remember is having driven for hours, for months, for so long, never thinking, not letting myself think.

Grasp him by the shoulders. Maybe rub them to soothe him. ← **Townsperson:** It's all right. Everything is right again. I'll do anything. Come home with me. I know about us. You will remember. Will you come back home?

Stranger: I will.

(Townsperson embraces the stranger) ← Pull him in from the position you were in

Townsperson: Oh no, I have to go into the pharmacy. Damn it. That's what I came here for, I guess. Before I saw you. You probably shouldn't come in. I don't want anyone in town to see you so suddenly. Not before your mother does. You won't leave me again, will you?

Stranger: How could I? I have nowhere else to go...

Townsperson: I love you. (They exit. Historians enter. Historians try to project an air of rationality, and knowledge.) Ex USL behind @

Actually concerned -- this person looks very ill and lost

Historian: Child, Are you all right?

Stranger: Yes, why wouldn't I be?

Historian: You look startled, as if you'd seen something terrible, and I thought it might be because of that creature you were talking to.

Stranger: What do you mean?

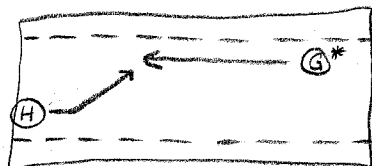
Historian: I have lived in this town my whole life. I am a town historian. I know all about the people that come here. Those people from out in the country who creep into our towns, living in some shack set up by some cheap landlord, selling god-knows what out the back door. And that one is the worst of any of them, dragging this place down.

Stranger: You mean they're not from here? ← Looking behind you

Historian: I should hope that one isn't. I don't claim to know everyone in this town, but I know most, and I think I would know if a person such as that came from our own Elysian. I heard some say her father was a drunk or something. But I was worried when I saw you two talking, you know they say that one is crazy. She's been telling lies to the first one ~~they see~~ out on the street. she sees

Stranger: About what?

Historian: Oh the worst, the most horrible things. That their mother died and they think you know why, or that they know something about you. Something awful. What did they say to you?



*wandering aimlessly, looking thru windows and @ drawing

*we'll have you creeping around SL during previous scene

Looking over G's shoulders & then back @ him in case Macy exits store

Trying to warn them

Warning but now also gossip

Look over his shoulder again

Nosy but also concerned

Start to try to leave, but turn around
Trying to cross DS of SR to exit

Stranger: Nothing. Nothing. Have you ever heard of someone who disappeared from here, maybe a year ago?

Looking off into the distance

Historian: What no. Or— Yes, yes, I did, now that you mention it. Some young person. I don't know the young people of this town so well, what's left of them. It was this time of year, last. I remember visiting my sister for her birthday, a couple days from now, and she mentioned it. Yes.

Back to looking @ Gu

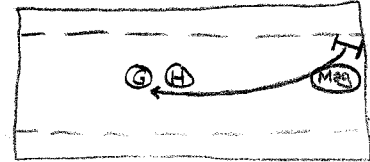
Why?

Stranger: No reason. I only heard of it. If you didn't know them, how are you so sure of that creature being a liar?

Strange to call her that

Historian: I notice people like them. I've seen her before up and down these streets. Everyone has. We've all heard the stories- whatever you do, you must not speak to them. My child, you really don't look well. What is it? I have heard of such things?

(Townsperson leaves the shop, grasps the stranger by their hands)



Take a few steps towards him
** push H back away from G to take her place next to him*

Townsperson: I know you're not a dream now. You're real. I'll tell you all about yourself. Do you remember anything else?

ONE: with she just pushed you
TWO: This person is dangerous

Historian (mouth agape): Get away, you!

Moving towards Mag to force her away

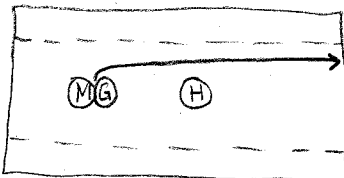
Stranger: I almost think I remember something else. But I will.

If H gets to you, wave or brush her off

Townsperson: You're twenty four years old. Your birthday is December 2nd. You've only cried three times in your life. Come back with me.

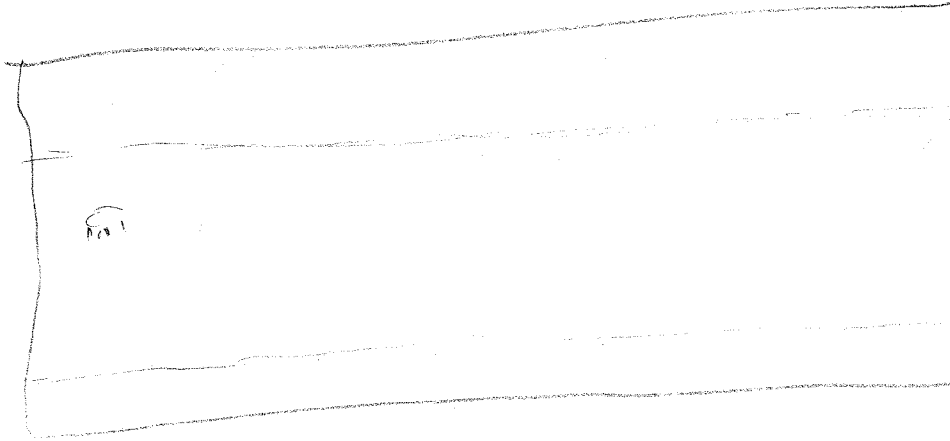
Stranger leaves with Townsperson stage left leaving Historian shocked

Fade to spot on Melanie, then fade out, then back on for all lights
First two on left



Maggie puts arm around Gu and leads him offstage.
Historian turns rapidly to watch them walk off. Lights down after they leave w/ H still "frozen" onstage.

BELL for entrances & exits



Costumes:

Gu -- casual (jeans & t-shirt)

Maggie -- poor-looking, more character-esque, feminine

Melanie -- Matron-esque, older vibes, feminine

Abby -- Apron for time in restaurant (notepad), casual (work attire)