110TH STREET STATION

By Burton Bumgarner

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Set in a New York subway station on the Upper West Side on a wintry Saturday morning, Estelle, an eccentric woman, sits on a bench doing cross-stitch and talking with Grover, a street person trying to sleep under a pile of newspapers. They are soon joined by Julia, a wealthy woman whose expensive car has just broken down and who is in a hurry to meet her husband; Calvin, a spoiled brat who is supposed to be meeting business associates of his father's at the airport; Marta, a recent immigrant on her way to a new job in a sweatshop; a novice nun with doubts about her vocation; Jan and Jill, musicians and roommates who are late for a rehearsal and who are driving each other crazy; and a punk who dances around under headphones.

During the wait for the next train, the characters think only of their own plights. Then they look around and draw conclusions about the people around them. They are drawn out by boredom, imagination, and a fight over a $20 bill one of them drops. Slowly they are drawn together and realize that their perceptions about each other and reality are miles apart. As the next train arrives, the life of each of the characters has been altered for the better.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(3 m, 6 w)

ESTELLE: A woman from the neighborhood.

GROVER: A man who lives in the subway tunnel.

JULIA: A wealthy woman.

CALVIN: A spoiled rich snob, not too bright.

MARTA: A recent immigrant.

NUN: A young novice.

JILL: A young musician.

JAN: Musician, Jill's roommate.

PUNK: A punk (male).

TIME: The present.

PLACE: 110th Street Station.

SETTING

The setting is the 110th Street Station beneath Broadway and Cathedral Parkway in New York. Trash cans, turnstiles, etc. may be used, but are not necessary. A backdrop with "110th Street Station - Cathedral Parkway - Downtown" may be used, or bare stage. SL and SR are benches. A *Wall Street Journal* has been left on the SR bench. A pile of newspapers is near the SL bench. The play takes place between the departure of a downtown train as the riders await the next train. The city is cold and rainy. The time is the present.

PROPS

ESTELLE: Cross-stitch, umbrella.
GROVER: Panhandling cup, grimy handkerchief.
JULIA: Watch, cell phone.
CALVIN: Watch, cell phone, wallet, handkerchief, briefcase containing a *National Enquirer*, $5 bill, packaged towelette, building pass.
MARTA: Scrap of paper, purse, $20 bill.
NUN: $5 bill.
JILL: Instrument case for viola, watch.
JAN: Instrument case for cello.
PUNK: Headphones.

SOUND EFFECTS

Trains sounds (approaching, stopping, departing and continuing past) and "Beethoven's Ninth."

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(AT RISE: ESTELLE is sitting on the bench sewing. GROVER is asleep on the floor beneath some newspapers.)

ESTELLE: It's a beautiful day upstairs, Grover. *(GROVER groans.)* It's about thirty degrees and it's pouring down rain. I just love it when it rains.
GROVER: *(From beneath newspapers.)* Me, too. It flushes out all the rats.
ESTELLE: I think we might be getting some snow, too. I just love the snow.
GROVER: Me, too. Nothing like stumbling down Broadway in a winter wonderland.
ESTELLE: It was getting kind of foggy last time I was upstairs. I love the fog. It always makes me think of the moors of Scotland.
GROVER: Reminds me of the last time I was hit by a bus.
ESTELLE: Nothing like a nice brisk, snowy, soggy, foggy New York morning.
GROVER: A case of botulism comes close.
ESTELLE: Oh, Grover. Don't be so grumpy!
GROVER: Estelle, why don't you just sit there and sew and let me sleep. I got a hard day of panhandling ahead of me.
ESTELLE: Whatever you say.

(All is quiet for several counts, then SOUND of a train leaving the station. ESTELLE waves good-bye and watches as the "train" moves left to right. Suddenly JULIA and CALVIN enter and frantically try to catch the train. They stop on the apron and watch as the train leaves. They pace, look at watches; then all is quiet. PUNK enters, looks down the tracks, then dances to unheard music from his headphones. Julia and Calvin dial on cell phones. Calvin looks around in disgust. The following dialogue is heard only by the audience.)

JULIA: Why did the BMW have to break down?

CALVIN: Why do I have to get up on Saturday morning?
JULIA: Why does it have to rain in New York?
CALVIN: Why can't I find my car keys?
JULIA: Why did I have to come to the Upper West Side on a Saturday morning?
CALVIN: Why do I have to live on the Upper West Side?
JULIA and CALVIN: Why do these things always happen to me? *(BOTH bump into PUNK.)* Watch it, buddy!

(Pacing continues with PUNK moving to his unheard music.)

JULIA: *(Talking on phone.)* This is Julia. Can Peter answer the phone? I'm supposed to meet him in front of the Chrysler Building in thirty minutes and I'm not going to make it.
CALVIN: *(Talking on phone.)* Hello, Daddy? It's me...your son. Remember? I know I'm supposed to meet those Chinese guys, but I forget which airport. Is it Kennedy? *(Nervously.)* Of course I'll make it. I'm on Long Island right now. I know they're due to land any minute. Don't worry about it.
JULIA: You can't interrupt?
CALVIN: *(As if he were driving a car.)* Got to hang up -- here's my exit.
JULIA: You tell my husband that his wonderful little car left me stranded at Columbia. No, don't send the limo. I'll take the subway...Of course I'm serious...I can't take a cab. I didn't bring enough cash for the fare. Tell him I'll be there as soon as I can.
CALVIN: I need to get my parking ticket. I'll call you when we get to their hotel. By the way, which hotel am I taking them to? ... Hello?...Daddy?

(BOTH fold up phones.)

JULIA: I wish they could be more reasonable. There's nothing wrong with the subway. *(Bumps into PUNK and shoves him away.)* Excuse me, buddy!

End of Freeview

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