

THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF AVERAGE PEOPLE

By Nikki Harmon

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CHARACTERS

JOE	An average guy waiting for a bus.
SOPHIE	A street person.
MATTIE	A street person
SUNNY	An average woman waiting for a bus.

SETTING/TIME

New York City – Port Authority Bus Terminal. Present day.

SOUND PLOT

Warrior Music
Trumpets Sound
Screaming Enemy Hordes
Trumpets Sound
Neighing of a Horse
Violin Music
Sad French Song
Happy Italian Song
Ocean Waves
Violin Music

LIGHTING EFFECTS

Down Spots or Area Lights can be brought up on Sunny and Joe to highlight when they are speaking their thoughts – at director's discretion.

PRODUCTION NOTES

You can use individual plastic chairs or benches – whatever you have that looks as if it could be in a bus station. The play can be performed with only chairs or benches, or on a full set resembling a bus station - at the director's discretion. Port Authority is a very clean bus terminal, but an overflowing large trash can is not unheard of, along with the occasional MacDonald's bag and newspaper under a chair.

MATTIE, is busy nursing a bottle in a brown bag (Note: - In NYC it's illegal to drink an alcoholic beverage on the streets, so people put their bottle in a small brown bag, and since the bottle is hidden, it's legal). If you want, you can change this to a can of soda or a bottle of water.

SUNNY has wrapped tourist gifts in her bags which she opens and looks at periodically. You can use the props in the script, or substitute – if you do change them, make sure SUNNY's dialogue is changed to reflect the change.

The French and Italian songs on page 9 may be instrumental or vocal. Perhaps a song by Edith Piaf and a song by Dean Martin.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Sitting, waiting for a bus, at Port Authority Bus Terminal, in New York City, takes *a lot of work!* It requires not only that you keep yourself occupied to prevent boredom, but keeping an eye on your belongings and your watch, so that you don't miss your bus; and knowing where the nearest cop is, so that if the person next to you sits too close, or leans too far, or reaches for something in their pocket, or looks at you for more than two seconds, you can jump up and yell, **POLICE!!!!** All this without acting as if you're looking at anyone else, and are perfectly content to just sit and wait quietly for your bus.

PROPERTY PLOT

TOP OF THE SHOW - ON STAGE

Bus Ticket – (*Joe*)

Small cart – (*Sophie*) loaded with all sorts of bags of clothing, collected soda cans, books, newspapers, radios, clothing hangers, etc. – items found on the streets. If you set the play in the spring/summer her cold weather clothing is in her cart, if it's winter/fall, she wearing it all.

Brown bag with a bottle inside – (*Mattie*)

OFF STAGE

Two Big Shopping Bags – (*Sunny*) overflowing with gifts (a box of candy, three models of the USS Intrepid, two *I Love New York* tee shirts and a mug), some wrapped and boxed – other tourist items can be substituted.

Wristwatch (*Sunny*)

COSTUME PLOT

JOE: Traveling clothing – reflecting the season. Should have a pocket to put his bus ticket.

SOPHIE: Is a street person, and should be dressed according to the time of the year you set the play in – if it's fall/winter, layers of clothing. (NOTE: The homeless use large black plastic bags as raincoats, cutting a hole in the bottom for their head, and on the sides of arms – if you would like to include that either as a costume or item in her cart)

MATTIE: Is a street person so the above applies to her, too.

SUNNY: Comfortable traveling clothing – reflecting the season (NOTE: the script calls for a sweater, but if your production is set in summer or winter, change the dialogue accordingly to read blouse, jacket, coat, or in her purse, etc.)

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The World Premier of *The Comings and Goings of Average People* was produced by Shelter Theatre Group, Julia Campanelli, Artistic/Producing Director; Westbank Café Downstairs Theatre, New York, NY, opening February 23, 1994, directed by Julia Campanelli, with the following cast and crew:

Joe	Ron Cohen
Sophie	Beth Boone
Mattie	Julia Campanelli
Sunny	Mackenzie Phillips

Stage Manager/Set Designer	Perry Ojeda
Lighting Designer	Hank Meiman
Sound Design	Spike Studio
Production Assistants	Kernan Bell, Elizabeth Rice, John Guida

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SETTING: The waiting area at Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City.

AT RISE: *JOE is sitting, reading the fine print on his bus ticket. SOPHIE is sorting through her belongings in her cart, and MATTIE's nursing a beer in a brown bag, as SUNNY ENTERS carrying two shopping bags of gifts.*

(JOE and SUNNY speak to the audience and themselves but never to each other.)

JOE: It's not that I care what the fine print on the ticket says or what all the numbers mean, or that someone's going to make me recite the pay code before they let me get on the bus, it's that I have to do something. You can't just sit around looking at other people. They get very nervous when you do that and start thinking, "What's this guy gonna do? Try and talk to me? Rip off my gold chains? Hit on me? If he puts a hand on me I'll yell so loud it'll blast the creep's brains out." That's why I don't look at anyone, don't move a muscle and just read the stuff on the ticket. It's a defensive maneuver.

(JOE goes back to reading his ticket as SUNNY starts taking packages out of her bags and examining them.)

SUNNY: It's not that I don't know what's in these boxes, it's just that if I look as if I'm doing something the police won't ask questions, and people won't stare and say things like, "Why doesn't she get a job?" or, "I work for my money." I hate it when that happens. I know what you're thinking. "How much longer can she keep it up? There has to be a bottom to those bags." You're right. You can look at a box of candy, three models of the USS Intrepid, two *I Love New York* tee shirts and a mug just so many times and people start thinking you're one of those obsessive crazies who count the cracks in the sidewalk. So I only do this for a few minutes then I switch to looking at my watch. That either means I'm in a hurry, the cops like that because you're not loitering, or, that I'm with someone. People around you like that one best. It gives you credibility and they're not afraid you're traveling alone. People like couples. Families are even better. You hardly ever hear of people getting mugged by a

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set of parents and their three kids. I used to wear a wedding band but no one believes that anymore. (*Looking at her watch*) I've got a minute before I switch to my watch.

JOE: Nice looking woman. No wedding band. I wonder who the gifts are for? Could be children. I don't want to get involved with someone with an Ex-husband and kids. Could be for nieces and nephews or maybe she's one of those people who go places and spends the whole trip buying souvenirs to prove they went.

SUNNY: That man's looking at me. It's time for the watch. (*Looks at her watch*)

JOE: She's waiting for someone. Probably her mother. They agreed to meet and now the mother's late and she's concerned.

SUNNY: He's still looking.

JOE: Maybe it's a boyfriend. Some big hulk that'll beat me up for hitting on her. (*Looks away*) It's not worth it.

SUNNY: He's not looking anymore. Why'd he stop looking?

JOE: Maybe the guy's a no-show. Stood her up. He'll probably call her tonight and say he got stuck in traffic. She'll be fed-up and start looking for a new relationship. A trusting one with a guy who's empathic, kind and thoughtful. The sort of guy who'd see to it she's never kept waiting but who'd give her, her own space. Let her do what she wanted without interfering, but always be there for her.

(*SUNNY doesn't see the following.*)

(*Warrior Music Fades Up*)

(*Leaping up*) A warrior ever at her side, ready to do battle . . .

(*Trumpets Sound*)

. . . to defend her honor against enemy hordes . . .

(*Screaming Enemy Hordes are Heard*)

. . . that would think nothing of dragging her off to some distant land. A captive with no hope of rescue until . . .

(*Trumpets Sound*)

. . . I came riding up over the far mountain on my trusty steed . . .

(*The Neighing of a Horse is Heard*)

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. . . and saved her from the clutches of the murderous multitudes, swooping her up onto my silver saddle, without ever breaking stride, and riding off into the sunset, her arms around my neck, tears streaming down her cheeks, sobbing how thankful she was to have finally met a trusting man who's empathic, kind and thoughtful.

(Warrior Music Fades Out)

(Sitting down with all the grandeur of a Knight back from the Crusades) It'll be magnificent. *(Looking at SUNNY)* She's lucky to have me.

SUNNY: He's looking again. They usually stop looking by now. He's probably one of those crazies. Just my luck.

JOE: Why is she looking at me like that? I bet she thinks I'm one of those crazies that hang out at bus terminals to pick-up women, take them to seedy hotels and rob them. I know what she'll do. She'll grab the first cop she sees and have me arrested. They'll take me in for questioning, fingerprint me, take a mug shot, put me in a line-up and I'll miss my bus. *(Taking out his ticket again)* I'll just read the ticket again and forget the whole thing.

SUNNY: I'll re-wrap the mug. That's the safest thing to do. If I go through the motions slowly it'll take longer and I don't have to go back to the watch so soon. People get suspicious when you do it too often. Obsessive compulsive, you know.

JOE: She's taking something out of the bag. Why's she doing it so slowly? I bet it's a knife. I was wrong about her. She's one of those crazies. She'll take that knife and hide it under her sweater, walk over to me and demand money. I won't know she's got a knife, but when I don't give her anything she'll lean closer and I'll feel the tip in my ribs. She won't say anything, just smile and ask for enough to get something to eat. I'll give her a couple quarters but she'll keep standing there smiling, pushing the knife a little deeper until I take out my wallet. She won't actually look inside; that'd be too obvious. I'll keep offering amounts, one dollar, five dollars, twenty, until I don't feel the knife anymore. She'll reach for the money very slowly, tuck it under her sweater, go back to the bench, pick up her bags and leave without arousing suspicion. I could yell or run after her and pin her to the ground, but then I'd have to wait for the police, go to the station, fill out a report, press charges and I'd miss my bus. It's only twenty dollars. I'll just let her have it. That's the best thing to do. I'll give her the twenty dollars and forget about it.

SUNNY: He's looking again. I think he likes me.

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JOE: You can't get involved with these crazies. You don't know what they're capable of doing. Just give them your money. That's the safest thing to do . . . I wonder how long before she makes her move?

SUNNY: He seems nervous. Maybe he's just lonely and he's looking for a little conversation. There's nothing wrong with that. Everyone gets lonely sometimes. That's nothing to be ashamed of.

(Violin Music is Heard)

He'll ask to sit by me on the bus. We'll talk, share stories, he'll ask for my phone number, but I won't give it to him. I'll call him. We'll have a drink but we'll take separate cars in case it doesn't work out. If it does, we'll go to a little French place.

(Violin Music Cross Fades with a Sad French Song)

No. That's too sad.

(Sad French Song Cross Fades with a Happy Italian Song)

That's better. He looks like he'd want Italian.

(The Music Fades Out)

It'll be perfect.

(JOE looks at her and catches her looking at him. THEY both turn away.)

JOE: She's looking at me like she wants something. I knew it. She's gonna hit me up for money. I'm going to make a stand. She's not going to get away with it. I gave a quarter to a Nun in the subway this month. That's it. I'm not giving anymore. Screw the twenty dollars. She's not going to get it out of me.

SUNNY: He's a generous man. I can tell.

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