

Production Version
As of September 17, 2004

SEPTEMBER BEARS
a story of love from a Long Island town

a play in one act

by

Jeff Barker

Copyright © 2003
by Jeff Barker

321 Albany NE
Orange City, IA 51041
(712)-737-8090
barker@nwciova.edu

Bo-ech-nuk-qo-choy dan del lippi djadun.

*(a Micmac saying, which means
“There are no time limits; when it’s finished, it’s finished.”)*

Acknowledgements

How could I dare to attempt a play deriving from the events that occurred on September 11, 2001 in the United States of America? Well, my simple answer is that I owe it to my friends whose story this is.

So, to Stuart and Mary Clark and to Sue Lucarelli, I say thank you. They have each given me more than I could ever repay. This play is my tiny contribution to their ongoing journeys. I have written with the hope and prayer that I would bring only healing and never hurt to all who have been affected by events such as these.

Sue Lucarelli and Mary Clark have each shared with me their own essays and poems about this journey and given me permission to use them to help tell this story. I have included edited portions of some of their writings in this play.

Some of the details of this play are fiction, but the events are based in reality. For example, much of the dialogue is invented or compressed, but I have struggled to retain the spirit of the conversations and activities. The numbers are all accurate (12 students, 350 bears, 50,000 bears, etc.). The central characters of the story and the locations are accurate. The names of the school children have been changed, as have the names of “Johnny’s guys.” These latter changes are simply to protect privacy of these individuals and their families. These people are remembered with joy and respect, even though their names are not used.

There are five parts to the play, indicated by Roman numerals followed by titles which refer to the evolving, informal names of the World Trade Center site. This segmenting is simply for the sake of the reader and does not play any particular role in the actual production of the play.

I am grateful to Tamara Fynaardt, Bob Reynan, and Dr. Karen Cianci of Northwestern College who supported the research phase of this project. Thanks to Arcadio and Cynthia, who run the Click on Café in Chicago, for providing me with a great writer’s hangout. Thanks to Dr. Evan Pritchard and also www.mikmaqonline.org (especially Joe) who provided us with assistance regarding American Indian history and languages. Thanks also to Northwestern College’s touring theatre ensemble which developed the first production of this play: Crystal Brown, Ben Brownson, Stephanie Ells, Kelcee Foss, Jeremy Korselman, Corinne Mings, Nate Schoenfeld, Andrea Brummel Taylor, Drew Schmidt, Jordan Dornbierer, and Marta Kotzian.

Finally, as always, I am thankful for the assistance of Karen Bohm Barker. She is an expert dramaturg of professional stature to whom this playwright just happens to be married.

Cast of Characters

4 males, 4 females (*with doubling; there are 26 characters*)*

Stuart Clark: pastor of Community Reformed Church,
Manhasset, Long Island, NY

Mary Clark: works for the New York headquarters of the
Reformed Church in America. Stuart and Mary are
married.

Sue Lucarelli: teacher at a Manhattan school for learning disabled
children; she has lived in Manhasset most of her
adult life

Teacher Writing Churchill's Report

Head of Sue's school

Teacher #1: at school where Sue teaches

Teacher #2: at school where Sue teaches

Teacher #3: at school where Sue teaches

Jennifer Clark: college student daughter of Stuart and Mary

Professor: college teacher of Jennifer Clark

Sandy: secretary at Community Reformed Church

Rabbi, Priest

Rosie: ten year old student in Sue's class

Eddie: ten year old student in Sue's class

Joshua: ten year old student in Sue's class

Shad: ten year old student in Sue's class

Gillian: ten year old student in Sue's class

Bob: member of Community Reformed Church

Angry Man on Phone

Diana: sender of bears with a clock in the belly

Firefighter #1, Firefighter #2, Firefighter #3

Principal: Head of a school in Manhasset

Construction Worker

NOTE: Children characters should be played by adult actors.

**Doubling suggestions are at the back of the script.*

Place

Manhasset and Manhattan, New York.

Time

2001 – 2002. The action begins on September 11, 2001.

for Sue, Mary and Stuart

September Bears
a story of love from a Long Island town

SETTING: a simple backdrop. Some stools.

AT RISE: All actors are visible at start. During the play, scenes should overlap as much as possible. Characters from different times and places may sometimes occupy the stage simultaneously.

I. The Towers.

(Music in, track #1)

ACTOR WHO PLAYS SUE

Do you like true stories? This one is. Even though—I mean, who can remember every detail? But the people are real. And what happened is real. And you say, “That’s it, that’s the way it was,” even though a long time later, you still can’t sort it all out. This is a true story.

(Music fades out. All exit, except STUART and MARY.)

STUART

I get up early this morning. To drop my wife at the airport. LaGuardia.

MARY

By 7:00, I say, “Goodbye, Stuart.”

(She blows STUART a kiss, which he catches and plants on his cheek.)

STUART

Goodbye, Mary.

MARY

I’m in the air.

STUART

I’m headed home.

MARY

I’m off to Dallas.

SUE

(entering)
I'm goin' to work.

MARY

My dear friend, Sue. She attends the church where Stuart is pastor. This morning, she's way down below me on the L.I.E., zoomin' her way into the city.

SUE

There's one person that can't be tardy: the teacher.

MARY

Sue and I are soul mates, barreling headlong into middle age.

STUART

They're off to Dallas. Off to Manhattan. But I know a couch waitin' back in Manhasset.

SUE

Life is too precious for sittin' still.

STUART

Meanin' that if you're a passenger with Sue, it's best to buckle up.

MARY

(sits)
It's 7:30 and the flight attendant is serving coffee and juice.

STUART

(taking off his shoes)
It's 7:45 and I'm back at the parsonage. If you don't know what that is, well it's just where a parson lives. And I'm on the parsonage sofa doin' what you call "restin' my eyes."

(to one specific person in the audience)
I'm not sleepin' on the job. I'm "restin' my eyes."

(STUART exits.)

SUE

It's 8:00, and my students stow their lunch boxes, binders in desks, homework in the box, pencils sharp. Routine is crucial for this crew. I have twelve students. I've got the ten year olds. It's a private school, and they all have Learning Disabilities, LD—the whole school. That's why they're here. They know they're Learning Disabled. They also know I'll give them a fight if they think "LD" means "Less Doin'." Every day they walk past the display that tells about one of our school's heroes, Winston Churchill. Heard of him? Did you know he was LD? His grade school report card from 1884 says—

TEACHER WRITING CHURCHILL'S REPORT

(entering, British accent)

Grammar: improved. Mathematics: improved. Diligence: He is not able to stick with any one thing. Punctuality: disgraceful. History and Geography: very good, especially history. Music: promising. Drawing: fair, considering. General conduct: he is a constant trouble to everyone.

(Pause.)

Other comments: He has very good ability.

(Exits.)

SUE

(reading from her journal, which she has found in her purse)

"He is a constant trouble to everyone." "He has very good ability." Every one of my kids knows what failure feels like. But here they're all in the same boat, and their day begins with hope.

MARY

It's 8:30. It will be a couple of hours before I touch down in Dallas.

SUE

At ten to nine, the head of the school comes on the intercom.

(Sound of intercom coming on. Track #2)

HEAD OF SUE'S SCHOOL OVER INTERCOM

Good morning.

SUE

Thirteen sets of eyes look over at the speaker as if someone is in there.

(She looks over at imaginary intercom, smiles.)

Why do we do that—these are bright kids, LD, but very sharp. The leader of our school says—

(She looks up at intercom again. Track #3 plays.)

HEAD OF SUE'S SCHOOL OVER INTERCOM

I'd like to request that all Head Teachers come to the main lobby for a brief meeting. Please come immediately. Thank you.

SUE

Hunh.

(Puts her fingers to her lips to keep the students quiet.)

I'll be right back. I step into the hall.

(SUE steps into the hall, joined by another teacher.)

TEACHER #1

What's this about, Sue?

SUE

I don't know. Maybe somebody donated a million dollars so we can build a swimming pool.

TEACHER #2

(entering)

What in the world?

TEACHER #1

Maybe somebody donated a million dollars so we can build a swimming pool.

SUE

We trudge down to huddle up by our little display about the man who invented the phrase, "Blood, toil, tears and sweat." Remember?

TEACHER #3

What does she want with us?

TEACHER #2

I heard we're gonna build a new swimming pool, 'cause someone just gave us a million dollars.

SUE and TEACHER #1

What?

(TEACHER #2 looks over at them and grins.)

TEACHER #3

I think a new swimming pool's a great idea.

(TEACHERS #1, #2, #3 huddle up and continue in unheard conversation as SUE talks with audience, encouraging them to actually respond to her questions.)

SUE

If you were at this school last year, you know we're doing a lot of building. In fact, we've moved. Our old school was near Central Park. Central. That means the middle of the island, this island with an Algonquin name. The Indians allowed the Dutch—what country were the Dutch people from? Right, Holland. And what ocean did they travel across to get here? Atlantic. And they built a fort here on the southern end of the island. The Dutch built some streets and gave them practical names according to what they went past in the fort. Wall Street. Church Street. Some British folks—what country were the

SUE (continued)

British folks from? England. They came floating up to shore and said to the Dutch people, “We’re the bosses now, and we like our home country names better than yours.” So New Holland became New England, and New Amsterdam Fort became New York. But they also kept some Indian names around here like Rockaway and Hackensack. My hometown has an Indian name—Manhasset. And what other Indian name sounds like Manhasset?

TEACHER #2

What are we doin’, Lucarelli?

SUE

I don’t know about you, but I’m thinkin’ about my history lesson.

(HEAD OF SUE’S SCHOOL enters, quite serious.)

TEACHER #2

Well, that doesn’t look like a swimming pool face.

HEAD OF SUE’S SCHOOL

There has been an accident at The World Trade Center. An airplane has flown into the side of the building. It is not yet known what the circumstances are, but there are parents working there, so we will keep you informed. Please do not alarm the children. Continue to teach as if nothing has happened.

(HEAD OF SUE’S SCHOOL exits. As others exit....)

TEACHER #2

It’s a perfectly beautiful day. What turkey would fly into a building in bright sunshine?

TEACHER #1

It must have been one of those single engine jobs.

TEACHER #3

I thought a new swimming pool was a great idea.

(Rumble of AIRPLANE ENGINE creeps in. MARY is brought to attention by AIRPLANE INTERCOM. Track #4)

AIRPLANE INTERCOM

Uh, ladies and gentlemen, good morning again, this is your captain. Everything is perfectly safe, but I regret to inform you that we’re going to be taking an unexpected layover this morning, and we’ll all be deplaning at, um, International, um, Atlanta International. Again, I’m sorry about this, but the FAA has requested this, and, uh, we’ll keep you updated as more information becomes available.

(MARY is praying throughout the following.)

SUE

(entering)

I make it up to the classroom, but before I have a chance to continue teaching “as if nothing has happened,” the intercom pops back on. This time no please, no thank you.

(SOUND of intercom coming on. Track #5. SUE look up at intercom.)

HEAD OF SUE’S SCHOOL OVER INTERCOM

Head Teachers to the lobby immediately.

SUE

(exiting)

Excuse me children.

JENNIFER

I’m watching TV at college in Alabama. I telephone my father in Manhasset at the parsonage.

(PHONE RINGS. Track #6)

JENNIFER (Continued)

I wake him up.

STUART

(entering sleepily with phone)

Hello.

JENNIFER

Did I wake you up, Dad?

STUART

No. I was just resting my eyes. Hi, sweetheart.

JENNIFER

Did Mom take off? Is she on the plane?

STUART

Yeah, she took off on schedule.

(Pause.)

What?

JENNIFER

Is your television on?

No. STUART

Turn your television on. JENNIFER

What is it? STUART

Turn your television on. JENNIFER

What? What's wrong? STUART

(to keep from crying)
Turn the TV on, Dad. JENNIFER

Which channel? STUART

Any channel. JENNIFER

What is it? STUART

I've got to go. JENNIFER

Jennifer? Jen. STUART

I'm late, Dad. JENNIFER

(JENNIFER hangs up phone, and then exits. STUART stares at the phone. Looks toward the television. Goes and gets the remote control. Stares at the remote. Looks out at television, but lets remote fall to his side, not yet able to use it. TEACHERS arrive in the lobby. HEAD OF SUE'S SCHOOL enters.)

SUE
Suddenly we're right back where we were a few minutes ago.

(STUART crosses to center, points his remote toward the television, and then watches.)

HEAD OF SUE'S SCHOOL

A second plane has hit the towers. Both planes were passenger planes. It is believed....

(Long silence. She struggles with emotion.)

We are in touch with police. We will...if you would please return...I promise to keep you informed.

(Very personally)

Thank you.

(They all exit one at a time, as if no one else is present. As STUART watches the television, he experiences a memory from Vietnam.)

STUART

They're cheering. They're somewhere right now cheering. That's what they're doing.

(narrating his own thoughts as he continues to take in the TV story)

When I was in Vietnam, my men and I were pinned down, and I called in an airstrike, and we watched them come over, and then the napalm hit. I asked them to adjust the second strike by, oh, 50 feet, and they did. And then we cheered. We planned it, and we did it, and we cheered.

(calculating his next move aloud)

If Mary can call me, where will she first call? The church building. She'll expect me to be at church.

(STUART exits. A PROFESSOR enters and writes on a chalkboard. JENNIFER enters, books in hand.)

PROFESSOR

Well, good morning, Miss Clark. I've already taken the roll.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry, professor, I was, I was watching the...I...there have been—

PROFESSOR

Yes, I know. But that doesn't concern us here.

(JENNIFER freezes.)

JENNIFER

My mother got on an airplane in New York this morning at 7:00, and I don't know where she is.

(Beat.)

Don't tell me what doesn't concern us here.

(JENNIFER exits, and PROFESSOR follows her.)

SUE

I am back in the classroom and the announcement comes. “Downstairs, grab nothing, leave now, everyone to the basement.”

(MARY exits.)

SUE (continued)

The center of my body disappears. Where is my husband? Where is our son, Johnny? Did they have appointments downtown today? Could they have been—? But this wife and mother must now be a teacher, whose student’s eyes ask, “What’s happening? What’s going on?”

Have you ever heard the sound of 350 children moving quickly to the basement of a school? We go down with them. We, the adults they love and trust, stone faced, tightlipped, unsmiling. Why?

They want their parents.

I dash upstairs. To gather toys and games. There’s a phone in my classroom. I call, and my husband says, “Hello.” He’s safe, and Johnny is safe.

I say, “I love you.” I say, “Tell Johnny.” I run back down.

I must be “Mama Luc” until the parents come. I must send the children walking home, no school buses, no cars, no trains. They must walk across bridges, not 3 blocks, but 3 miles.

(Music in. Track #7)

SUE (continued)

That day all the teachers are wearing watches, but none of us knows what time it is. Did you know some Indian languages have no word for time? Now we are all Manhattans. We have lost track of time. We get the last children started on their walks. Then comes our turn. I go to meet my husband and Johnny. I do not yet know, I have not yet heard.

(Pause.)

As I walk toward midtown, I come upon the most heartening sight I have ever seen. New York City has become a small town of, “Y’all come.”

(There on the street are a RABBI and a PRIEST from the area, handing out water to passersby. SUE receives a bottle of water as she exits. PHONE RINGS. Track #7 fades into phone ringing. SANDY dashes in and answers.)

SANDY

Community Reformed Church.

MARY

Sandy?

SANDY

(yelling off)
 Pastor Stu. Stuart! It's Mary.
 (into phone)
 Mary!

MARY

Hello, Sandy.

SANDY

Mary. We've...oh, Mary. Here he is.

STUART

Hello.

MARY

Hello.

STUART

Hello.

MARY

Hello.

STUART

It's Mary, Sandy. It's Mary.

MARY

I've—there are—people are here in line—Stuart—I've got—I'm sorry.

STUART

Where are you?

MARY

Well, I'm in Atlanta. I'm fine, except I've got to get off the phone, because there are—so, I'll call you back, okay?

STUART

Is there a—are you...

MARY

Not yet—and we can't...

STUART

Are you going to a...

MARY

They—they've made a reservation...but I don't know how I'll, because there aren't any rental...

STUART

You will. Don't worry. You just call me when you get there. Dear God, thank you for this moment. You can hang up, Mary. I love you.

MARY

Yes. Amen. And I love you.

(MARY hangs up and exits.)

STUART

(hanging up, talking to SANDY)

There was a line of people waiting to use the pay phones at the airport, but the airline has made a hotel reservation for her, she's just got to figure out how to get transportation to the hotel, she's going to call back after she gets there.

SANDY

She's not...

STUART

No, they had to put down in Atlanta.

SANDY

Is she going to try to go to her meeting in Dallas?

STUART

Not if I know Mary. If I know Mary, she's coming home.

SANDY

I don't know how.

STUART

Me, too, but not knowing something doesn't make it less true.

(STUART and SANDY exit. MARY enters, pulling her suitcase.)

MARY

On Thursday, there are five airplanes that get into LaGuardia. One of them contains a bunch of Delta employees. And me.

(STUART has entered.)

STUART

Well, hello there, you. Welcome to the new world.

(They rush to each other for an embrace. And then another one. STUART gets the suitcase and they exit.)

II. The Pile.

SUE

I don't know why we had school that Thursday. But we did.

(Children enter with models and remain standing for pledge.)

SUE (continued)

I guess we thought the routine would help. So I give Daisy our dog a goodbye rub, make the drive from Manhasset to Manhattan, arrive at school, welcome the children, stow the lunch boxes, binders in desks, pencils sharp. Just like every day.

(Children put their hands on their hearts.)

CHILDREN

I pledge allegiance to the flag
Of the United States of America
And to the Republic for which it stands
One nation

(Children freeze.)

SUE

Some people believe you ought not to say "Under God" in school. Like some people believe you ought not to have a flag at a religious building. But that's not what we're worried about today. Because today there are soldiers in the playground.

Not you, my child, not you. You are innocent.
As are all the children,
Those who lost daddies, mommies, brothers, and friends.
Those who lost the neighbor who bought cookies and lemonade,
the coach,
the funny guy on the train.
This is not TV, my child...we cannot turn it off.
They are gone.
They too are innocent.
They went to work early to get a cup of coffee, to read the paper,
to see the sunrise on that gorgeous day.
They went to prepare for a meeting, to talk to the boss before seeing a client.
They called home to say, "I love you" or "Good Bye."

SUE (continued)

Some just dialed. Others had no time at all.
 Yes! We will miss them. We will miss their futures, bright and shining.
 But we are left, my child,
 To make your world safe and secure again.
 What must we do? What?
 Dare we ask. God?

CHILDREN

(breaking freeze)
 Under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

(Children scatter to work.)

SUE

(to audience)
 The thing to do on this Thursday is to get busy working with our hands. And so we do.
 (watching children)
 Okay, who else has theirs ready to show?

(As children share their models, they stand and move to the front of the class.)

ROSIE

The buildings are the same shape and size as before, but on the outside they have...these rubberbands represent rubberbands, so if anything tries to hit the building, they'll just...boooooinnng...bounce right off.

(Children hoot and cheer.)

SUE

Okay, who's next?

GILLIAN

This is the...and this is the other...and on this one and this one there are great big helicopters on the roof to fly everyone away if the elevators go out of service.

(Children applaud.)

JOSH

There are 110 floors to each building, so half of that is 55, so each building breaks in half and there are these are helicopter blades that can lift the top half up if anything is going to hit the building, the blades start turning and lift the top half up about 300 feet, which is the same length as a football field, and then when the projectile has gone past, the building sits back down.

SUE

Great. Thank you. Next?

EDDIE

The reasons these buildings look like spaceships is that they are spaceships, so if ever any trouble is coming, like even a earthquake or anything at all you could ever think of, you just press this red button here and—

(pressing button, flying the building up into the air)

and off they go to outer space, and inside the ceilings are all made of marshmallow so people don't get hurt when the spaceship turns upside down to head back to earth and big parachutes pop up out of the basement, and if the ride goes past lunch, people can just eat the ceiling.

(Children cheer and clap and talk.)

SUE

That's wonderful. Who else? Shad?

SHAD

I'm ready, I was ready, but I didn't put enough glue on it, so it fell apart, and I gotta rebuild it.

SUE

Okay, that's okay. We can rebuild it.

(SHAD seems ready to cry. SOUND OF PLANE, Track #8, has been creeping in, and now the children scream and duck.)

SUE (continued)

Alright, it's alright. It's just our airforce. That's all.

ROSIE

Is it the good guys?

SUE

Yeah. Come and sit down here children. Sit down. I'm going to ask you a few questions about what happened on Tuesday. I know that your parents are all safe. I'd like it if you would tell us if there is someone that you know who is lost?

(Children shake heads.)

No one? Are there other things that you would like to tell us about what's happened?

(GILLIAN raises her hand.)

SUE (continued)

Yes, Gillian.

GILLIAN

I was on my way to school on Tuesday, and I was late. My mom was with me, we were in a taxi, and we could see something happening. We saw the smoke, and we could tell it was something bad. And then we saw something fall. And then something else. Except they weren't...except they were people.

(Silence.)

So my mom asked the taxi driver to turn around and we went home. That's why I was not at school on Tuesday.

(EDDIE raises hand.)

EDDIE

We can't get home, our apartment is past the barricades, they won't let us in there. So. We have to stay at my aunt's house, and after school today my mom is going to take me to the store to buy some new clothes, and I hope she's going to let me get a toy too, and I asked her if we could also go to McDonalds, and she said we'll see.

(SHAD raises his hand.)

SHAD

My father is an American citizen. But he was born in another country.

ROSIE

Mrs. Lucarelli. Why would God let something like this happen?

GILLIAN

Mrs. Lucarelli, are you Jewish?

SUE

No, I'm a Christian.

GILLIAN

My cousin was killed by a terrorist bomber last year in Israel. My parents say that could start happening here.

JOSH

Mrs. Lucarelli, do you know stuff about Jesus?

SUE

(specifically to JOSH)

Well, Jesus was Jewish, and he was born in Israel 2000 years ago, and I'll tell you about him, but what I'd like *you* to do is—you have Hebrew school today don't you? I'd like you to ask your rabbi that same question.

(specifically to ROSIE)

And I don't know why God let this happen. But I don't believe that he wants it to happen. I believe this is an evil thing. And I believe that Jesus taught his followers to

SUE (continued)

treat other people with love. And I believe that this, what has happened, is not what Jesus would want.

(noticing something)

Shad, what's...it's okay...you'll be able to rebuild it.

SHAD

All I know is I need a hug.

SUE

Come here.

(SUE gives him a hug, and then she exits to get the three bears. CHILDREN ad lib about where Sue went until she returns, for example, "Shad, where'd she go? Can you see?" SUE reenters with the three bears, and class is thrilled.)

SUE (continued)

Here, you hold onto this for a while.

EDDIE

I want to hold a bear, too.

ROSIE

I want one, too.

SUE

I only have three.

GILLIAN

May I hold one, too?

JOSH

I'm after Shad.

SUE

Okay, look children. You share the bears today.

JOSH

How many minutes does each child get?

SUE

Tomorrow I'll bring more bears. I'll make sure everyone has a bear to hold tomorrow. Okay.

SHAD

Everyone?

SUE

Everyone.

EDDIE

Do we get to take them home?

SUE

You may hold them at school. They will be here everyday. We'll sit them on your desks, and then when you need a bear hug, they'll be there for you. Alright?

JOSH

You have three bears here and there are twelve students, so you have to bring nine bears tomorrow, unless you want one too, and if you do, you have to bring ten.

GILLIAN

Mrs. Lucarelli?

SUE

Yes.

GILLIAN

Would you like to tell us if there is someone that you know who is lost?

SUE

Children, let's write something. Let's go back to our desks. What would you like to write today?

(As they're exiting.)

SHAD

I want to write a letter to America.

GILLIAN

We should write a letter to the President.

JOSH

He lives at one six zero zero Pennsylvania Avenue.

(The children are gone and SUE is alone.)

SUE

I will not fulfill my promise to bring bears tomorrow. Because on Friday, school will be cancelled again. I go to church instead. After a special prayer service, members of our congregation are huddled in groups, doing inventory. "Where are the Ezraty's?" "They're okay, they're out of the country." "What about their daughter, doesn't she work

SUE (continued)

downtown?” “Marion would know—did you ask Marion?” And on, and on go the questions. I wander over by Stuart, Mary and another member, Bob.

(STUART, MARY, SUE and BOB are gathered together.)

BOB

(to SUE)

Do you know if anyone is...from our church?

(to STUART)

Pastor Stu, there's none that we know of is there?

STUART

Not that we know, but Manhasset's pretty...On Wednesday there were seventy-three unclaimed cars in the train station parking lot.

BOB

It looks like we lost more people from this town in one day than all the wars put together.

SUE

We don't know that yet.

BOB

You're right. I didn't mean that....

SUE

They're going to find a cavern in there. They're going to find, they've got to find—

(Beat.)

This town never felt so small. I've lived here twenty-five years, and it never felt so small.

BOB

Well, we got a lot of Wall Street livin' here.

MARY

How are your students...

SUE

Oh, the children. Every little...they're asking the big questions, but there are tanks in the streets. So more than anything they want hugs. Yesterday, I promised them that I'd bring them all teddy bears.

BOB

The whole school?

SUE

No, just my class. I only have three bears there, so I told them they'd all have bears by Monday.

MARY

And that helped?

SUE

They were comforted for a while.

BOB

Well, what child wouldn't be comforted if you promise them a new toy? What are you gonna do, buy new toys every day?

SUE

No, yeah, kids like toys, but that's not...

STUART

Bob...

SUE

There are military jets...but the children can't tell the difference, so they think it's another...and they climb under the...they're terrified...they cry for their parents...and they know that their parents have gone to work in tall buildings...how are we ever supposed to get anything done? They passed those three bears around yesterday.

STUART

I'll go to the store and see if I can...how many?

SUE

There are twelve kids in the class. So nine. Nine more.

STUART

I think I should try to get twelve.

MARY

If you can find twelve.

STUART

Each child should have their own.

(starting out)

Bob, could I...

(MARY comes over to STUART.)

BOB

Just a minute.

(to SUE)

What about the rest of the kids in the school?

MARY

(to STUART)

Don't get the tiny bears. They should be big enough to hug.

SUE

(to BOB)

I don't know. Their teachers...

STUART

(to MARY, but he's also paying attention to the other conversation)

Huggable?

BOB

(to SUE)

I'll find as many as I can. I'll call you Monday.

MARY

(to STUART, but she's also paying attention the other conversation)

Yeah. Huggability, that's it.

BOB

(crossing to STUART)

Yeah, Stuart?

STUART

(smiling)

Nothing.

(BOB and STUART exit.)

MARY

Sue. What else?

SUE

Bob's going to do something.

MARY

(delighted)

Oh, Bob, he gets it. It takes him awhile, but he gets it.

SUE

I don't know. I think he's planning to try to get bears for every kid in the school. But that's a terrible lot of bears, several hundred.

MARY

Well you can't walk in there with bears and say "First come, first served."

SUE

No, you can't. You gotta have enough for everybody or you can't go at all.

MARY

We know somebody who knows where there are several hundred bears.

SUE

We do? Really? Who?

MARY

Let's ask Him.

SUE

(with a hint of sarcasm)
Oh, I get it. The Big Somebody.

MARY

You don't think he'll give them to us?

SUE

Yeah, he'll give them to us. Yeah.

MARY

You don't think he will?

SUE

Mary...three young guys...friends of Johnny's...three guys who were at our house all the time...when they were growin' up...little guys who used to live in our refrigerator as much as their own...three little guys who...

(a very long pause)
grew up to get jobs in the....

MARY

Oh, no.

SUE

(turning away)
Yeah, he'll give us the bears.

MARY

Sue.

(SUE waves MARY away, but stands there a beat longer, and then SUE goes.)

MARY (continued)

Some people, when they don't know what to do, don't do anything. But other people, even when they don't know what to do... Maybe that's why Sue and I are such friends. Sue, if she sees something wrong, she's going to put it right. She just is. I love that. But it's our failing.

On Saturday, I send an email. Now, Stuart and I are not originally from New York. Because of this and because of my work with the women of our church around the country, I have made a lot of friends. So I simply tell my friends, I tell them that our community is devastated, and our children and their teachers need help. Could you send a bear...big enough to be hugged, small enough to fit in a backpack? It must be new. Send it quickly. Send it today.

(All children enter with letters. MARY starts out, turns back)

MARY (continued)

I promise you that our little church will put your bear into the arms of a child. You have our word.

(The children are entering. MARY starts out again, and stops)

We thought we might get enough bears for Sue's school. We had no idea.

(MARY exits. SUE enters with a laundry bag.)

EDDIE

What's in the bag, Mrs. Lucarelli?

ROSIE

Is it the bears?

GILLIAN

I think it's the bears.

JOSH

It could be the bears.

SHAD

You remembered!

SUE

Sit, sit, sit, sit.

EDDIE

It's the bears.

SHAD

She remembered.

JOSH

I never thought she'd remember.

ROSIE

Mrs. Lucarelli's memory is much better than yours.

JOSH

I just get distracted.

SUE

What's first today?

(holding up the bag)

Is this first?

CHILDREN

This first!

SHAD

So, if it's the bears they can help us with our pledge.

SUE

Okay, these bears are a gift to our class from my church, which is the Community Reformed Church in my home town of....?

CHILDREN

Manhasset.

SUE

You got it right!

JOSH

That's because I took my medication.

SUE

Who wants to go first?

(picking out a child, since all hands go up)

Josh.

JOSH

(moving to the bag)

I'm going to name my bear Albert, after Albert Einstein who was the world's greatest scientist.

(JOSH starts back to his seat, and then realizes he forgot to pick out a bear. He reaches in without looking and yanks out a bear.)

Hello, Albert.

OTHER CHILDREN

Hello, Albert!

(Each child picks out a bear and calls out its name, "Rufus," "Ashley," "Your name is Ducky" to much cheering and greeting. GILLIAN is last. She reaches into the bag and freezes, as do the other children.)

SUE

And so each child picks out a bear and gives it a name that means something to that child. And outside on the street, there are people putting names and pictures up on trees and fences. They are hoping to find those who are lost, hoping against hope that some emergency worker will recognize an injured victim who has no identification and cannot yet speak. This is their hope. Others are beginning to hope only that those working in the white tents will recognize a face, and call a phone number and say, "Your search is over. I'm sorry."

(SUE goes to her satchel and takes out three large, laminated photos, which we never see.)

This is what these children passed on their way into school today. Me, too. And on the fence by the white tent, I will put up a picture of Randy, Johnny's college roommate. He's one of those little guys who raced through our house and yard, growing slowly into men.

(She sifts through the pictures.)

Randy, Philip, Mark. Markey was making his very first sales call last Tuesday. He asked his mom three times if his tie matched. Phil's boss asked him to stay in the tower and answer the phones. Phil was always a joker, keeping things light. He did it. He stayed. I will soon make sure that all Johnny's guys are represented on that streetside collage of hope.

(GILLIAN pulls out her bear and calls out its name, "Lucy!" SUE is lost in thought.)

GILLIAN

(bringing SUE out of her reflections)

Mrs. Lucarelli?

SUE

When someone gives us a gift, what do we do?

GILLIAN and ROSIE

Say thank you.

EDDIE

Thank you.

SUE

But are the people who gave you these bears here today?

GILLIAN

We write a thank you note.

EDDIE

Well, you're here, can't you tell them?

SHAD

What's your church look like? I want to draw a picture.

SUE

It's a little church on a hill in the middle of town.

SHAD

It's a little church?

SUE

Yeah, less than a hundred.

JOSH

How many square feet?

SUE

It's not as big as our gymnasium.

(Wadding up empty plastic bag.)

Okay, believe it or not, we're going to try and get some work done today, but keep your bears nearby, in case you need a hug.

EDDIE

Mrs. Lucarelli. My sister goes to a different school, but she doesn't want to go, because she's afraid. She couldn't get to sleep all last night. Do you think we could collect bears to send to her school, too?

GILLIAN

Mrs. Lucarelli! I have a friend whose school would like bears, too.

SHAD

Mrs. Lucarelli!

ROSIE

Mrs. Lucarelli, I know a school.

JOSH

Mrs. Lucarelli, bears for every child in Manhattan.

GILLIAN

It's a movement!

EDDIE

We can call it, "The return of the bear!"

ROSIE

We can call it, "Teddy Bears are everywhere!"

SHAD

We can call it, "Hugs across America!"

GILLIAN

Mrs. Lucarelli, you could call them right now and see if they would like to have bears?

(Pause. All the children are suddenly silent, watching for her decision.)

SUE

Alright. I will. I'll call your sister's school right now. While I do that, I'd like you to work on your thank you notes, and also those letters we started last Thursday.

EDDIE

Mrs. Lucarelli.

SUE

Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE

My friend who, my friend who, my friend he lives in this apart—, he lives in this apartment across from the pile, and his mom found a piece of a lacrosse stick up on their balcony they don't know where it came from, and I said it came from the towers when they fell down.

JOSH

Could that happen, Mrs. Lucarelli?

EDDIE

I told you it could happen.

SUE

I don't know if it did. I suppose it could. It depends on how far—

JOSH

Did you see the stick?

EDDIE

I asked him to show it to me, and he said his mom wouldn't let him see it.

JOSH

Did it fly through the air?

EDDIE

And the police came and wrapped it up and took it away.

JOSH

How big was it?

SUE

(to change the subject)

The police are our helpers, aren't they. Now let's write those letters.

JOSH

And the firemen.

EDDIE, SHAD and ROSIE

And the firemen!

SUE

And the firemen.

GILLIAN

And the firewomen.

JOSH

You can't have firewomen!

EDDIE

He said it was a small piece of a shaft. It looked like a bone!

SUE

And the firewomen—that is enough about the—!

ROSIE

—Is that an airplane?

(CHILDREN grab their bears and ad lib frightened cries. FREEZE. No SOUND CUE. Each child breaks their freeze to read their letter and then exit.)

JOSH

Dear Principal. We have bears now. Have you heard? Don't you think our whole school should get bears? That will be about 350, give or take some bears, although you probably knew that. Mrs. Lucarelli says that her church is going to see what they can do. I'll believe that when I see it.

ROSIE

Dear Mayor Julieahnee. Have you heard about our teddy bear project? We are suggesting schools to our teacher, and she is calling them up. She has called five already. The children will soon have comfort at their school. I know we sure do. I hope that you do not work too hard these days.

GILLIAN

Dear President Bush. I listened to your speech with my parents. My father said it was a very fine speech. That is not usually what he says when you speak. I think this trouble is making us all try a little harder. I know I will, and I hope you will, too.

SHAD

Hello, America. God bless you. Signed, Shad, in Manhattan.

(All children are off.)

III. The Pit.

SUE

By the end of the day, I have simply taken another step and then another. It's what I do. I've contacted five principals, who have excitedly requested over a thousand bears. I go see Mary after school.

(MARY enters.)

SUE (continued)

Mary...

MARY

I just got a call.

SUE

Um, I think I may have created a monster. My kids think that other kids need bears, too. They kept giving me names of schools, so I just called and asked and we now have requests for over a thousand bears.

MARY

A thousand bears?

SUE

I've created a monster.

MARY

I just got a call from Western Michigan.

SUE

Our school alone needs 350. We can't do this, but how am I supposed to tell them no?

MARY

I just got a call from Western Michigan and they're driving a truckload of bears out here themselves.

STUART

(entering)

Hey you two, guess what just happened?

MARY

(to STUART)

We don't want to know.

(to SUE)

And she said that...

STUART

Well, I'm gonna tell ya anyway. Bob just called and he says, Stuart, what should I do, I bought all these bears, but I can't get them in the car. I said, how many did you buy, Bob? And he says, 350. He said, give me every bear in the store. So he's got 350 bears.

(SUE and MARY look at each other and try to keep from laughing.)

STUART (continued)

(exiting)

Bob's still on the phone. What should I tell him?

SUE

Tell him we're on our way.

(exiting)

350 bears!

MARY

(exiting)

Bob. He gets it!

STUART

(entering)

The next day is Tuesday.

SANDY

Pastor Stu. There's another delivery of about a dozen big boxes out here. I think it's more bears.

STUART

What are we going to do with all these bears? How are we going to organize this?

STUART and SANDY

(They look at each other with an idea, and then call out as they exit to find her.)
Mary!

(JOSH enters.)

JOSH

Teddy Bears. A journalistic report. A church in Manhasset on Long Island has been collecting bears to help children. It is very interesting. They set up their church chairs in rows. Each chair holds one bag. Each bag holds 10 bears. Each row has 5 chairs. Each row of chairs has 50 bears. A Chevrolet suburban can transport 17 rows into Manhattan. That is 850 bears. A Chrysler mini-van can transport 15 rows plus three more bags – 780 bears. That is a lot of bears.

(JOSH exits as EDDIE enters.)

EDDIE

Bears. A report by Eddie. There used to be bears on this Island, back before cheeseburgers and milkshakes when the Manhattan Indians lived here and they had their own name for bears, but I have not found out what it is. The only bears that live here now are in the zoo. Bears are very big and dangerous, so you must give them respect for that.

(EDDIE gives a grin or a bow and exits. SUE enters carrying a box.)

SUE

This is not a major operation, since we have so few church members to begin with, and even fewer with available time during the day. We treasure every minute anyone can give. Some give minutes. Others give much more. They work without reward.

MARION

(entering, taking box from SUE)

You should sit down and take a break, Sue.

SUE

For example, see that woman there? You don't know her name. But she is working faithfully almost everyday. And so it happens. A bear at a time. Unpack. Inspect. Record sender's names. Send the "well-loved bears" to the cleaners. Read the notes. Give them a hug and a prayer. We're staving off the demons for awhile.

SUE (continued)

We haven't found a single Manhasset friend and the hours are growing longer, our hearts less hopeful, the children and parents of the lost growing more desperate. We can't get near "the pile," we can't locate a hospital with positive news, and families are beginning to speak of memorial services. Johnny's guys are just—

MARY

I was watching you in church on Sunday, Sue. I'm worried about you.

SUE

This is not about me, you do what has to be done.

MARY

Do you know how a child's top, when it's spinning very fast will look as if it's not moving at all? And then you see it start to wobble? Just a little bit at first. I'm not watching a child's top. I'm watching a full-sized human top.

(Beat.)

Have you been writing about this?

SUE

Mary, it's all I talk about, it's all I think about, it's all I dream about...if I sleep. Why would I want to write about it?

MARY

You know the old Jewish prophet, Jeremiah? He wrote out his grief. His lament. Lamentations.

(Beat.)

Have you ever written poetry?

SUE

You don't know me very well.

MARY

Just try.

(Beat.)

I love you, Sue. Stuart loves you. We're your friends.

SUE

I don't want to know that you love me.

MARY

You don't? Really?

SUE

I don't, this is not—

MARY

Then what do you want? What's missing?

SUE

I have no idea. The guys. Johnny's guys.

MARY

I know.

(Pause.)

Have you ever written prayers?

SUE

Well, prayer, that's another...I guess it's a matter of...tryin' to find God at all, let alone have a conversation.

MARY

I know. But sometimes I write my prayers. It's different than speaking prayers.

SUE

I don't write prayers, I don't write poetry, I don't write laments, for pity's sake.

(MARY takes out a journal and places it in SUE's hand. She kisses SUE on the cheek and exits. SUE throws the journal down on the floor upstage.)

SUE (continued)

This is not about—. They don't call me "Mama Luc" for nothing.

That week the deliveries go to Eddie's sister's school. And then those other four on our first day's list. More calls are coming in as the word spreads that we have bears. Suddenly it's Friday and it's our turn.

Our principal agrees that each class will come to our room, and my 10 year olds will help the younger students select their bears. It becomes a loving competition.

(The children enter, each carrying a bear, and they hawk their qualities.)

ROSIE

This bear is soft.

EDDIE

This bear is friendly.

JOSH

This one's a genius.

SHAD

This one will make you feel safe, for sure.

ROSIE

Doesn't this bear have the cutest smile and makeup?

GILLIAN

This bear is a good listener. Oh, you have to hear this note attached here. Listen. "This bear is now yours. It got me through some bad nights."

EDDIE

This one has a really cool drawing by someone. And then it says on the back, "I have come to stay with you, and anytime you're feeling blue, I've got a great big hug for you! From Missouri to Manhattan, with love."

(EDDIE uses bear to tickle SHAD.)

EDDIE (continued)

"I have come to stay with you, and anytime you're feeling blue—"

SHAD

(interrupting)

Mine says, "Hi. My name is Spencer. I know this isn't much, but it is something." I think you should take it.

JOSH

(seizing attention with mere volume)

"Our thoughts and prayers are with you New York City." Mrs. Lucarelli, how many miles is it to Michigan?

ROSIE

Okay, listen, listen, listen, listen. Mine is the longest. "Dear Friend. Hi. My name is John Viola. I'm really sorry if you lost any kind of family. I know, I lost 2 cousins. I'm giving you one of my favorite stuffed animals. His name is Fred. I hope this bear can help you sleep at night or comfort you. I'm really, really sorry."

SHAD

I'd take that one if I were you.

(Students each make a move as if they are setting the bear into a younger child's hands, and they freeze in that pose. MUSIC CUE, track #9. SUE moves along the line, taking each bear into her arms. As she does, child exits, except for EDDIE who remains onstage and watches SUE.

SUE gives each of the five bears to a member of the audience, telling that person that this bear is for them to keep or give away as they wish. As she returns to the stage, EDDIE comes to her.)

EDDIE

Mrs. Lucarelli?

SUE

Yes, Eddie.

EDDIE

This is the happiest day of my life.

(SUE hugs EDDIE. He exits.)

IV. The Hole.

SUE

The acting out cases are way down. The principals say the stress level drops within an hour of the bears' arrival. Our little church delivers all we have...over 50,000 bears. But one superintendent hounds me. His school system is hit hard by nine eleven. Followed by the Bell Harbor plane crash. It's the Bronx.

ANGRY MAN ON PHONE

Alright look, it's me again, from, well, surely you recognize my voice by now, I need you to please return my calls. We're getting desperate over here. These kids...I need the bears. I need the bears. Please call me. Four schools...6000 bears. 6000. Please. If you can help. Please.

SUE

Mary gets a call from California.

(ANGRY MAN has exited, and MARY and DIANA enter to speak on phone.)

DIANA

They're really cute bears. We supply gift shops, and we have some left over. They have a clock in the belly, but they're still cute. If you can use them, we'll send them.

MARY

Well, our standard has been that the bears need to be 10 to 14 inches high.

DIANA

Well, these are about 10 inches. I think.

MARY

They need to be huggable.

DIANA

I guess you could hug these.

MARY

They can't be tiny bears or monster bears. These are comfort bears. They have a very real job. They're going to be in schools, so they can't be toys or make sounds. Just plain and simple Teddy Bears.

DIANA

Well, you know better than me. Would you like to look at one?

MARY

I say, yes, send us one.

(DIANA and MARY exit.)

SUE

Two things happen next. Mary calls the Bronx. She tells them there's no way we can get six thousand more bears. No way. The second thing is that we get a sample of the gift shop bear, we say, no, it won't work. They have a clock in their belly. They're more in the toy category than the comfort category. They don't fit what we're trying to do. We have to tell them no.

(STUART and MARY enter. SANDY will follow shortly.)

STUART

The very next day is Tuesday. It's eleven A.M. We're at the church building.

SANDY

Um, there's a delivery here. I think it might be bears. A lot of them.

MARY

That can't be. I'd know about it.

SANDY

They're unloading big boxes. It says, "clock bears."

MARY

Oh, we didn't tell them to send those, they weren't supposed to, what are we going to do with those, how many are there?

SANDY

They said 124 boxes. Six thousand bears.

(MARY stares at SANDY.)

SUE
Six thousand?

SANDY
Six thousand bears.

MARY
Six thousand?

SANDY
Six thousand.

STUART
Mary?

MARY
I think we have to call the Bronx.

STUART
We're going to deliver six thousand more bears?

SANDY
If they're going to get there before the break, you got about three days.

STUART
How's it gonna happen this time?

MARY
Who has the ability to get big jobs done fast? Who has the people? Who has the equipment?

STUART
Remember that guy who works for the...he's a...

MARY
Yeah, yes! He said if we ever needed anything...

STUART
They'd do it for us.

MARY
I'll call 'em right now.

STUART

(exiting)

Let's carry some boxes. Mary's callin' the fire department.

(SANDY exits)

SUE

They show up the next night. They've got a bus. A big coach bus. They stop traffic out front and back right up to the church. When they're done, that bus is jammed full of bear boxes. No room for anybody except the driver.

STUART

(entering, calling back off stage)

Why don't you guys come inside and get a bear.

FIREFIGHTER #1

(entering)

Alright!

FIREFIGHTER #2

Now we're talkin'.

STUART

Mary, I've invited these guys to come inside and get a bear.

MARY

Of course. We have some bears that aren't ideal for children. It's our tradition that our volunteers can take one of these bears as a keepsake.

FIREFIGHTER #3

That's alright, I don't think we need bears.

STUART

Change your mind?

FIREFIGHTER #1

Actually, um, well, we, the...

FIREFIGHTER #2

Actually, we thought you said, "Beer."

FIREFIGHTER #1

Pretty dumb, I guess. We don't want any bears.

STUART

Well, we don't have any beer, but you're welcome to a...

(FIREMEN adlib no thanks.)

MARY

Just a minute.

(MARY steps off and returns almost immediately with a bear dressed)

MARY (continued)

How about this well-dressed bear, wearing a motorcycle jacket?

(FIREFIGHTER #1 and #2 immediately begin to silently fight over the bear.)

FIREFIGHTER #3

Ma'am, I'd be honored to have that bear.

(MARY takes the bear from the fighting firemen and gives it to #3.)

FIREFIGHTER #1

What else you got back there?

FIREFIGHTER #2

Alright, why not. I'll look.

(FIREMEN exit with STUART and MARY.)

SUE

On Thursday, the fire department delivers the bears to four Bronx schools. One of the firefighters calls Mary from the scene.

(Fade in SOUNDS of wild cheering. Track #10. MARY and #3 enter, on phone.)

FIREFIGHTER #3

Mrs. Clark, you hear that cheering. You hear that? The kids are lined up on both sides of the street. Screaming their lungs out. And they got signs that say, "We love the F.D.N.Y." I've never had anything happen like this before. Never. I can't believe this is all about teddy bears.

(He exits.)

MARY

I say, I can't either. We broke our own rules, but I'm thinking a toy bear with a clock in the belly turns out to be just fine. I call the woman who sent the bears and tell her about the reception at the Bronx schools. She starts to cry on the phone. I think, I've...that something's wrong.

(Into the phone.)

I'm sorry, Diana, I didn't mean to...

DIANA

No, it's not...it's just that I grew up in the Bronx. I know the schools you're talking about. I know those schools.

(DIANA hangs up and exits. MARY crosses to SUE.)

SUE

The last day, the day before the school break, a shipment arrives from New Mexico. From the Apache reservation. And there is one school system that we've ignored. One at our own front door. The Manhasset elementary schools. Who have lost so many. There are just enough bears for all the children in our little devastated town.

MARY

We make our deliveries, including one large bear that we deliver to the principal's office. Before we leave the building, I see that a little boy is sitting by that big bear. I go over and tell him, "That bear has come to Manhasset from American Indians way out west." His eyes grow wide, and he wraps his arms all the way around the bear. As we leave, the principal takes me aside.

PRINCIPAL

See that boy right over there.

MARY

Yeah. I told him where that huge bear came from.

PRINCIPAL

That little boy is in the third grade. Nine years old. He told his teacher today that without his dad, he doesn't see any reason to go on living. So he's with me today. Thanks. Thanks for not forgetting about us.

(PRINCIPAL exits, and MARY goes to get a bag of little bears.)

SUE

We delivered all those huggable bears. But what of the littlest bears, too small to hug? We find a place for them. We take them down to where Johnny's guys...we take them down to the hole. Where the construction workers, firemen, policemen, EMTs work through that long, hard season, seeking to complete that which can never be done.

(CONSTRUCTION WORKER enters. MARY enters from other side.)

We take the bears in clear plastic bags into St. Paul's chapel, which used to rest in the shadow of two towers. It has become a way station, pews turned into beds. We enter in silence, trying not to interrupt those who seek quiet comfort here. But we never have to wait long. We're usually just a few steps inside the door—

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Hey. Can I have one of those?

(MARY takes the bag to the worker. He selects a bear and straps it to his hat. He shows it to MARY and they exit together, newfound friends.)

SUE

(gets journal, and kneels at a stool, opening the journal)

With no more bears to deliver, I do what I can no longer avoid. I write. I write a lament for the children.

(During the following laments, characters will enter and either join SUE's speech, or take the lament away from SUE. All these lament characters remain on stage through them all. All lament lines are moments of individual speech, monologue rather than dialogue.)

HEAD OF SUE'S SCHOOL

Downstairs, grab nothing, leave now, everyone to the basement!

JOSH

What's happening?

ROSIE

What's going on?

SHAD

Are we safe?

SUE

The adults, stone faced, tight lipped, unsmiling...why?

JOSH

It must be terrible!

ROSIE

We want our parents, where are our parents?

SUE

They come to us, running, some shoeless.
They hold each other and cry, and they bleed.
My God, they are shaking and bleeding...

ROSIE

Our teachers too, speak to each other quietly.

SHAD
They hug us.

SUE
And try to patch.

JOSH
It must be nothing...nothing can happen here. Not here.

ROSIE
We walk... walk home.

JOSH
No school buses, no cars, no trains.

SHAD
We walk across bridges.

JOSH
Not three blocks, three miles!

ROSIE
There's smoke everywhere. Why is there so much dust...white dust covering everything?

SHAD
Are they going to kill us all?

ROSIE
What about my puppy?

JOSH
Why do they hate us, what have we done?

ROSIE
Where's God, why can't He stop them?

(They each turn away from SUE and freeze as they speak.)

JOSH
Why—?

ROSIE
Why—?

SHAD

Why—?

SUE

And there I am in the school basement, again and again. I have never left it.
I write a lament for the workers.

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER

I've picked up their broken bicycles, their cars, the gnarled, twisted mess of their offices.

SUE

And there I am in the hole, again and again.
I know what Mary would lament. She would lament quitting her morning walks,
because she cannot bear seeing...

MARY

...one more front porch with those piles of wax left from candles burning overnight in
memory of a lost family member.

SUE

I know what Stuart would lament. He would lament hearing...

STUART

...the strains of bagpipes on the wind. Announcing another memorial service. Or a
funeral if a body has finally been found.

SUE

But what of Sue? What is Sue's lament?

(All break their freeze and turn to look at SUE.)

SUE (continued)

How can I ever say?

(All exit, except SUE.)

SUE (continued)

I'm at home. It's a Saturday. I hear a cry—outside the house—the cry of a dog. I run
out. I see that our dog Daisy has been struck by a car. She just lies
there, crying. We pick her up and carry her, to the vet and back home again. We fuss
over her day and night. Finally, after a few weeks, she struggles to her feet, stands for a
moment, then collapses...dies.

(SUE sits, very still. STUART and MARY enter. MARY gives SUE a bag with
a gift.)

MARY

She was a great dog.

SUE

That she was.

MARY

I'm sorry.

SUE

Feels like salt in the wound.

STUART

You want to talk? About the wound?

SUE

No. I'm worn out, Stu. I wish this was over. I want normal back.

STUART

Yeah.

(Pause.)

MARY

I'm sorry about Daisy.

(STUART and MARY start out. But they see SUE reach into the bag. It is a teddy bear. MARY and STUART wait.)

SUE

Alright, you want to know, you want to know what the wound is? There are three beautiful kids that are gone and they've only found enough to bury one of them, but my son is alive, and I have no idea why. Daisy got run over by a car. I can understand that. We didn't fix the fence. I can feel guilty about that. But I—. This is what hurts so bad. I don't know how to feel happy that my son was not in those buildings.

(SUE begins to weep. MARY comes and enfolds her. STUART comes to SUE'S side.)

STUART

Do you know what evil is? It's jealous. It's jealous of anything good. It's jealous that it got Johnny's friends, and it didn't get Johnny.

(SUE reaches out to STUART to bring him into the embrace, and MARY gathers them into a trio embrace. The children come out and make a presentation, as if

they are in front of the class, lining up in front of SUE, but facing front. During the following, STUART and MARY exit.)

ROSIE

Mrs. Lucarelli, this basket has some gifts for you. Our parents helped us.

GILLIAN

“This stationary is for teaching us to write and how to love our city.”

SHAD

“These safety pins are for making us feel so safe.”

JOSH

“This flashlight is for lighting our way in the darkness.” It takes two sized C batteries. They’re already in there. I checked.

EDDIE

“These lifesavers are for the lives you’ve saved.” They’re “assorted flavors.”

ROSIE

“This perfume is for the breath of fresh air that your teaching brings.”

CHILDREN

(in rehearsed unison)

“Thank you for an amazing year!”

(They turn and embrace SUE, and then speak as they exit.)

GILLIAN

Goodbye Mrs. Lucarelli. It’s been a wonderful year.

SHAD

She’s a good teacher.

EDDIE

She’s Mama Luc.

JOSH

She’s the bear lady.

ROSIE

Yeah.

V. The Site.

(SUE is alone. She takes the bear that MARY gave her and the journal. She addresses the audience as if it is the unseen class of another year.)

SUE

I want to ask you to remember, children. Remember the year when the Moxch, the bear, returned for a little while to the isle of the Mannhattans. On the first anniversary of nine eleven, I went to the chapel where George Washington worshiped. You can go there. It's across the street from the site. Many were there that day, mostly men of armor, like trees, with little bears strapped to their precious helmets. And they asked me to say a

SUE (continued)

prayer. I knew they would. So I was ready.

(SUE opens the journal and kneels. As she reads, all others enter and listen. A distant American Indian flute plays. Track #11.)

SUE (continued)

My heart remembers what my mind tries to forget. But I seek to not be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good. Be with those who suffer, Lord, and grant them your peace. In the words of the Algonquin people of Manhattan, "Elogoq Neesgam. Neegeh geel ekpiding aym." Let me be the tool of the Creator. I am now in Your hands. Amen.

END OF PLAY

Doubling suggestions
(for producing the play with a minimum of 8 actors)

Male Actor #1	Stuart Clark
Male Actor #2	Joshua, Teacher #1, Angry Man on Phone, Firefighter #1, Professor
Male Actor #3	Shad, Teacher #2, Priest, Bob, Firefighter #2
Male Actor #4	Eddie, Teacher #3, Rabbi, Firefighter #3, Construction Worker
Female Actor #1	Mary Clark
Female Actor #2	Sue Lucarelli
Female Actor #3	Rosie, Teacher Writing Churchill's Report, Jennifer, Diana, Marion
Female Actor #4	Gillian, Head of Sue's school, Sandy, Principal

Pronunciation Guide

“Moxch” — moh-k. Pronounced with a long “o” and a “k” sound from deep in the throat—not a hard “k.”

“Elogoq Neesgam. Neegeh geel ekpidingq aym.” — El-oh-gawk Neese-gahm. Nee-gah geel eh-pin-deek eye-m

Acting Notes

SUE may take freedoms with adlibbing during interaction with CHILDREN in school scenes.