

BRINK TIME

A one-act dramedy by
Rex McGregor

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CALIFORNIA GRIZZLY, bear played by a girl or a boy.

TRAPPER JOAN, rugged teenage mountain girl.

SAM BOYANT, young man of many dubious talents: quack, hustler, entrepreneur.

ALEEMA, preteen girl, sporty, accepted as a boy.

TABESH, preteen boy, nerdy.

AZAD, street barber, young woman disguised as a man.

MURSAL, Aleema's sister, teenage, confident.

RETTA, preteen girl, cautious.

ANSEL, Retta's younger brother, adventurous.

DONNA ROCKWELL, 1950s housewife type, friendly.

ZEN, intense teenage girl with a morbid outlook.

RAY, Zen's lively great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, 197 years old.

KLOË, hip teenage girl, a Coast Guard trainee.

This play may be performed with a cast of 13 actors (8-9 female and 4-5 male or 13 female) or fewer, with doubling (e.g., 4 actors):

	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4
Female	GRIZZLY	ALEEMA	RETTA	
Female	JOAN	MURSAL		KLOË
Male	SAM	TABESH	ANSEL	RAY
Female		AZAD	DONNA	ZEN

SETTINGS

Scene 1: Twilight of the Grizzly

Mount Pinos, Santa Barbara National Forest (now Los Padres National Forest), California. 1924.

Trapper Joan has the last surviving California grizzly in the sights of her rifle. The bear doesn't stand a chance...until an unlikely savior comes to its rescue.

Scene 2: Aleema the Boy Girl

A street in Kabul, Afghanistan. The present.

Aleema enjoys being a "bacha posh" — an Afghan girl raised as a boy. But with the onset of puberty her freedom won't last long.

Scene 3: Sugar Horror

A street in your neighborhood. The near future.

Trick-or-treaters Ansel and Retta are lured by irresistible candy. Will they ever go home again?

Scene 4: Almost Immortal

The shore of Bunker Hill Island in the former Boston Archipelago. The distant future.

The sea level has risen so much that hills have become islands. As the environment is destroyed around her, Zen dreads the thought of living on for centuries.

SCENE 1: TWILIGHT OF THE GRIZZLY

(Gunshot.)

(A terrified CALIFORNIA GRIZZLY scampers in on all fours.)

(Another gunshot. The bear falls to the ground, wounded. It howls in pain. After several failed attempts to get up, it lies at rest, snarling.)

(JOAN, a rugged mountain girl, strolls in, aiming her rifle. The bear roars ferociously. Joan calmly pulls the trigger. But only a click is heard.)

JOAN: Don't you worry none, varmint. I got plenty o' bullets.

(Joan whistles Chopin's funeral march as she casually reloads. When she finally takes aim again she is startled by loud repeated honks from a vintage car horn.)

SAM: *(Out of sight:)* Hold your fire! Hold your fire!

JOAN: What in tarnation...?

(Joan looks offstage and waits, puzzled.)

(SAM, a chirpy young man, comes in. He wears flashy clothes and carries a carpet bag.)

SAM: Salutations on this glorious afternoon, ma'am.

JOAN: Howdy, stranger. How the blazes did you get that Tin Lizzy up here?

SAM: It was a bumpy drive. But a traveling man don't need roads.

JOAN: What you sellin', peddler?

SAM: What do you need?

JOAN: Got any liquor?

SAM: Sure. Legal too when I write you a prescription. Let me introduce myself. (*Presenting a card.*) Sam Boyant. Purveyor of Fine Medicinal Remedies.

JOAN: Homebrewed hooch?

SAM: Nope. The genuine hard stuff. Certified by the crowned heads of Europe. Come see.

JOAN: Be right with you. I'll jes finish my chore.

(She aims her rifle at the bear. Sam interposes himself.)

SAM: Wait, wait wait!

JOAN: Outa my way!

SAM: You haven't thought this through. Do you realize what we have here?

JOAN: A lowdown ornery b'ar.

SAM: An opportunity! (*Presenting a card.*) Sam Boyant. Trusty Financial Advisor.

JOAN: (*Lowering the rifle.*) Financial?

SAM: I always play the right card.

JOAN: The tradin' post pays 20 bucks for a pelt this size.

SAM: You can earn far more than that, ma'am.

JOAN: This ain't no quality black b'ar fur. Jes plain ol' grizzly.

SAM: If you let the animal live I guarantee you a fortune in ongoing revenue.

JOAN: You fulla moonshine.

(The bear growls.)

SAM: Let's discuss this without interruption.

(Sam ties a handkerchief over his nose and mouth like a bandit. He rummages in his bag and takes out a dead fish and a small bottle. He pours some liquid over the fish. Then he cautiously dangles the fish over the grizzly's head. The bear tries to reach up and grab the fish in its mouth.)

JOAN: You givin' the critter its last meal?

(The bear slumps down, fast asleep. Sam throws the fish away and takes off his handkerchief.)

SAM: Laced with chloroform.

JOAN: Well, I'll be hornswoggled! What's this all about?

SAM: Use your noggin. Before today when was the last time you laid eyes on a grizzly?

JOAN: Cain't rightly recall... A fair while.

SAM: Last reported sighting was two years ago. 1922. And that one was shot dead. Experts say the California grizzly's extinct now. What we have ourselves here, ma'am, is a genuine gold-plated meal ticket.

JOAN: How d'you figure that?

SAM: *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Theatrical Impresario. Official Agent for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus.

JOAN: You fixin' to put it on show? A plain ol' b'ar?

SAM: A unique specimen. Punters will pay good money to view the exhibit.

JOAN: You reckon?

SAM: What's pictured on our state flag?

JOAN: A grizzly.

SAM: And would any patriotic citizen admit to never having seen one in the flesh?

JOAN: Guess not.

SAM: Split the proceeds 50-50, ma'am? Deal?

(He holds out his hand for a handshake.)

JOAN: Shouldn't we git legal counsel?

SAM: *(Presenting a card:)* Sam Boyant. Attorney at Law. Contracts a Specialty. And you are?

JOAN: *(Shaking hands:)* Folks call me Trapper Joan.

SAM: Not for much longer. A lady of means don't need to work.

JOAN: Gee whillikers! I won't know meself.

(The grizzly writhes and groans in its sleep.)

SAM: Oops. We're neglecting our investment.

(Sam rummages in his bag and takes out a large pair of pliers. He approaches the bear and locates the wound.)

JOAN: Don't tell me. Sam Boyant. Tooth Puller.

(Sam forces the pliers into the bear's hide, twists them and pulls out a bullet.)

SAM: Quick Efficient Service.

(The sleeping grizzly still groans.)

JOAN: The customer don't seem too satisfied.

SAM: I heard two shots. Is there another wound?

JOAN: Cain't be. I only hit it once.

SAM: How can you be sure you missed?

JOAN: I never miss.

SAM: Well then –

JOAN: First time I was aimin' at a rattlesnake.

(Joan takes a dead snake out of her pocket. The grizzly still moans in its sleep.)

SAM: Then what's its problem?

(He rummages in his bag, takes out a stethoscope and examines the grizzly.)

JOAN: Sam Boyant. M.D.

(Sam gasps when he listens to the bear's belly.)

SAM: Dang me! It's a female!

JOAN: Ain't you lookin' in the wrong locality?

SAM: Nope. It's pregnant.

JOAN: Land sakes!

SAM: Must be a male out there.

JOAN: Leastways there *was*. Mebbe months ago. Dependin' on how far gone she is.

SAM: I'd say it's pretty much full term... In fact...

(Still asleep, the grizzly roars in pain.)

JOAN: Got a clean towel in that bag o' yourn?

SAM: Sure.

(Sam takes out a towel and hands it to Joan. She holds it between the bear's hind legs.)

JOAN: Your drug musta induced labor. B'ars give birth while hibernatin'... Here it comes.

(The unconscious grizzly gives a loud birthing roar. Joan wraps the towel and holds it as if she is cradling a newborn cub. She takes a peek.)

The cub's a filly. Cute l'il thing. Gotta keep her warm. Empty your bag... Do as I say!

SAM: All right, all right.

(Sam tips the contents of his bag on the ground. A leather muzzle and an iron chain fall out. Joan gently places the towel in the bag. Meanwhile, the mother grizzly has drifted off into a peaceful deep sleep.)

JOAN: You need feedin', sweetheart.

(Joan puts the bag on the grizzly's chest and drapes one of its forelegs over it to hold it in place.)

There you go. Suckle away.

SAM: Our prize may not be a one-off now. But this maternity show's bound to be a hit.

JOAN: Listen—

SAM: *(Approaching the grizzly with the muzzle and chain:)* Better get these on while it's quiet.

JOAN: *(Interposing herself:)* Don't you touch her!

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SCENE 2: ALEEMA THE BOY GIRL

(ALEEMA, a preteen girl, and TABESH, a preteen boy, are playing soccer in the street. Both have similar shirts, trousers and short haircuts. Tabesh is in possession of the ball. But Aleema soon intercepts it and keeps it away from him with fancy footwork.)

ALEEMA: You play like a girl!

TABESH: Take that back!

(Aleema races away and kicks the ball out of sight.)

ALEEMA: "Ali scores the World Cup winning goal!"

TABESH: In your dreams.

ALEEMA: "The crowd goes wild! Qatar 2022's the best tournament ever!"

TABESH: Like Afghanistan could even qualify.

ALEEMA: I'm playing for Brazil. They paid 50 billion for my transfer.

TABESH: *(Retrieving the ball:)* You got ripped off. In 2022 50 billion Afghani won't buy a Coke.

ALEEMA: Fifty billion American dollars. Neymar says I'm worth every cent.

TABESH: You aren't even eligible. You have to be Brazilian to play for Brazil.

ALEEMA: Neymar plays for Barcelona. And he's not Spanish.

TABESH: Barcelona isn't a national team.

ALEEMA: Yeah well... What if Neymar adopts me?

TABESH: You've already got parents.

ALEEMA: This is discrimination. FIFA's rules suck.

TABESH: There's one way you could play for Brazil. Go to school there.

ALEEMA: OK, I will.

TABESH: Your father doesn't even let you go to school *here*.

ALEEMA: Only 'cause I have to work... But Baba will change his mind... Soon as he realizes I can't be a world champion without an overseas education.

TABESH: Sure, sure.

ALEEMA: Just has to ask himself. Does he want me to buy him a swimming pool or not?

TABESH: (*Laughing:*) You're away with the fairies.

ALEEMA: (*Grabbing Tabesh in a headlock:*) Who you calling a fairy?

TABESH: (*Struggling:*) No one! No one!

ALEEMA: (*Applying pressure:*) Would you like me to buy *you* a swimming pool?

TABESH: Yeah, course!

ALEEMA: Indoor or outdoor?

TABESH: Indoor!

ALEEMA: Heated?

TABESH: Yes, please!

ALEEMA: (*Releasing Tabesh:*) Right. Expect delivery in seven to ten years.

TABESH: Will you be having a pool of your own?

ALEEMA: At least three. In each of my mansions.

TABESH: Guess you'll have to be a bit careful.

ALEEMA: What?

TABESH: About being seen...in a bathing suit.

ALEEMA: You—!

TABESH: (*Backing away:*) Don't worry. I won't say anything.

ALEEMA: Shut your face!

TABESH: I'm on your side. I want my pool.

ALEEMA: Back to the game. Your kickoff!

TABESH: Calm down. You'll be fine. The World Cup's not like the Olympics. They don't have any...you know, testing.

ALEEMA: Shut up and play!

TABESH: And in the changing room you can always shower in private.

(Aleema lunges at Tabesh, but he scampers away. There is a playful chase. Aleema catches Tabesh and tickles him. He can't help laughing. AZAD, a young woman disguised as a man, comes in, pushing a handcart with barber's equipment. She is wearing men's clothes.)

AZAD: Tabesh. Tabesh! Time for a trim?

TABESH: Yes, please!

ALEEMA: (*Releasing Tabesh:*) I'll beat you to it.

AZAD: No, no. Tabesh. You come sit down.

ALEEMA: Hey!

TABESH: Do him first. You know Ali. Always has to win at everything.

AZAD: Not today. Not anymore.

ALEEMA: What are you talking about?

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AZAD: I don't want trouble. I just do what the customer says.

ALEEMA: That's more like it. Short back and sides, please.

(Aleema approaches. But Azad blocks her way.)

AZAD: No, no. Not possible.

ALEEMA: You said you have to do what I say.

AZAD: What my *customer* says. You don't pay me. Your father does. Or did.

ALEEMA: Have you had an argument with him?

AZAD: No. He just said I'm not to cut your hair.

TABESH: Woohoo! What have you done, Azad?

AZAD: I never do anything. Except go about my business. And not even that sometimes.

ALEEMA: Baba can be so unfair.

TABESH: I sure wouldn't want to be on his bad side.

ALEEMA: He shouldn't stop a man from earning his living. I'll pay. Out of my own pocket.

(Aleema offers Azad a few coins.)

AZAD: Keep your money.

TABESH: He can afford it. Says he's got megabucks. May's well get your slice.

AZAD: No. Not worth the flak.

ALEEMA: Baba won't find out. If he asks, I'll say it was someone else.

AZAD: He wouldn't believe you. He's spoken to all the local barbers. None of us is allowed to cut your hair.

ALEEMA: Why not?

AZAD: Why do you think? You're growing up, Aleema.

ALEEMA: My name's Ali.

AZAD: If you say so.

ALEEMA: Baba calls me Ali.

TABESH: Yeah, I thought he liked having a son.

ALEEMA: He does! He's proud of me. Always showing me off. To everyone.

AZAD: As if most of us don't know the truth.

ALEEMA: I don't care who knows. Long as they play along.

TABESH: Sounds like the game's nearly up. You'll be wearing a headscarf soon.

ALEEMA: No way! Baba hasn't thought this through. If I have long hair, I won't be able to help out at the garage!

AZAD: He's aware of that. – Tabesh, do you know any boy looking for work?

TABESH: Um...

ALEEMA: (*Raising a fist:*) No one's taking my job!

TABESH: Actually, we're all fully employed.

AZAD: Except for our friend here.

ALEEMA: Baba can't just fire me!

TABESH: You could take him to court.

ALEEMA: (*Distressed, looking offstage:*) Mursal!

TABESH: For wrongful discharge.

AZAD: Careful.

ALEEMA: Mursal!

TABESH: Just don't tell him I said so. I'm not qualified to give legal advice.

MURSAL: (*Off, calling to her classmates:*) See you tomorrow.

TABESH: Better leave me right out of it.

(MURSAL, Aleema's teenage sister, comes in, wearing a black school uniform and white headscarf.)

MURSAL: No, I'm good. My brother's here. He'll walk me home.

ALEEMA: See? Only a boy can do that!

MURSAL: What's up?

TABESH: He has to grow her hair. I mean, she has to grow his... You get the picture.

MURSAL: Is that all?

ALEEMA: It's not funny.

MURSAL: Yes it is. You'll experience what it's like. Not being free to walk down the street by yourself.

ALEEMA: Without me to escort you, you'll have to stay home more!

MURSAL: Tough. At least I'll have a little sister to amuse me there.

ALEEMA: No you won't! I'll run away!

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SCENE 3: SUGAR HORROR

(RETTA, a preteen girl, comes in, wearing a skeleton costume. She carries a bag full of treats.)

RETTA: Come on, Ansel. My bag's full. Let's go home.

(ANSEL, Retta's younger brother, comes in, wearing a business suit many sizes too big for him. He has an optical head-mounted display pushed up on his forehead. He is scoffing candy from a bag.)

ANSEL: Still room in mine. How come you got more treats than me?

RETTA: I didn't. I'm just saving them for later.

ANSEL: I want some for later too. Can we do one more house? Please, Retta!

RETTA: We've already done the whole street.

ANSEL: We missed this place.

RETTA: That's out of bounds.

ANSEL: Whata you mean?

RETTA: The lady who lives here's a witch.

ANSEL: Bull! No such thing as witches.

RETTA: That's what grown-ups want us to think. But I overheard Mom talking to Dad. She said, "That woman who moved in on the corner, you stay away from her. I know her type. She'll bewitch every man in the neighborhood."

ANSEL: Cool! If she's got magic powers, she can download candy.

(Ansel approaches a door.)

RETTA: Ansel! Stop! It's too risky.

ANSEL: So? Why can't I take a risk for once in my life?

RETTA: We have to play safe.

ANSEL: That's all we ever do. Virtual reality lessons at school. Virtual reality games at home. Boring! I want real reality. A real life adventure! Don't you, Retta?

RETTA: Well... As long as you're ready to run at the first sign of danger—

ANSEL: Thanks, sis.

(Ansel knocks on the door.)

RETTA: Don't you dare step inside.

ANSEL: I'm not crazy. Most accidents happen in the home. Slippery floors. Loose mats. I'm after adventure. Not a broken neck.

RETTA: The biggest hazard you have to watch out for is grown-ups.

ANSEL: Yeah. If one of them trips over and lands on you, you could be squashed to death.

(The door opens. DONNA appears, looking like a cheerful 1950s housewife.)

DONNA: Hello, children.

ANSEL: Trick or treat!

DONNA: My, what gorgeous costumes. *(To Retta:)* I can see you're a stick-thin supermodel. *(To Ansel:)* But what are you? A lawyer?

ANSEL: Scarier.

DONNA: Politician?

ANSEL: Scarier.

DONNA: I give up.

ANSEL: Bank manager.

DONNA: Ooh!

ANSEL: Give us a treat or I'll fiveclose you.

DONNA: Pardon?

RETTA: He means "foreclose."

ANSEL: Only worse.

DONNA: Well, I'd better fetch something extra special. Don't go away.

(Donna goes back inside.)

ANSEL: See? Nice lady.

RETTA: I don't trust her. I took her photo. Let's run a background check.

(Retta starts poking the air in front of her. Ansel lowers his optical head-mounted display over his eyes.)

ANSEL: I hate wearing these googles.

RETTA: You'll get eye implants when your retinas are fully developed.

ANSEL: Yeah, yeah. And in the meantime I have to go around looking like a baby.

RETTA: This facial recognition app is awesome... Here we are. Donna Rockwell. Human resources manager, Advanced Food Technology Project, NASA.

ANSEL: NASA? That's where they do rocketship stuff. Cool.

RETTA: Shh! She's coming.

(Donna reappears, carrying a basket.)

DONNA: Now, which one of you deserves first taste?

ANSEL: Me! Me!

(Donna reveals a cabbage.)

DONNA: Enjoy.

ANSEL: Yuck!

DONNA: Have a nibble. I guarantee you'll love it.

ANSEL: I don't eat greens.

RETTA: OMG! It's pure sugar!

ANSEL: What?

RETTA: Look at your nutrition analysis app.

ANSEL: Jeepers!

(Ansel can't resist taking a piece of leaf.)

RETTA: Ansel!

DONNA: It's perfectly safe. Check the health certification on your screen.

(Ansel tentatively tries a lick.)

ANSEL: Yum!

DONNA: It may look like a cabbage. But it's actually an edible 3D printout.

ANSEL: Sweet!

(Ansel grabs the cabbage and scoffs it.)

RETTA: If that's supposed to get kids to eat their veggies, it's an epic fail. They'll just rot their teeth!

DONNA: Teeth are disposable. We can regrow them.

ANSEL: I'm already on my second set.

RETTA: But you won't get any more.

DONNA: Yes you will. As many as you need.

ANSEL: Like sharks?

RETTA: That laser technology costs the earth.

DONNA: Not any more. We use high-speed printers for dentistry now.

ANSEL: I've got a gap up here. Can you fill it?

DONNA: Of course.

(Donna reaches into her basket and takes out a portable printer.)

ANSEL: I want my chewing power back to full strength.

DONNA: "Upper right second molar. Scan for personalized fit" ... Done.

(Donna produces a tooth and inserts it into Ansel's gum.)

RETTA: OMG! The tooth's made of pure sugar too!

DONNA: Highly compacted. Can last for weeks if you suck at it slowly.

ANSEL: Wow!

(Ansel starts sucking his fingers.)

RETTA: That's enough, Ansel. Let's go home.

DONNA: You can make all sorts of interesting things out of sugar.

ANSEL: Yeah?

DONNA: Would you like one of these printers?

ANSEL: Sure!

DONNA: "Replicate."

(Donna produces another printer. She offers it to Ansel, who sticks the cabbage between his legs and takes the printer.)

ANSEL: Gee, thanks.

RETTA: Don't eat it!

ANSEL: I'm not stupid. This is an investment... But so tempting. You hold it for me, sis. You've got willpower.

(Retta reluctantly accepts the printer.)

RETTA: I guess it could come in handy. If used sensibly.

(Ansel can't help chewing his fingers.)

DONNA: Absolutely. For example, if you ever need a prosthetic limb...

RETTA: I don't have a lot of call for that.

DONNA: You never know.

ANSEL: Hey! Where are my fingertips?

(Terrified, Ansel holds up his knuckles.)

RETTA: OMG! You've chewed them off!

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SCENE 4: ALMOST IMMORTAL

(Various items of trash litter the stage, as if washed up on a shoreline. Amongst them, a battered wire bird cage.)

(ZEN, a teenage girl in retro 21st-century Goth gear, sulkily paces up and down, kicking the trash with her boot. RAY, a very old man in a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, relaxes in a deck chair. Zen nibbles her hair. She examines a strand.)

ZEN: Flood! I'm turning gray already!

(Zen plucks out the offending hair and flicks it away.)

RAY: The first gray hair is a tragedy. The thousandth gray hair isn't so bad. The millionth gray hair is a blessing.

ZEN: Spare me your wisdom. My life's over.

RAY: You look healthy enough to me, Zen. Perhaps a trifle dehydrated.

ZEN: My heart's broken.

RAY: The heart is an amazingly resilient organ. Take mine. Still going strong after 197 years.

ZEN: I do know how old you are, Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandpa Ray. You mention it every five minutes.

RAY: I'm proud of my longevity. Three more years and I'll break the double century barrier. No one's ever done that. The closest is Miyuki Kanagawa in Japan. She has a nine-month head start on me. But if I outlast her, I'll gain the world record.

ZEN: *(Simultaneously mocking him:)* World record. Big deal.

RAY: I realize my triumph won't stand for long. Life expectancy keeps extending. By the time you're my age, 200 could be normal.

ZEN: Heaven forbid. Mercifully, supergeriatricness doesn't run in our family.

RAY: Genetics has nothing to do with it.

ZEN: You had hundreds of descendants, didn't you? I'm the only one left. The rest died young.

RAY: In accidents.

ZEN: Nearly all climate change-related. Typhoons, flash floods—

RAY: Yes, yes. But nowadays we have sophisticated early warning systems. So you're perfectly safe. You might even hit 300.

ZEN: Just my luck! Condemned to live for ages...without Kloë. I have to wake up every morning without Kloë. And go to bed every night without Kloë.

RAY: Zen. It's weeks since she broke up with you. Time to move on.

ZEN: I'm ready to move away. I can't wait to get off this trash heap.

RAY: (*Looking at the sky in the distance:*) Well, here come our rescuers.

ZEN: Finally!

RAY: Nowhere for them to land. They'll have to let down a line and winch us up.

ZEN: How primitive! I can remember when Boston was a civilized village.

RAY: I can remember when it was a small town.

ZEN: We're not even an island now. Just a reef.

RAY: With plenty to explore. Help me up, Zen. Take me for my walk. Have to keep active.

(Zen helps Ray to his feet. He is very dodderly, but with Zen's support he manages to hobble around.)

ZEN: Don't overexert yourself.

RAY: I'm in perfect shape. Only disease I suffer from is *clockstrophobia*. The fear of being trapped in a confined period of time.

ZEN: You mean mortality?

RAY: Watch your language, girl. Now, what's the sea washed up today?

ZEN: A sad-looking birdcage.

RAY: Ah. A symbol of hope.

ZEN: How do you figure that?

RAY: No bird inside.

ZEN: It probably died of starvation. Rotted away. And its bones fell out through the wires.

RAY: Aren't you a cheerful soul.

ZEN: I'm just being realistic. The whole planet's a disaster area.

RAY: And has been since before I was born. What else is new?

ZEN: I'd tell you. But I don't want to upset you.

RAY: Has there been a weather update?

(He checks his watch.)

No. Still on schedule.

ZEN: Miyuki Kanagawa has died.

RAY: So she didn't even hit 199. (*Chuckle.*) Well well well.

ZEN: I thought you hated hearing about death.

RAY: Not in this case. I've got no rivals now. All I have to do is hold on.

ZEN: You said you have a heart, Great-Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandpa Ray. I can't see any sign of it.

RAY: Er...how did she die?

ZEN: "Assisted."

RAY: The stupid idiot! What is it with these people? They get so close. Then they give up.

ZEN: We don't know what her circumstances were.

RAY: There's no excuse for packing it all in! Life's too precious... Though doctors don't seem to think so.

ZEN: What do you mean?

(Ray holds up a pill attached to a chain hanging around his neck.)

RAY: They kindly provide every supergeriatric with this pill. If life becomes too much for us we can simply swallow and drift off into eternal sleep.

ZEN: I wondered what that was.

RAY: My first instinct was to flush it down the toilet. But I decided to wear it. As an act of defiance. I'm no coward like Miyuki Kanagawa.

ZEN: Don't judge her. People usually do things for a reason... Even if other people never know.

RAY: What are you on about?

ZEN: Nothing.

RAY: Listen. A change of scene will perk you up. This time tomorrow we'll be lazing at Rocky Mountain Beach. (*Looking offstage:*) Oh, a raft.

ZEN: (*Looking offstage and gasping under her breath:*) Oh no!

RAY: I was looking forward to a winching.

ZEN: We need to get outa here! Fast!

RAY: What?

ZEN: (*Frantically taking off her boots:*) A tsunami's coming!

RAY: I know. But not for another two-and-a-half hours. We'll be long gone by then.

ZEN: Let's swim for it.

RAY: Are you serious?

ZEN: (*Stripping down to a wetsuit:*) This is an emergency!

RAY: No it isn't. If our lives were in danger, we'd start beeping. Early warning system, remember?

ZEN: We can reach the mainland in about 90 minutes.

RAY: But our ride's already here.

ZEN: We needn't bother them. Nice morning for a dip. You said you like to keep active.

RAY: Not in the sea when a tsunami's on the way!

ZEN: You said yourself we've got plenty of time. Let's get your shirt off.

(Zen frantically struggles to undo Ray's buttons.)

RAY: This is insane.

ZEN: I'll tow you across. Or float you across. But we have to leave now!

(KLOË, a teenage girl, strolls in, wearing Search and Rescue gear and carrying two water bottles.)

KLOË: Morning, sir.

(Zen stops and turns away guiltily. Ray is pleasantly surprised to see Kloë.)

RAY: Kloë! I didn't know you were with the Coast Guard.

KLOË: *(Offering a bottle to Ray:)* I engulfed a fortnight ago.

RAY: Many thanks.

KLOË: Had to drown something with my life.

(Ray takes a long drink. Pause. Zen and Kloë ignore each other.)

RAY: Ah! Fresh water. Nothing like it.

KLOË: You can drench that again.

RAY: Still using that nautical slang, Kloë? It was old-fashioned last century.

KLOË: It's tiding a comeback.

ZEN: Are you stalking me?

KLOË: *(Offering a bottle to Zen:)* Only deluging my job.

ZEN: Really? Out of all the people who could come to my rescue it just happens to be you.

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