

(There is a long pause. Finally.)

ALICE: (Gets essay from desk, refles it and returns to desk. No, you're not. If you'll bend and take what I can give you, things will work out for you . . . Trust me . . . Let me help you, Calvin . . . Please . . . I can teach you speech . . .

CALVIN: (Crosses to up center file cabinet. Long pause. Okay . . . all right, man . . . (Crosses to student chair and sits.)

ALICE: (Crosses to desk, takes off raincoat and sits in swivel chair.) Now, then, we'll go through the exercise once, then you do it at home . . . please, repeat after me, slowly . . . "asking" . . . "asking" . . . "asking"

CALVIN: (Long pause.) Ax-ing . . .

ALICE: Ass-king . . .

CALVIN: (During the following, he now turns from ALICE, faces front, and gazes out beyond the audience; on his fourth word, lights begin to fade to black.) Ax-ing . . . Asking . . . ass-king . . . asking . . . asking . . . asking . . .

## ✱ Out of Gas on Lovers Leap

Mark St. Germain

Characters: Myst (17), Grouper (17)

Setting: A yellow convertible parked on a promontory overlooking the New England town of Grosset Bay

Premiere: WPA Theatre, New York City, 1985

Publisher: Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

Mystery Angeleeds and Chauncey "Grouper" Morris have just graduated from White Oaks Academy, an exclusive boarding school for students with behavioral disorders. Myst is the illegitimate daughter of rock star Snow Angeleeds. Grouper is the son of Senator Clifford Morris. Instead of attending their classmates' graduation party, they have driven out to a cliff-top lookout. They are best friends, and Myst has the hots for the

marginal Grouper, who claims he is waiting for it to be "historic." Later tonight, they will sleep together for the first time. And they will jump off the cliff.

MYST: You think we should go to Whorrie Laurie's party tonight?

GROUPEr: You want to?

MYST: I don't know. It is our graduation.

GROUPEr: That's right. Now we start real life.

MYST: You sound so nasty when you say that.

GROUPEr: When do we leave for Seaside?

MYST: We don't necessarily have to go to Seaside just to live by the ocean, you know.

GROUPEr: What do you mean?

MYST: I'm sure my mother would give us her house at Malibu—

GROUPEr: Bite your tongue!

MYST: Why?

GROUPEr: First of all, it's not even the same ocean. The Pacific Ocean's for pussies.

MYST: You're crazy.

GROUPEr: It is far more mellow than the Atlantic.

MYST: Ocean is ocean.

GROUPEr: Can you imagine rides on the beach at Malibu? Can you picture roller coasters and whips and haunted houses—

MYST: Whips and haunted houses, maybe—

GROUPEr: Does the Polar Bear club come out in sub-zero temperature in bathing suits to swim every New Year's Day at Malibu? Shit, if it ever got really cold out there they'd close the state. How can you even mention Seaside Heights and Malibu in the same breath? Seaside Heights is real. It's for real people, regular working people. The only thing you work for in Malibu is a tan—

MYST: (Cutting him off.) I was at the Malibu house this Christmas.

GROUPEr: (Stopped.) So?

MYST: My mom, old Leather Stocking, had a Christmas party and invited everybody from the record company, and got stoned to oblivion because a couple of the biggies didn't show. She's not imaginative enough to think they might have families or people they actually liked who they'd rather see that day. Christ, I felt sorry for anybody who had to spend Christmas with us. She sat around petting my hair whenever I got close enough, saying to all these guys, "This is my little girl. Would you believe it? This is Mystery." And meanwhile, these guys are eyeing the both of us trying to decide whose bones to jump—

GROUPER: I know whose I would—

MYST: Then jump.

GROUPER: I will.

MYST: I'm waiting.

GROUPER: Have you ever done it in a Ferris wheel? The largest Ferris wheel on the East Coast, on a pier right in the middle of the ocean? They'd stop the thing and look up and see the seat on the top rocking back and forth. That would be a first, even for you.

MYST: My mom bought me a doll for Christmas. One of these antique dolls that cost half a Porsche—

GROUPER: Why do I get the impression I'm talking to myself?

MYST: She watched me unwrap it; she was jumping up and down like she was ten years old and I said, "Snow"—because God knows I can't call the woman "Mother" in front of company, "Snow, I think you need this more than I do."

GROUPER: (*Imitating radio transmission.*) This is Earth calling Angeleeds—Earth calling Angeleeds—come in please—

MYST: Funny—

GROUPER: (*Excited.*) I'm getting contact—a transmission from somewhere past Saturn—

MYST: Grouper!

GROUPER: (*Looking at her.*) Success! You can hear, you can listen. (*He grabs her.*) Then listen harder. (*Pause.*) I love you. More than I ever loved anybody. More than anybody's ever loved anybody. Because I'm totally sure we can be happy

together 'till we both die. (*Pause.*) That's it, then. We live together, get married, or I jump off this cliff tonight. Your choice.

MYST: Don't your parents expect you home for the summer.

GROUPER: Probably. They always expect the worst. So?

MYST: (*Pause.*) My mom was talking about maybe going to France for a while.

GROUPER: (*Pause.*) France?

MYST: Yeah; you know—the Eiffel Tower and drinking on the street?

GROUPER: She's taking you?

MYST: I didn't say I'd go . . .

GROUPER: You'd rather spend the summer with her.

MYST: Of course not! (*Pause.*) But even you have to admit there's a difference between Paris and Seaside Heights.

GROUPER: (*Ice cold.*) Get in the car.

MYST: Where are we going?

GROUPER: We are going nowhere, that's where we're going.

MYST: Grouper—are you driving over the edge?

GROUPER: You'll wish. I'm dropping you at Whorrie Laurie's party. (*Tries to start car, it won't turn over.*) Maybe you'll get lucky if somebody's looking for seconds.

MYST: Oh come on. Stop. This is our night.

GROUPER: Call your mother. Tell her to fly over early if you can reach her.

MYST: Did I say I'd go? I never said that.

GROUPER: You thought about it.

MYST: What if I did? What's wrong with that?

GROUPER: If you don't know there's nothing I can tell you. (*Tries car again; only a click is heard.*) Goddamn it!

MYST: You want me to look under the hood?

GROUPER: Watch it, Myst—

MYST: Watch what?

GROUPER: DON'T START YOUR MECHANICAL SUPERIORITY SHIT AGAIN!!

MYST: Grouper, my mother lived with a race car driver! I had to pick up something.

GROUPER: I bet you did.

MYST: Funny.

GROUPER: Your mom lived with everybody. And if she didn't like 'em enough to live with, she just fucked them.

MYST: Hey—beef up those memoirs, right?

GROUPER: I'm not kidding around, Myst. (*Car is not turning over.*) SHIT!

MYST: You always want to hear who her latest is. You *subscribe to People*, for God's sake. (*Begins to get out of car.*) Let me take a look—

GROUPER: Stay in the car!

MYST: But you don't know anything about motors!

GROUPER: STAY IN THE CAR! (*Gets out, tries to open hood and can't. Myst reaches down in car, releases hood lock. Hood pops open. He looks at her, then away, leaning over the engine.*) Goddamn piece of Italian shit. (*Screams over cliff's edge.*) This is it! I'm going Jap next time!

MYST: (*Watches him.*) You want me to try to turn it over? (*He looks at her.*) The motor. You watch down there, I'll crank it up here.

GROUPER: (*Grudging.*) All right. (*MYST tries again. Nothing. Grouper kicks the bumper a few more times, looks back in.*)

Try again. (*She does; nothing. Grouper screams into the engine.*) WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

MYST: (*Looking at dashboard.*) Ah, Grouper—

GROUPER: I'm concentrating! (*He hits spark plugs with beer can.*) Why do I bother wasting good money on gas?

MYST: If you took that car your father wanted to give you—

GROUPER: Did I ask your opinion about anything?

MYST: I thought guys were supposed to like cars.

GROUPER: Sexist bullshit. Guys with metal between their ears like cars. I *hate* this car.

MYST: You hate every car.

GROUPER: True. I wish I were born two hundred years ago. I swear. How many times did you read about horses having heart attacks on people.

MYST: (*Looking back at dashboard.*) Grouper—

GROUPER: I'm trying to fix it! Would you turn it goddamn over, please?

MYST: Were any of these indicators broken?

GROUPER: No! Of course not! (*Pause.*) What do you mean, "Indicators"?

MYST: The gauges—the dials on the dashboard.

GROUPER: They work fine. Would you turn the key now—

MYST: Group—

GROUPER: MYST! JUST GIVE THE FUCKER GAS, WILL YOU?

MYST: I can't.

GROUPER: WHY NOT?

MYST: You're out of gas.

GROUPER: Huh?

MYST: THERE'S NO FUCKING GAS!

GROUPER: (*Slams hood, wipes off hands.*) Fixed. (*Gets in car.*) Now what is all this shit about France?

MYST: My mom wants me to go. But I said . . .

GROUPER: (*Cutting in.*) Let's get this straight, Myst. Right now, okay? Real straight. . . .

MYST: (*Turns away.*) I'll walk back to town for gas—

GROUPER: Didn't you hear what I said before? What's the matter with you?

MYST: Nothing's the matter with me. Why don't you get real? Have a beer or a joint—get control of yourself.

GROUPER: I just asked you to marry me! That was a proposal!

MYST: I don't want to hear it. So I didn't listen.

GROUPER: I knew it!

MYST: I don't want to deal with it right now, okay? Can't I just enjoy my fucking graduation night?

GROUPER: I'm talking the rest of our lives and you're worried about your fucking graduation night?

MYST: (*Angry.*) Couldn't you have just bought me a corsage or something? You kill me, Grouper.

GROUPER: Don't you love me?

MYST: Grouper, we're young. We are. I mean, how can you

want to get so serious when neither of us ever even had a job yet?

GROUPER: I love you, Myst. More than anyone in the whole world. More than anyone in the whole school. (GROUPER *climbs over windshield to hood.*)

MYST: Grouper—what are you doing?

GROUPER: (*Walks slowly down hood towards guardrail.*) Remember me, okay? (*Turns, bounces on hood as if diving board, readying himself.*)

MYST: (*Terrorized.*) Don't—Grouper—GROUPER! (GROUPER *leaps, jumping off sideways so that he lands safely on the ground.*) Grouper—You asshole! How dare you do that to me! You stupid bastard!

GROUPER: I'm sorry, Myst. I'm sorry—

MYST: (*Punches him.*) YOU SON OF A BITCH! YOU SHITTY SON OF A BITCH SCUM!!

GROUPER: (*Holding her arms.*) I know—I know—but how did it feel?

MYST: Let go of me!

GROUPER: How did it feel when you thought I was jumping?

MYST: I was scared! I hated you. I missed you. (*She pulls free.*) This is to get back at me for Christmas, isn't it?

GROUPER: No—not at all—

MYST: Damn right it is. For me going away and leaving you here—

GROUPER: That has nothing to do with it—

MYST: (*Getting more and more upset.*) I tried to call! Every day I did! I called your house, and they never told me a thing—I never knew 'till I got back here . . .

GROUPER: I know that.

MYST: Grouper, you cannot do this to me. You can't love me this much! I can't handle it!

GROUPER: I can't help it, Myst. I swear to God.

MYST: Oh Grouper. You don't believe in God. (*Hugs him.*)

GROUPER: That's not my fault.

MYST: You are the worst thing that ever happened to me.

GROUPER: I wish I didn't care about you, Myst. I really do. I wish I could spit in your face and never see you again.

MYST: Get in the car. (*They do, arms around each other.*) Kiss me. (*He does.*)

GROUPER: To me it's all simple. I see my parents and they're fucked up. I see your mother and she's fucked up. Everybody I know who's gone after things like money and magazine covers all get fucked up. You don't need that. All I want is one little thing, Myst. I want to be happy.

MYST: That's not a little thing, Grouper.

GROUPER: You know what my father told me six thousand, seven hundred and fifty-two times? The only intelligent thing the guy ever said, so he said it a lot. He'd say, "Chauncey—"

MYST: (*Cutting in.*) "Chauncey." Christ!

GROUPER: "There's only one way to get what you want in this world. Go after it with your life. Live for it. Be ready to die for it." And he's right. Even though *he's* so dumb he's wasting his life as a third-rate handshaker who's not even sneaky enough to make it to Vice-President.

MYST: Grouper, everybody wants to be happy. Everybody tries to be—

GROUPER: But they don't work at it, Myst. They get sidetracked. I'm working on it; I'm planning for it. We work for just enough money to live on, right, and if one of us works in a restaurant we can even cut down on food costs. We'll lay on the beach all summer and relax—no pressures, no problems. We'll take long walks, there's miles of beach, and if we walk south there's a park, Island Beach State Park, and there's a bird sanctuary. We can go there if we feel like getting away—just the two of us.

MYST: And if *we* have any kind of problem, one of the two of us, what then? Go down to the beach and bitch to the birds?

GROUPER: We talk to each other.

MYST: Talk. Just like that, right? Work it out calmly and rationally. Like you did at Christmas—

GROUPER: I thought you didn't love me and nothing was worth it anymore—

MYST: So you'd stick it to me *and* your father, one shot, right?

GROUPER: My father?

MYST: Ripping up your state flag and tying pieces of it together to hang yourself with—

GROUPER: You know I don't wear belts—

MYST: You walked all the way 'cross campus to the gym! You could have borrowed a belt from somebody—

GROUPER: There was nobody on campus! Everybody was on vacation. I had to break into the gym. Let's not start in on it, okay?

MYST: No; it's not okay. I should listen to a guided tour for happiness from a guy who strung himself up from a basketball hoop? Why would you hang yourself from a basketball hoop?

GROUPER: Myst—

MYST: You could have swallowed pills or sat in the car with the motor running—

GROUPER: This is a convertible!

MYST: Then why the gym? Why not your room or a tree or something? Why pick the gym to hang yourself in?

GROUPER: I don't know. *(Pause.)* It seemed kind of . . . athletic.

MYST: Bullshit. Tell me why. If you love me, Grouper, tell me why.

GROUPER: *(Pause.)* I wanted to get the scoreboard lit up, you know how they do it at the games? But I couldn't get the power on. I wanted it to say "Visitors 1, Home Team, Zip."

MYST: *(Laughs; he laughs with her.)* What did your parents say when Percy called them?

GROUPER: They didn't know much at first. Percy called them Christmas Eve. Told my dad, "Chauncey had a bit of an accident on the basketball court today . . ."

MYST: *(Laughing.)* He said that?

GROUPER: *(Continuing as Percy.)* "I'm afraid the boy missed the basket, Senator. Landed on his head, he did. Is there anyone you could send up to keep an eye on him?"

MYST: Who came?

GROUPER: Nobody. I told them to stay away. And they did.

MYST: It must have been horrible being in the infirmary on Christmas.

GROUPER: Better than being home.

## Progress

### Doug Lucie

**Characters:** Ange (20), Lenny (21)  
**Setting:** Ronee and Will's apartment in London  
**Premiere:** Bush Theatre, London, 1984

**Publisher:** Methuen, Inc.

Ange, a young working-class woman, leaves her husband after he beats her. She is shy, somewhat reserved, though she also has a tough streak. Ange's husband, Lenny, is an inarticulate car mechanic with "animal cunning and an evil sense of humor." Unannounced, he shows up where she is staying, at the home of an upper-class social worker.

ANGE: Dunno.

LENNY: What d'you mean? Dunno?

ANGE: I mean, I dunno.

LENNY: Don't be stupid. Either you like it or you don't.

ANGE: I like it.

LENNY: Good. *(Pause.)* How come I don't get a cup of tea?

ANGE: 'Cause you ain't staying.

LENNY: Says who?

ANGE: I do.

*(He takes a packet of sandwiches out of his overalls pocket.)*

LENNY: I've got to have something to wash me dinner down.

ANGE: What d'you think you're doing?

LENNY: It's me dinner. This is me dinner hour so I'm gonna have me dinner.

ANGE: Not here you ain't.

*(He stuffs a sandwich in his mouth.)*

LENNY: Bleedin' well am.

ANGE: You horrible pig. *(Beat.)* Who made them, then?

LENNY: Me mum. *(Beat.)* Egg and cress. Lovely.

ANGE: You don't like egg.