

# Take me Home

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## Characters

Ace – A Dominican-New York cab driver

Iago – male, 40s, the Pretzel stand seller and oracle

Ana (voiceover and film) – 30s, Hispanic

Other Ana's – women in red coats who appear around the city, inside ATM windows, and on the city streets

Randi (voiceover) – Female, sixty-something co-host of the radio show “Call & Kvetch,” straight offa Long Island

Cindy (voiceover) – Female, sixty-something co-host of the radio show “Call & Kvetch,” straight offa Long Island

NYC citizen callers on “Call & Kvetch” – Bradley and Susan

## Setting:

In an actual yellow New York city cab that drives downtown in the financial district carrying three audience-passengers in the backseat. Throughout the performance, actors will appear on the street and inside glowing ATM centres as though we are seeing a dreamscape of Ace's – particularly the figure of Ana recurring in a red coat. The video screen in the cab will start by showing ordinary cab footage: stoop talk, weather reports etc. but gradually text and other images will appear on the screen at key moments.

*The passengers/audience get in the cab at the designated area with the help of the doorman. Ace does not speak, simply begins driving, then stops unexpectedly after a block or so to deliver the rules.*

Ace:

Ok, listen up everyone. Cab rules.

One. You wear your seatbelts at all times.

Two. *(He locks doors)*. The doors are now locked. In other words: we're in this together.

Three. I'm a respectable cab driver, so if you get outta control, I will put on NPR and make you listen to classical music – Pachelbel's canon, Fleur de Lis, Moonlight Sonata, it's all gonna play on loop.

Four. You CAN NOT videotape this cab ride. This is not a reality show. Plus you don't know where that's gonna end up. NSA, Wikileaks, you know what I'm talking about?

Five. It's not about the destination. It's the journey. [*Repeats this once in Spanish*]

So where you wanna go...?

Where you wanna go?

Where you wanna go?

*(Passenger states where they want to go.)*

Really? Really? I should have known. I like you people. But really?

So the rule is: I take you wherever I want to take you. I take you the corner if I want, If you owe me I take you to the ATM, *(in one breath)* I'll take you to Midtown, to Murray Hill, to Madison Ave, to Mongolia, to Moravia, to Mali, to Micronesia, to Madagascar, to the moon. I'll take you to a city that is not your city. I'll take you to the other side. I'll take you on a ride. We are

on a journey. And I will take you somewhere you didn't even know you wanted to go. Are we clear? Are we clear?

Oh one last thing: you *will* enjoy the ride. Let me correct that: I want you to enjoy the ride. Relax. Lean back, take a deep breathe, exhale, let your back become one with the seat. Feel yourself turn into jello. Let yourself wobble. Let yourself go. Jiggle that fat. You hear me? Enjoy the ride.

*Continues to drive, he sings to himself, a song about finding someone. On the screen appear the following lines, one at a time:*

*Do you know where you're going?*

*Do you?*

*I didn't think so.*

*Scene 2: Gary the Hustler Part 1*

*Ace flicks down the sun visor on the passenger side. On it is taped a blurry looking photocopy of a photo that looks like it has been taken by a security camera. It shows a disheveled and dodgy Gary who looks like a creepy character straight out of a David Lynch film. Ace addresses the passengers.*

Ace:

This guy. This guy. You know him? Every time I pick this guy up, he shorts me. The first time it was, like, ten dollars so... I'm in his apartment, lifting his TV. I'm like I'm not catching no back breaks for this guy. "I got you, I got you," he says, "I'll give you something extra." He's from somewhere down south – he hasn't got the accent but the hick is still in him. He knows the drug talk... He knows, like, the codes. The apartment smells of cigarettes, some weed and he's all hyper so there's coke somewhere... And then his girl, she comes out the other room.... Your girl fly enough.

*On the video screen appear the lines, one at a time:*

*Why is she with you?*

*Why is she with you?*

*Why is she with you?*

Ace: And I'm thinking: why is she with you? Why is she with you? Why is she with you? Ohhhh. You binge drugging her. Now that's the only reason that girl might be with you, bro. Or she thinks she can save you from your own darkness. *(Beat)* You know him and you think you know everything about him... And then he goes out to do some more and it's just me and her. She is wearing, like, this red coat... *(Makes kissing sound with hands to mouth)* Classy not too much showing but that's enough, you know what I'm saying? I look at her, and I see the end is written as clear as day It's already too late so I say:

Ace: Hey-

Ana: (v/o) Hey-

*Music swells – something romantic like Billy Holiday. From behind us fades up the sound of voices, which appear to be talking intimately, almost to us, as though the characters are sitting in the backseat of the cab. Ace and Ana in the past.*

Ana: Come back here-

Ace: I can't-

Ana: Come back here- Come on... You afraid of something-?

Ace: It's my car, I gotta stay in front-

Ana: Come on. What's gonna happen-?

*Sound of door opening and closing as Ace gets in the back seat or perhaps he slides through from front seat. Silence.*

Ana: What's wrong?

Ace: I don't like being back here-

Ana: Why not?

Ace: *(He says nothing)*

*On the screen appear the lines, one at a time:*

*I have a secret.*

*I wish I could tell you.*

*But then it wouldn't be a secret anymore.*

Ana: But I'm here-

Ace: That's true-

*Ace tries to kiss her.*

Ana: Don't-

Ace: What? You ask me to get in back with you-

Ana: I just- don't-

Ace: Ok I get it... No actually I don't get it-

Ana: Why, is that all I am to you? *(She swears in Spanish)*

Ace: No... But I thought-

Ana: Because that's all I am to him-

Ace: Listen- Not just anyone can ask me to come back here and I come back here- Most girls I be like: no-

Ana: Women-

Ace: What?

Ana: I'm a woman-

Ace: You are most definitely a fine woman- You are a very fiiinnne woman-*(He slides closer and tries to make her laugh)*Yes m'am/- No m'am. Whatever you say m'am-

Ana: Stop! Stop it. Stop!

*Ace laughs. They kiss. She speaks to him quietly in Spanish. The voices fade out.*

Ace: Enough of that.

*Ace changes the radio station to people talking. He cruises past an ATM, in the window a woman stands in a red coat. She is waving in slow motion. On the screen the words: "Look out!" appear. The cab doesn't slow down or stop. Ace changes the station again and turns it up. The show is "Call & Kvetch". Reminiscent of NPR's "Car Talk". Hosted by two older ladies – straight offa Long Island. The show should sound absolutely naturalistic and authentic burbling away on the radio – even with its jaunty air it shouldn't veer too far into the realm of farce. During the radio show, images on the screen could appear such as a city fading into smog. Perhaps some kind of environmental chaos or destruction. A person turning transparent and disappearing.*

Randi: Well it's just terrible-

Cindy: It's just terrible-

Randi: Really terrible-

Cindy: Ok, on that note, let's talk a call. You're on "Call and Kvetch" ... Call us with your complaints and we'll sympathize-



Randi: We'll empathize-

Cindy: We'll see it through your eyes-

Randi: We won't rationalize your fears away-

Cindy: We'll panic with you and then some-

Randi: We'll kvetch together-

Cindy: And we'll all feel better... *(call comes in)* Hello, you're on "Call & Kvetch"...

Bradley: Hi this is Bradley, long time listener, long time caller...

Randi: We remember you Bradley-

Cindy: How could we forget-

*Randi and Cindy cackle.*

Randi: Go ahead Bradley...

Bradley: I'm calling about the city-

Cindy: It's a mess-

Randi: It's a disaster-

Bradley: Exactly- But it's not just that... It's all the disappearing- First it was just the edges of the island vanishing, like someone had just nibbled them off; the piers and the warehouses way out west and then it was that chunk off the Bronx that was gone one day and no one cared about that, don't even get me started-

Randi: Right-

Bradley: But this morning I woke up and it was getting closer and I live downtown... I looked out my window and the next block is just gone, into thin air- And no one wants to take responsibility- And if it keeps going like this, we'll have to move further and further in and then what's going to be left... ? We'll all be camped out in Central Park eating canned tuna-

Cindy: It's a darn shame-

Randi: It's a real crisis-

Cindy: Who's going to take responsibility?

Randi: That's what I want to know-

Bradley: I know-

Cindy: We hear your Bradley-

Bradley: Thank you-

Randi: Alright, let's take another call-

*Ace switches radio off.*

*On the screen appear the following lines one by one:*

*Did you remember to turn off the stove?*

*Are you sure you turned it off?*

*Ace opens the glove compartment, it is stuffed full of fortune cookies in their wrappers, they fall out as he rummages around.*

Ace: It's somewhere in here. I keep my dreams in the glove compartment so I can take them out and look at them sometimes. *(Throwing fortune cookies aside)* I eat a lotta Chinese.

*Ace offers some fortune cookies to the audience members.*

Ace: Have one. Go on. Even if you don't eat it, you can read your fortune. Get your money's worth.

*Hopefully they open the fortune cookies, either way, Ace opens his own.*

Ace: Wait wait wait. You have to read the fortune first before you eat the cookie, it's like bad luck if you don't.

*Ace shakes his head at those who ate the cookies first. Perhaps the fortunes appear on the screen too.*

Ace: Ok. Do you ever, like, play this game? Where you read the fortune and then you add on two words at the end? You know what I'm talking about. *(To one person)* You know what I'm talking about. *(He laughs.)* So this is how we play. You read your fortune and then at the end, you say "in a cab." *(He indicates to each audience member to read).* You read yours. *(At the end of the fortune he adds the words:)* In a cab. Say it say it. In a cab.

*Ace encourages each person to read their fortune then add the words "in a cab." Then he reads his own fortune and adds the words "in a cab." Perhaps he improvises with them, reading into their fortunes as they relate to who he thinks each of them is.*

Ace: *(reading his own fortune)* The object of your desire comes closer... in a cab. This one's going on the board...

*Ace pulls down his sun visor. Dozens of different fortunes from cookies are tacked to the back of it. Ace refers to these throughout the drive to deflect/answer questions and make pronouncements about the world.*

Ace: These are my greatest hits... *(Reads from sun visor)* "Wherever you go, you always take yourself with you..." in a cab. Right?

“You are a yellow desert flower alone in the wilderness...” in a cab.

“Look into your past milkshakes for answers...” in a cab. That one had to go up there.

Ace: *(He sticks the latest fortune up there. Reads it again to himself)*  
The object of your desire comes closer. The object of your desire comes closer.

*We see a Pretzel stand up ahead on the street.*

Ace: Bingo. Pretzels-

*Ace pulls over and yells out to Iago, who incidentally might also be wearing a red coat.*

Ace: Yo man. Give me everything I desire with mustard. *(Turns to back.)* Anyone want a pretzel? How about some Filet Mignon? Caviar? Tofurkey? You look like a vegan. *(Beat)* Nahh. They just got pretzels.

*Tells Iago how many pretzels he wants based on customer's order.*

Ace: So you seen our friend?

Iago: Who?

Ace: Come on-

Iago: Man you gotta let that go-

Ace: Hey I'm zen, I'm chill, I'm cool – I'm freezing my balls off I'm so cool. Come on, you're my oracle. Tell me why the wind is blowing up your ass-

Iago: You gotta keep moving-

Ace: I'm moving-

Iago: Move move move-

Ace: You think I'm not moving all the time-

Iago: You're driving but you're not moving-

Ace: You out here every day, I know you seen him-

Iago: A man can see and not see at the same time.

Ace: That's very wise. Very fucking wise... But I'm bringing you customers, man. You're in a zombie-land down here and I'm making you money-

Iago: That's (*names price*)

*Iago hands over pretzels.*

Iago: That's (*restates price*)

Ace: (*distributing pretzels*) Best pretzels you ever tasted... Eat them now before they go out of business- These are on Mr Iago here.

Iago: Hey, c'mon-

Ace: We'll pay when we get what we need... But these are some sub standard products you're selling. Where's the mustard?

Iago: I haven't seen him.

Ace: Seen who?

Iago: I swear I haven't-

Ace: But you would tell me if you had?

Iago: I gotta make living out here, Ace-

Ace: Where's he hustling tonight-?

Iago: Even if I knew-

Ace: Where?

Iago: I dunno. If I was gonna say-

Ace: If you were gonna say...?

Iago: If I was gonna say... Maybe the alleys-

Ace: *(To backseat)* Mmmm. These pretzels are delicious; you gotta come back to this guy. He makes the best pretzels south of Wall St, no south of 14<sup>th</sup> St... Good work, man. *(He gives Iago \$10)* Keep the change. Oh and *(throws him a fortune cookie -Iago doesn't catch it)...* for you. I see a prosperous future-

Iago: I didn't say nothing-

Ace: Don't worry... See something say nothing -

*As Ace drives off muffled through the windows, we hear Iago yelling-*

Iago: I didn't see nothing!



Ace: *(Reading from Fortune sayings on the visor)* The man who waits til tomorrow, misses the opportunities of today- The man who waits til tomorrow, misses the opportunities of today- The man who waits til tomorrow is a sucker in a cab- We gotta move. Move move move-

*Ace drives with intention. Puts on the radio. He's in a good mood now. The phone rings, he answers it. He conducts the conversation half in Spanish.*

Ace: *(Spanish is underlined)* Yo? How you doing... Yeah, I'm driving. Who told you that? I'm not. Why would I go look for him? If he happens to be where I'm driving then I'm not looking, he just happens to be there. Did Iago call you? That little fucker. I'm just driving. I'm just doing my job. I'm not in relapse. But if I see him I see him. So what?! Anyway, he's not the one I'm- Nothing, I didn't say anything. You're the one saying her name, I didn't even mention her. I asked you not to talk about her to me. I asked you not to talk about her. Hang on. *(To customers)* Right or left? Right or left?

*The word "Right" appears on the video screen. Passengers state right or left. Ace turns the direction they want to go.*

Ace: *(Back into phone)* Ok I won't. I said I won't. I know what happened last time. Fine. *(He hangs up)*

*The voices of Ana and Ace fade up behind us again: intimate, close. They are both sitting in the back seat.*

Ana: How would you feel, if you sat back here – and I drive-

*Sound of door opening she goes to get out.*

Ace: You're not driving. You're not driving. You're not driving-

*He grabs her arm.*

Ana: Let go, let go of my – ow! Ow ow ow- You're an idiot-

Ace: You're an idiot-

Ana: Stop being an idiot, idiot-

Ace: I'm not the idiot, idiot-

Ana: You hurt my arm-

Ace: I'm sorry, boo, I'm sorry... I'm sorry.

Ana: Take me home-

Ace: Nahh boo, come on-

*Silent sulking.*

Ace: Come on. Ok, ok, ok, alright, I'll let you drive-

Ana: You will?

*Beat.*

Ace: No.

Ana: You asshole- you know your face is crooked, you know that-

Ace: Well your breath is stinky-

Ana: Your hair is falling out-

Ace: Your eye is lazy-

Ana: Your feet have warts-

Ace: Your thighs are fat-

Ana: I thought you liked my fat thighs-

Ace: I do, I love your juicy thighs- I just thought we were telling each other facts about our bodies-

Ana: You are a cono... *(starts laughing)*. You know who you remind me of when you talk like that?

Ace: Don't say that, don't you ever say that... I'm nuthin like him.

Ana: Ok, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Please take me home-

Ace: Nah you're my prisoner now. We gonna live inside this cab forever. We're gonna eat gyros for breakfast lunch and dinner and sleep in the trunk and drive around the whole country and tell each other stories and we'll use the engine to stay warm and in spring we'll roll down the windows and when we get back we'll get married driving over Brooklyn bridge and we'll have babies and I'll teach them how to drive before they can walk and we'll get old sitting right here-

Ana: That's so stupid...

Ace: That's my dream-

Ana: It's a stupid dream-

Ace: Hey don't shit on my dreams-

Ana: I love you stupid face-

Ace: I love you stupid face more- Come here- Come here- Come here-