

Ten Stops on a Train

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TEN STOPS ON A TRAIN

There are four chairs set up adjacent to each other and in a row. The stage is well lit, and the play opens with the sound of a running subway train. The train is empty, and after a moment we hear the train start slowing down as it approaches the station.

STOP #1 - WHITEHALL STREET STATION

"Ding-Dong" "Whitehall Street Station" (Sound of opening doors). Enter MICHELLE, MICHELLE'S MIND and SKETCHY GUY.

Michelle hurries in and sits down in Seat 1, clearly nervous. Sketchy Guy doesn't sit down, and simply stands there looking out towards the audience, his hood up so that you can barely see his face. He's wearing headphones and listening to some intensely loud music, which can be heard from within the hood.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The actors rock slightly to the right to simulate the train leaving. (Sound of of train dies after six seconds).

Michelle stare out towards the audience with a blank expression on her face. Sketchy Guy bobs his head to the music, his feet twitching to the beat. Michelle fidgets around, crossing her legs, and clutching her purse on her lap. She then glances over at Sketchy Guy who's standing to her left.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Ummmm, okay. Sketchy. (Pause). I'm stuck here, alone, in this train with the sketchiest guy I have ever seen. Perfect. (Pause). Maybe if I'm really quiet he won't notice I'm here.

SKETCHY GUY

(Mumbles) Where you gonna go?

Michelle freezes.

SKETCHY GUY

(Mumbles) Where you gonna hide?

Sketchy guy continues bobbing and weaving to the music, mouthing the rap lyrics that he's hearing.

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MICHELLE'S MIND

This guy's so juvenile...

After a moment, the song ends, and the guy takes off his headphones, which hang by his neck. He looks around the car, noticing that he and Michelle are alone. He turns forward, a smile appearing on his face.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Damn, I better not have left my cell at the cafe. (Looks through her purse). That clerk was definitely trying to rush me...

Sketchy Guy starts watching her rifle through her purse, and when she looks up, they lock eyes. Michelle quickly glances away, looking straight ahead. Sketchy Guy keeps looking at her.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Jesus. He's still looking at me. This guy's sick. (Pause). Maybe if I stare back at him he'll leave me alone.

Michelle looks at him in the eye, but instead of turning away, the sketchy guy turns his body around so that he's facing her. Michelle quickly looks forward.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Bad idea.

SKETCHY GUY

Hey sweetcheeks.

(Sound of the train slowing down). Sketchy Guy stumbles a little as the train loses speed, and looks like he's about to approach her.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Oh God. He's coming over.

STOP #2 - RECTOR STREET STATION

"Ding-Dong" "Rector Street Station" (Sound of opening doors). Enter JOHN.

John stumbles into the train as soon as the doors open, and immediately sits down in Seat 3, just as Sketchy Guy manages to approach Michelle. John appears to be oblivious to what is going on, and sits down with a blank look in his eye, staring straight ahead. Sketchy Guy stands awkwardly for a

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second, swears, and exits the train just before the doors close.

MICHELLE'S MIND

There is a god.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The actors rock slightly to the right to simulate the train leaving. (Sound of train dies after six seconds).

The two characters sit in silence, simply staring ahead. Michelle glances over at the guy to her left.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Okay. This guys seems normal enough. Thank God he came by when he did.

The two sit there quietly for about five seconds, silent and completely still.

JOHN'S MIND

FUCK!!!

Immediately following his mental outburst, John slumps forward in his seat and puts his head in his hands. Michelle turns her head to look at him, a concerned look in her eye.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Nope. Scratch that. This guy is loony too. (Pause). I wonder if he's okay...

JOHN'S MIND

Alright John. Relax. Just breath. You can do that right? Just breath in, (Pause), and breath out. Breath in (Pause), and breath out. (Pause). Good.

As John directs himself, we see him breath in and out in accordance to what is going on in his head. Michelle continues staring at him for a moment longer, and then starts looking through her purse. John hasn't moved.

JOHN'S MIND

The distance. She broke up with you because of the distance. (Pause). Fine, I can buy that. (Pause). She shouldn't have to put her life on hold just because you're not around John. (Pause). Yeah John, it's okay

(MORE)

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JOHN'S MIND (cont'd)
for her to be screwing your friend.
(Clenches hair, and starts rocking
back and forth).

(Sound of train slowing down). Michelle finishes rummaging through her bag and looks over at the guy next to her as the train slows down. She then looks at the door.

STOP #3 - CORTLANDT STREET STATION

"Ding-Dong" "Cortlandt Street Station" (Sound of opening doors). Enter DAVID and BEGGAR.

David and Beggar walk into the train. David struts towards Seat 2. Michelle stares at David.

DAVID'S MIND
Click!

David makes a clicking motion with his thumb with his right thumb and sits down, a cocky look on his face. The beggar sits down in seat four, glancing at John with little interest.

DAVID'S MIND
Oh yeah, she was totally checking
me out. (Smirks).

Michelle turns to her right, an indifferent look on her face.

MICHELLE'S MIND
Douchebag, 9 o'clock. (Sighs).

The beggar faces forward, his hands resting on a wine bottle covered in a brown paper bag on his lap. After a moment, he stands up and walks to the left end of the train, mumbling to himself and holding the bottle of wine in his hands. He stands there mumbling, and then takes a swig from the bottle, only to find that he's all out of alcohol.

BEGGAR
Fuck. (Grumbles).

Michelle glances over at the beggar, annoyed at the outburst. John's no longer slouched over and has his elbows on his knees, staring straight ahead, a dark look on his face. David takes a couple shots of himself with his cellular phone, his face turning from side-to-side so that he can get shots in profile.

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The Beggar looks depressed for a moment, and then turns around, walking up to Michelle in Seat 1.

BEGGAR

Missy, could you spare a little change?

Michelle stares at him for a moment, and then looks at the empty bottle in his hand.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Alcoholic. (Judgmental). I'd give him some change if I had any...

Michelle shakes her head no and then looks forward. The Beggar then approaches David in Seat 2.

BEGGAR

Some change sir?

David stops taking pictures of himself with his cellphone, and stares away from the Beggar towards his left, a look of exasperation on his face.

DAVID'S MIND

Really, there aren't enough chicks on this train. And the one chick here isn't anything special.

David doesn't acknowledge the old man's presence, and the Beggar moves on to John in Seat 3.

BEGGAR

Spare some change sir?

John just sits there, his elbows still resting on his knees, his eyes clouded and distant.

JOHN'S MIND

Did I do something wrong? Sure there were problems here and there, but what relationship doesn't? (Pause). None of this makes any sense.

The Beggar grumbles and lurches a bit as the train starts to slow down and moves to the door at the right end of the train. Michelle turns her head to look at him, and David believes he's getting checked out again.

DAVID'S MIND

Click!

David makes the clicking motion with his hand again as the train comes to a complete stop. John sits up and runs his fingers through his hair. The doors open.

STOP #4 - CITY HALL STATION

"Ding-Dong" "City Hall Station" (Sound of opening doors).
Enter HORDE + SARAH and exit BEGGAR.

The Beggar leaves the train as a horde of people rush in through both doors. The train is packed so that we can't see the people sitting in the chairs and are unaware that Sarah has sat down in Seat 4. The crowd is silent as they enter the train, save for the sounds of them brushing up against each other.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The people continue to fidget around, taking a while to arrange themselves comfortably in the train.

DAVID'S MIND

Click! Click! Click! Wait, was that even a click? Yeah, it must have been...

The crowd continues to move around, eventually spreading out and forming two groups by the two doors. The four seats are once again visible.

MICHELLE'S MIND

I wonder how Rachel's doing. She didn't seem too good last time I saw her. OWWWWW! Watch it! Jeeze you could kill someone with those heels. (Pause). I wonder if they come in _____.

JOHN'S MIND

BLACK. Like my soul. Twisted, tortured, (pause), ummmmmmmmm, twisted, tortured, _____.

DAVID'S MIND

Titties. Huge freaking titties. Ten out of ten. Yes, now turn around sweetheart, yeah, let me get a good look at you. Mmmmmhmmmm, yup. Ass, nine out of _____.

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MICHELLE'S MIND

Twenty minutes left. I know I shouldn't have bothered with the masquera. Looking pretty won't help if you're ten minutes late Michelle. God, I wish I was as pretty as _____.

JOHN'S MIND

Megan! Why are you doing this? Do you honestly expect us to be friends after all this? I don't know if I'll ever be able to look at you _____.

DAVID'S MIND

Again? Seriously, I'm on fire today. (Pause) Hey, that girl kinda looks like that chick I hooked up with at the bar. Damn, that lay was _____.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Nice! I brought my lucky hello kitty eraser! Doubled up with my lucky pink sock, there's no way I can screw this up. (Pause) I know dad said that I shouldn't think about it like that, but what the hell, this can't hurt, _____?

JOHN'S MIND

Right. Time to move on John. You don't want to be like every other pathetic dude who gets dumped. (Laughs nervously) Remember how emotional Dan looked in the bus when his Katy broke up with him? God that was pathetic.....

The train starts slowing down and the crowd of people stumbles as the train draws to a halt.

STOP #5 - CANAL STREET STATION

"Ding-Dong" "Canal Street Station" (Sound of opening doors). Exit Crowd and enter KID, BUSINESS MAN, and LOUD GIRL.

The massive crowd of people exits the train and a Kid, a Business Man, and a Loud Girl on a cellphone enter.

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As the people file out, John starts crying, his head in his hands and his shoulders shaking as he sobs. David is in the process of changing his hair-do and is wearing sunglasses inside the train, looking extremely pleased with himself. Michelle is reading a magazine (Cosmo) and has her legs crossed. The new protagonist (Sarah) is busy tapping away on her blackberry phone. She is dressed in a professional, yet attractive manner.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The Business Man walks to the left end of the train and pulls out a blackberry. Loud Girl follows close behind, seemingly unaware of her surroundings as she stops by Seat 1, talking loudly and smacking her lips. The Kid walks to the right end of the train, staring out towards the audience with a crafty smirk on his face.

LOUD GIRL

Oh my god. No way! (Pause) Mike hooked up with her? But she's so, like, fat!

Michelle glances over, clearly annoyed. She rolls her eyes and turns the page. John's still crying, David's playing with his hair, and Sarah glances at John indifferently before looking back at her phone.

LOUD GIRL

She can have Mike for all I care. It's not like he's even going to like, call her or anything. Isn't he also hooking up with that Paulina girl?

The businessman continues tapping away at his phone.

LOUD GIRL

Wait, what? I can't hear you. Mindy. I can't hear you.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Wow. What's up with all the cellphones? (Turns to look at David next to her). And now this douchebag is wearing sunglasses in the train.

DAVID'S MIND

Oh yeah. Rockin' the sunglasses indoors. It's brilliant, not only can I check girls out without them knowing, but I also look DAMN good doing it. Win win.

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LOUD GIRL

Mindy? Aaaargh, I'm not getting reception. (Hangs up)

MICHELLE'S MIND

Douche probably thinks we can't see him staring at us. God, creeps like this are so easy to read. (Looks over at John). Oh my god, is he crying? (Continues staring).

DAVID'S MIND

Click! Damn, these women can't get enough of this! (Turns to look at John). What a baby.

There is an awkward pause here where no one talks for a moment. The Loud Girl has finally grown silent. The Kid is picking his nose, pulling out a big booger and then putting it in his mouth. David watches, a look of disgust on his face. There is another awkward pause and then Sarah stops texting on her phone and looks at John sitting next to her. David glances at her, noticing her for the first time.

DAVID'S MIND

Hello! It's the hot chick from before! (Smirks) This little wimp's gonna make this too easy.

David tears off his glasses dramatically, throws his hair to the side, and tries to make eye contact with Sarah. She looks at him for a second and then crosses her legs, turning her face in the other direction. David keeps looking at her for a second and then turns forward, a smirk on his face.

SARAH'S MIND

Oh too easy. I'm totally going to screw with this guy. (Smiles).

The train starts slowing down and stops at the next station.

STOP #6 - PRINCE STREET STATION

"Ding-Dong" "Prince Street Station" (Sound of opening doors). Enter ELDERLY LADY, GOSSIP GIRL #1 and GOSSIP GIRL #2. Exit BUSINESS MAN.

The train doors open and an Elderly Lady enters from the door on the left, her steps slow since she's using a cane. She pauses when she enters, looking at the four main protagonists for a second before making her way to the far left of the train car. From the door on the right, the

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Business Man exits, bumping into a pair of impatient young women entering the train (Gossip Girl #1 and Gossip Girl #2) laughing loudly and playfully bumping into each other. They proceed to the right end of the train, standing behind the young boy, who stares at them and starts fidgeting around nervously. On their way there, they glance over at David, who see's them and smiles back, a cocky smile on his face. He makes two clicking motions with his thumb. They start giggling, and then continue glancing over at him for a while, their giggles getting louder and their poking and bumping more intense.

Loud Girl watches the pair of girls that enter the train in annoyance. Michelle and Sarah watch the Business Man leave the train in passing interest, Sarah pulling out a small mirror and beginning to apply lipstick. John's no longer sobbing, his face still covered by his hands.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The train lurches a little as it starts, and the two girls bump into each other as they lose balance, sending them into yet another fit of giggling. However, the lurching of the train also causes the Old Lady to also lose her balance, leading her to drop her cane which falls to the ground and rolls away from her. She stares at it in disbelief for a moment, and then looks at the two giggling women across the train, clearly annoyed and assuming that they are giggling at her.

Michelle, Sarah, and David see the cane fall. David looks at it, appearing mesmerized by it, and then looks away abruptly. Sarah stares at it and then continues applying her lipstick. Michelle looks at it for a moment, and then at the three protagonists sitting next to her. Loud Girl is once again on her cell, her body turned so that she has her back to the audience, her left hand with a finger in a left ear so that she can hear the phone.

DAVID'S MIND

Nose goes.

SARAH'S MIND

Someone'll get it.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Really? (Pause). I'll get it.

Michelle puts away her magazine and starts getting up. However, before she can stand upright, the Kid walks up to the Elderly Lady and picks up the cane. He hands it to her. The Elderly Lady smiles at him.

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ELDERLY LADY

Thank you deary.

The Elderly Lady then looks at Michelle and smiles at her as well, having noticed that she was going to help. Michelle looks relieved and nods back, smiling.

The train becomes quiet for a moment, each character doing their own thing. Loud Girl is talking softly on her phone. The Kid goes back to his spot on the train, looking at Gossip Girl #1 and Gossip Girl #2, who are staring at David and John, whispering and giggling to each other, their faces only inches apart. David's clearly loving all the attention, and runs his hands through his hair and clears his throat.

The train starts slowing down as it reaches the station.

STOP #7 - 8TH STREET STATION (NYU)

"Ding-Dong" "8th Street Station" (Sound of opening doors).
Enter MOVIE STAR, PUBLICIST, and MANAGER.

The train doors open and Loud Girl leaves the train, her finger still in her ear, the conversation having turned serious. The doors remains opened for a second, and then a movie star, his manager, and his publicist rush into the train just as the doors close. In their rush, the three move in front of the Old Lady, who shuffles backwards so as to avoid getting crushed. At the sight of the Movie Star, the entire train freezes. Michelle stops reading, involuntarily bringing the magazine up to shield her face. David stops staring at the giggling couple and stares at the Movie Star, his mouth dropping a little and his eyes widening. John doesn't move, his right hand, clenching and unclenching slowly. Sarah freezes for a moment, her eyes wide in shock. She then simultaneously straightens her tight skirt and business shirt before quickly adjusting her hair. Gossip Girl #1 and Gossip Girl #2 stop giggling, putting their hands over their mouths and staring at each other in disbelief. They then start whispering to each other, frantically looking and gesturing the the Movie Star. The Kid stares at the three men that walk in, not identifying the person but clearly aware that he is of some importance.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). The three men get to their place on the train, the Publicist breathing heavily and clutching a folder.

PUBLICIST

Wow. That was close. I barely made it. (Breathes heavily).

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The Movie Star looks around the train for a moment, everyone else immediately glancing away from his gaze. He continues looking for a moment, and then turns to the Manager.

MOVIE STAR

So, what's next?

The Manager pulls out a blackberry and looks through it for a moment, his eyes glued to the screen.

MANAGER

Meeting with Matt Lauer from the Today Show in twenty minutes, break for coffee in an hour and a half, (pause), stop by the hotel room to meet up with the new agent ten minutes after that, and then we rush over to the Daily Show and prepare for the interview with John Stewart.

The Movie Star looks up, thinking for a moment, and then nods. Suddenly, he turns back to the Manager.

MOVIE STAR

Wait, what about lunch?

The Manager looks back at the phone.

MANAGER

Hmmmm. Lets see...lunch...lunch...

PUBLICIST

No time. Coffee is lunch today. Grab a bagel so that you can eat it at the studio later.

The Movie Star looks disappointed, but nods, and then pulls out a packet of papers and starts leafing through them. The train is dead silent, everyone looking in different directions and occasionally glancing over at the group of three men. Michelle's mind speaks first.

MICHELLE'S MIND

Oh. My. God. Is that who I think it is?

DAVID'S MIND

Wow. Holy shit. I can't believe this.

JOHN'S MIND

.....

SARAH'S MIND

Is my skirt straight? How about my hair? I'd straighten them a little more, but then it would be way too obvious. (Pause). Oh my god, oh my god, OH MY GOD!!!!!! (Girlish squeal).

The train slows as it reaches the station.

STOP #8 - 14TH STREET - UNION SQUARE STATION

"Ding-Dong" "14th Street, Union Square Station" (Sound of opening doors). Enter GIRLFRIEND and BOYFRIEND. Exit OLD LADY, GOSSIP GIRL #1, GOSSIP GIRL #2.

The train doors open and the two gossiping girls exit the train. On the opposite side, the Old Lady makes as if to leave, however, she is blocked by the Movie Star and his entourage. As a result, it takes her several moments to walk around the group, nearly stumbling as she tries to avoid them. She exits. From the other side of the train, a girlfriend and her boyfriend enter, holding hands and staring at each other adoringly. They approach the right edge of the car, and stand right behind the young kid, who makes a gross face when they pass by.

"Please watch the doors" (Sound of closing doors). (Sound of train starting). John looks up for the first time, noticing the couple that entered the train. His eyes are dark, his expression sorrowful. Everyone around him still glances towards the actor's entourage, who are no longer talking but simply keeping to themselves. John's eyes remain fixed on the couple on the opposite end of the train.

MOVIE STAR

I'm reconsidering this role, Paul.

MANAGER

(Shrugs) You got time to decide whether it's right for you.

The girlfriend leans against the wall of the car, her boyfriend positioning himself so that he's leaning over her. She looks up at him, and then glances over to the other side of the car, noticing John, David, and then the Movie Star.

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DAVID'S MIND

Click!

The girlfriends eyes go wide when she sees the celebrity, her body visibly shrinking away from her boyfriend as she moves out from under him. Her boyfriend's surprised by this and looks over, noticing him as well. The girlfriend stands up straight, standing away from the guy and trying to get the attention of the men across the car. John watches her, dismay appearing on his face.

JOHN'S MIND

(Frowns) Women.

The Movie Star ponders what his manager said for a moment, and then continues talking, oblivious to the commotion he is causing.

MOVIE STAR

Wait, don't I need to decide before the meeting at 11?

PUBLICIST

Yup. You do.

MOVIE STAR

Shit.

The train starts slowing down, and the three men approach the doors. The girlfriend approaches the other door as well, planning to take the same exit as them. Her boyfriend looks at her in shock, looking at her and the men across the car. The train stops on the tracks, not yet having reached the next station.

MANAGER

What the hell?

MOVIE STAR

(Laughs) Guess this isn't our stop.

The three men step back to where they were originally standing, and the girlfriend steps back uncomfortably, staring back at her boyfriend who's staring at her in disbelief, his arms crossed in front of him.

GIRLFRIEND

Where are we getting off again?

BOYFRIEND

57th street.

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She nods, approaching him and smiling at him seductively. He looks uncomfortable for a moment, and then smiles, holding out both his hands. She grabs them, and then pushes against them, a playful smile on her face. He falls back, letting her push him up against the wall. David glances at them quickly and frowns slightly. John continues staring at the couple, his eyes menacing and full of rage.

DAVID'S MIND

I could totally get her if I wanted it.

JOHN'S MIND

Dumbass. What a total freakin' idiot. He's getting played like a total sap.

Michelle is now once again looking at her magazine, occasionally glancing over at the entourage to her right. Sarah's on her blackberry, typing and glancing furiously.

MICHELLE'S MIND

How many movies has he been in? I think I've seen... wait let me think... five. Yeah, five movies. Not counting his appearance on Law and Order...

SARAH'S MIND

O-H space M-Y space G-O-D period. (Pause) I'm on a train with my biggest celebrity crush. (Pause) Wait, scratch that. I'm on a parked train with the hottest guy on earth. (Girlish squeal). I hope it never starts...

MICHELLE'S MIND

No wait. It was six movies. I'm forgetting that Disney movie that he acted in when he was thirteen. How did he get so buff at that age?

SARAH'S MIND

What if we're stuck on this train forever? (Looks around). Okay, I'm definitely the hottest girl here. He'd definitely choose me. (Blushes). Oh my god, we'd have the most gorgeous children.

MICHELLE'S MIND

I wonder what Cosmo has to say about this. Shouldn't there be a, "What to do when you encounter a celebrity" column? (Reads for a second) Ugggggh! Cosmo, you have failed me!

The train starts up again, and the publicist breathes out a sigh of relief.

PUBLICIST

Any more of those and we'll be in big trouble.

MOVIE STAR

This is our stop right?

PUBLICIST

Yup.

David looks over, taking off his sunglasses and staring at the group of men intently.

DAVID'S MIND

What's the big deal? I'm definitely better looking than that guy.

The train starts slowing, and it reaches the next station.

STOP #9 - 23RD STREET STATION

STOP #10 - 28TH STREET STATION