



CONSTELLATIONS

BY NICK PAYNE



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CONSTELLATIONS
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For Minna

Dedicated to Dad

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Mum.

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Lastly, I would like to acknowledge “A Memoir of Living with a Brain Tumour” by Tom Lubbock, originally published in *The Observer*, November 2010.

CONSTELLATIONS was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, Sloane Square, London, on January 13, 2012. It was directed by Michael Longhurst, the designer was Tom Scutt, the lighting designer was Lee Curran, the composer was Simon Slater, and the sound designer was David McSeveney. The cast was as follows:

MARIANNE Sally Hawkins
ROLAND Rafe Spall

CONSTELLATIONS was originally produced on Broadway by the Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer) and the Royal Court Theatre, by special arrangement with Ambassador Theatre Group and Dodgers, on December 16, 2014. It was directed by Michael Longhurst, the scenic and costume designer was Tom Scutt, the lighting designer was Lee Curran, the sound designer was David McSeveney, the original music was by Simon Slater, and the production stage manager was Peter Wolf. The cast was as follows:

MARIANNE Ruth Wilson
ROLAND Jake Gyllenhaal

CHARACTERS

MARIANNE

ROLAND

A change in formatting — between normal, **bold**, or *italic* text — indicates a change in universe.

CONSTELLATIONS

MARIANNE. Do you know why it's impossible to lick the tips of your elbows? They hold the secret to immortality, so if you could lick them, there's a chance you'd be able to live forever. But if everyone did it, if everyone could actually lick the tips of their elbows, then there'd be chaos. Because you can't just go on living and living and living.

ROLAND. I'm. I'm in a relationship. So. Yeah.

MARIANNE. Do you know why it's impossible to lick the tips of your elbows? They hold the secret to immortality, so if you could lick them, there's a chance you'd be able to live forever. But if everyone did it, if everyone could actually lick the tips of their elbows, then there'd be chaos. Because you can't just go on living and living and living.

ROLAND. I've. I've just come out of a really serious relationship. So. Yeah.

MARIANNE. I was just making conversation.

ROLAND. Sure.

MARIANNE. Just trying to start a conversation.

ROLAND. No, sure. But. Still.

MARIANNE. Do you know why it's impossible to lick the tips of your elbows? They hold the secret to immortality, so if you could lick them, there's a chance you'd be able to live forever. But if everyone did it, if everyone could actually lick the tips of their elbows, then there'd be chaos. Because you can't just go on living and living and living.

ROLAND. Oh right.

MARIANNE. Try it.

ROLAND. What's that?

MARIANNE. Your elbows, try licking them.

ROLAND. I'm all right.

(Marianne attempts to lick her elbows, demonstrating the difficulty.)

MARIANNE. I'm Marianne.

ROLAND. Roland.

MARIANNE. Thank God the rain's held off.

ROLAND. Yeah.

MARIANNE. Nothing worse than a soggy barbeque.

ROLAND. Yeah.

MARIANNE. Soggy sausages. Would you like a drink?

ROLAND. I'm all right. My wife's actually just gone to get me a beer.

MARIANNE. Try it.

ROLAND. What's that?

MARIANNE. Your elbows, try licking them.

*(Marianne attempts to lick her elbows, demonstrating the difficulty.
Roland, initially hesitant, also attempts to lick his elbows.)*

ROLAND. See what you mean. I'm Roland.

MARIANNE. Marianne.

ROLAND. Shame about the rain.

MARIANNE. Nothing worse than a soggy barbeque.

ROLAND. So are you, are you a friend of Jane's or —

MARIANNE. No, Jane, yeah. We were at college together.

ROLAND. Right.

MARIANNE. Yourself?

ROLAND. My wife used to work with Jane.

MARIANNE. Your elbows, try licking them.

*(Marianne attempts to lick her elbows, demonstrating the difficulty.
Roland, initially hesitant, also attempts to lick his elbows.)*

ROLAND. See what you mean. I'm Roland.

MARIANNE. Marianne.

ROLAND. Shame about the rain.

MARIANNE. Nothing worse than a soggy barbeque.

ROLAND. So are you, are you a friend of Jane's or...?

MARIANNE. Who's Jane?

ROLAND. Jane's the — She's the lady having the barbeque?

MARIANNE. Oh, right, Christ, no. I was just walking past and I saw a load of free booze and sausages. I'm joking.

ROLAND. Right.

MARIANNE. Jane and I were at college together. How about you?

ROLAND. I play football with Tom.

MARIANNE. Tom?

ROLAND. Jane's brother-in-law. Blue-y green T-shirt.

MARIANNE. Yes.

ROLAND. D'you want a drink?

MARIANNE. I'm fine. Thanks.

ROLAND. So what do you, what do you do? For a living.

MARIANNE. I work at Cambridge University.

ROLAND. Right. Great.

MARIANNE. Yourself?

ROLAND. I'm a beekeeper.

MARIANNE. Really?

ROLAND. Yeah, yeah.

MARIANNE. You're really a beekeeper?

ROLAND. I'm really a beekeeper.

MARIANNE. I fucking love honey.

ROLAND. Oh yeah?

MARIANNE. Spoon. Jar of honey. Heaven.

ROLAND. What sort of honey do you normally go for?

MARIANNE. I'm too embarrassed.

ROLAND. How d'you mean?

MARIANNE. Too embarrassed to tell you.

ROLAND. Why's that?

(Marianne whispers the following into Roland's ear: "I like Tesco. The really dirty stuff, the prison stripe stuff.")

That's all right.

MARIANNE. Really?

ROLAND. Of course.

MARIANNE. I'm not putting honest, hard-working beekeepers out of business?

ROLAND. Wouldn't've thought so.

MARIANNE. Do you think I'm a honey philistine?

ROLAND. Some of the supermarket stuff's all right.

MARIANNE. Really?

ROLAND. Yeah, some of it's fine, yeah.

MARIANNE. So — And I mean don't take this the wrong way, but, I mean, are you —

ROLAND. Go on.

MARIANNE. You — I mean do you make a living?

ROLAND. I do, yeah.

MARIANNE. I mean from beekeeping.

ROLAND. From beekeeping.

MARIANNE. How does it — I mean how does it —

ROLAND. Well. I used to, I used to work for a friend of mine. In Wiltshire.

MARIANNE. Very nice.

ROLAND. After a while though, decided I wanted to go into business on my own. But my, my girlfriend — Ex-girlfriend —

MARIANNE. I'm sorry for your loss.

ROLAND. What's that?

MARIANNE. No — I was — I was making a —

ROLAND. Right.

MARIANNE. Sorry for your loss as in

(Gestures, sliding a finger across her throat, "killed.")

ROLAND. Right.

MARIANNE. It was just a —

ROLAND. No.

MARIANNE. Anyway you were —

ROLAND. Yeah, no, so, she, my ex, she wanted to move to London. So we got this one-bed place in Mile End.

MARIANNE. No wonder you broke up with her, fuck me. I'd've broken up with her if she'd made me leave Wiltshire for fucking Mile End.

ROLAND. I'm still living there, actually.

MARIANNE. Lovely curries.

ROLAND. There wasn't any room. For bees.

MARIANNE. I see.

ROLAND. We didn't have a garden.

MARIANNE. Bummer.

ROLAND. One day I was up on the roof and I realised it was perfect. So I tidied it up a bit and I got my first hive.

MARIANNE. Amazing.

ROLAND. Went from one to two, from two to four. We, we went away. Me and Laura. We went away to Spain and when we got back, we found that the flat had been raided.

MARIANNE. Raided?

ROLAND. I used to keep the honey in trash bags. You know those black, plastic garbage bags —

MARIANNE. Yes.

ROLAND. Didn't have a lotta money, at the time, so the trash bags were just a cheap alternative. When we were away though, one of the neighbours called the police. Thought I was brewing up smack or something. They properly went for it. The police. They kicked the front door in, turned the flat upside down and they confiscated all these trash bags filled with the most amazing honey and honeycomb.

MARIANNE. Did that really happen?

ROLAND. Yeah.

MARIANNE. You used to keep honey in trash bags?

ROLAND. Yeah.

MARIANNE. *Roland I don't think that I can go back to work.*

ROLAND. *Have they told you that?*

MARIANNE. *They're great.*

ROLAND. *You've told them then?*

MARIANNE. *Not yet.*

ROLAND. *But you're going to.*

MARIANNE. *I think so.*

ROLAND. *But you haven't said any of this to them?*

MARIANNE. *They've said whatever I want.*

ROLAND. *So what about part-time?*

MARIANNE. *I don't know the point.*

ROLAND. *You mean the point of going part-time?*

MARIANNE. *Either I'm walking or I'm*

Either I'm walker

I either do it or I don't. Scares me.

ROLAND. *Work?*

MARIANNE. *Stopping.*

ROLAND. *Stopping work scares you?*

MARIANNE. *What will I do?*

ROLAND. *We'll go away. We can do whatever we want.*

MARIANNE. *I don't —*

ROLAND. *I'm being serious.*

MARIANNE. *I don't —*

ROLAND. *I mean it.*

MARIANNE. *I I don't*

We can't. I have to have to make a

I have to have a choice.

Control.

ROLAND. You want me to leave?

MARIANNE. Not in a bad way but yeah.

ROLAND. Have I done something wrong?

MARIANNE. No.

ROLAND. Have I said something, have I offended you?

MARIANNE. No.

ROLAND. I thought we'd had a nice evening?

MARIANNE. We did.

CONSTELLATIONS

by Nick Payne

1M, 1W

This spellbinding, romantic journey begins with a simple encounter between a man and a woman. But what happens next defies the boundaries of the world we think we know — delving into the infinite possibilities of their relationship and raising questions about the difference between choice and destiny.

“Who knew that higher physics could be so sexy, so accessible — and so emotionally devastating? CONSTELLATIONS, Nick Payne’s gorgeous two-character drama ... may be the most sophisticated date play Broadway has seen. [Payne is] a wise and compassionate young playwright ... And though CONSTELLATIONS is a supremely articulate play, it knows that words inevitably fail, that they are never enough to bind two people together forever. Time, it turns out, is a more effective breaker of hearts than human beings, with all their conflicted intentions, can ever be. This story of parallel universes is universal in every sense of the word.”
—**The New York Times**

“Nick Payne’s smart, slushy and pretty superb CONSTELLATIONS [is] about the progress of any ordinary life, which begins with seemingly endless possibilities and then dwindles until death forecloses further choice. ... I wasn’t alone in sniffing into my Playbill.”
—**The Guardian (UK)**

“Short and sweet and strangely haunting. ... the devilishly clever scribe is not playing games with either his characters or his audience, because with each iteration Roland and Marianne grow closer to one another — and become more important to us. And by the end of the play (has it really been only an hour?), we’re fully invested in their lives. All of them.”
—**Variety**

“... a singular astonishment, at once eloquent and mysterious but which nonetheless articulates within its own idiosyncratic idiom something that touches an audience as real. ... a wholly satisfying and complete emotional journey. ... The well-judged dialogue, at once terse and trenchant, finds its own characteristic poetry.”
—**The New Yorker**

Also by Nick Payne

IF THERE IS I HAVEN’T FOUND
IT YET

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