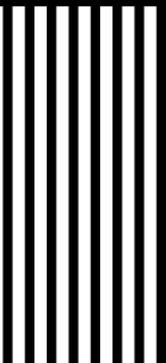


# NEED TO KNOW

BY  
JONATHAN CAREN



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



NEED TO KNOW  
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NEED TO KNOW was first professionally produced at Rogue Machine Theatre (John Perrin Flynn, Artistic Director), Los Angeles, on October 25, 2015. It was directed by Bart DeLorenzo, the scenic design was by Stephanie Kerley Schwartz, the lighting design was by Chu-Hsuan Chang, the sound design was by John Zalewski, the costume design was by EB Brooks, and the stage manager was Daniel Coronel. The cast was as follows:

STEVEN ..... Lucas Near-Verbrughe  
LILLY ..... Corryn Cummins  
MARK ..... Tim Cummings

## **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

STEVEN, late 20s/early 30s, charming, smart and talented.

LILLY, late 20s/early 30s, charming, smart and talented.

MARK, mid/late 30s, not. The actor should have some physical quality that stands out, whether he's overweight or thin and meek. We should judge him before we know him.

## **PLACE**

Two adjacent apartments between Harlem and the Upper West Side.

## **TIME**

Summer.

A slash (/) indicates the point of overlap in dialogue.  
The hallway can be its own location if need be.

*The “sense of the universal equality of things” is the hallmark of the web. Yet... the web is simultaneously imbuing our lives with all kinds of unique and permanent phenomena. These phenomena make up the essence of our digital auras; auras created by... the specificity of context, relationship and juxtaposition. Consider for instance how unique it is to geo-physically meet someone who you’ve only previously known online...*

—Gabriel Shalom,  
*Augmented Reality vs. Aura Recognition*

# NEED TO KNOW

## Scene 1

*Two adjacent apartments not split evenly onstage. The visible majority belongs to the apartment stage left. The living room has a desk/office space squeezed in the corner with a large MacBook. The couch is pressed up against the dividing wall.*

*The stage right apartment is settled. We do not see the entire room. Just a Tudor upholstered armchair, probably in light wheat, nutmeg, oat, or stone. There is a floor lamp and a nearby bookshelf and we see half a kitchen table.*

*In the S.L. apartment, Steven is in the process of unpacking just as Lilly has returned carrying a small bookshelf, bags from Duane Reade, and a plastic bag with two fish. She's out of breath.*

STEVEN. You bought a fish.

LILLY. *Two* fish, actually.

STEVEN. And a bookshelf.

LILLY. And a bookshelf.

STEVEN. One fish, two fish.

LILLY. Red fish, YOU fish.

STEVEN. How can I help?

LILLY. Put away the paper towels.

*She tosses him paper towels.*

STEVEN. Got it.

LILLY. And those spongy cloths go under the sink.

STEVEN. (*Offstage.*) I scrubbed down the bathroom.

LILLY. Thank you for doing that!

STEVEN. (*Offstage.*) I don't even want to know what that orange stuff was around the tub.

*Lilly pours the fish into a fishbowl.*

LILLY. There you go. You like that don't you.

STEVEN. (*Offstage.*) What was that?

LILLY. Nothing. I was talking to the fish.

*Steven returns.*

STEVEN. Where'd you find the shelf?

LILLY. Housing Works. I had to pry it from this lady named Flo who is apparently on a first-name basis with the manager, "Rodney," but I begged her for it since we don't have a lot of space, and then I put the cash on the counter and ran out of there and screw them, I got it.

STEVEN. Check it out, it totally fits.

LILLY. I can't wait 'til we're settled already.

STEVEN. Now that we have the shelf, you can finally unpack your books.

LILLY. (*With hesitancy.*) Yeah.

STEVEN. I thought you want to be "settled."

LILLY. I *know* what my book looks like, Steven.

STEVEN. We have to do something with the box.

LILLY. I don't need fifty copies on display to remind me I hate the cover.

STEVEN. Here we go with / the cover.

LILLY. I said *anything* but an ocean for *The High Tide*. And what do they put on it?

STEVEN. An ocean. I know.      LILLY. An ocean. I *hate* the cover. You hate the cover.      It's redundant!

STEVEN. If they let *me* design it, I would've put a barren, dried-out seabed. Because that's this little thing called *irony*.

LILLY. Really. I had no idea you were so wry and ironic.

STEVEN. Uh-uh. That was sarcasm. Not the same thing.

*She gazes at the fish. They look happy.*

LILLY. Aw... Look at them swimming around in their little bowl.

STEVEN. (*Trying to rally some positivity.*) See? This is a good thing.

LILLY. Rah rah.

STEVEN. It's starting to look like a home in here.

LILLY. I named the big one Lindsay.

STEVEN. Lindsay?

LILLY. Yes.

STEVEN. Why Lindsay?

LILLY. Because. He looks like a big ole pansy.

STEVEN. He keeps poking at the small one's bum.

LILLY. That's how they spawn. He wants her to release her eggs so he can spray them with milt.

STEVEN. That. Is. Horrifying. What's the smaller one's name?

LILLY. Fred.

STEVEN. Is that right?

LILLY. Fred is sophisticated and demure. And I feel sorry for her because she keeps trying to swim away, but look how Lindsay just won't leave her alone.

STEVEN. I thought you were at Starbucks.

LILLY. I needed a break.

STEVEN. How's the new draft?

LILLY. *(The way you say it when it's too painful to say the truth.)* It's good!

STEVEN. I can't wait to read it. Whenever you're ready.

LILLY. Not ready.

STEVEN. Whenever that may be.

LILLY. Don't push.

*He kisses her, then wipes her upper lip. Mark enters the stage right apartment carrying a FedEx.*

STEVEN. You're sweaty.

LILLY. And I smell like a bag lady.

STEVEN. I don't care.

LILLY. Want to turn up the A/C?

STEVEN. Or we can take off our clothes?

LILLY. Yeah, we could do that.

STEVEN. So let's do it then.

LILLY. So... no more unpacking?

STEVEN. I *could* put away the books...

*Lilly takes off her shirt.*

LILLY. Or not.

*Steven is about to take off his boxers. They ad lib towards sex until a phone buzzes. They both reach for their phones, distracted from sex, but Lilly leads the charge.*

STEVEN. It's me. One second.

LILLY. Who is it?

STEVEN. No one. It's work stuff.

*Lilly sits in her underwear and aimlessly checks her phone.*

*Throughout the scene, in the other apartment: Mark takes off his shoes, ruffles through mail, checks the fridge (not that we can see it) and searches on his computer.*

LILLY. I'll just be here. Half-naked on the couch.

STEVEN. What are you looking at?

LILLY. Nothing.

STEVEN. *(Looks over her shoulder.)* Anything interesting?

LILLY. God yes. Important things are happening on Instagram.

STEVEN. Give me the headlines.

LILLY. Justine posted another selfie in a bikini.

STEVEN. She's still with that tech guy in Hawaii?

LILLY. How does she already have fifty likes?

STEVEN. You really need me to answer that? C'mon, put that away.

*They both keep looking.*

No really put it away. Put that away.

*They don't. They keep scrolling through her phone.*

LILLY. Adam Waterstein is in Paris.

STEVEN. He lost weight.

LILLY. He's been taking Crossfit.

STEVEN. Every other day it's like "Adam Waterstein checked in to Crossfit."

LILLY. Risa Stokes is in Central Park.

STEVEN. Who's she with?

LILLY. I don't know them.

STEVEN. She has a new haircut.

LILLY. I kind of like it.

STEVEN. Yeah me too.

LILLY. Marcello and his dog.

STEVEN. It's a little much, right? I mean how many photos can you take of your dog before it's like, "We get it. You love your dog."

LILLY. Samantha Carlton is engaged?

STEVEN. You didn't know that?

LILLY. When did that happen?

STEVEN. See, around three months ago this fella Adrienne gave her a ring...

LILLY. We just had dinner with her and Adrienne at Stella like—

STEVEN. Three months ago.

LILLY. That was three months ago? Where has my life gone?

STEVEN. I ate it.

LILLY. Shut up.

*Lilly picks up her jeans and crosses to the bathroom.*

STEVEN. Where are you going?

LILLY. Shower.

STEVEN. I was going to fuck you. In the *daytime*.

LILLY. Fleeting urge. It's over.

STEVEN. Where'd it go?

LILLY. I don't know. I emailed it to someone.

*Lilly enters the bathroom. Steven hangs his head.*

STEVEN. (*Calling to her.*) We have that cabernet! I thought we could have it tonight... unless you want to go out?

LILLY. (*Offstage.*) Out where?

STEVEN. Raul has his opening at Eli's, remember?

*Mark exits his apartment.*

LILLY. (*Offstage.*) I don't know if I'm ready to see all those people.

STEVEN. I get it.

*Mark opens the front door and peeks inside. Steven swings his head around.*

Hello?

MARK. I'm so sorry.

*Door shuts. Steven puts on his jeans, walks over, and opens the door. Mark is startled. He has a FedEx package.*

STEVEN. Can I help you?

MARK. Sorry. So so sorry! So so sorry. Sorry.

STEVEN. It's OK.

MARK. I was picking up my mail. I thought I heard people.

STEVEN. Are you looking for someone?

MARK. I live in 4A. I wasn't sure if anyone moved in yet or not.

STEVEN. We moved in. We're in the *process* of moving in.

MARK. So many people are in and out these days it's hard to keep track of who is coming and who is going.

STEVEN. We're coming.

MARK. I'm Mark.

# NEED TO KNOW

by Jonathan Caren

2M, 1W

Lilly and Steven are smart, talented, and charming. Their new neighbor is not. After moving into a new apartment, they meet the man they now share a wall with—Mark Manners, an aspiring fiction writer and longtime tenant of the building. Lilly and Steven proceed to Google-stalk Mark and have a field day mocking his website... only to realize the walls are thin. Did he hear everything they said about him? When they try to resolve the newfound tension, it escalates in ways none of them could ever predict.

*“Caren... keeps surprises and red herrings in constant churn while having a high time with a symbolic pair of fish in a bowl.”*

—Los Angeles Times

*“The characters in Jonathan Caren’s contemporary comedy NEED TO KNOW use Facebook and the internet to glean information about others, but while technology plays a pivotal role here, the playwright’s primary concern is ethics: specifically, how we treat the misfits among us—those who may not conform to conventional standards of beauty and behavior.”*

—LA Weekly

*“NEED TO KNOW is a play for the 21st Century with some subtle... gaffes at society’s perpetual attachment to cell phones, lap tops, social media, and Googling. Additionally, some hysterical but sobering questions are raised about privacy—or the lack thereof—in today’s world. Playwright Jonathan Caren brilliantly blends funny and frightening with serious topical concerns.”*

—LASplash.com

*“Seductively suspenseful... a provocative psychological cat-and-mouse game with some neat Hitchcockian touches... [Caren] knows how to keep us guessing...”*

—StageSceneLA.com

**Also by Jonathan Caren**

CATCH THE FISH

THE RECOMMENDATION

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