



# **FIRE IN DREAMLAND**

**BY  
RINNE GROFF**



**DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.**



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FIRE IN DREAMLAND was originally commissioned by Berkeley Repertory Theatre (Tony Taccone, Artistic Director; Susan Medak, Managing Director), Berkeley, California, and the Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Patrick Willingham, Executive Director), New York, New York, and originally produced by the Public Theater in June 2018. It was directed by Marissa Wolf, the scenic design and costume design were by Susan Hilferty, the lighting design was by Amith Chandrashaker, the original music and sound design were by Brendan Aanes, and the production stage manager was Buzz Cohen. The cast was as follows:

KATE ..... Rebecca Naomi Jones  
JAAP HOOFT ..... Enver Gjokaj  
LANCE ..... Kyle Beltran

The world premiere of FIRE IN DREAMLAND was produced by Kansas City Repertory Theatre (Eric Rosen, Artistic Director; Angela Gieras, Executive Director; Jerry Genochio, Producing Director), Kansas City, Missouri, in April 2016. It was directed by Marissa Wolf. The cast was as follows:

KATE ..... Bree Elrod  
JAAP HOOFT ..... Gabriel Marin  
LANCE ..... Brian Huther

## **CHARACTERS**

KATE, American, probably 30s.

JAAP HOOFT, Dutch, probably 40s.

LANCE, African-American, probably 20s.

## **TIME**

Mostly March–October, 2013.

## **PLACE**

Mostly Coney Island, New York.

## **NOTES**

Ideally, the actor who plays Lance generates the sound of the “CLACK” live, using a clapperboard (aka slate board) from a film shoot, even in the scenes in which he appears as a character.

Feel free to make the exact hour and date of each time jump explicit or not, as your instincts guide you. In general, I recommend against it, but maybe you’ll find a clever way of incorporating that data.

The word “fackh-y” is meant to approximate the sound of this particular Dutchman saying the word “fucking” with the Dutch “g” in place of the American “ck.”

Kate and Jaap may be played by actors of any racial background.

**palimpsest**

1. a very old document on which the original writing has been erased and replaced with new writing.
2. something that has changed over time and shows evidence of that change.

# FIRE IN DREAMLAND

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

**MARCH 15, 2013. 4:07 P.M.**

*The Boardwalk at Coney Island. A cold day in early spring.*

*Kate (30s) stares out at the ocean, listening to the sound of the waves. She wears a waterproof coat over the kind of outfit a person wears when she has a real job. She carries a bag over her shoulder, something sensible.*

*She begins to cry.*

*The crying grows into deep, sad weeping.*

*CLACK. Eight months later.*

**OCTOBER 31, 2013. 3:45 P.M.**

*Kate addresses the audience.*

KATE. There was this movie.

*Beat.*

Or I guess I should say there *is* this movie. Although it feels like it's in the past now. It's *about* the past. It's a movie about a fire that took place a long time ago. This huge, devastating fire that happened right here on Coney Island. Like the beachfront and all the buildings around here looked even worse than they do now if you can imagine. Hey, you guys, listen: This movie was like the most important movie in the whole world to me, okay? I don't think I'd even be here if it weren't for this movie so there's that. If I could, I would totally just shut up and show it to you, which I know you'd like like a million times better. *(To someone in particular.)* Except maybe for you. You're a good listener. I can tell. *(Back to*

*general audience.*) But I can't do that. Show it to you exactly. But like the first time I heard anything about the movie at all, it was just this guy telling me about it.

Like literally every image. Telling me the movie. Whispering it into my ear.

I'm going to whisper it into your ear.

The very first thing you see on the screen, try to picture it, is a newspaper with the date: Friday, May 26th, 1911. It's the front page of some old-timey Brooklyn newspaper with this cool old-timey font and the headline is like: "Coney Island Summer Season Commencing Tomorrow, Predicted to Be Most Prosperous in History of Great American Amusement Park By the Sea."

So right from the start you pretty much know that everything is probably going to go very wrong.

*CLACK. Eight months earlier.*

**MARCH 15, 2013. 4:08 P.M.**

*Kate cries on the Boardwalk.*

JAAP. Are you very well?

KATE. What?

*Kate, caught off guard, turns to see Jaap Hoofst (40s), a handsome European, wearing one shoe and rolled-up pants, which are wet at the bottom. He carries his other shoe in his hand: a dripping-wet fabric sneaker.*

JAAP. Are you very well?

KATE. (*Perfunctory.*) I'm fine, thank you.

JAAP. But not very well. At first I thought you are praying.

KATE. I wasn't praying.

JAAP. You were crying.

KATE. I was cold.

JAAP. You have some shit on your face.

KATE. Excuse me?

JAAP. Some shit on your face, you have.

KATE. I really don't want to talk to anyone right now, okay?

JAAP. Okay.

*Slight pause.*

But I think a woman would like to know if she has some shit on her face. (*Reaching for her face.*) Here.

KATE. Don't; get away.

JAAP. Here.

*He indicates where on his own face, under his eyes.*

*She touches under her eyes.*

KATE. It's mascara.

JAAP. A lot of shit. You would like me to wipe it away?

KATE. I've got it.

*She wipes under her eyes.*

Is it gone?

JAAP. (*Pronounced "nay."*) *Nee.*

*She wipes some more.*

KATE. Now?

JAAP. A little amount of shit. I think you find it to be okay.

KATE. (*Laughing.*) It's like you know me already: just how much shit I'll take.

JAAP. (*Pronounced "ya."*) *Ja.*

KATE. What?

JAAP. Is like I know you already.

*CLACK. A repeat. Perhaps heightened.*

**MARCH 15, 2013. 4:09 P.M.**

KATE. I'm fine, thank you.

JAAP. But not very well.

*CLACK. A little later.*

**MARCH 15, 2013. 4:25 P.M.**

KATE. So what happened to your shoe?

JAAP. Nothing.

KATE. 'Cause it looks kind of wet.



JAAP. *Ja.* The shoe dries. But this...

*He takes a cell phone out of his pocket.*

KATE. Oh no. They say if you put it in a bag of rice.

JAAP. That worked for me once.

KATE. Really? I wasn't sure that really worked.

JAAP. This time I am not so sure. This water is salt.

*He puts his tongue to his phone.*

KATE. Careful: It's toxic.

JAAP. It is the ocean.

KATE. Who knows what's floating around out there still.

JAAP. It is because of the Superstorm Sandy.

KATE. What is?

JAAP. What is floating around out there still.

KATE. The storm probably didn't help, but I don't think it was ever very clean.

JAAP. I saw your Superstorm Sandy on television. In my country, they are very interested when America is flooding. I see the images on the television, and I know I must to come here.

KATE. Are you disaster relief? You're not working with NYCEDC, are you?

JAAP. I don't know what these words mean.

KATE. You said you came because of the storm?

JAAP. *Ja.* It clears many modern objects from the beach area so the setting is now quite good to make my film.

KATE. You're making a film?

JAAP. I am a filmmaker.

KATE. That's cool. I have one friend who does something like something at the Office of Film and Television, in Manhattan. I think he's still there. But that's cool: a movie.

JAAP. A film.

*CLACK. A little later.*

**MARCH 15, 2013. 4:42 P.M.**

KATE. No, I've heard of it. They're using that trademark again for some of the redevelopment plans. So it was 1911?

JAAP. The fire.

KATE. I think I knew that. I know there were lots of fires back then.

JAAP. But this one brings all of Dreamland to ashes, never to rebuilt.

KATE. I should learn more about the history of this place.

JAAP. You will come to my film to learn.

KATE. Sure. When can I come see it?

JAAP. This is difficult to say. I am starting the process today.

KATE. Like today today?

JAAP. *Ja.* Today today I am using my phone to record the sounds of the sea. Amazing sounds. I am getting closer, closer. Until... Big wave. It drops.

*He holds up his wet phone.*

My crew is coming with proper equipment.

KATE. So you have a crew and everything?

JAAP. There is the New York City School of Film. You know of this school of film?

KATE. I think I've seen the posters on the subway. So you're a student.

JAAP. No, a filmmaker. The school is to get my visa to America where all becomes possible.

KATE. In America.

JAAP. *Ja.*

KATE. I'm not sure I agree with you.

JAAP. Unless they restore the many plastic garbage bins to the beach area.

KATE. Well, I wouldn't worry about them restoring too much of anything anytime soon. I mean beachfront isn't handled by my office, but it's like how long has it been already?

JAAP. This is why you were crying?

KATE. No. I mean that, too, I guess; but no, it's just a hard day. And I'm cold. I can't believe you're not cold.

# FIRE IN DREAMLAND

by Rinne Groff

2 men, 1 woman

In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, Kate meets a charismatic Dutchman named Jaap, who's making a film about a different disaster nearly a century earlier: the 1911 fire that burned Coney Island's Dreamland to the ground. Desperate for a higher purpose, Kate becomes completely involved with Jaap, for better or worse. FIRE IN DREAMLAND is a groundbreaking exploration of what we can create in the face of devastation.

*"Powerfully presented and completely absorbing, FIRE IN DREAMLAND not only offers a strong lesson on the dangers of buying too quickly into another person's dream, it also poignantly recalls a tragic event in history worth knowing about."*  
—**The Epoch Times**

*"...powerfully dynamic... Exciting, clangy, and fast, this tale, that starts out with loss and disillusionment, finds its pathway through devastation into salvation, much like that heart-pounding feeling when we know we have survived the wild ride of a roller coaster...and we return to the safety of the platform edge."*  
—**FrontMezzJunkies.com**

*"With FIRE IN DREAMLAND, Groff makes a persuasive argument: That dishonesty exists because we want it to—because we prefer beautiful dreams to depressing reality. More alarmingly, it also illustrates the kind of destruction that can occur when such dreams go up in flames."*  
—**TheaterMania.com**

**Also by Rinne Groff**  
COMPULSION OR THE HOUSE  
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THE RUBY SUNRISE

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