

## "BENCH SEAT" FROM AUTOBAHN

BY NEIL LABUTE

### CHARACTERS

GUY (20s), a graduate student in a university town; GIRL (20s), not formally educated and working at the local Walmart

### SCENE

The bench seat of an automobile overlooking a scenic view where lovers come to either make out or break up

### TIME

The present

GUY is trying to get out of his present relationship, but GIRL has been down this road before, literally.

GUY: No, look, not at all! I was just trying to say that... See, I'd like to talk about the future, that's all... what our future might be.

GIRL: Oh.

GUY: Like, if you see us having one of those. A future together, I mean.

GIRL: Well, yeah, duh. Sure. (Beat.) Sure I do.

GUY: Okay. Right. And would that be... what? Here, or...?

GIRL: Wherever. They have Wal-Marts all over, so I can transfer anywhere.

GUY: Right. Of course.

GIRL: I know engineers work in all parts of the world, so I'm willing to do whatever. You tell me.

GUY: Kay. It's just that... you know... I think it's gonna be... well...

GIRL: My parents'd be fine with it, too, so no problem there. I mean, they'd probably wonder why you couldn't just get a job around here, what with the Boeing plant nearby and all, but hey... they're not the end of the world.

GUY: Sure. (Beat.) You mean "it." It's not the end of the world.

GIRL: I don't really like it when you do that. Correct me.

GUY: Sorry, I wasn't... I was only...

GIRL: Just so you know. (HE nods and stops, trying to regroup. SHE slides slowly over to him, cuddles again.) Whatever you want, that's what I'd like. However you wanna work things out is cool. (Laughs.) I was just so sure you were gonna let me have it, you know, tell me to take a hike or something, that I was really shaking. I was almost kinda mad on the way up, I don't know if you noticed or not...

GUY: Ummm, a little, I guess, but...

GIRL: Yeah. I was sorta screaming. I mean, you have to understand... this guy before you—I showed you his photo that one time, remember?—he really hurt me and I think I'm so hypersensitive to another incident like that one that I'm still jumpy, I am. Like, two years later. (Beat.) Afterward, and I don't mean just when I was walking back home, but for months after, I wanted to hurt him, I really did. I would follow him to class and send 'im shit, all this shit through the mail, little dead field mice and crap... I was so out of it! Yeah. I'd find out when he was going on dates and stuff—his roommate was this one wrestler who marginally liked me—and I'd show up at the restaurant or down over at the Cineplex and go to the same show... whatever. One time, this once, I waited in some bathroom stall at an Applebee's for, like, an hour. I screamed at this chick he took to his softball game. I mean, like, in her face! (Yells.) AAAAAAHHHHHH!!! If you could've seen her... man, it was priceless. (Remembering now.) See, he ended up having to take some summer classes to finish up, so I really let him have it. Totally spooked him. He even called the cops once, but I was, like, so what? Fuck him. I just kept it up, but was very sly about it, too. Made it seem all totally random, from these different mail stations in other towns and stuff... They couldn't really do a thing about it. The police. (Beat.) I got his new e-mail address about five months ago—through one of those "Find Your Classmate!" deals out on the Internet—and I've sent him a few nasty ones. These, like... all these pictures of horses shitting in a woman's mouth and various acts of that nature... because, you know, that's basically what he did to me. Just outright... took a shit right on me and then probably laughed about it, too. All the way home. (Thinks.) How do you say it in the past, anyway? You know, like, past tense? When you've already shit on someone...

GUY: Ummm... shat, I think.

GIRL: Really?

**Guy:** Yeah. It's... I mean, I'm not so sure if it's the same for *horses*, but with people, yes. It's shat.

**Girl:** Well... that's what he did. This Mr. Grad Student with a Trust Fund. He shat on me and sent me packing, and that is wrong. That is a bad, bad thing to do to someone, a someone who loves you, so I said to myself, I said, "Hey, little man, no! Uh-uh! I'm not through with you yet. Nope. And maybe not for a long time, either." (*Beat.*) So, see, that's what I was thinking about on the way up here. Sorry if I was being all weird.

**Guy:** No, that's... no. Didn't notice.

**Girl:** Good. 'Kay, that's great. (*SHE scuttles into the crook of his arm. HE is frozen, like a deer on the interstate.*) You wanna make out some more, or should we go drive...?

**Guy:** Umm... huh. Why don't we, maybe, sit for a bit? All right?

**Girl:** Sure. Fine.

**Guy:** We could just sit here... and relax.

**Girl:** That's nice.

**Guy:** Yeah. Let's stay... and relax.

(*The GIRL's eyes start to flutter and SHE closes them. HE is wide awake.*)

**Girl:** Tell me again.

**Guy:** What?

**Girl:** How much...

**Guy:** Huh?

**Girl:**... You know... how much more it was. More than good...

**Guy:** Oh. (*Indicates.*) This much. It was this much more... this, this much.

(*The GIRL drifts off. The Guy sits with his hands held wide, his eyes open, staring off into the night.*)

# BLACK THANG

BY ATO ESSANDOH

## CHARACTERS

SAM (30s), attractive, intelligent Black man; MATTIE (30s), attractive, intelligent Black woman

## SCENE

New York City

## TIME

The present

When MATTIE and SAM began dating three months before, SHE said SHE did not want to become emotionally involved with anyone and persuaded SAM to sign a contract stating that they mutually agreed not to become emotionally attached. If the contract were broken, all ties would be nullified. But neither can hold to the contract.

SAM's apartment. SAM and MATTIE (*languish in bed.*)

SAM: So what do you want to do now?

MATTIE: I don't know.

SAM: Do you want me to call you a cab?

MATTIE: What?

SAM: A cab.

MATTIE: Do you want me to leave?

SAM: Well I—

MATTIE: Because if you want me to leave I will.

SAM: No I thought you wanted to leave.

MATTIE: What would give you that impression?

SAM: It's what always happens. I just assumed that—

MATTIE: You assumed?

SAM: Well yeah—