

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Slow fade up from darkness.

Q. When I think of Country X, the thinking starts from darkness. And by that I mean the same darkness as the blank space in your mind, before a thought forms. Does that make sense? Do you know what I'm talking about? Because all thoughts, and hence all universes, really start—because they have to, right?—from *nothing*. In the *beginning*. Right? That's all I'm saying. So when I think of Country X, it starts, because it *has to*...with my eyes closed.

She closes her eyes.

And then, here's what I do. Because I haven't been to Country X before, I think back to a country to which I *have* been: Country W, which *borders* Country X, and hence has a similar feel.

She opens her eyes.

At least I think they have similar feels because they look the same in photographs, and anyway borders are man-made so they might as well be the same country for all the *earth* cares. This makes sense, right? You've done this too? When imagining places you haven't been to?

She closes her eyes.

So I stopped there for a week—this country similar to Country X. And I stayed in a small hotel, on a dirt road. The ocean wasn't far off. There were palm trees, warm rain, and a gentle tropical breeze. And there were jungles and mountains in the distance. You could smell the wet soil.

She opens her eyes.

Can you picture what I'm describing? Can you fill in the rest of the picture yourself?

Sounds of a ship.

This is how I picture Country X in my mind. Yes, I know it's reductive, I know I'm romanticizing it, and that it's infinitely more complex than tropical rain and mountains. But I'm just being honest about how my mind makes its first sketches. But I don't have expectations. I'm ready for whatever the country gives me. I'm joining my fiancé there. I'm going to Country X to live.

Scene 2

On the ship over. F is slightly older than Q.

F. I enjoyed our talk.

Q. So how?

F. It's refreshing, talking to you.

Q. How so?

F. Everyone goes to Country X. The days just seem to talk about opportunity, opportunity.

Q. That kind of description, fiancé, doing business there and all. You don't fault me on that?

F. You're not your fiancé.

Q. I'll be living off his support, right?

F. We all have to live somehow.

Q. Right, my fiancé. I don't have to work if I don't want to. I plan to. But I want to take some time to really get to know Country X, in a deeper way.

Beat. Then Q chuckles to herself.

F. What?

Q. No, just know that sounds naive?

F. How come?