



T.I.C.

(TRENCHCOAT IN COMMON)

BY PETER SINN NACHTRIEB

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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through a generous grant from the Wallace Gerbode Foundation
San Francisco, CA.

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For San Francisco

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

The play is an adaptation of Kid's blog, a theatrical representation of her writings, recordings and links to other materials she has found.

IMHO, the "stage version" of these digital transmissions should use as much traditional, "organic" stagecraft as possible. The mechanics of the stagecraft need not be concealed. In the world premiere version, we were thinking of the speed and energy of vaudeville as a jumping-off point, with presented fragments coming fast and furious with as little "in between" time as possible. Fun physicality, fun props, and hands emerging from off-stage holding the fun props are all highly recommended.

MUSIC/SOUND

Lots! The sounds computers make to indicate an accomplished task. The noise of the world. There are suggestions for certain songs and feelings in the text. Please substitute, embellish, what have you.

MOOD

Lively transmissions beaming through the vacuum of space.

T.I.C. (TRENCHCOAT IN COMMON) received its world premiere by Encore Theatre Company (Lisa Steindler, Artistic Director) in San Francisco, California, on January 5, 2009. It was directed by Kenneth Prestinizi; the set design was by James K. Faerron; the costume design was by Kaibrina Sky Buck; the lighting design was by Heather Basarab; the props design was by Jacquelyn Scott; the sound design was by Sara Huddleston; and the production stage manager was Angela Nostrand. The cast was as follows:

KID	Rebecca White
DAD	Michael Shipley
CLAUDIA	Anne Darragh
SABRA	Arwen Anderson
SHYE	Lance Gardner
TERRENCE	Liam Vincent

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CHARACTERS

KID — More like a senior in high school.

DAD — Kid's father. Late 40s.

CLAUDIA — Upstairs neighbor, 50s–60s — Female.

TERRENCE — Another upstairs neighbor, dressed in classic flasher garb (trenchcoat, bare legs, creepy) 30s–40s — Male.

SHYE — Downstairs neighbor, 20s — Male.

SABRA — Downstairs neighbor, 30s — Female.

The characters are of unspecified but diverse cultural backgrounds.

SETTING

A “Tenancy in Common” building (T.I.C.)* in San Francisco, California, and numerous locations on the Internet.

*A T.I.C. is a way for rental housing to be converted to owner-occupied housing in San Francisco and is a workaround for the city's nuanced condo laws. Just in case you were wondering. There's more about that online.

TIME

A summer between junior and senior year. Some archival information linked in posts may be from longer ago.

*Every man is surrounded
by a neighborhood of
voluntary spies.*

—Jane Austen
(found googling “neighbor quotes”)

T.I.C. (TRENCHCOAT IN COMMON)

Prologue

Darkness.

The hum of a streetlight.

The sound of an oscillating fan.

The sound of a man, Terrence, breathing heavily. The kind of breath you wouldn't want to hear when answering the phone alone at night.

The sound of a woman, Sabra, crying.

The sound of a man, Dad, making quiet noises of pleasure.

The sound of a man, Shye, lightly beating a drum in a heartbeat.

Claudia lights a match, puts it to the end of a joint. Embers.

The growing sound of a keyboard clacking. Urgent clicking.

The sound of whispers of evil plots and deepest fears. A chorus that gets louder and louder.

Four phones ring loudly, break the noise. Clicks.

In darkness:

CLAUDIA. The green apples at Trader Joe's are always rotten.

SABRA. The duck has made its migration.

SHYE. There will be no second encore.
TERRENCE. Pancakes.
DAD. Oh.
CLAUDIA. Yes?
TERRENCE. Yes?
SHYE. Yes?
SABRA. Yes?
DAD. Yes.

First Post: Sunday, 3 A.M.

A loud lick of music.

A light clicks on Kid.

She is looking at us.

KID. Something isn't right. And I'm not talking about the general, universal incorrectness of everything. Something deeply deeply isn't right here. Like on this property. Like this bed. (*Lights click on a bed, or a picture of a very soft bed.*) It feels like I'm being swallowed in a swamp made of Charmin. Seriously, nineteen pillows of varying size? It's a little too soft, a little too fancy, a little too gay, IMHO. As is the floor treatment. (*Lights click on nicely designed rug layout or picture of one.*) And the dresser. (*Lights click on a nice dresser or picture of one.*) My "dad" has "good taste." (*A shift. Dad, smiling at Kid.*)
DAD. Is this going to be all right for you?
KID. It's fine.
DAD. Good. Good good. This was going to be my bedroom. But ...
KID. Yeah.
DAD. I'll take the couch for now. It's a comfy couch, so don't feel bad.
KID. Thanks.
DAD. This used to be my bed.
KID. Mmm.
DAD. In my old place. I slept in it.
KID. That makes sense.

DAD. A lot of good memories in that bed.
 KID. Great.
 DAD. The sheets are new.
 KID. Pink.
 DAD. And Egyptian! I want you to enjoy sleeping in it.
 KID. I'll try.
 DAD. This is your home now. I want you to feel like you're home. And that this is your bed. Would you like a glass of wine?
 KID. You know how old I am?
 DAD. Of course.
 KID. I don't drink wine.
 DAD. OK. Well, that's responsible.
 KID. Only shots.
 DAD. Oh.
 KID. Whiskey. Absinthe. Jäger bombs.
 DAD. I only have chardonnay.
 KID. No thanks.
 DAD. Well, if you change your mind ...
 KID. OK. *(Dad almost exits.)*
 DAD. You know why they invented wine? To remind you of your greater ambitions. That at any moment you can jump out of that box they keep you in and change the world. Never forget you can do great things. *(A beat.)*
 KID. I won't. *(Dad almost exits.)*
 DAD. And the oak reminds me of fields I used to sleep in. So ... *(They stare at each other. Dad walks away. A shift, Kid turns back to us.)*
 KID. I recorded that on my laptop. That is my "parent," technically speaking. According to the government there is proof of this fact. I'm sure it was on my mom's to-do list to tell me she actually knew the seed source. I guess it was three bullet points down from "Suddenly Perish." I ate beef today. *(A picture of beef.)* I'm currently listening to *[Insert name of band, such as Tegan and Sara.*]*. *(Music.)* I'm supposed to be working at Coldstone this summer but I think the smell of a waffle bowl would make me vomit and lose hope. As does this building. A single house split into four units, plus our cottage in the back. *(Beat.)* This is stupid. Is this stupid? I have nothing else to write. *(Click. Blackout. Silence. Motion in the darkness, as though people are hurriedly trying to do something undercover.)*

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

Second Post: Monday, 3 A.M.

Music. A good punky high-tempo song.

Kid, dancing, headphones in.

KID. Isn't this song awesome? I am loving loving this song right now. Well, as much as I can. Like when I say I "love" a song, or that I "love" Google, what do I mean? I don't want to start a family with it. I'm not going to cuddle and spoon with a fucking song. Maybe the lead singer of the song but lead singers are assholes and that's more like lust. Like I'd be happy to blow a lead singer but not, like, open a joint checking. And really, what is love? Is it even real? Isn't it just some intangible feeling meant to keep us hoping and ignoring the fact that we are trapped in a shitstorm of failures and grief? I'm quoting my English teacher. She asked us that once. Like right at the end of the period. Anyway, I have neighbors. And they have windows. And I have discovered that they all eat food. (*The four neighbors rush into these positions. Tableaus/soft freezes: Sabra sipping smoothie through a straw. Shye with a baguette. Claudia eats lettuce with chopsticks. Terrence eats honey off a banana.*) They all read. (*Shye reads a small dark book. Claudia reads a schematic. Sabra reads the Pottery Barn catalog. Terrence reads a tabloid.*) And from time to time they all stand and look at something semi-vacantly. (*The four stand and look at something semi-vacantly.*) I was almost going to put the last one in sepia to make them seem more sad. I took those all from my window. (*The four try to look normal while hiding something.*) "Love Thy Neighbor Yet Pull Not Down Thy Hedge." British proverb and/or Benjamin Franklin and/or Benjamin Franklin quoting a British proverb. I just googled "neighbor quotes." Most seem to be about the maintenance of fences, walls, hedges ... various clever 'n' cute ways to promote mistrust. I bet they cry a lot. (*Sabra cries.*) This is a pic of one of them crying earlier. (*Shye, plays chest or tunes something, singing "fuck" in tune.*) I guess he's going to be House Bandleader. I saw him unpack maybe 200 instruments and recording equipment. Oh, and a rainstick. (*Shye turns a rainstick.*)

I don't want to prejudge, but I hate rainsticks and people who use them. (*Claudia lights a joint.*) I think she's going to be Marijuana Chief. Averages a joint every four hours. She doesn't giggle, though. All the stoners in my high school giggled. But not, like, life-affirming giggles. Giggles like shrugs. Like they're giving up. She doesn't do that. Her kimono makes me nervous. (*Terrence stands, smiles and breathes.*) As does his general aura. He was standing there for like three hours. (*Terrence drinks a glass of water.*) Occasionally he disappears from his window. (*Terrence steps out of view, smiling, gliding.*) And then returns. (*Terrence returns with a new glass of water. The four continue their activities in the background.*) I wonder what their names are. The "seed source" tried to cook for me today. (*Dad runs across with a tray and something charred and smoking on it.*)

DAD. Ay yay yay. Ay yay yay.

KID. I am still attempting to ascertain whether he has skills. I spent a good chunk of the day camera-poning him when he didn't know. Like this. (*In a bathroom mirror, Dad unsuccessfully tries to style his hair in a pleasing way.*) And this. (*Dad lifts his shirt up in the mirror, looks at belly. Sighs.*) And this. (*Dad makes his belly talk.*)

DAD. "The greatest pain in life is to be invisible. What I've learned is that we all just want to be heard."

KID. I just googled that quote. He's pretending that his belly is Oprah Winfrey. I'm not impressed by the video quality of my phone. Not enough pixels. I don't think it sufficiently captures the true essence of the beasts that surround me in the full splendor of their normality. But are they normal, really? Italically *really*? If I were to slice into their skin, what mysteries would I discover? Deep, dark, bloody regrets and fetishes and anomalies exploded, grotesqued, calcifying like spurs of weirdness on their spine? If there's anything I've learned from my mom, it's that all adults hide things. Maybe this shall be my mission. I will be the Diane Arbus of this building. These neighbors: (*The four strike a pose, slightly off from neutral.*) My retards. This is what "the source" does with Listerine. (*Dad stands holding a bottle of Listerine. He pours a capful. The sensation in Dad's mouth intensifies, almost getting unbearable. He braces himself, testing his limits. He spits Listerine out of his mouth into the sink. Panting, exhausted, sweating, relief, pleasure. Click. Blackout. Music.*)

Third Post — 2 A.M. Tuesday

Music stops abruptly.

Lights up on Kid in her room holding legal documents and on the four neighbors in soft poses as though they were caught:

Claudia on the phone, scratching her boob through a kimono.

Sabra holds a jar of sugar and a duffel bag.

Shye holds an orange pill bottle, one pill in his fingers almost in his mouth.

Terrence in his trenchcoat and warm smile. Perhaps he holds a misting bottle, which he occasionally sprays.

When they speak, their heads turn out, except for Terrence who remains forward.

CLAUDIA. Claudia Borealis.

SABRA. Sabra Jones.

SHYE. Shye Macarthur Pleasanton, Jr.

TERRENCE. Terrence no last name.

KID. "Tenancy In Common." That's what this living setup thing is called, according to documents that the source left on the microwave after dinner. (*Dad searches for documents in the background.*) Apparently, in this city, there are rules against directly turning property into condos so instead people buy the whole property collectively because oh my God I am boring myself while typing this sentence. Behold, their financial vaginas.

CLAUDIA. 281-31-2111.

SABRA. 033-65-1998.

SHYE. 759-72-4916.

TERRENCE. 123-45-6789.
 KID. Anyone need a speedboat? I've also learned their annual incomes.
 CLAUDIA. Thirty-two thousand.
 SABRA. Two hundred fifty-three thousand.
 SHYE. Six hundred dollars, plus trust fund.
 TERRENCE. Decline to state.
 KID. Mother's maiden names:
 CLAUDIA. Gosling.
 SABRA. Prissington.
 SHYE. Macarthur.
 TERRENCE. Decline to state.
 KID. And their level of decay:
 CLAUDIA. March 22, 1951.
 SABRA. February 12, 1972.
 SHYE. October 21, 1984.
 TERRENCE. Decline to state, but I will tell you I'm in Libra territory. *(Terrence makes scale gestures.)*
 KID. Seriously, who the fuck is that guy?
 TERRENCE. Area code 415-555-1212.
 KID. That's not a real number.
 TERRENCE. Single, but professionally I suppose I'm polyamorous, hahahaha!
 KID. He wears that every day, looking like someone who is legally obligated to tell you why he can't live near a school.
 TERRENCE. Self-employed in more ways than one, if you know what I mean. Wink wink! Wink! Semicolon close parentheses.
 KID. He's still standing there as I type this.
 TERRENCE. Terrence no last name.
 KID. Yeah, we know, but just exactly who the fuck are you, Mr. —
 TERRENCE. *(A creepy whisper.)* Terrence no last name. *(Shye takes the pill. Claudia licks her upper lip. Terrence turns upstage, puts a leg up on something, revealing hair. Sabra comes forward, crying, holding a glass jar of sugar and a duffel bag.)*
 KID. Five feet from deviance, neighbor two —
 SABRA. Sabra Jones.
 KID. — Continues her sob fest. *(Sabra dips finger into the sugar jar and sucks it.)* She's always carrying that duffel bag and apparently loves empty calories in times of stress. *(Dad, in garden, drinks chardonnay. Sabra, sucking finger, stares at Dad.)* This is her looking

at a homosexual with false hope. “False hope” should be her middle name. I found her Facebook page. (*Shift. Sabra’s Facebook page.*)

SABRA. “Sabra Jones now in San Francisco!”

KID. Her profile is totally public.

SABRA. “Sabra Jones unpacking boxes and assembling! Sabra Jones loving some weird-flavored ice cream on a hot day! Sabra Jones starting new job tomorrow!”

KID. Sabra has four friends.

SABRA. “Hi guys! Looking to meet fun new people that I don’t previously know for friendship and dates!”

KID. Why would you date that?

SABRA. “I’m fit, friendly, childless, love people, giving gifts, getting rubdowns, and trying to live a life that is positive and non-violent!”

KID. Desperate.

SABRA. “I really enjoy being physically or mentally challenged! Challenges, obstacles, mortal mistakes are what make life, life! Meet me with an open mind. Soulmates welcome!”

KID. She’s too old for Facebook. (*Terrence floats by. Sabra floats back.*)

TERRENCE. Terrence no last name.

KID. Still at his window. Can he see me? (*Claudia steps forward talking on a phone. She smokes a joint.*)

CLAUDIA. I want to see you.

KID. Claudia has a “lover.”

CLAUDIA. When do I get to see you, *mi guapo?*

KID. From a Spanish-speaking nation.

CLAUDIA. *Té quiero*, Arturo.

KID. I transcribed this as she talked.

CLAUDIA. I want your body. Inside my home. Press your weight against my floor. Rub my walls. Tread on my land. I’m landowner now. Officially middle class. The bougie guilt is making me so horny.

KID. I’m not comfortable with that.

CLAUDIA. I think I may be turned on by real estate.

KID. Less comfortable with that.

CLAUDIA. It’s like I walk upon my floors and they’re an erogenous extension of myself. Or maybe I’m just hippie-ing up my materialism. How about I get a blanket, lay it in the middle of the hardwood floor and we hump ourselves into a new state of consciousness.

KID. I almost stopped listening after she said “hump.”

CLAUDIA. Maybe I’ll keep that blanket there and never wash it.

Right in the middle of the room. I'll put a rug over it so I'm the only one who knows it's there. Except for you, Arturo, you'll know.

KID. And I'll know. Thank you for saying dirty old lady things through an open window. Maybe it's the pot.

CLAUDIA. Just a joint.

KID. Five times a day.

CLAUDIA. I am being careful. Jesus, it's tense right now and this is the only shit that makes me forget my knees. (*Slightly more suspicious.*) This is harder than I expected.

KID. What is? Being horny? Alone? Life? Is Arturo in prison? With what tragic "curve ball" must Claudia reckon? I googled "Claudia Borealis Tragedy Curve Ball Pot Smoking Sadness" and found a few videos. (*Shift. Claudia beats a loaf of bread to a pulp with an ax.*)

CLAUDIA. YAAAAAH! YAAHH! YAH YAH YAH YAH YAH!
(*She keeps beating it until the bread is flat.*)

KID. That was a protest against wheat.

CLAUDIA. TAKE THAT, GLUTEN!

KID. Claudia has been part of many protests.

CLAUDIA. (*With intense anger.*) WHAT DO WE WANT?

OTHERS. (*Inaudibly and with less enthusiasm.*) Mrhha dlahdha.

CLAUDIA. WHEN DO WE WANT IT?

OTHERS. Now.

CLAUDIA. WHAT DO WE WANT?

OTHERS. Mraah dlahalh

CLAUDIA. WHEN DO WE WANT IT?

OTHERS. Now.

KID. What does Claudia want?

CLAUDIA. "I've laid down before bulldozers, I've put my face against a cop in riot gear, I lived in a tree for a goddamn year. This is just the beginning. I warn the evil powers of the world that your days are nearing an —"

KID. It's a long quote. (*Claudia floats away. Dad appears in Kid's room.*)

DAD. Curve ball.

KID. Meanwhile, the "source" keeps trying to infiltrate.

DAD. (*To Kid, smiling.*) We've been thrown a curve ball. And we have to adjust our swing.

KID. Lots of lame attempts to find some common experience. Like —

DAD. Aren't the days getting so lengthy?

KID. Or —
DAD. I can't believe it's a new month already.
KID. Or —
DAD. Kelly Clarkson.
KID. I don't trust him. He left his credit card statement on the microwave.
DAD. BuddyTalk International. \$34.95. Chock Morgan Media. \$19.99. Discretion Mail Order Boutique \$79.95. (*Terrence breathes heavily.*)
KID. I don't like it here. (*Shye speaks into a microphone.*)
SHYE. Fuck you.
KID. Example four.
SHYE. Fuck one two. This is the first song on my final album. (*Dad watches Shye sing.*)
KID. Shye was recording "music" outside today. (*Shye plays a guitar, loop tape, drum machine or his body.*)
SHYE. This song is "dedicated" to my "boyfriend," Truck. It's called Chocolate.
KID. I recorded this on my laptop. (*A song.*)
SHYE.
*You're standing by the freezer, there,
You're pullin out the Ritter Bar
that I just bought from the store.
who the fuck do you think you are?*
(*Shye stops playing. Then in spoken word, really fast.*)
asshole who don't respect my space and things and feelings don't recognize the fact that I bought that chocolate for a *reason* ...
(*Sung.*)
*You see I just had a real hard day.
Work was worse than it usually is.
And my back was acting up
And I just got a weird phone call.*
(*He stops playing, spoken word fast.*)
What phone call do you wonder could it be your other lover other lovers one of your secrets revealed someone caught you you're in trouble oh you don't think I know but I do and that's the main reason why I don't let you fuck me anymore, you male slut bitch.
(*Starts strumming again. Sung.*)
*The phone call was some serious news.
Just found out that I'm gonna explode.*

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