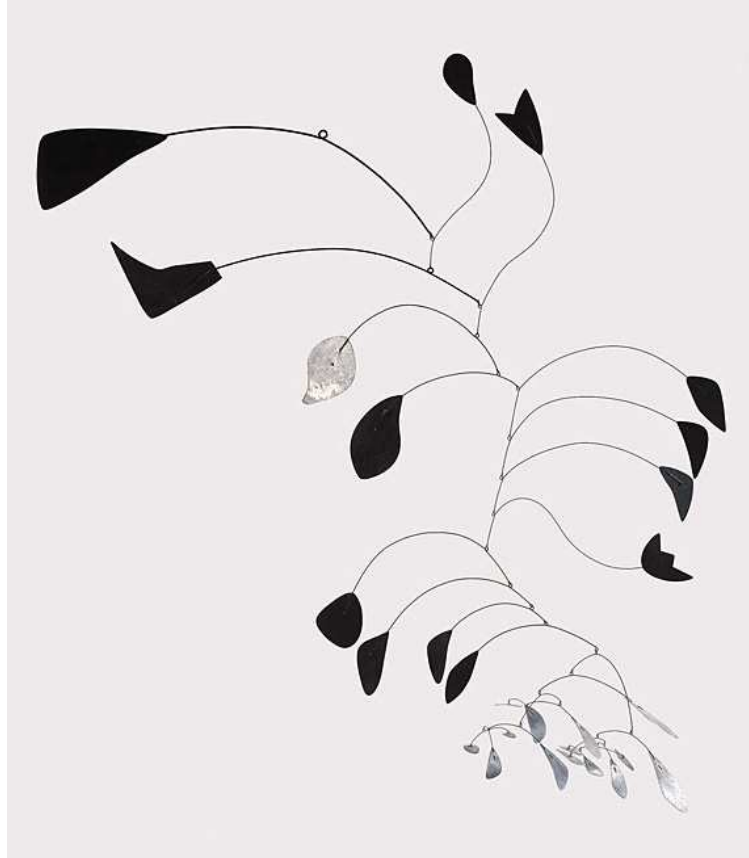


APRICOT SUPERNOVAS

A short physic-al play by K²



APRICOT SUPERNOVAS

KAT: Yen's babysitter. Attractive. 16.

YEN: Japanese American 4th grader. 300 pounds with asthma, but the actor should be tall and thin. The character is 10, but the actor needn't be.

TEACHER: A present version of Ms. Gagarin.

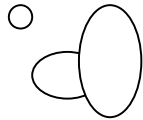
MS. GAGARIN: a past, more flawed, version of the Teacher. Can be played by the same actor.

MRS. YOMOTO: Yen's mother. Cyclical.

INVISIBLE CLASS: sounds and lights that encircle classroom.

Notes: A / in a line of dialogue cues the next line of dialogue to begin.

The concentric circles and arrows indicate shapes that I imagined during the moments they appear next to in the script. They do not need to be represented tangibly.



*An orange rolls across the stage. The
TEACHER enters.*

TEACHER

Pencils Down!

Sound of a pencil being snapped.

Telescopes taut!

Sound of a gun cocking.

Projectiles projecting!

*Sound of something being flung into air with
a sling shot.*

Ready....Set....But!

Before I leave you to your astronomy experiments, let me remind you of Yen and his Apricot Supernovas.

Exasperated groans from the INVISIBLE CLASS.

I thought I could just experiment. I thought I could test the density of the ether. I thought I could determine the laws of physics but until you understand that love can change them—has changed them—there will be the danger that it may catch you by surprise. Put your Feynman away, and let me illustrate.

Back in summer school. Back when we still thought of the universe in terms of solar systems, and our solar system in terms of an immutable physics, I had a student whose unrequited love disrupted the revolutions of the world's trajectory. Yen, like all of us, *was* once under the same conditions that fascinated Newton and frustrated the Wright brothers. He was a void.

And when he filled, he adopted his own gravitational autonomy—or perhaps I should say, got pulled into another's. Energy flew to him like particles into the sun. The energy in oranges, bananas, apricots—he devoured them. Absorbed them into a dense celestial body that, to the naked eye, made him look like nothing more than a grossly overweight 4th grader. I watched it happening, like Hailey's ten minutes before it hit, and I only fed his chaos.

Enter YEN. Heavily. He is hopelessly overweight.

YEN

The earth is 4.55 billion years old.

Pause.

MS. GAGARIN

What else can you tell us about our planet?

YEN

The earth is the third body from the sun.

Pause.

MS. GAGARIN

Good, and do you remember the first two?

YEN

The Earth rotates about its axis at 1,532 feet per second.

MS. GAGARIN

Ok. And tell us a little about...

YEN

That's really fast.

MS. GAGARIN

Yen, everything in context.

YEN

That's 1,000 KM per hour.

TEACHER

I always appreciated a metric conversion.

YEN

That's as fast as my heart.

MS. GAGARIN

That's physically impossible, Yen.

YEN

It is the densest body in our solar system but weighs nothing.

MS. GAGARIN

Well, that's not exactly how that works...

YEN

I would be normal in space.

MS. GAGARIN

You are perfectly normal, now if you'll just take your seat...

YEN

I can't. I'll get stuck.

MS. GAGARIN

You won't get stuck. Desk size is regulated by the school board in conjunction with the FDA. Please, Yen...

She gestures toward the desk.

YEN

My stomach expands over the desk.

MS. GAGARIN

I guess you can stand up here with me, but I'm going to have to keep going. Is that alright?

YEN doesn't answer.

(To class)

Does anyone remember Newton's first law?

YEN

Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it.

MS. GAGARIN

Yes, Yen, thank you.

(To Class)

And the second?

YEN

Acceleration is produced when a force acts on a mass. The greater the mass (of the object being accelerated) the greater the amount of force needed (to accelerate the object).

MS. GAGARIN

Ok, again, Yen, thank you.

YEN

For every action/ there is an equal and opposite...

MS. GAGARIN

There is an equal and opposite reaction. Thank you, Yen, but I'm really going to have to ask you to sit down and pay attention—silently.

YEN sits down in the chair.

It is not easy for him to squeeze in.

Chuckles from the class.

The sound of a rubber band stretching too far.

Recess bell.

Sounds of sneakers shuffling out. Sounds of air escaping.

YEN remains seated.

YEN'S living room.

YEN and KAT, Yen's scrawny but grounded babysitter, are constructing a solar system out of fruit.

Hand me Saturn. YEN

Is that the apple or the lime? KAT

It's the sixth planet from the sun, Kat. YEN

Ok, lime. KAT

YEN gets up and starts encircling KAT, playing catch with an orange. His chair creaks gratefully as he stands.

Hey, Yen, watch it. What are you doing?

I'm sailing through the solar system. YEN

Stop it. KAT

Crashing on lunar shores. YEN

You'll wreck your diorama. KAT

Now that I've started, I can't stop. It's in physics. YEN

Yen. Just Yen, come on. Your mom said this is due tomorrow. KAT

For who? YEN

Ms. Gagarin. KAT

Gargerin. YEN

KAT

Gargerin.

YEN

Gagarin.

KAT

Quit it.

YEN

Kat, do we have any plums left?

KAT

What?

YEN

For Jupiter's moons.

KAT

Aren't plums a little big?

YEN

My sun is a grapefruit; I don't think keeping things to scale is a priority.

KAT

It looks like we have two left.

YEN

If I eat one, then there will be one left. It's math.

KAT

Is that what that's called?

YEN

Can we get some more?

KAT

Your mom already spent \$75 on fruit, I think we can make due with what we have left.

YEN

Kat.

YEN tries to settle into her lap. He is crushing her.

KAT

What, ow, Yen, you can't sit on my lap. You're crushing my legs.

He gets up.

Thank you!

YEN

Weight isn't the same thing as mass.

KAT

I know.

YEN

I have the same mass everywhere but my weight changes from day to day. And planet to planet.

KAT

So what does that mean?

YEN

You'd love me on Mars.

KAT

Yen, quit goofing around, I'm only here for another 15 minutes.

YEN

Then where do you go?

KAT

Home.

YEN

On your space ship?

KAT

Very funny.

YEN

Where do you live?

KAT

Just outside the city.

YEN

But everyday you come here.

It's my job. KAT

It's gravity. YEN

Hand me Saturn. KAT

I think it's growing mold. YEN

Then we'll use the dried apricots. Here, hand me the glue gun. KAT

Apricots aren't Saturn. YEN

Why did we buy so many then! What are they, stars? KAT

Apricots are supernovas. YEN

Whatever, same thing. KAT

No. YEN

Yeah, Galileo, I remember reading that supernovas are just dying stars. KAT

No, apricots are supernovas. YEN

Ok, but hand em over, so we can finish up before I leave. KAT

Energy compounded orange fold into a wrinkly sliver of dried fruit. Tang expecting to implode on the vast universe of my tongue! YEN

Yen. KAT

YEN

A once succulent star hanging on the branch of the orchard galaxy!

KAT

Yen, do you need to eat another dinner? Is that what this's about?

YEN

No. I'm not hungry.

KAT

Then why do you keep eating.

YEN

You make me nervous.

KAT

I'm making *you* nervous? You're the one who keeps circling around me.

YEN

Sorry.

KAT

Just sit still for a minute. You're going to give yourself a heart attack.

He sits. Rocking. Sound of a fly—or any other organism that's metabolism runs through its life like a chubby kid through kit-kats.

Thank you.

What do you want for Mars?

YEN

I don't need Mars.

KAT

You have the moons of Jupiter, and supernova apricots and you want to leave out Mars?

YEN

It's my project.

KAT

Ok!

She gets up to leave.

YEN

Where are you going?

KAT

Well, if you don't need Mars, there's no point in the rest.

YEN hands her an orange.

YEN

Peel this for me?

KAT

So you are still hungry?

YEN

Please.

KAT

Fine. But I'm teaching you to do it for next time.

The key is to get your fingernails under the skin. See?

You have to be careful for spills. It can get sticky. Then, are you watching?

She pats the ground next to her.

Sit down.

YEN sits down in her lap.

Next to me, Yenny.

YEN stands up and tries to sit back down in her lap.

Do you want me to do this or not?

YEN

I'm starving.

KAT

Ok, so then you peel back the pieces one by one. Yeah, see but sometimes not all of the skin comes off. It's really sticking to this one, you get the idea.

YEN

Kat?

MRS YOMOTO enters.

MRS YOMOTO
Hi honey, Kat. Yen, how's the project coming?

YEN
It's over, *now*.

MRS YOMOTO
Those are all your planets?

KAT
Yen's chosen a metaphorical approach to the solar system.

MRS YOMOTO
Oh, is that why all the fruit?

YEN
The point is it's ephemeral.

KAT
And edible, right, Yenster?

YEN
Yeah.

MRS YOMOTO
Let me just get your check. Don't forget, pickup from school's tomorrow at 3.

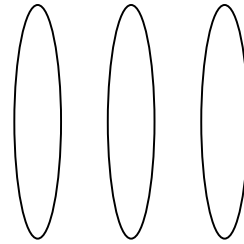
KAT
Bye! Thanks Mrs. Yomoto!
She exits.

YEN
I ate the moon.
Can you hand me Saturn?

She hands him a lime which he attaches to the diorama.

MRS.YAMOTO exits.

*The classroom. Science presentations are under way.
YEN, with effort, sits in the chair/desk with his project.*



MS. GAGARIN
(To another student)

Andrew, your turn.

*KAT enters.
The sound of water filling something in.*

KAT
Hey Yen, sorry I'm late, did I miss your presentation?

YEN
Yeah, but it's ok, I'll meet you outside.

KAT
No, I don't mind, this stuff is interesting.
I'm sorry it missed it; I wanted to see how you would explain the absence of Mars.

MS. GAGARIN
Andrew, before you go back to your seat, do you mind cleaning up your stray "meteors?"

YEN
You'll distract me from my presentation.

KAT
Oh! So you haven't actually gone yet. Come on, let me watch. I could learn something for the fall.

YEN
Fall?

KAT
When I leave for school. On my spaceship right, Yen?

MS. GAGARIN
Yen Yomoto, your turn.

KAT
Good luck!

MS. GAGARIN
What are we learning about? Oh right, the immutable solar system.

YEN tries to stand but he can't squeeze out of his chair with an attached desk. He stands with it stuck around him.

YEN

The solar system is energy. Mercury, Venus, Earth...Energy.

Pause

MS. GAGARIN

Great, Yen tell us, why did you use the fruit to represent the planetary bodies?

YEN

It decays.

MS. GAGARIN

Ok...Well, you have 4 more minutes...is there anything else we should know? How about the apricots, are those stars?

YEN

(Starting to breathe audibly)

That's what my...Kat, she's here, back there. That's what she thought.

MS. GAGARIN

Ok, so what-

YEN

Kat's one of the smartest sitters I have. Had. But she's very heavy. Like people see me. Like the apricots. There's so much life weight in her that she's collapsing in on herself, and expanding again with internal carbon fusion.

MS. GAGARIN

Well, that doesn't sound fun. Thank you, Yen, can we have Josh's buoyancy exper-

YEN

And when the carbon collapses in on itself, the star explodes into a galactic supernova. A hole of gravitational attraction.

YEN breaks out of his chair/desk and starts to encircle KAT.

KAT

Yen? Should I get your inhaler?

YEN

And I can't pull myself away.

YEN starts dismembering fruit solar system.

I keep circling, trying to circumvent her Newtonian physics but there's no escape. I'm caught in the orbit, and the sun, the stars, and the Marsion moons are all being eclipsed by her apricot energy.

Throwing fruit.

The universe is pulsating against the anti-matter that's threatening to absorb me. Eat me into her electromagnetic event horizon.

Eating fruit.

And here I thought if I ate, if I ate her atmospheric apricots it would smother my love's luminosity that is so material I can see it being pulled to her kinetic center.

Shooting apricots start falling from the sky.

Out of my ears, and palms and nose and toes, everything that makes up my lightness of being, racing to her heavy, heavy relativity.

KAT

Yen! Stop it, sit down, you're going to asphyxiate yourself!

YEN

Get away from me!
I'm on an orbit.
I'm...

YEN collapses with a stressed induced asthma attack. Sound of a pencil breaking.

KAT

Yen!

○

MS. GAGARIN

Yen?

○

KAT

Yen.

○

YEN
(gargling)

KAT kneels down to give YEN CPR—about to put her lips to his. She pulls back and instead presses hard down instead on his chest. The sound of pencils snapping.

YEN deflates.

KAT, bewildered and scared, runs off. The teacher watches her go.

TEACHER

Solar Apocalypse. Love sucks physics into a black hole.
The only force denser than gravity.

TEACHER

(The present)

Telescopes down! I said telescopes down, everybody.

Sound of something being lowered.

The void collapses and love makes physics buckle. Yen implode. And Yen's is the pattern of the universe.

