

# SUBWAY STORIES, OR HOW NOT TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK ON THE R TRAIN

By Kimberly Lew

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## SUBWAY STORIES, OR HOW NOT TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK ON THE R TRAIN

*A One Act Comedy*

**By Kimberly Lew**

**SYNOPSIS:** It's the first day of class and Sam has already messed up: he totally forgot to write his essay on "Why I Heart New York." Luckily, he has a long train commute with just enough time to come up with something to turn in. But how can a writer concentrate when there are celebrity sightings, break dance fights, and underground freak outs going on around him— not to mention all the other wackos of New York City public transit? Sam's got a subway ride to figure it out.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(1-5 females, 4-5 males, 6-16 either, 2-12 extras; gender flexible,  
doubling possible)*

CHRIS (m/f).....	Roommate and friend of Sam. (12 lines)
SAM (m/f).....	College student. General good person, though a bit scatter-brained. (103 lines)
ANNOUNCER (m/f) .....	Voice only, but could be a character if needed. Grumpy transit worker. (12 lines)
JO (m/f).....	Teenager, addicted to his/her cellphone. (6 lines)
DAN (m).....	Very much in love with Marissa. Like, grossly in love. (13 lines)
MARISSA (f).....	Very much in love with Dan. Also in a gross way. (12 lines)
DOLORES (f).....	Elderly, moves slowly but has a fierce hidden temper. (8 lines)
JIM (m).....	Business man. Very rude. (6 lines)

- HILDA (m/f)..... Huge fan of celebrity culture.  
(17 lines)
- LARRY (m/f)..... Subway passenger. (2 lines)
- ADRIAN (f)..... Pretending to be pregnant for  
subway seats. (15 lines)
- NED (m/f)..... Very nervous and scared of  
tight spaces. (18 lines)
- EMMA (m/f)..... Business woman. (8 lines)
- PAUL (m/f)..... Subway rider. (8 lines)
- MIKE (m)..... Construction worker. Very  
sleepy. (10 lines)
- ARI (m/f)..... Very excitable. (11 lines)
- DAISY (f)..... Very excitable. (11 lines)
- JOSH (m/f)..... A fan of the finer things in life.  
(14 lines)
- JUICE (m/f)..... Member of the Shark crew from  
Brooklyn. (7 lines)
- SPIKE (m/f)..... Leader of the Shark crew from  
Brooklyn. (13 lines)
- TONY (m)..... Member of Shark crew from  
Brooklyn, but in love with  
Maria. (3 lines)
- BERNIE (m)..... Leader of the Bronx Jets.  
(11 lines)
- MARIA (f)..... Sister of the leader of the Bronx  
Jets but in love with Tony.  
(4 lines)
- TOURIST (m/f)..... Kind-hearted foreigner.  
(8 lines)
- PERSON 1 (m/f)..... Passenger. (1 line)
- PERSON 2 (m/f)..... Passenger. (1 line)
- NANCY VON FAMOUSFACE (m/f)..... Celebrity. (Non-Speaking)
- GUY (m/f)..... Has a disgusting habit.  
(Non-Speaking)
- TRAIN PASSANGERS (m/f)..... 0-5, Coming on and off train.  
(Non-Speaking)

BRONX JET/SHARK CREW (m/f)..... 0-5, Dance crew extras.

*(Non-Speaking)*

**CAST NOTE:** You can feel free to rename characters and change pronouns to fit their changed genders, or you can have boys play girls and vice versa. Roles can be doubled, tripled, or quadrupled as the director sees fit.

**DURATION:** 30 minutes.

**TIME:** Monday morning.

**SETTING:** The Bay Ridge subway stop and a subway train.

**PROPS**

- Backpack with school supplies
- Notebook
- Pen
- 3 Cell phones
- Rolling suitcase
- Cane
- Sunglasses
- Scarf
- Magazine
- Camera phone
- Toe nail clipper
- Shoe box
- Paper bag
- Messenger bag
- Construction worker hat/vest
- Large pepper grinder
- Electric candle
- Small table
- Table cloth
- Plate of food and utensils
- 2 Boom boxes
- Sandwich

Do Not Copy

**SOUND EFFECTS**

- Sound of a train approaching
- Chime of doors opening/closing
- Screech of train brakes
- Phone ring/ding

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

Almost all of this play takes place on a subway train, which can be as spare or elaborate as you'd like to make it. At minimal, you will need some benches, a pole and train doors. Characters can be in scenes as passengers in the background, coming and going even if they are not in the scenes. In Scene Eleven, there will be music of your choice playing on the boom box.

*Dedication*

*Thanks to Bonita, Feliciano, Kristen, Errin, Renata, and Amy Desiato.*

*Also, (and especially) Josh.*

## SCENE ONE

**AT RISE:** *The Bay Ridge Avenue subway stop. College-aged students CHRIS and SAM arrive. SAM wears a backpack with school supplies in it.*

**SAM:** You really didn't have to walk me to the train. I feel like you're my mommy on my first day of school.

**CHRIS:** Well it is your first day of class this semester. And I was going to get a bagel over there.

**SAM:** I'm just saying. I feel like you should've been holding my hand when we crossed the street.

**CHRIS:** *(Doing a mom voice.)* Now, dear, you have everything you need?

**SAM:** You're so dumb.

**CHRIS:** *(Continuing the joke.)* You got your keys? Your cellular phone?

**SAM:** Such a dork.

**CHRIS:** Your billfold? Your homework?

**SAM:** *(A realization.)* –Wait.

**CHRIS:** *(Still doing a routine.)* Your number two pencil–

**SAM:** *(Serious.)* WAIT!

**CHRIS:** *(Dropping the act.)* What?

**SAM:** My homework! *(Pulling out phone and scrolling through emails.)*  
Yeah, we're supposed to turn in a short essay. "Why I Heart New York."

**CHRIS:** Well that sucks.

**SAM:** "500 words due on the first day of class." Oh, man, what am I going to do?

**CHRIS:** 500 words? That's like, what, a page?

**SAM:** *(Talking to self.)* My new year's resolution was to get it together. To focus on my studies. But nooo, you had to screw it up, didn't you? Had to play video games for three hours last night instead of looking at your syllabus again–

**CHRIS:** *(Grabbing his friend.)* Hey! Chill out. Look, you have a decent commute ahead of you. You can totally write it on the train.

**SAM:** What?

**CHRIS:** Yeah, just write it on the train. Make some stuff up. That's what English Majors do, right?

**SAM:** For the last time, that's not—

*SFX: The sound of a train approaching is heard in the background.*

**CHRIS:** Hey, isn't that your train?

**SAM:** *(Running off stage.)* Oh, shoot—

**CHRIS:** *(Waving off.)* Remember to stand clear of the closing doors, dear!

*Lights down.*

## SCENE TWO

**AT RISE:** *Lights up on SAM on the train. This will be the setting for the remainder of the play, and people will constantly be getting on and off the train throughout the play. SAM can also shift seats and positions throughout unless a scene explicitly says he's in a certain place. SAM sits on the bench, wildly hovering over a notebook with a pen in hand. He will struggle with writing throughout the play.*

**SAM:** *(Talking to self.)* Why I love New York... why I love New York... Because it's cool? No... it's the city that never sleeps? Ugh. Too cheesy. It's the center of the universe? No, too conceited. New York state of mind? Empire state of mind? Empire strikes back— stay on topic!

**ANNOUNCER:** *(As the train doors open.)* This is 59th Street Station. Please stand clear of the closing doors.

*JO gets on the train, phone glued to his/her ear.*

**JO:** *(Into the phone.)* Yeah, I just got on the train.

*SFX: The closing chime of the doors can be heard in the background.*

*(Still into the phone.)* No, the train doors just closed. Yeah, now we're moving. Like, right now. *(Sits next to SAM.)* Oh, I got a seat. Yeah, a seat. It's not that packed. I mean, there are people here, but not that bad. Oh, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9... 9. Oh, no. 10. You mean counting me or not counting me? Right. Then 10. There's a girl wearing a red dress. She's sitting across from me. And she has headphones on. I think she's listening to music. Yeah. *(Right in SAM'S face.)* And then there's a person sitting next to me. No, not that cute. Yeah. Like... I'd give him a 6. If I'm being nice. He's writing something. Now he stopped. Now he started again. Nope, stopped. Now he's looking at me.

**SAM:** Do you mind?

**JO:** *(Still into the phone.)* He just asked me if I mind.

**SAM:** Seriously. Could you just... stop?

**JO:** *(Still into the phone.)* He wants me to stop. I know, right? Now he's rolling his eyes. Yeah. He's being a total 5. Oh, now we're going into a tunnel. I might lose reception.

**SAM:** *(To himself.)* Thank goodness.

**JO:** *(Still into the phone.)* Yeah, I might lose you. We're going into the tunnel now. Like, the train is already darker. Hello? Hello? I think I lost you. I think I lost you.

*JO puts the phone down for a minute. SAM breathes a sigh of relief. Then, JO dials the phone and is back on it.*

*(Into the phone.)* Oh my god. I totally lost you. Like the line went out for a minute but now you're back. Yeah, there are still 9 people on the train. Not counting me, of course...

*SAM watches on, exasperated. Lights go down. SFX: The chime of the train doors is heard.*

### SCENE THREE

**AT RISE:** *Lights up on a DAN and MARISSA, standing next to SAM, holding the pole. MARISSA holds a rolling suitcase. They are both VERY affectionate.*

**DAN:** I'm going to miss you, baby.

**MARISSA:** I'm going to miss you too.

**DAN:** I just don't like us having to be apart.

**MARISSA:** I know, but I'll be back before you know it.

**DAN:** I love you, smoochy bear.

**MARISSA:** I love you more, my cuddly wuddly.

**DAN:** What am I going to do without you?

**MARISSA:** What am I going to do without YOU?

**DAN:** Well, call me when you get in.

**MARISSA:** I will. And I'll text you throughout the day.

**DAN:** You better. Send me photos.

**MARISSA:** I'll take so many. It'll be like you're there with me.

**DAN:** Okay, the stop is coming up, sweetheart.

**MARISSA:** I don't want the ride to end.

**ANNOUNCER:** This is Church Avenue. Please stand clear of the closing doors.

*MARISSA gathers her suitcase and begins to get off the train.*

**DAN:** *(Waving.)* Be safe, lovey.

**MARISSA:** *(Stopping in the doors.)* I will, darling.

**DAN:** *(Running to the doors.)* I'll miss you!

*SFX: The door chimes. Doors trying to close but DAN and MARISSA hold them open as they continue to say sweet nothings. The train passengers, including SAM, are now staring.*

**MARISSA:** I already miss you!

**DAN:** I miss you so much too!

**MARISSA:** It's like you're not even here anymore! That's how much I miss you!

*SFX: The doors chime again, but the lovebirds are prying them open.*

**SAM:** *(Trying to get them to leave.)* Okay, guys—

**MARISSA:** It's like I miss missing you, that's how much I miss you.

**DAN:** It's like you've already come back, that's how long I've been missing you.

**ANNOUNCER:** Attention passengers: can whoever is holding the doors, please get out of the way? We have other stops to get to.

*MARISSA and DAN hug, then let the doors shut. They hold their palms to one another's at the window:*

**DAN:** *(Yelling.)* My heart will wait for your return, my love.

**MARISSA:** I will think of you every second I am gone.

*The train begins moving again. DAN sits next to SAM on the bench.*

**SAM:** Your girlfriend going on a long trip?

**DAN:** A trip? Oh, she's just going to work. Suitcase sales. She'll be home by 5.

*SFX: DAN'S phone dings. He looks at it. To SAM.*

Aw, look. She just texted me a sad face emoji. Do you think she misses me?

*Lights down.*

#### SCENE FOUR

**ANNOUNCER:** This is 45th Street. Stand clear of the closing doors.

*Lights up on a more crowded train now. SAM is still seated. A (seemingly) sweet old woman with a cane, DOLORES, is trying to get through the crowd.*

**DOLORES:** Excuse me. Excuse me.

*Suddenly JIM, comes running onto the train, just as SFX: The doors chime and close. As he runs onto the train car, he knocks into DOLORES.*

**JIM:** Hey! Wait! Someone hold the doors! Someone hold the—

**DOLORES:** Ow!

**JIM:** Move it, lady. You can't stand in the way like that.

*SAM overhears this and yells to JIM.*

**SAM:** Uh, excuse me?

**JIM:** *(Not caring.)* What?

**SAM:** You can't just talk to her like that.

**JIM:** Beat it, kid.

**SAM:** I mean, she's just an old lady. You don't have to be so rude.

**JIM:** Would you mind your own business?

**SAM:** Hey, man, you like, rammed right into her.

**JIM:** She was blocking the doors at rush hour. You can't block the doors at rush hour!

**SAM:** *(To himself.)* Jerk.

*Everyone goes back to what they were doing. DOLORES approaches SAM.*

**DOLORES:** Excuse me, young man?

**SAM:** Yes, ma'am?

**DOLORES:** *(Slowly.)* I heard what you said, and I just wanted to say—  
*(Suddenly sharp, ranting.)* next time you should just shut your trap. Talking about me as if I'm not right here. What? You think just because I'm older that I can't defend myself? I have stockings older than you, child. I have years of experience. I don't need some punk kid calling me old. I can take care of myself. I am an independent woman. *(Turning to JIM.)* And you! You good-for-nothing yuppie scum. How dare you just shove your way through like a Neanderthal. Just because you're carrying a wide load doesn't mean you throw all that weight however you like. *(Whacking him with the cane.)* Didn't your mother ever teach you any sense of decency? See? Not helpless! I can handle myself! I can stand on my own two feet!!

**JIM and SAM:** Sorry, ma'am.

**DOLORES:** (*Settling back down into sweet old woman mode again.*)

Thank you. (*She hobbles over to SAM.*) ...Well?

**SAM:** What?

**DOLORES:** Where are your manners? Aren't you going to offer me your seat?

**SAM:** What?

**DOLORES:** Aren't you going to offer your seat to your elder?

**SAM:** (*Getting up, moving out of her way.*) Seriously? I don't—

**DOLORES:** (*Sighing, to herself as she takes his seat.*) Kids these days.

*Lights down.*

## SCENE FIVE

**AT RISE:** *Lights up as SFX: train doors chime.*

**SAM:** (*Furiously erasing a page from his notebook, to himself.*) Stop quoting Taylor Swift songs, you goon! This is why you're never going to write the next great American novel.

*Next to SAM, HILDA stands, curiously looking in the direction of NANCY VON FAMOUSFACE, a woman in big sunglasses and a scarf, reading a magazine.*

**HILDA:** (*Nudging SAM, quietly, and pointing.*) Do you see who that is?

**SAM:** Huh?

**HILDA:** The lady in the glasses.

**SAM:** What about her?

**HILDA:** That's Nancy von Famousface.

**SAM:** Who?

**HILDA:** (*Giddy.*) Nancy von Famousface. Huge movie star? Winner of last year's MTV Movie Award for Best Kiss?

**SAM:** Oh, I don't think I caught that.

**HILDA:** The movie she won that award for was called *Heartbreak Hotel California*. It was sooo romantic. She played a hotel owner who thinks she can never love again.

**SAM:** Yep, never seen it—

**HILDA:** She's so much smaller in person. God, the camera really adds extra bulk, huh?

**SAM:** I wouldn't know.

**HILDA:** You never see celebrities in the subway. I guess they really are just like us, huh?

**SAM:** I mean—

**HILDA:** I wonder if she's still dating Max Evenmorefamousactionguy anymore.

**SAM:** I promise you I have no clue—

*Before SAM even finishes his sentence, the flash of HILDA'S camera on her phone goes off.*

**HILDA:** Wait until I put this up on Facebook. *(Looks at the photo.)* Oh wait, it's kind of blurry. You can't even tell it's her.

**SAM:** I think it looks fine.

**HILDA:** Will you try to take a photo? Like, with me in it?

**SAM:** I don't really feel comfortable doing that.

**HILDA:** *(Thrusts the phone in his hand and already walks towards NANCY.)* Thanks.

*HILDA goes and stands awkwardly sort of near NANCY, but not close. SAM snaps a picture.*

*(Looks at the photo.)* Let me try to get closer. I'll just like—walk by and then you take a picture right when I pass her.

*HILDA gets up and very casually walks by NANCY. Just as she crosses her, though, she turns to the camera and does a dramatic pose, just as SAM takes the photo. NANCY doesn't even look up from her magazine. HILDA walks off as though nothing happened.*

**SAM:** Is that good enough?

**HILDA:** *(Looks at the photo.)* I'm going to just go over there, and you take as many pictures as you can.

**SAM:** I really don't want to do this—

**HILDA:** Thanks, hon!

*HILDA goes over to NANCY and proceeds to do a lot of weird poses around her as NANCY continues to read her magazine, undisturbed. HILDA does bunny ears on her. HILDA does a pose where she pretends to laugh at something NANCY says. HILDA maybe even gets on the ground and poses in front of NANCY. All this happens to the constant clicks/flashes of SAM behind the camera.*

*(Out of breath, back over with SAM.)* I think we got it.

**SAM:** *(Handing back her phone.)* Thank goodness.

*SAM returns to his writing as another passenger, LARRY, approaches HILDA.*

**LARRY:** Is that Nancy Von Famousface?

**HILDA:** Totally is!

**LARRY:** Oh, man. I want to ask her for her autograph.

**HILDA:** Don't do it. Celebrities deserve a little privacy.

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