

Characters:

Thomas (Samuel) and Craig (Ryan), in their 30s, friends since childhood

Owl (Stayci)

Various voices of downtown St. Paul (all the actors)

*The door to the Bulldog, a crowded pub, flies open and
CRAIG comes barreling out with a yell of wild exasperation.
The door opens again and THOMAS, his friend comes out after him.*

THOMAS

Hey!! You OK?

CRAIG

I'm fine, I just need ... air. I'm fine.

THOMAS

You've been weird all night, the only one at your welcome home party who doesn't seem to be having fun. ... Come on, it's me, talk to me. Is it weird being back?

CRAIG

No it's great. Yes it's weird. Downtown is ... sad. All the cool places are gone, stuff is broken, people broken. It's not just downtown, everything's just ... broken.

THOMAS

Is this about the baby? The job? I thought you were excited –

CRAIG

I am! Jodi's happy, parents are happy we'll be close by. Got the job, got the place, painted the baby room, we're all set. But like, I just can't with all this pretending the world is fine, talking about some game on the TV or some shoes we wanna buy. Like don't you think about the future and ...?

THOMAS

Wanna lose it? Yeah! But I try not to worry about it all the time.

CRAIG

And this is why the world is ending. Everyone's given up. Isn't anyone gonna do something?

THOMAS

Yeah, it's bad, I hear you. Things have been ... bad. Really bad here. But you know, when your people have been kicked around for as many generations as mine –

CRAIG (*overlapping*)

Sorry, total white guy moment, we're all still on stolen land, right?

THOMAS (*continuing*)

Right. Catastrophic change. Disruption of what you thought was normal. Isn't new just because it's new to you. I try to pace myself, you know, see the long arc. Change happens slow – a little, a little, a little, and then suddenly, a lot. Hey, you know what? There's this thing, lemme show you. I think it's this way, up Wacouta, toward 7th? It's a mural, an owl,–

We hear them walking up Wacouta

CRAIG

That is not an owl. That is like some worker guy sitting on a Pabst beer can.

THOMAS

Not that, up here further, past the fancy event center, there, on the left, in the alley. There.

We hear them enter the alley. It's a little more echoey in there

CRAIG

Wow, it's huge. Wait, doesn't the owl like for Native Americans mean death or ...?

THOMAS

Yeah, just stop –

CRAIG

Sorry, yeah –

THOMAS

Every tribe's got a different take. My tribe sees them as messengers. And this is just a painting anyway, but check it out, there's a thing I heard about, I don't know if it's real or not, but, look into her eyes. Like without blinking. For as long as you can.

CRAIG

Okaaaay. Huh. It's kinda creepy looking. So what's –

THOMAS

Shhhh, listen!

The sound of feathers ruffling. A very soft owl sound.

CRAIG

Whoa –

THOMAS

Don't look away! Now touch her.

CRAIG

Uhm, people piss back here.

THOMAS

Up high.

He steps closer, touches the wall, the owl sound gets louder.

CRAIG

It feels soft, like ... It feels like feathers, are you kidding me, this is ... whoa, amazing.

THOMAS

Look at her ears, she's a listener. You can hear through her. Be still. Listen.

OWL

Liiiiissssstennn. To the ciitiityy. The peeeeeople. Waaaaantiing.

We hear the voices of the people in downtown St. Paul, their wants. At first, they are isolated, quiet, little drops in a pond.

Chocolate brownie, chocolate chip cookie

Free parking spot, free parking spot

Better apartment, more light

Come on, don't ghost me, text me back

Just pee already and stop pulling on this leash!

OWL

Peeeeeepeople wiiiiiiiishhhiiiiing

The voices get a little more heartfelt, a little more overlapping.

Better job, something with purpose

One. Nice date. With one. Nice person.

If mom could just retire, finally take it easy, stop worrying

Stop hating everyone and everything all the time

If these people could get some dang help, stop overdosing

OWL

Huuuummmanssss dreeeeeamiing

More determined, a little faster, a little louder

Finally give up my car and just bike and ride the bus

Make time to be creative, to play, to laugh
Get involved, volunteer
Talk to my neighbors, make new friends

OWL

Imaaaaaginiiiiiing

Now a stream of overlapping hopefulness.

Rooftop gardens
Turn these old buildings into art centers, food halls
Make the riverfront one big park
Knock down the ugly buildings, make more open space
Trees, more trees!!
Outdoor dancing
Funky restaurants
Twinkly lights everywhere!
People talking to each other, taking care of each other
A bicycle bridge across the river
Hot air balloon rides
A funicular!!!!

OWL

Liiiiffffe becommmiiiiing

The sounds of a vibrant town square, people laughing talking, a fountain, music and dancing.

THOMAS

Hey. We should probably get back.

CRAIG

Wow. Did you hear all that?

THOMAS

Not a thing. What did you hear?

CRAIG

So much ... yearning. But, like, so much hope too? Right here. All around us.

THOMAS

Wow, it totally worked for you.

CRAIG

Like, if we could just hear each other, if we could just believe in each other's dreams ... like, what we could all do ...?

THOMAS

That's what I love about you. You can be all "the world is ending!!!" one minute, and then "maybe we can save it!!!!" the next.

CRAIG

I know, I'm such a dork.

THOMAS

No! You know what this town needs? A little optimism. Hey, I missed you. Wasn't sure you'd ever come back.

CRAIG

I missed you too. You're a really good listener.

THOMAS

Yeah, of course, you're always there for me.

CRAIG

Buy me another beer?

THOMAS

You're the one with the fancy new job. I think it's your round.

CRAIG

Yeah, OK.

THOMAS

Welcome home buddy.

CRAIG

Thanks. It's good to be home.