

Billy Nobody

a comedy by Stanley Rutherford

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The characters

Multi-racial casting requested

- Billy:** A man in his late thirties or forties, a little guy with irregular features, charming and cute, highly eccentric.
- Aurora:** A woman in her late forties/early fifties, full of heat, flashy and wild, unruly hair, unruly mind.
- Lenny:** Billy's landlord—adult male, a red-faced, pot-bellied, loud-mouthed jerk.
- Emily:** Billy's ex-wife—adult female, a big woman (big tall or big wide or both), a social climber, pushy and coarse, a bull in society's china shop.
- Marty:** Emily's lawyer—adult male, surly, macho, inept.
- Mrs. Sagerson:** Billy's piano teacher—an old woman, very prim and proper, seriously demented.
- Ernie:** Billy's upstairs neighbor—a character who is heard, but never seen, a real mess.

The setting

All scenes take place in Billy's apartment—a high-ceilinged, sparsely furnished room. There is an old wooden table (stage center), a scattering of old, hard-bottomed, hard-backed wooden chairs, a doorway that leads to a bathroom (up stage left), and a doorway that is the apartment's entrance (up stage right). Downstage, and somewhat removed from the other chairs, sits a small old, wooden baby chair

A note

This is not a naturalistic play. The dialogue is stylized as should be the movement and action of the piece.

ACT I, Scene 1

At lights up, BILLY rushes in through the apartment entrance. He is extremely upset, breathless, close to tears. He stops in the center of the room and slowly begins to catch his breath and calm down. Shortly thereafter AURORA enters carrying a bag of groceries and a large, rather spectacular-looking satchel.

AURORA and BILLY are extremely eccentric, each in his/her own way. BILLY is a little guy, strange, but cute, sweet, rather mysterious. AURORA is pretty flashy--unruly hair, unruly clothes, unruly mind.

AURORA: Honey, are you okay?

BILLY: **[Heading toward the bathroom]** Excuse me...

AURORA: Are you okay? [She sets the groceries on the table and the satchel on the floor.]

BILLY: I have to take a bath...

AURORA: Honey, you think too much.

BILLY: Warm water...

AURORA: When was the last time you had a vacation?

BILLY: Excuse me...

BILLY heads into the bathroom, AURORA goes back to the apartment door, shuts it and tries to lock it but discovers that the lock doesn't work.

BILLY: **[Coming back out of the bathroom, stammering]** I...I...I have agoraphobia.

AURORA: Honey, your lock doesn't lock.

BILLY: "Agora" is Greek for "market place"...

AURORA: The lock on your door doesn't work...

BILLY: I have fear of the market place, fear of the city streets...

AURORA: Anyone can walk in and out of here.

BILLY: ...fear of the open door...

AURORA: Pathological crazy people can walk in and out...

BILLY: I can't sleep.

AURORA: This is New York City.

BILLY: I haven't slept in weeks.

AURORA: Honey, maybe you'd rather be alone.

BILLY: I try to sleep, I want to sleep...

AURORA: Maybe if I left...

BILLY: I have skin allergies...

AURORA: **[Nodding]** Honey, I'm a victim of over-exposure...

BILLY: I'm a mess...

AURORA: It's always "Hi, Aurora, how ya' doin', Aurora," and you and I've never met and there you were standing in front of the Big Value bawlin' like a baby.

BILLY: That's what agoraphobia is like...

AURORA: And I said, there's a man I've got to meet.

BILLY: ...you get disoriented when you have to go out into a hostile environment...

AURORA: **[Sitting down at the table]** It's like I was telling this guy, Mario, who does my hair...

BILLY: ...you shake, you sweat...

AURORA: ...and it's not that I like Mario, in fact I don't like Mario, and it's not that Mario can cut hair any better than anyone else, in fact, he's just as bad as all the rest of them...

BILLY: I have a lot of compulsive behavior problems...

AURORA: So he's got me sitting in the chair, strapped in and covered up and he's waving the scissors around and saying, "What's goin' on, Aurora, what's goin' on, baby?" and here's the thing: he didn't even know that I'd been gone, and it's been like seven, eight years,

right, over eight years, and he didn't realize that I'd been gone, and I'd been in Amsterdam, I'd been in Paris, I'd been in Madrid, and, honey, I haven't been in New York in over eight years and it's like, "Oh, hi, Aurora, what's going on, Aurora?"

BILLY: I cut my own hair.

AURORA: I hate my hair.

BILLY: Emily made me go to the professionals...

AURORA: They are not professionals...

BILLY: Emily's my ex-wife.

AURORA: Mine used to look like shit, and people told me it looked like shit, and this was long before it was fashionable to have brutally wacked-over-shitty-looking hair, and I'm telling Mario about all of this and he starts talkin' wigs, do you believe this, and, honey, I'm not ever talkin' wigs, and here he is runnin' on about how I need a wig, or maybe I need two wigs, and I just started yelling at him, because if you're talkin' hair you're not talkin' wig, and if you're talkin' wig, at the very best, you're talkin' somebody else's hair, and, honey, I ain't putting somebody else's hair on top of my head. So he gets pissed because he sells wigs, and, of course, he sells wigs because he can't cut hair, and it's like he's gonna get the bucks at the end of the line no matter what, and that's another thing I can't stand is the feeling of complete fucking helplessness at the hands of a man who can't cut hair and is making money off of that fact.

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 2

AURORA is taking the groceries--little jars of baby food-- out of the bag and placing them on the kitchen shelf. She then turns and sits at the table and notices a small address book that had been thrown on the floor. She stands and picks it up, sits down again, and starts looking through it. BILLY then enters from the bathroom. He is wearing a robe and is drying his hair with a towel.

AURORA: Feeling better?

BILLY: It was really nice of you to help me...

AURORA; Honey, I see, I do, I don't think...

BILLY: I've never met a nice person before.

AURORA: **[Indicating the address book]** Are these your people?

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** I don't have any people.

AURORA: **[Reading]** Nate and Dottie Renfrow, Bill Tully...

BILLY: They're Emily's people.

AURORA: **[Shaking her head, reading]** Jack and Ginger Peterson...

BILLY: Emily collected people.

AURORA: **[Reading]** Maxine Bennett...

BILLY: Emily was a party girl.

AURORA: Honey, I invented the party.

BILLY: That's all she thought about: who was having a party and were they going to invite her.

AURORA: The party-girl-era is dead.

BILLY: No one every told Emily.

AURORA: **[Putting the address book down]** Honey, my name's Aurora.

BILLY: I...I'm Billy.

AURORA: Hi, Billy.

BILLY: **[Smiling, very shyly]** Hi, Aurora.

AURORA: It's nice to meet a stranger.

BILLY: **[Embarrassed]** I'm not very interesting.

AURORA: Honey, you're fascinating.

BILLY: You don't have to stay...

AURORA: You might be the most fascinating man I've ever met.

BILLY: I have panic attacks.

AURORA: Would you like a gin and tonic? **[She reaches for her satchel]**

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** I have fear of fear.

AURORA: **[She opens her satchel and takes out a bottle of gin, tonic, ice and two glasses and during the following dialogue proceeds to pour two drinks]** Honey, I've got everything here for any occasion.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** I get disoriented.

AURORA: And I'll tell ya' right off that I used to be what they call a "problem drinker," you know what I mean? But then I went to one of those clinics for people who are problem drinkers, have you ever been to one of those clinics? And you spend a lot of time sitting around in groups talking about "the problem" and you get to know a whole lot of people who, for the most part, are people you'd really rather not get to know because they're problem drinkers and you'd be a problem drinker too if you had the personalities that some of these people have. **[She hands him a drink]**

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** No, thank you.

AURORA: Come on, honey.

BILLY: I haven't slept in weeks.

AURORA: Maybe a drink will help you relax.

BILLY: **[He takes a hesitant little sip of the drink and sets it down]** I'm afraid to go to sleep.

AURORA: Honey, I liked you the minute I saw you.

BILLY: I have the same dream every night...

AURORA: There's something special about you.

BILLY: I'm in the Big Value...

AURORA: You dream about this place too?

BILLY: ...and I'm pushing a shopping cart up and down the aisles and I'm picking up stuff and I'm trying to read the labels to figure out the fat content and the price, and the thing is I eat baby food...

AURORA: **[Nodding]** My guardian was a bulimic...

BILLY: I like baby food, I like the texture...

AURORA: I learned the whole bulimia thing from her...

BILLY: ...and I'm upset...

AURORA: ...and you eat and throw up, eat and throw up...

BILLY: ...because I'm picking up all these things like pork and beans...

AURORA: It gets real boring...

BILLY: ...and I don't eat pork and beans, I never eat pork and beans, but I put a can of pork and beans in the cart and then I put another can of pork and beans in the cart, a different brand of pork and beans in the cart, and these people are coming past me pushing their carts up and down the aisles, and I don't know these people, but they know me and they're saying "There's Billy, look at Billy..."

AURORA: **[Nodding]** "Hi, Aurora, how's it goin', Aurora?"

BILLY: ...and I'm going up and down the aisles, aisle after aisle, night after night, and I push the cart to the check-out stand and the check-out person rings up each item, but it's a different check-out person each time, and it's not a nice check-out person, it's a mean, hostile, ugly check-out person, and every time they charge me more than what the price tag says and every time I pay more than I should. **[BILLY hits his head several times on the table--this is one of his favorite gestures of despair]**

AURORA: Honey, do you point out to the check-out person that he's overcharged you?

BILLY: I pay more every time.

AURORA: You have to tell them!

BILLY: They're very hostile.

AURORA: You have to be assertive.

BILLY: I'm very passive.

AURORA: **[Comforting him]** Honey, it's a dream.

BILLY: **[Standing]** Excuse me, I have to take a bath.

AURORA: You just took a bath.

BILLY: Warm water...

AURORA: Honey, I've never seen you before...

BILLY: You're really a nice person.

AURORA: I'll never see you again...

BILLY: I've never met a nice person before.

AURORA: We're strangers, we can talk the truth...

BILLY: I had developmental difficulties.

AURORA: ...because there wasn't any last time and there won't be any next time, no expectations, no complications...

BILLY hesitates and then sits back down. Long pause.

AURORA: **[Looking around]** Nice place you got here.

BILLY: Emily got everything.

AURORA: You're a minimalist.

BILLY: ...Grandma Crosby's rugs, Grandma Crosby's quilts...

AURORA: I'm a minimalist.

BILLY: ...Grandma Crosby's armchair...Emily got everything.

AURORA: **[Indicating the address book]** Honey, forget this woman.

BILLY: She threw that at me...

AURORA: You don't need her.

BILLY: She showed up this afternoon and opened the door and threw it at me...

AURORA: You've got to get your lock fixed.

BILLY: **[Indicating the address book]** She said it was my fault that everybody crossed her off their party list...

The telephone rings.

BILLY: **[Startled/upset]** Don't answer it.

The telephone rings again.

BILLY: Just let it ring.

The telephone rings a third time.

BILLY: The most awful people call.

The telephone rings a fourth time.

BILLY: Hostile people.

The telephone rings a fifth time.

BILLY: They always want something.

The telephone rings a sixth time.

BILLY hits his head several times on the table, then looks up.

BILLY: Please don't leave me.

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 3

BILLY and AURORA are sitting at the table. They are drinking gin and tonics. AURORA has settled in a bit; she's taken nail polish, remover, and so forth from her satchel and is doing her nails

AURORA: ...and I wasn't a pass-the-notes-in-class-type, or the walk-around-the-hallways-in-twos-and-threes-and-giggle-type...

BILLY: I read history books.

AURORA: I went to this place called Miss Pence's and I was on a scholarship...

BILLY: Ancient history, medieval history...

AURORA: ...and I didn't have "the wardrobe"...

BILLY: ...any history...

AURORA: ...I only had the uniform, and I didn't have the make-up, and this was during the Sandra Dee era when you had to have blond hair and pink lipstick and white lipstick and first you put on the pink lipstick and then you put on the white lipstick...honey, all I did was hide in my room and read...

BILLY: I'm a slow reader...

AURORA: I read Brothers Karamozov in three days...

BILLY: I have to sound out the words...

AURORA: Three days, count 'em, one, two three...Brothers Karamozov...

BILLY: History books have a lot of hard words...

AURORA: Three days...

BILLY: Big words...

AURORA: ...and then at Bryn Mawr, Ezra Rebholtz, the art historian and sexual psychopath, showed me a picture of the paining by Manet of the naked lady lying on the grass eating lunch with a couple of

guys, and, honey, the minute I saw that painting I knew exactly what I wanted to be...

BILLY: I was an experiment.

AURORA: ...and there I was a little, pink, plump art history major and there's not much you can do when you're a little, pink, plump art history major except take off your clothes and pose...

BILLY: My father, the world famous child psychologist, wanted me to be a genius and he and my mother, the world's second most famous child psychologist, gave me "educational" toys, and I wanted "fun" toys...

AURORA: You think too much.

BILLY: And they had these "educational" things hanging down over my crib...they drove me crazy...

AURORA: Thinking too much can make you sick.

BILLY: I have skin allergies.

AURORA: See what I mean.

BILLY: Itching and flaking...it's awful...[Sticks out his leg to show her].

The telephone rings.

BILLY: Don't answer it.

The telephone rings again.

BILLY: Just let it ring.

The telephone rings a third time.

BILLY: The most awful people call.

The telephone rings a fourth time.

BILLY: Hostile people.

The telephone rings a fifth time.

BILLY: They always want something.

The telephone rings a sixth time, then stops.

AURORA: There's a whole random phone call thing going on all over town...

BILLY: Emily calls sometimes.

AURORA: ...people dialing numbers at random just to see who'll pick up the phone.

BILLY: Emily's lawyer calls sometimes.

AURORA: They even have computers dialing numbers at random...

BILLY: Emily wants my baby chair. **[He points to an old, sad-looking little kiddie chair]**

AURORA: Nobody cares who they're talking to anyway.

BILLY: It was my baby chair and it was my mother's baby chair and her mother's baby chair... **[Looking back at AURORA]** I'm boring you.

AURORA: Honey, you're the most fascinating man I've ever met.

BILLY: **[Pause, suspicious]** You're not one of those Scientology people, are you?

AURORA: I'm not a Jehovah's Witness either, okay?

BILLY: Because I'm not taking any personality test...

AURORA: I'm a model.

BILLY: I read history books, I take baths, I try not to bother anybody...

AURORA: I've been modeling ever since Bryn Mawr...

BILLY: I'm not very interesting...

AURORA: And I've done the pose-for-the artist thing, and the center-fold thing, I even did the porn movie thing a couple of times back during the Summer of Love, and there I was fucking some guy in an apartment off Haight Street, and he was Adam and I was Eve...**[then earnestly]** Honey, look, I've got money, okay? I don't want you to think that I don't have any money or a place to stay, there are a lot of places to stay, no big deal...

BILLY: I'm not a very good host...

AURORA: I keep moving, because you stay too long in one place one thing leads to another...

BILLY: I usually don't like people...

AURORA: ...and then you're trapped.

BILLY: ...but you're different...

AURORA: I travel.

BILLY: I read history books.

AURORA: ...go anywhere any time as long as they don't speak your language or know who you are.

BILLY: I take baths.

AURORA: I like being a stranger.

BILLY's upstairs neighbor, ERNIE, suddenly knocks several times on his (Ernie's) floor (BILLY's ceiling). The knocking is accompanied by some muffled cries for help. BILLY and AURORA look up toward the ceiling.

BILLY: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** It's okay, Ernie, everything's fine. Don't worry. **[Then to AURORA]** The guy who lives above me has anxiety attacks...

ERNIE knocks and moans again.

BILLY: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** Everything's all right, Ernie. There's nothing to worry about, **[Then to AURORA]** He gets upset and has tantrums. **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** It's all going to be okay, Ernie.

AURORA: He needs a vacation.

BILLY: **[Suddenly suspicious]** Emily's lawyer didn't hire you, did he?

AURORA: Honey, we're strangers.

BILLY: You're supposed to spy on me aren't you.

AURORA: I don't know you, you don't know me, and you were crying and I helped you carry your groceries back to your place...

BILLY: **[Suddenly looking around the room]** Where is my piano?

AURORA: ...you took a bath...

BILLY: **[Upset]** Where is my piano?

AURORA: Honey, what piano?

BILLY: **[Very upset]** What happened to my piano!?

AURORA: **[Looking around]** Honey, there wasn't a piano here when we came in.

BILLY: **[Panicked]** Where is my piano?!!

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 4

BILLY is seated at the table working on his recipes (as described below). AURORA is wandering around the stage looking for BILLY's piano.

AURORA: **[Looking for Billy's piano]** Do you think maybe it was over here? Where do you usually keep it? **[Pause]** I mean, honey, there are only so many places you can put a piano. Was it a big piano? **[BILLY's is completely focussed on his recipes. AURORA moves in closer to him]** Was it a big piano? **[Pause]** You don't want to talk about your piano.

BILLY: **[Reading one of the postcards]** Mrs. N. Siegel of Brooklyn, N.Y. writes, "Your corn chowder recipe was so good I can hardly wait for the rosemary chicken." **[He addresses an envelope, inserts a recipe card, and seals the envelope.]**

AURORA: Honey, it's fine. I understand. Forget about the piano.

BILLY: There were 73 today.

AURORA: It'll turn up. They always do.

BILLY: That's \$146 bucks, two bucks for each recipe. And you're doing people a service.

AURORA: Sometimes the right things happens at the right time.

BILLY: Everybody needs a recipe and if you've got a good recipe you've got money in the bank.

AURORA: Opportunity knocks, you open the door.

BILLY: Everybody needs to eat...

AURORA: See what I mean?

BILLY: They're my Aunt Frances's recipes.

AURORA: You're amazing.

BILLY: She left me her cookbooks when she died. And after my breakdown and the divorce when Emily got all the money and the rugs and the furniture...I got the idea for the mail-order recipe business...

AURORA: They're gonna put you on a talk show.

BILLY: It's called "Aunt Frances' Recipe-of-the-Month Club" and I pick out the recipe, get the recipe cards printed up, put the ad in the magazines...

AURORA: They're gonna put your face on the dollar bill...

BILLY: ...and then the people send in two dollars for the recipe-of-the-month and I send them the recipe-of-the-month and a card advertising the next month's recipe-of-the-month and I make six, seven hundred bucks a week. At home.

AURORA: Honey, the things that happen by chance, ya' know, just happen...are the things you should go with.

BILLY: Last month I did a James Beard corn chowder recipe...

AURORA: See what I mean?

BILLY: ...this month it's Craig Claiborne's rosemary chicken, it's great...

AURORA: What did I tell ya'.

BILLY: Chicken sauteed with lots of rosemary and a sauce made with vermouth. **[He hands a rosemary chicken recipe card to AURORA]**

AURORA: **[Looks for a moment at the card]** Have you ever tried this?

BILLY: I don't cook. Neither did Aunt Frances.

AURORA: Honey, what's Craig Claiborne going to think about this?

BILLY: I think he'll be flattered.

AURORA: What if he reads the ad? What if it just so happens that Craig Claiborne reads the ad and what if it just so happens that Craig Claiborne decides to send in his two bucks for Aunt Frances' rosemary chicken recipe, and then he reads it, and then he realizes that Aunt Frances' rosemary chicken recipe is really Craig Claiborne's rosemary chicken recipe?

BILLY: Craig Claiborne doesn't read the ads in the magazines any more.

AURORA: He's gonna be pissed.

BILLY: Craig Claiborne is dead.

AURORA: **[Beat]** Honey, look, I've been back in New York for three days, count 'em, one, two, three, and it's funny how you think you've got to get back to a place because I'd been in London and Cairo and Madrid and, honey, I keep moving...

BILLY: Would you like a piece of candy? **[He stands]**

AURORA: I travel to forget who I am.

BILLY: I have some chocolates hidden in the drawer. **[He crosses to a bureau]**

AURORA: You can be somebody new in every town.

BILLY: **[Opening a drawer and pulling out a box of chocolates]** I'm not supposed to eat chocolate.

AURORA: So here I am back in New York and I've been here three days and all I've seen are the same faces that I used to see and that's the reason I left because I'd seen all the faces...

BILLY: **[Taking a chocolate and offering one to AURORA]** You won't tell anybody that I'm eating chocolate, will you.

AURORA: **[Declining the chocolates]** Honey, I need new faces.

BILLY: It's bad for my skin. **[He puts the chocolates back in the drawer and moves back to the table]**

AURORA: And that's just one of the things that I like about you: you're a new face, a completely, fabulous new face. **[Excited]** Honey, look...**[Standing, moving away from the table, tracing a map on the floor]**...there's a whole continent over here...France, German, Italy, Spain, Portugal...and then there's a whole other continent down here...Morocco, Kenya, Egypt...and then there's India...and then there's China...honey, we could take a plane, you and me, to, say, Munich, and then a train down through Bavaria and into Switzerland...

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** My parents made me stay in my room and color in my coloring book...

AURORA: Trains are fun!

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** They wanted me to stay inside the lines...

AURORA: And when we get tired of Madrid we'll go to Tangiers...

BILLY: You're here to torture me, aren't you.

AURORA: Honey, we met, you were there, I was there, now we're here...

BILLY: You're going to cut off my fingers.

AURORA: **[Sighs, and starts to pick up here things and put them in her satchel as though she were leaving]** Look, I was just trying to help, okay? I'm sorry, I thought I was helping, and there you were crying, and that's what life is like now, people are crying at the check-out stand, and there was something about you, something...**[She starts to stand]**

BILLY: Emily's friends never liked me either.

AURORA: I like you.

BILLY: It was an arranged marriage...

AURORA: I like you a lot.

BILLY: ... and then I had the breakdown and Emily walked out on me and got the divorce and....

AURORA: Do you want some advice?

BILLY: And then my father died...

AURORA: **[Screams]** Forget this Emily bitch!

BILLY: **[Screams back]** Where is my piano?!

AURORA: **[Screams]** Forget mom, forget dad!

BILLY: **[Screams]** Where is my piano?!

AURORA: **[Screams]** Forget the fucking piano!

BILLY: You're going to cut off my fingers.

AURORA: Honey, I don't know what I'm doing here, okay?

BILLY: Please don't cut off my fingers!

AURORA: Sometimes you just have to take a chance.

BILLY: I didn't mean to lose my piano.

AURORA: **[Opening her satchel and pulling things out]** Honey, look, look here, here are my secrets, here are all of my secrets, okay? Here's everything, here's my towel, here's my shampoo, here's my bathrobe, here are my underpants, here's my toothbrush, here's my orange juice, here's my lettuce, my tomatoes, my celery, my carrots, my eggplant...honey, this my whole story, okay, I'm not complicated, this is everything, no concealed weapons, no hidden microphones, no surprises: this is my life. This is all there is.

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 5

BILLY is standing, walking around the room, describing the views that he sees from his imaginary tree house. AURORA sits at the table drinking a gin and tonic.

BILLY: **[Pointing at one of the walls]** ...and the forest is thick through here and all you can see are the pine trees and the birches and all you can hear is the sound of the birds and the squirrels and at night there's the frogs and the crickets... **[Moving to the next wall]** And over here there's a pathway that leads to a meadow, and there's a little creek that runs down over here and there are ducks and geese and swans and stepping stones and a little footbridge and **[looking up]** there's the sky and the clouds and a ray of sun that comes down through the trees, and this is my tree house, that's what I pretend, that this is my tree house and nobody can see me, but I can see everything...**[brief pause]**...you don't like my tree house.

AURORA: I love your tree house.

BILLY: You don't like my tree house.

AURORA: I'm crazy about your tree house...

BILLY: **[Indicating another wall]** And from here, if you stand on a chair [he does so], and look real hard, you can see China and way over there you can see India, and the Cape of Good Hope...

AURORA: I love this.

BILLY: **[Pointing]** There's the Rock of Gibraltar.

AURORA: They're gonna write a book about you.

BILLY: **[Pointing]** There's Big Ben.

AURORA: Honey, I'll tell 'ya, I'd completely given up on men...

BILLY: **[Pointing]** There's the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

AURORA: And I was the first one to say forget men, who needs 'em...

BILLY: Would you like a piece of candy?

AURORA: ...I don't need 'em, I don't want 'em...

BILLY: I have some chocolates hidden in a drawer. **[He crosses to the bureau]**

AURORA: Honey, I haven't been laid in a decade, maybe once or twice, a couple of times in Madrid, nothin' serious...

BILLY: **[Taking out the chocolates]** I'm not supposed to eat chocolates.

AURORA: **[Studying his face]** It's your face.

BILLY: It's bad for my skin.

AURORA: ...it's your beautiful face, it's your innocent eyes...honey, I've been looking forever for a guy with innocent eyes..

BILLY: **[Offering her a chocolate]** Would you like a chocolate.

AURORA: ...'cause, every other man in the world has seen too much, has lied to much... **[She reaches over and touches him]**

BILLY: **[Withdrawing]** Please don't touch me.

AURORA: I really like you.

BILLY: I don't like to be touched.

AURORA: Honey, I don't go home with just anybody ya' know.

BILLY: I have skin allergies.

AURORA: Sometimes I can't help myself.

BILLY: Would you like to see my wedding picture?

AURORA: So I came back to New York and there you were.

BILLY: **[Pulling his wedding picture out a drawer]** This is the picture of our wedding, see... **[showing it to AURORA]**...there's me and there's Emily...that's Emily...

AURORA: **[Looking]** Honey, you look terrified.

BILLY: It was an arranged marriage.

AURORA: Does she always look this mean?
The telephone rings. Billy moans.

AURORA: Don't answer it.
The phone rings again.

BILLY: It's Emily's lawyer.
The phone rings again.

AURORA: Honey, you take things too personally.
The phone rings again.

BILLY: Emily wants my baby chair.
The phone rings again.

AURORA: It's a computer
The phone rings again then stops.

BILLY: **[Standing and shouting]** Aunt Frances is mine! I thought Aunt Frances up. I find the recipes, I address the envelopes... and now Emily and her lawyer are going to carry out some sort of take-over, and she's probably on the phone right now talking to some conglomerate or something, Nabisco or somebody, and she and her lawyer and Nabisco's lawyers are going to set up some sort of monopoly over the whole recipe thing, and the government doesn't care...

AURORA: Honey, have another piece of candy.

BILLY: Do you know that there are more people working directly or indirectly for the government than there are people who don't work directly or indirectly for the government?

AURORA: Would you like another gin and tonic?

BILLY: You're not a member of the League of Women Voters are you?

AURORA: I don't vote.

BILLY: Emily's the membership secretary of the League of Women Voters, and the League of Women voters has cocktail parties for the candidates, I'm serious...and Emily used to make me go to the

cocktail parties, and then she made me go to Senator Moynihan's dinner party and everybody was drinking and making small talk and Emily was drinking and making small talk and and I didn't know how to drink and make small talk and Emily started calling me "Billy Nobody" because she said I was a nobody and that I'd always be a nobody...

AURORA: I like Billy Nobody.

BILLY: ...and the government is run by people who go to parties and people who vote...

AURORA: I'm crazy about Billy Nobody.

BILLY: But who represents us, huh? Who represents the people who don't vote, huh? Who represents the people who aren't party people, huh?

Suddenly the front door slams open to reveal the LANDLORD, a red-faced, pot-bellied, loud-mouthed jerk.

LANDLORD: **[Standing in the doorway]** Guess what time it is, Billy!

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** Please don't leave me.

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 6

The LANDLORD is standing over BILLY. BILLY and AURORA are seated at the table.

LANDLORD: The rent's due, Billy, time to pay the rent.

BILLY: **[Confused]** I just paid the rent.

LANDLORD: Time to pay the rent again.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, don't pay.

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** I'm the landlord, lady.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** He's the landlord.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** You don't have to pay him a thing.

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** I'm the landlord.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** His piano is missing. What are you going to do about it?

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** You havin' a roommate now, fella? Roommates aren't permitted, ya' know that? No roommate.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** His piano is missing and the lock on the door doesn't lock!

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You some kinda whore, honeybunch?

BILLY: **[To LANDLORD]** My piano teacher's going to cut off my fingers if I don't find my piano..

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** His piano teacher's going to cut off his fingers if he doesn't find his piano!

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** Where'd ya' find the roommate, Billy? Out on the corner?

BILLY: At the Big Value.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** He was crying at the check-out stand.

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** You got the cash, Billy? The rent is due.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, there's a clause in the municipal code that says if the lock doesn't work you don't have to pay the rent.

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You got some sort of record, honeybunch?

AURORA: **[Shouts at the LANDLORD]** Pathological crazy people can walk right in!

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** You can't keep a felon in here.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** You're a lunatic, aren't ya'?

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You want a miserable life, lady? Be a landlord.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** This man is a lunatic.

LANDLORD: You got the taxes, you got the insurance...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** They've got warnings out about people like this one...

LANDLORD: ...and this is a quality unit here, you know that?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** You're not supposed to let 'em through the door.

LANDLORD: You got the walls, you got the floor, you got the door...

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** Fella, you turn right around and march yourself right out of here...

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** I'm the landlord.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** He's the landlord.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** There are people who'll call themselves anything to get some money.

BILLY: I've got the money...I'll give you the money. **[BILLY stands and crosses to his bureau and starts to count out his money]**

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, you don't owe him a thing.

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** I've seen you out on the corner, honeybunch.

AURORA: **[Screams to the LANDLORD]** His piano teacher's going to cut off his fingers if he doesn't find his piano!

LANDLORD: You're an illegal, aren't ya'?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, it's not against the law to kill somebody in New York...

LANDLORD: **[Shouts to BILLY]** You can't keep an illegal in here.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** ...all you need is an excuse.

LANDLORD: **[More or less to himself]** I gotta pay the electrical, I gotta pay the taxes...

AURORA: **[To BILLY, tracing a map on the floor]** Honey, Germany is over here, and Italy is down here...

LANDLORD: ...and then you got some fucker that comes to inspect the fire escape and ya' gotta pay him off because there is no fuckin' fire escape.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** They've got beautiful sunsets in Italy...

BILLY crosses to LANDLORD and audibly counts out \$650 dollars.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD while BILLY is counting]** You used to hang out at the No Name with the Brightway twins and a guy named Dirty Al, didn't ya'.

LANDLORD: **[Surprised]** You know Dirty Al?

AURORA: I knew I knew you.

LANDLORD: I know Dirty Al.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** This is what it's like when you're a legend.

LANDLORD: I know you!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** "Hi, Aurora, how's it goin' Aurora?"...

LANDLORD: Aurora!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** See what I mean?

LANDLORD: I'm Lenny! Lenny DeVanzo, baby, remember me?

AURORA: **[With a sigh, to BILLY]** Honey, I used to be the club girl...

LANDLORD: Billy DeVanzo's little brother...Lenny!

AURORA: ...and I did all the clubs, every night, I was the one that everybody came out to see...

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You are beautiful, baby.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** And once ya' start livin' on the edge, there's no fallen back on the safety net...

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You changed my life, baby.

AURORA: **[Screams to LANDLORD]** Where is his piano?!

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You made me a man.

BILLY: **[Screams]** Where is my piano?!

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** Why don't you go take bath.

BILLY: **[To LANDLORD, angrily]** You were supposed to fix the faucet.

LANDLORD: Who broke the faucet?

BILLY: It was broken when I moved in.

AURORA: **[To LANDLORD]** It was broken when he moved in.

LANDLORD: You're gonna pay for it, fella.

BILLY: I didn't break it.

AURORA: He didn't break it!

LANDLORD: You're gonna pay for everything, fella, that's what life's all about, you break it, you pay for it, you don't break it, you pay for it anyway.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, this is why I keep moving.

LANDLORD: Baby, baby, baby...

BILLY: **[Crying]** Where is my piano?

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** You are beautiful, baby...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, it's your eyes.

BILLY: **[Crying]** Where is my piano?

AURORA: **[Screams]** Where is his piano?!

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** Baby, baby, baby...

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 7

AURORA sits drinking. BILLY sits depressed, staring at his baby chair.

AURORA: Men can't keep their hands off me.

BILLY: **[Staring sadly at his baby chair]** I told her I didn't want it.

AURORA: ...they follow me in the streets, they hang out in packs outside the door...

BILLY: I told her, mom, mom, mom, I don't need the chair, please don't leave me the chair...

AURORA: ...and, honey, I did the live-for-today thing, okay, and the Summer of Love thing, and then I moved to New York to launch the Age of Nymphomania...

BILLY: ...and then she started crying and saying, you don't want the chair, and I said, it's a wonderful chair, but, mom, I don't need the chair...

AURORA: I was never cut out for monogamy...

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** My mother never listened to me.

AURORA: ...'cause if ya' stick with a guy pretty soon ya' know what every look means and you've talked until there's nothing to talk about or maybe ya' didn't talk and ya' wanted to talk...

BILLY: No one ever listens to me...

AURORA: **[Moving closer to him]** Do you smell that? Do you smell that smell?

BILLY: **[Shakes head]**

AURORA: It drives most men into a sexual frenzy...

BILLY: **[Shakes head]**

AURORA: That's what they all tell me, it's my smell. Johns Hopkins wanted to do a study...

BILLY: I have a sinus condition.

AURORA: Honey, the streets are full of meat-eaters and I'm the meat.

BILLY: **[Turning away]** I was thirty-six and my father had died and my mother couldn't handle me by herself and then she paid off Emily's family...

AURORA: Honey, I have walked the streets of a hundred cities and I have seen the faces of a hundred million people and I have looked into their 200 million eyes and, honey, those eyes are empty, there's nothing there...

BILLY: ...and then we were married, and then my mother wanted to send us on a honeymoon to Mexico...

AURORA: ...and I'm lookin' in their eyes thinking that maybe they'll be looking back...

BILLY: I have skin allergies...

AURORA: ...but there's nothing there.

BILLY: I can't eat spicy food...

AURORA: Honey, I've been looking for you forever.

BILLY: I can't sleep in strange places...

AURORA: I look in your eyes I see somebody looking back.

BILLY: I have the same dream every night.

AURORA: Honey, look at me.

BILLY: **[Screams]** I have the same dream every night!

ERNIE, the upstairs neighbor, pounds on BILLY's ceiling and utters muffled cries for help.

BILLY: **[Calling up to ERNIE]** It's okay, Ernie. Everything's okay. **[Then to AURORA]** The guy upstairs has anxiety attacks. **[Then to ERNIE]** Everything's going to be all right, Ernie...

ERNIE knocks and moans again.

AURORA: **[Calling up to ERNIE]** Take a little vacation honey. You'll feel a lot better.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** Ernie's chewed off all of his fingernails.

AURORA: **[Calling up to ERNIE]** Ernie, honey, we love you!

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** Ernie's torn out all of his hair.

Pause.

AURORA: Honey, look, **[indicating]** this is where Kenny Lombardi stabbed me one night when he was drunk and I was drunk...

BILLY: I think you're really nice.

AURORA: ...and here is where Jimmy Hillyer slashed me with a broken bottle the night he found out I'd been sleeping with his brother...

BILLY: I think you're the nicest person I've ever met.

AURORA: ...and this arm was broken by a guy named Pete whose last name I never knew...

BILLY: Would you like to see my birth certificate? **[He stands and crosses to his bureau to get his birth certificate]**

AURORA: Honey, I never had a house to clean, I never wanted a house to clean...

BILLY: My mother was in labor for three days.

AURORA: I don't want to disappoint you.

BILLY: My mother was screaming, I was screaming...

AURORA: I don't want to hurt you.

BILLY: **[Showing her the birth certificate]** See, they made a print of my little foot right after I was born.

AURORA: **[Taking the birth certificate]** Honey, this is your whole problem, right here, this piece of paper...

BILLY: They thought that if I died at least there'd be a print of my little foot...

AURORA: ...because they stuck you with the piece of paper thing and the name thing and the identity thing....

BILLY: **[Pointing to birth certificate]** That's my little foot.

AURORA: And then they put you through the agony of developing a personality, and then you've got the personality, and then you're stuck with the personality, and, honey, that's the beginning of despair.

BILLY: I'm a nobody.

AURORA: Honey, everybody's a nobody.

BILLY: You don't like my little foot.

AURORA: It's the Age of the Nobody.

BILLY: You don't like my little foot.

AURORA: It's a beautiful little foot.

BILLY: I wanted to show it to you.

AURORA: **[Starts to cry]** It's a beautiful little foot.

BILLY: I really like you.

AURORA: It's a beautiful little foot. **[She starts sobbing]**

BLACKOUT

ACT I

Scene 8

BILLY is sitting at the table working on his recipes. In time AURORA enters from the bathroom carrying one of Billy's cookbooks. Her hair is wrapped in a towel; she has just taken a bath.

BILLY: **[Looking up]** Feeling better?

AURORA: That was wonderful.

BILLY: A good bath is the best thing for anxiety.

AURORA: Honey, you've got the whole thing figured out.

BILLY: A good bath takes away the worries and the fears.

AURORA: **[Sitting down at the table]** Stay at home, work at home, take baths...

BILLY: A good bath makes the bad things seem like they're not so bad after all.

AURORA: ...avoid going to a lot of parties...

BILLY: The whole world would be a better place if more people spent more time in the bathtub.

AURORA: **[Suddenly excited, indicating a page in the cookbook]** Honey, have you ever thought about "London broil with green peppercorn butter"...it's got a marinade.

BILLY: Mrs. Heartland USA doesn't like marinades.

AURORA: **[She turns the page]** How about "Veal, ham and mushrooms in madeira sauce"...is a sauce a marinade?

BILLY: Sauces are different. Mrs. Heartland USA likes sauces, because Mr. Heartland USA likes sauces, he can see the sauce and he knows that it's something special, but Mr. Heartland USA doesn't see the marinade and so he doesn't care.

AURORA: **[Getting excited]** Have you ever thought about doing an International Recipe of the Month?

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** Aunt Frances was a stay-at-home.

AURORA: Aunt Frances visits Brazil!

BILLY: You don't understand.

AURORA: Aunt Frances visits Madrid, Aunt Frances visits Lisbon...

BILLY: I don't want a mother.

AURORA: **[Picking up Emily's address book]** ...and you could put all of these people on your mailing list and these people would tell other people...

BILLY: Emily wanted to be my mother, now you want to be my mother.

AURORA: Honey, I'm not anybody's mother.

BILLY: Everyone wants to tell me what to do.

AURORA: I am not your mother!

The door slams open and EMILY and EMILY'S LAWYER enter in a rush. EMILY is a big woman (big tall or big wide or both). She is pushy and coarse, a bull in society's china shop. She has a killer hair-do. Her LAWYER is surly and macho but a rather inept.

LAWYER: The judge has issued an order, Billy.

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** I want those recipes.

LAWYER: The judge has ordered that 50% of the profits from the recipe business accrue to the former wife...

EMILY: Give me those recipes.

LAWYER: ...retroactive, with interest.

BILLY: They're Aunt Frances' recipes.

AURORA: They're Aunt Frances' original recipes.

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** And who may I ask are you?

BILLY: **[Emphatically]** I thought Aunt Frances up, I find the recipes, I pay for...

EMILY: **[Noticing that AURORA is holding her address book]** What are you doing with my address book?

AURORA: You threw it at him.

BILLY: You threw it at me.

EMILY: I want it back.

AURORA: **[Hiding the book behind her]** Finders keepers...

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** Give the lady her address book.

EMILY: Those are my people!

AURORA: Losers weepers...

LAWYER: **[To AURORA, pleading]** Please, give the lady her address book.

AURORA: **[To EMILY and the LAWYER]** Would you care for a gin and tonic?

EMILY: **[Shrieks at BILLY]** Who is this woman!

AURORA: Bourbon and seven, scotch on the rocks?

EMILY: **[To LAWYER]** This woman is trying to steal my people!

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Honey, I don't need your people.

EMILY: Those are very important people!

LAWYER: **[To AURORA, pleading]** Give the lady her people.

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Honey, the party girl era is dead.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA, pleading]** Please, give the lady her people.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** You gotta get that lock fixed.

LAWYER: **[To BILLY]** The lady is entitled to 50%...

AURORA: Every psychopath in town is gonna move in...

EMILY: **[Eyeing AURORA suspiciously]** You're with the FBI, aren't you.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** What did I tell ya?

LAWYER: **[To AURORA suspiciously]** I know you.

EMILY: This isn't one of those entrapment things...

LAWYER: **[To EMILY]** I've seen her somewhere before...

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** You didn't give her any money, did you?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** "Hi, Aurora, how's it goin', Aurora?"

LAWYER: Aurora!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** See what I mean?

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** Did you pick this woman up in the street?

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** Aurora!

EMILY: **[To AURORA with disgust]** You should be ashamed of yourself.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** I'm Marty!

EMILY: **[Screams at AURORA]** I want my address book!

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Honey, I invented the cocktail party, okay?

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** Marty Brillman, remember me?

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** And at first people didn't know what to do...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** I am the membership secretary of the League of Women Voters!

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** ...they'd never been to a cocktail party before...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** I am the co-chairman of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception's charity bazaar and dinner dance!

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** ...they didn't know what to say...

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** You are beautiful, baby.

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** So I invented the hors d'oeuvre...

LAWYER: Baby...

AURORA: And I started passing them around...

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** You make the planets spin.

AURORA: ...and then I invented the little black dress with the little straps and I called everyone "darling" and they kissed me...

LAWYER: Baby...

AURORA: ...and it was the party-girl era and I was the party-girl who walked into the room and turned the whole place into the place to be...

LAWYER: Baby...

AURORA: ...and they'd say "Love ya', baby, touch me, baby," and everybody wanted to know where I was going and what I was doing and who I was doing it with...

LAWYER: Baby...

AURORA: ...and the men bought me drinks and gave me drugs...

LAWYER: The night we spent together was the greatest night of my life.

AURORA: ...and then they'd get on their knees and beg me for a fuck...

LAWYER: **[Moans]**

AURORA: ...and that's what they want, honey, every single one of 'em...

LAWYER: **[Dropping to his knees]** Baby...

AURORA: **[Screams]** I invented the fuck!

LAWYER: Baby, baby, baby...

BLACKOUT

End of ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

BILLY has just come from taking a bath and sits despondently in his chair drying his hair. AURORA is extravagantly animated--each of the ensuing speeches is accompanied by a new position/pose--it is almost a dance.

AURORA: And people ask me: "Aurora, honey, what does it feel like to be lying around naked in front of some guy with merciless eyes who's studying your body, every fold of your flesh...?" And it's been almost twenty years, ever since Bryn Mawr, with a few months off when I was at the treatment center, that some guy with merciless eyes has been staring at me and it's not easy work, okay, because ya' gotta sit or ya' gotta stand or ya' gotta lie there for seventeen days and, honey, I only work for guys, okay, because you've gotta be able to radiate your energy when you're lying there naked, and you show it with the face, and the body, and the tension in the body, and the excitement in the body...

Pause.

And people ask me: "Aurora, honey, what do you think about while you're lying there naked in front of some guy with merciless eyes?" ...and a lot depends, I'll tell ya', on whether you have your eyes open or shut, and if the artist wants your eyes open you leave 'em open, and if he wants your eyes shut you leave 'em shut, and for me shut is harder than open, because there you are lying there not knowing what in the hell is going on and you start thinking about cellulite, you start thinking about every insult that you've ever received...

Pause

Honey, I sell my body. And I think a woman should be able to sell her body if she wants to sell her body. And if she wants to sell her body she should be able to get a damn good price for it, right, because, look what they're getting. [Indicates herself] Honey, this is a work of art. This is the culmination of the whole evolutionary struggle right here, and I'm not gonna let 'em take a peek at it for nothin', right?

Pause

Do you know Botticelli's Venus, the naked lady with the hair, and the hand over the breast, standing on the big clam shell, do you know this painting? Honey, she was the first woman in the history of art to stand there naked with her eyes wide open. This is a fact. And, you've got all those madonnas and lady saints and that's about all they painted for centuries, and not one of 'em has her eyes open, like maybe one or two of them have their eyes sort of open but they're looking down, not out, they're looking away, not at you, and then along came Botticelli and painted Venus, stark naked, eyes open looking right out at ya'. Honey, she is the woman who changed the history of art, and, honey, [loudly] when are they gonna figure it out that it's the model and not the artist that makes the painting a work of art!

Long pause as AURORA crosses and pulls a chair over and sits down next to BILLY, who has been sitting despondently staring at the floor. AURORA moves in closer to BILLY, pours him another gin and tonic and hands it to him.

BILLY: **[Looking up]** I want to be a cow.

AURORA: Honey, I don't think you realize quite what you've got here.

BILLY: I want to be white with black spots...

AURORA: Do you know DeKooning?

BILLY: I want to live in a meadow and eat grass and moo.

AURORA: Do you know DeKooning and those paintings of the women, the mutilated, smeared-faced, anguished, crazed-looking women? [She strikes a pose more-or-less resembling one of DeKooning's smeared-faced, anguished, crazed-looking women] Honey, he painted paintings like that of me, really, I'm serious, I posed for him, nice guy, real professional, and he'd say to me, "Darling, give me the look of love," so I gave him my best look-of-love look and he'd start slapping those colors all over that canvas, and, honey, nobody knows about these paintings, okay, nobody, they're a secret, they've been keeping them under wraps in some vault somewhere because, honey, they are the hottest, most fabulous paintings that that old guy ever did, they are some of the greatest paintings of the twentieth fucking century and they're me. They are me.

BILLY: It's awful having to be a human being.

AURORA: I am the Mona Lisa of the twentieth century.

BILLY: **[Standing and moving to a wall, indicating]** Here is the dawn of history and the swirling oceans and the volcanoes and the lava beds and the formation of the continents...

AURORA: Honey, I like the fact that you're an intellectual...

BILLY: **[Referring to the wall]** If you look really far and really deep, you can see back to the beginning of time...

AURORA: I'm attracted to intellectuals.

BILLY: **[Moving to another part of the wall]** ...and here is the appearance of marine vegetation and the dinosaurs and the tropical forests...**[Turning to AURORA]** I wanted to be a historian.

AURORA: Everyone said I should be an artist...

BILLY: But I read too slow.

AURORA: I can't paint for shit...

BILLY: You have to read fast to be a historian, otherwise you can't keep up with it.

AURORA: Honey, never plan anything.

BILLY: I try to sleep, I want to sleep...

AURORA: Never plan anything!

BILLY: You wouldn't be able to sleep either if you had the same dream every night...

AURORA: You plan something, nothing'll happen.

BILLY: ...the Big Value dream, the falling elevator dream...

AURORA: You don't plan something, something will.

BILLY: ...the can't-find-the-piano dream...

AURORA: Look at you and me.

BILLY: **[Defiantly]** I'm going to cut off my fingers.

AURORA: Honey, this is a major moment in our lives, do you realize that?

BILLY: I'm going to cut off my hand.

AURORA: Aurora meets Billy, Billy meets Aurora...

BILLY: I'm going to cut off my arm.

AURORA: ...Aurora likes Billy, Billy likes Aurora...

BILLY: I'm going to cut off my arm and put it in a box and send it to my piano teacher.

AURORA: Billy is the only man left in the entire world who has innocent eyes.

Pause as BILLY and AURORA stare into each others eyes.

BILLY: The last person who tried to help me turned out to be a gospel singer.

AURORA: Honey, I can't promise you anything, okay?

BILLY: You can only take so much gospel music.

AURORA: I can't stay in the same place too long, the same room too long...

BILLY: **[Nodding his head]** Emily left me, the gospel singer left me, you're going to leave me...

AURORA: I can't even live with myself.

BILLY: Maybe you'll send me a post card.

AURORA: Honey, I don't know what I'm doing here, I'm just doing it, you know what I mean?

BILLY: Maybe you'd like to be on my mailing list.

AURORA: **[Holds out her hand to him]** Honey, touch me.

BILLY: **[Drawing back]** I don't like to be touched.

AURORA: Please, touch me.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** It scares me.

AURORA: Honey, I need to be touched...please touch me...

Hesitantly, but bravely, BILLY reaches over and touches AURORA. They hold hands for a few moments. And then the telephone rings. BILLY moans and pulls his hand away.

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 2

BILLY and AURORA are seated at the table and MRS. SAGERSON, the piano teacher, is standing over them looking very perturbed. MRS. SAGERSON is very old and prim-looking. She is completely ditzy.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** Where is your piano?

BILLY: Please don't cut off my fingers!

SAGERSON: How can you practice your lesson without your piano?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, where did you put it?

SAGERSON: **[Louder to AURORA]** Where is his piano?

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** She's going to cut off my fingers.

AURORA: **[TO SAGERSON]** Would you care for a gin and tonic?

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** What did you say, my dear?

AURORA: **[Loudly]** Would you care for a gin and tonic?

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** My dear, I'm clairvoyant.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** She knows what's going to happen before it happens.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** You didn't practice, did you, young man.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** See what I mean?

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** What kind of gin, my dear?

AURORA: [Holds up the bottle and says the brand name]

SAGERSON: I'll have a double, my dear, thank you. [She sits down]

AURORA pulls another glass from her satchel and as the dialogue continues she proceeds to pour a drink for Mrs. Sagerson, and another for herself and for Billy.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** Where is your piano?

BILLY: **[Desperately]** I don't know, I don't know.

SAGERSON: Well, neither do I.

AURORA: Maybe you could have the piano lesson later.

SAGERSON: **[Extending her hand to AURORA]** I'm Mrs. Sagerson.

AURORA: **[Shaking hands]** How do you do.

SAGERSON: Of the Philadelphia Sagersons, that's Sagerson with one "s".

AURORA: **[Sweetly]** I've heard so much about you.

SAGERSON: And what did you say your name was?

AURORA: Aurora.

SAGERSON: Aurora what, my dear.

AURORA: Borealis.

SAGERSON: **[Touching each object]** Bless this table, bless this chair, bless this chair, bless this chair, bless this glass, bless this glass, bless this glass, bless this bottle.

AURORA: Amen. **[She serves the drink to MRS. SAGERSON]**

SAGERSON: **[Taking the drink]** Thank you, my dear.

AURORA: **[Serving the drink to BILLY]** Billy.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head, trying to refuse the drink]** I have skin allergies.

SAGERSON: **[Offering a toast to BILLY]** Sweet dreams, Billy.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Sweet dreams, honey.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** I have the same dream every night.

They toast, and drink, Billy reluctantly.

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** You make a very nice gin and tonic, my dear.

AURORA: I invented the gin and tonic.

SAGERSON: I was the first woman to drink and smoke in public.

AURORA: I'm the Mona Lisa of the twentieth century.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** What did she say?

BILLY: **[Loudly]** She's the Mona Lisa of the twentieth century.

AURORA looks at MRS. S. and does an impersonation of the Mona Lisa's insipid/smirky smile.

SAGERSON: History always repeats itself, my dear. That's what history is all about.

BILLY: **[Standing and moving to the wall, indicating]** Here is the age of the cave man and the cave woman...

SAGERSON: **[Firmly to BILLY]** You sit down, young man.

BILLY: ...and the cave people migrated along the edge of the seas...

AURORA: **[To SAGERSON, as she eyes BILLY adoringly]** Billy and I just met...

BILLY: ...and they were food gatherers and hunters...

SAGERSON: Stop all this mumbling!

AURORA: **[To SAGERSON]** ...it was an immediate attraction...

BILLY: ...and then they started domesticating animals...

SAGERSON: **[Shaking her finger at BILLY]** Johann Sebastian Bach never lost his piano.

BILLY: **[To SAGERSON]** I want to be a cow!

SAGERSON: **[Shaking her finger at BILLY]** You need to practice your scales and your arpeggios...

BILLY: I want to sit in a meadow and eat grass!

AURORA: **[Makes some amorous sounding mooing noises]**

SAGERSON: I don't offer piano lessons to just anyone, young man, and don't you forget it!

BILLY: Please don't cut off my fingers.

AURORA: **[Does a little more mooing]**

SAGERSON: I could leave, I could never come back...

BILLY: I didn't mean to lose my piano..

SAGERSON: **[Loudly, firmly]** Music is the key to the gates of paradise!

BILLY: **[Screams]** Where is my piano!

ERNIE knocks and moans again. Everybody looks up.

AURORA: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** Everything's fine, honey, don't worry about it.

BILLY: **[To AURORA and SAGERSON]** You think I'm a mess, you should meet Ernie.

ERNIE knocks and moans again.

AURORA: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** It's all right, Ernie, honey. Everything's okay.

BILLY: **[To AURORA and SAGERSON]** Ernie's pulled out all of his eyelashes.

AURORA: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** We love you, honey!

BILLY: Ernie's got scabs all over his arms where he chews on himself.

ERNIE knocks and moans again.

SAGERSON: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** You need to get a job, young man! Steady, full-time employment!

Pause, as they all look up until ERNIE is silent.

SAGERSON: Shall we begin the lesson?

BILLY: **[Sadly to AURORA]** I didn't want to go to Senator Moynihan's dinner party.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, neither did Senator Moynihan...

BILLY: And everyone was laughing and talking and exchanging business cards...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Neither did Mrs. Moynihan...

BILLY: You're not anybody unless you have a business card.

SAGERSON: Ludwig Van Beethoven never had a business card.

BILLY: I can't sleep. [He sits back down and slumps in his chair]

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** Sit up, sit up, sit up!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, I don't usually follow guys home, you know what I mean?

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** You're going to develop curvature of the spine!

BILLY: I don't even know whether I'm awake or asleep.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** This is all very confusing for me too.

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** We used to have such lovely dinner parties...

BILLY: Maybe this is a dream.

AURORA: **[To herself]** Maybe this is a dream.

SAGERSON: **[To AURORA]** ...real dinner parties where the women wore tiaras and long gloves and the men wore tuxedos and cummerbunds...

BILLY: I don't have a cummerbund.

SAGERSON: ...and they were real people with real faces...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, I've looked in the eyes of a million faces...

SAGERSON: They don't have real faces any more...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** ...and they're empty, honey, they're dead...

SAGERSON: ...they're all made up and made over and lacquered and glossed...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** ...your eyes are alive..

SAGERSON: ...and you can't tell who's who or what's what or who belongs to whom or why they belong to them or what they're doing with them or why they're doing it and, frankly, my dear, I don't care any more.

[Then touching each object] Bless this table, bless this chair, bless this chair, bless this glass, bless this glass, bless this glass, bless this bottle. **[AURORA pours SAGERSON another drink]** I am of an older era, my dear, when Miss meant Miss and Mrs. meant Mrs. and there was nothing in between...**[then shaking her finger]**...and who are these people with their take-overs and take-outs, and no one corresponds any more, have you notice that? We used to have nice note papers and fountain pens and people wrote one another to invite them to something or to thank them for something or to tell them something, and those were the days, my dear, when people had something to say, and there was conversation, my dear--you said something, some one answered back, you said something else, some one answered back, and a dialogue developed, my dear, that lasted well into the after-dinner hours, with the after-dinner drinks and the fire and the candles and the bouquet of flowers-from-the-garden...my goodness, how things have changed--they don't grow flowers any more, my dear, they import them!

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 3

EMILY and MRS. SAGERSON are seated drinking gin and tonics. BILLY sits somewhat removed from the others trying to work on his recipes. EMILY has taken a tray, cheese and crackers from her purse and is spreading the crackers with the cheese and placing them on the tray. The LAWYER is standing by AURORA, hustling.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** ...you changed my life, baby. You made made me a man.

EMILY: Would anyone care for a cheese and cracker?

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** ...me, lawyer, J.D., N.Y.U....

EMILY: This is a special blend of goat cheese and cheddar with finely chopped walnuts.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** ...two-hundred and twenty-five thou per anum...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** Would you care for a cheese and cracker?

AURORA: I invented the cheese and cracker.

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** I'd like to be your friend.

AURORA: I invented the cheese ball and the cheese puff.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** My wife doesn't love me anymore...

EMILY: I'm trying to expand my friendship circle.

AURORA: You know those olives stuffed with pimento? I invented those too.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** ...my wife never loved me...

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** Would you care for a cheese and cracker?

SAGERSON: **[Taking one]** Thank you, my dear.

EMILY: This is a special blend of goat cheese and cheddar.

SAGERSON: Bless this cracker. Bless this cheese. **[She pops it in her mouth]**

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** My kids won't talk to me....

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** Would you like to be a member of my friendship circle?

SAGERSON: You make a very nice cheese and cracker, my dear.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** I'm just a regular guy...

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** Are you with the government?

SAGERSON: **[To EMILY]** You can't trust a bureaucrat, my dear.

EMILY: I'm the membership secretary of League of Women Voters.

SAGERSON: **[Taking another cracker]** Regulators and lawmakers, my dear, are the fleas on the rump of the public dog.

EMILY: Billy didn't like our friends in the government, did you Billy?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, we have to talk...

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** And everyone thought that Billy and I would be the perfect couple...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I don't think I can stay here much longer...

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** Billy had some money...I had the connections...and Billy and I would climb the social ladder together and have a couple of kids...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Too many people in too small a room and my teeth start to hurt...

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** I wanted to make babies... **[then tearfully]** I wanted to be a mother! **[She opens her arms to BILLY as though to embrace him]**

BILLY: **[Opening his arms, tearfully]** I didn't want to go to Senator Moynihan's dinner party.

EMILY: **[About to hug him, then screaming]** You ruined my life!

BILLY: **[Screams at EMILY]** I didn't want to go to Senator...

AURORA: **[Screams at EMILY]** He didn't want to go to Senator...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** He threw up on Mrs. Moynihan!

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** I told her I didn't want...

EMILY: And then you threw up on Mrs. Moynihan's dog!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, we're getting out of here.

BILLY: **[Shouting to EMILY]** Aunt Frances is mine? I thought Aunt Frances up, I find...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** You don't need these people...

EMILY: I get 50% of the proceeds...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** These people are parasites!

LAWYER: **[To BILLY in a mocking voice]** Thought you didn't need a lawyer, didn't you, Billy.

EMILY: You're a loser, Billy.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, these people are mutants!

LAWYER: **[To BILLY]** Thought you could represent yourself, didn't you, Billy.

EMILY:a real loser.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Mutants like this are taking over the whole upper West Side...

LAWYER: Spousal neglect, breach of fiduciary duty...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** They're running for public office.

EMILY: Malicious intent.

LAWYER: Breach of expressed warranty, breach of implied warranty...

EMILY: Mental cruelty.

LAWYER: Compensatory damages...

LAWYER/
EMILY: Punitive damages!

BILLY: **[To EMILY]** You can't have my baby chair.

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** You can't have his baby chair.

EMILY: I don't want your baby chair.

BILLY: It was my mother's baby chair and her mother's...

EMILY: **[Screams]** You ruined my life!

SAGERSON: **[To EMILY]** You need to adjust your medication, my dear.

The door slams open and LENNY, the landlord enters.

LENNY: **[To BILLY]** The rent is due, Billy. Time to pay the rent.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, we're getting out of here.

BILLY: I just paid the rent!

LANDLORD: **[Looks around and notices the other people]** What the hell is this?

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I know a nice hotel...

LANDLORD: **[To BILLY]** You can't have political meetings in here, no political meetings...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** ...it's cheap, it's clean...

LANDLORD: **[Looking at the LAWYER]** You some kinda pervert?

LAWYER: I'm a lawyer.

LENNY: **[To BILLY]** You can't have a pervert in here.

LAWYER: I'm a lawyer.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** We could get away for a couple of days...

LANDLORD: **[To AURORA]** I'm Lenny, baby, Lenny, remember me?

LAWYER: **[To LENNY]** The lady's not interested, fella.

LENNY: **[To AURORA]** You and me, baby...

ERNIE knocks on the ceiling and moans. Everyone looks up.

LANDLORD: **[Shouting up at ERNIE]** Shut the fuck up, Ernie!

BILLY: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** It's okay, Ernie!

LANDLORD: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** You're gonna rot in hell, Ernie.

AURORA: **[Shouting up to ERNIE]** It's okay, honey, think nice thoughts.

EMILY: **[Heading toward the phone]** I'm going to call Craig Claiborne...

LAWYER: **[To EMILY, blocking her]** Cool it, lady...

EMILY: **[Spitefully to BILLY]** I'm going to tell him about this recipe business...

LAWYER: **[To EMILY]** Lady, relax...

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Craig Claiborne is dead.

EMILY: **[Pointing]** She has my address book.

LAWYER: **[To EMILY]** He **[indicating BILLY]** is your source of income, you are my source of income...

EMILY: **[Shrieks, to LAWYER]** You don't develop a place in society overnight, you've got to work at it.

LAWYER: **[To EMILY]** This is a delicate relationship.

EMILY: **[Shrieks, to AURORA]** I am the membership secretary of the League...

LAWYER: **[To EMILY]** Lady, shut up.

EMILY: **[To LAWYER]** I'm not paying you to tell me to shut up!

LAWYER: That's exactly what you pay a lawyer for!

SAGERSON: **[To no one in particular]** What a sorry state of affairs the world has come to...

The telephone rings. The lawyer grabs it.

BILLY: Don't answer it.

LAWYER: **[Answering the phone]** Marty Brillman, attorney-at-law.

BILLY: **[Holding his head]** It's always bad news.

SAGERSON: ...soap operas and bail-outs and headlines proclaiming the dietary dilemmas of movie stars...

LAWYER: **[To BILLY]** Your library books are overdue, Billy.

BILLY: They always want something.

SAGERSON: And they take polls these days to find out if anybody has an opinion about anything and all they find out is that nobody does.

LAWYER: **[To BILLY]** You owe the library twenty-seven bucks, Billy. [He hangs up]

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Don't pay 'em, you probably haven't read 'em anyway.

SAGERSON: In my day everybody had an opinion about everything.

BILLY: **[Confused]** I don't have any library books!

LAWYER: **[Mockingly]** Twenty-seven bucks, Billy.

BILLY: I don't have any library books!

SAGERSON: And everybody knew that a consonant was a consonant and a vowel was a vowel.

The telephone rings.

BILLY: Don't answer it.

LAWYER: **[Answering the telephone]** Marty Brillman attorney-at-law.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, this is why you can't stay too long in one place...

LAWYER: **[Pause as he listens, then to BILLY]** It's Channel 13, Billy, you haven't paid your pledge.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** Life is just one problem after another.

LAWYER: Forty-five bucks, Billy, you pledged forty-five bucks. **[He hangs up]**

EMILY: **[Shocked]** Forty-five bucks?!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Nobody ever pays their pledge.

EMILY: Forty-five bucks!

BILLY: **[Confused]** I didn't give them a pledge.

LAWYER: They want the money, Billy, they've got your number...

LENNY: Time to pay the rent, fella.

LAWYER: ...they don't care who you are.

BILLY: I don't have a TV!

LENNY: The rent is overdue, buddy...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, you've got to get out of here!

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** Why are you such a loser?

BILLY: **[Looking around]** I don't have a TV!

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** Why are you such a wimp?

BILLY: **[Cries]** I don't have a TV!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, I know a nice hotel...

SAGERSON: **[Shaking her head]** A pianist without a piano is like an island without a sea.

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 4

AURORA is leading BILLY by the hand around the room. She is taking him on a European tour--the floor is the map, the walls are the scenery. BILLY, though a bit hesitant, is enjoying himself.

AURORA: ...and unless you're going first class or something it's not bad because they've got these deals, okay? And then there's the dining car down this way, see... **[they move]**, and you've got the nice napkins and table cloths, and you're sitting there looking out the window and it's Bavaria, okay? **[Indicating]** And there's the snow on the mountains and the little churches, and then it's Switzerland and there's the snow on the mountains and the little chalets...

BILLY: **[Awed]** I've never seen snow before.

AURORA: ...and there's a bar car down this way **[they move]**, and the people are speaking different languages and they're not looking at you unless you want them to look at you and you can take pills for motion sickness, okay? And then it's Italy...

BILLY: Wow!

AURORA: Italy is down over here, come on... **[they move]** and it's real nice because they speak Italian which I don't, but I like that because you can speak with the eyes and the hands and nobody cares and you smile and they smile and they give you food and you say "grazie" and it's olive trees and vineyards and red earth and sports cars and playboys and the Pope and the Romans and the Renaissance and then there's the Riviera, okay? Are you listening to this?

BILLY: **[Excited]** Is that the Mediterranean?

AURORA: Honey, come here, come on, that's it... you're doin' good, honey, you're doin' real good. Are you having a good time?

BILLY: I think so.

AURORA: You're doin' great.

BILLY: It's a little scarey.

AURORA: I'm proud of you.

BILLY: **[Looking at the Mediterranean]** It's so blue!

AURORA: ..and you walk along the beaches and you wear sun glasses and you don't need a wardrobe because at a lot of these place you can be more-or-less nude and you can sit under the little umbrellas and drink the drinks that the waiters bring you and you can go into the water if you want to go into the water...

BILLY: I don't swim.

AURORA: ...and then at night you sit on little chairs at the little tables at the outdoor cafes and eat pasta and drink chianti and you watch the people walking up and down and they're holding hands and smiling and the moon is full and we're holding hands and smiling **[and they are]**...and you meet people if you want to meet people or you don't meet people if you don't want to meet people and it's all hellos and goodbyes, it's no life-long friendship thing, just hellos and goodbyes, and then you get on the ship and sail away to Barcelona... **[they pretend to board a ship]** ...toot-toot, come on, honey, toot-toot...

BILLY: Toot-toot...

AURORA: **[They shuffle around the room toot-tooting]** ...and it's the breeze and the sun and the waves, and you can take some more motion-sickness pills if you need them...

BILLY: Toot-toot...

AURORA: ...and you can stay in your cabin if you want to...

BILLY: Toot-toot...

AURORA: ...and nobody cares who you are and you don't care who they are and you don't care who you are and you drink some more and eat some more and play another game of shuffleboard and then you land in Barcelona. **[They stop]** Okay, take a big step. **[They step]** Now you're in Spain. Isn't this fabulous? Do you feel the heat? Isn't that fabulous? Do you hear the music? And over here **[they take another step]** is Madrid!

BILLY: **[Suddenly withdrawing, shaking his head]** I'm an existentialist.

AURORA: Honey, nobody cares.

BILLY: You don't have to go anywhere when you're an existentialist.

AURORA: You have to keep moving.

BILLY: Every place is like every other place. It's always you and it.

AURORA: This is your problem. You're a standing target. Travel and forget. You need to forget. **[AURORA breaks into a flamenco dance. She stomps and around and whoops it up]** Honey, I invented this. **[She does a little more flamenco]** This is what they do in the night clubs. I taught them the whole thing. **[A little more flamenco]** I'm a national heroine. **[A little more flamenco]** They're thinking about naming a soft drink after me. **[She stops, they look around]** Honey, can you hear that sound inside my head? **[She moves her head close to his]**

BILLY: **[He listens, then shakes his head]**

AURORA: That's Madrid. That's the sound of Madrid, the night life, the love life....Do you hear that?

BILLY: **[He listens, then shakes his head]**

AURORA: Honey, I am Madrid.

BILLY: **[Pulling away from her, moving around the room]** Here is the post office, okay....and over here is the Big Value...and over here is the dentist's office, okay? And I go to the post office once a week to mail the recipes, and I go to the Big Value once a week to buy baby food and toilet paper and toothpaste, and I try not to go to the dentist at all. That's the story of my life.

AURORA: Honey, maybe the story continues...

BILLY: The dentist says I need a root canal.

AURORA: ...maybe you turn the page and it's a whole new story, a different story...

BILLY: Happiness is over here. **[He moves to a corner of the room]**

AURORA: ...with new people and new things to see.

BILLY: I stand here, it's happiness. I have happiness anytime I want it. And this wall is my friend **[he touches it]** and that wall is my friend, walls have always been my best friends...and over here **[he moves]** is anxiety, and over here **[he moves]** is bankruptcy, and over here **[he moves]** is hysteria, and over here **[he moves]** is

desperation, and over here [he moves] is suicide. **[He faces AURORA]** I have a complete life. Right here. It's simple.

AURORA: They're gonna make a movie about you some day, you know that?

BILLY: And I get up in the morning and I brush my teeth and I take a bath, and I have strained peaches and two baby biscuits, and then I do some recipes, and then I eat some strained veal and strained asparagus for lunch...

AURORA: Would you like to take off your clothes?

BILLY: **[Screams]** I don't want a root canal!

AURORA: I'd like to take off my clothes if you'd like to take off your clothes...

BILLY: ...and every time I close my eyes it's the Big Value dream, or the falling elevator dream and my mother and I have gotten into this elevator...

AURORA: Your mother is dead...

BILLY: And the doors close...

AURORA: ...she's not riding elevators any more...

BILLY: And the elevator starts to move...

AURORA: Honey, do you hear that noise inside my head?

BILLY: **[Screams]** I can't sleep!

AURORA: **[Screams]** Do you hear that noise inside my head?!

BILLY: Excuse me, I'm going to take a bath.

AURORA: Honey, I'm scared too, okay. I'm confused too...

BILLY: **[Backing away]** A good bath is the best thing for anxiety...

AURORA: I'm just taking one step and then another step...

BILLY: **[Backing away]** A good bath takes away the worries and the fears...

AURORA: Honey, I can only be intimate with strangers, you know what I mean?

BILLY: **[Backing way]** A good bath makes the bad things seem like they're not so bad after all...

AURORA: I can't make love with anybody I know too well...

BILLY: I have skin allergies.

BILLY enters the bathroom and closes the door.

AURORA: **[Standing outside the bathroom door, calling in]** Honey, I don't want to be Aurora anymore. **[Pause]** Honey, it's always "Hi, Aurora, how's it goin', Aurora?", and everybody expects Aurora to be Aurora, and there are a lot of times that Aurora doesn't feel like being Aurora, you know what I mean? Honey, Aurora isn't even my real name. **[Pause]** Honey, I only drink when I'm lonely, okay? **[Pause]** You don't know how lonely it can be when you know everybody. **[Pause]** Billy?

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 5

EMILY, LENNY THE LANDLORD, and MRS SAGERSON are seated around the table drinking gin and tonics. BILLY is clutching his baby chair far down stage, removed from the others. EMILY is preparing celery sticks stuffed with calm spread (which have materialized from her purse). The LAWYER is standing next to the bathroom door waiting for AURORA who is inside.

EMILY: **[Quite drunk, talking a blue streak more or less to the LANDLORD]** ...and marriage wasn't explained to me, and neither were the physical aspects, and the priest was charging me a counseling fee, a five dollar counseling fee...

LANDLORD: **[To EMILY]** You want a miserable life, lady...

EMILY: ...and so I went to the Bishop to complain about the priest and the Bishop wanted to charge me five bucks too..

LANDLORD: **[To EMILY]** ...be a landlord...

EMILY: For a prayer!

LANDLORD: **[To EMILY]** ...you got the taxes...

EMILY: And then I had a vision of the Virgin Mary...

LANDLORD: **[To EMILY]** ...you got the upkeep...

EMILY: ... and she wanted me to give her five bucks, too...

LANDLORD: **[To EMILY]** ...you've got the electrical...

EMILY. ...the Virgin Mary, in my vision, was holding out her hand saying "I need five bucks, Emily. Give me five bucks"

AURORA enters from the bathroom.

LAWYER: **[To AURORA]** You are beautiful, baby, you are beautiful.

EMILY: **[To AURORA, offering the celery-stuffed-with-clam-spread]**
Would you care for a celery stuffed with clam spread?

AURORA: **[Crossing downstage to BILLY]** Honey, ya' know, I'd love to stay a little longer but it's...you know...honey, you're as sweet as they come, really...

EMILY: This is a special blend of clams and cream cheese...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Maybe another time, another place... **[She starts picking up her belongings and packing them in her stachel]**

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA, kneeling]** You are Aphrodite...

EMILY: **[Referring to celery and clam spread]** I invented these.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, my real name is Mary Agnes Menninger...

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** ...Goddess of love...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** ...but I got sick of being Mary Agnes Menninger so I became somebody else, and when I got sick of that I became somebody else again.

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** I am your servant, Aphrodite...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I'm somebody new in every town, every day...

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** Beat me, baby, beat me...

EMILY: **[To MRS. SAGERSON, fighting back tears]** Billy was supposed to make love to me on our wedding night, but Billy didn't know what to do...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I'm somebody new with every man.

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** Beat me, baby, beat me hard.

EMILY: **[To SAGERSON]** I never did get fucked.

SAGERSON: **[Shaking her finger at BILLY]** Practice, practice, practice.

EMILY: I'm never going to get fucked,

SAGERSON: **[Shaking her finger at BILLY]** Strive, strive, strive.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, I lie, you know what I mean.. it's the only way to protect yourself, otherwise they'll figure you out.

SAGERSON: **[Comforting EMILY]** I was jilted, my dear, by the great Paderewski...

EMILY: My whole life I've been misunderstood...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I don't want to be figured out...

SAGERSON: I bear the stigma of a woman who lost her love...

EMILY: **[Sobs]** Men have never understood me...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I lie, okay, but I don't cheat...

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** I'm no good, baby, I'm no good...

SAGERSON: And this was in the days when romance was Romance, and moonlight was Moonlight...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** I've never hurt anybody, okay...

SAGERSON: **[Sadly]** There isn't any moonlight any more.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** And I don't want to hurt you. **[She continues packing up her belongings]**

SAGERSON: And there used to be Events in the old days, real events with World Wars and debutantes, and Bess Truman was running things then, and Bess Truman wouldn't have stood for this deficit business and this buy-out business and this tell-all biography business, because Bess Truman was a lady, my dear... **[Then shaking finger at BILLY]** And Harry Truman played the piano!

BILLY: **[Angrily to SAGERSON]** I don't want to play the piano! I never wanted to play the piano!

SAGERSON: Harry Truman played the piano by ear!!!

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, you don't have to play the piano...

SAGERSON: **[Outraged]** Of course he has to play the piano.

BILLY: **[Picking up his baby chair and shouting]** I hate the piano! **[He smashes the baby chair onto the floor]**

AURORA: **[Shouts]** He hates the piano!

SAGERSON: What's the point of being alive unless you play the piano!

A stunned pause as everyone stares at BILLY and the baby chair, which lies broken on the floor. BILLY, near tears, is more stunned than anyone--amazed at what he has done.

EMILY: **[Shrieks]** That's my baby chair!

LAWYER
and
LENNY:

Bad boy, Billy, bad boy!

EMILY: You ruined my baby chair!

LAWYER
and
LENNY:

Very bad boy, Billy...

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Why don't you go register some voters, sweetheart.

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** You stay away from my husband!

BILLY: **[Angrily, to EMILY]** She's my friend!

AURORA: **[Angrily, to EMILY]** I'm his friend!

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** This woman is a harlot!

LAWYER
and
LENNY:

[To AURORA, holding their sides and sinking to the floor] I am dying, baby, I am dying...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** That's a wig isn't it.

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Why don't you pull it and find out.

LENNY
and
LAWYER:

[To AURORA, rolling on the floor] I am dying like a dog...

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** Honey, I go to a guy named Mario...

AURORA: **[Reaching into her satchel and pulling out Emily's address book]** Here, sweetheart, you can have this. You need it, I don't.

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** Mario's got some real nice wigs...

AURORA: **[Handing the address book to EMILY]** Lotta nice guys in there, give 'em a call.

EMILY: **[Taking the book]** I don't want this any more.

AURORA: Those are your people!

EMILY: **[Tearing pages out of the address book]** I hate these people. I never want to see them again!

BILLY: **[Angrily, to EMILY]** Leave her alone!

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Leave him alone!

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** I want my husband back.

AURORA: **[To EMILY]** Get out of here!

BILLY: **[To EMILY]** Get out of here!

EMILY: **[To AURORA]** I want to torment him.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Come on, honey, we're getting out of here.

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** I'm going to make you beg for an early death.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** I have the same dream every night...

LENNY: **[On his knees to AURORA, with tearful remorse]** I didn't want to be a landlord.

LAWYER: **[On his knees to AURORA, with tearful remorse]** I didn't want to be a lawyer.

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** We'll walk right out of here and never come back...[she starts putting some of Billy's things into her stachel]

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** ...and my apartment door opens and people come rushing in...

LENNY: I wanted to be a veterinarian.

LAWYER: I wanted to be a forest ranger.

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** ...mean people, hostile people...

SAGERSON: **[Standing, to BILLY]** I'm afraid I'm going to have to charge you for this piano lesson whether you've got a piano or not!

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** ...and they're here to make me miserable...

AURORA: **[TO BILLY]** We'll change our names, no one will ever find us...
[BILLY and AURORA stand for a moment looking in each other's eyes]

EMILY: **[To BILLY as she pulls items from her handbag]** I brought you dates and figs, I brought you a melon and a mango...

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** There's a wound in my side, in my neck, in my back, in my gut...

EMILY: **[To BILLY]** I brought you marmalade and apple butter...

AURORA: **[To BILLY]** Honey, Aurora meets Billy, Aurora likes Billy...

SAGERSON: Bless this table, bless this chair...

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** Billy likes Aurora...

EMILY: **[Screams]** I made the apple butter myself!

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** Touch my heart, feel the wound.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** Where is your piano!!

BILLY: **[To AURORA]** Please don't leave me.

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY]** I'm going to cut off your fingers, young man!!

LAWYER
and
LENNY: **[To AURORA]** Baby, baby, baby...

SAGERSON: **[To BILLY as she pulls a cleaver from her handbag] I'M GOING TO CUT OFF YOUR FINGERS WITH A CLEAVER!! [She brandishes the cleaver over her head]**

BLACKOUT

ACT II

Scene 6

BILLY and AURORA are dancing to a slow strange, funky, country-western tune (the tape deck has emerged from Aurora's satchel). Aurora leads, Billy follows as he watches his feet and gradually gets the hang of it. The song and dance end. BILLY and AURORA hold on to each other for a moment....

BILLY: This is the strangest dream I've ever had.

AURORA: **[Indicating the wall]** Here is the river and the rowboat and the weeping willow and the moon is rising over the hills...

BILLY: This is a romantic dream.

AURORA: Here am I, here are you...

BILLY: I've never had a romantic dream before.

AURORA takes BILLY by the hand and they sit and stare into each other's eyes, holding hands. BILLY is in a state of nervous excitement.

AURORA: Do you like this?

BILLY: **[A brief pause, excited, but hesitant]** It makes me nervous.

AURORA: This is what fun is like.

BILLY: **[Still excited, but hesitant]** It makes me nervous.

AURORA: Isn't that a nice feeling?

BILLY: **[Suddenly withdrawing his hand and moving to the wall]** Here are the ancient civilizations, Babylon and the gardens, Egypt and the pyramids, the Greeks, the Etruscans, and Rome...

AURORA: Honey, you're the man of the century.

BILLY: I like history.

AURORA: I'm not kidding.

BILLY: It's already happened, you don't have to worry about it.

AURORA: You're the man they're going to write about when they write the history of our times.

BILLY: Current events make me nervous.

AURORA: Honey, I'd like to kiss you.

BILLY: **[Pause, very excited]** A lot of things make me nervous.

AURORA: Come on...you're getting a little excited...

BILLY: It's embarrassing

AURORA: It's natural.

BILLY: Natural is embarrassing

AURORA: Natural is fun.

BILLY: I'm not a very good kisser.

AURORA: It's easy...

BILLY: **[Pause, very excited to the point where they almost kiss, but then BILLY withdraws]** I can't...

AURORA: Honey, you're not going to live forever, okay, and there are more possibilities than impossibilities, are you listening to me?

BILLY: I don't believe in reproduction.

AURORA: I'm not talkin' reproduction.

BILLY: They should let the whole species die off.

AURORA: Honey, look, I can't stay in the same room too long, I can't stay in the same town too long...

BILLY: I really like you...

AURORA: ...pretty soon the walls start movin' in on me...

BILLY: It scares me.

AURORA: ...and I start feelin' like a rat in a cage...

BILLY: **[Indicating the wall]** Here is the city of Herculaneum at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, the eruption, the flames...

AURORA: **[Hurt]** Honey, who in the hell do you think you are, huh?

BILLY: ...the people screaming as they run through the streets...

AURORA: **[Angry and hurt]** Do you think you're the only one who's afraid? Honey, you're just like everybody else, you're just like every other asshole sittin' there talkin' to the walls.

BILLY: **[Shaking his head]** Dreams are amazing.

AURORA: There you are crying at the check-out stand, and I come along and discover you...

BILLY: Suddenly you're sitting there and a giant spider comes walking through the door...

AURORA: ...I pick you out, I make you somebody, because you're nobody with out me, because, honey, nobody's somebody unless they have someone to appreciate, someone to care about, someone to love, do you know what I mean? **[In tears, she starts putting things back in her satchel, getting ready to leave]**

BILLY: You don't know what it feels like not to know whether you're dreaming or awake?

AURORA: I leave, you disappear...

BILLY: **[Nodding his head]** This is a dream.

AURORA: ...I go out that door, the lights go out, I go out that door and you're left here with your demons and and your ghosts and your stinking self-pity.

BILLY: This is a bad dream.

AURORA: **[Conciliatory]** Honey, I look in your eyes, I see somebody looking back...

BILLY: Maybe I'm dead.

AURORA: **[To herself]** I look forever for somebody that looks back, and it's a dead man.

BILLY: Is this what death is like?

AURORA: Life imitates death. **[She continues putting things back in her satchel]**

BILLY: **[Pause, as he watches her]** You run away from everything, don't you?

AURORA: You hide from everything, don't you?

BILLY: **[Turning away]** No matter what you do you're going to get hurt, that's the lesson of life...

AURORA: Why is it that the one man in the whole world that I fall for is the one man in the whole world who doesn't want me?

BILLY: **[Hurt]** Leave me alone.

AURORA: That's what I'm doing.

BILLY: My life is fine, everything's fine...

AURORA: **[To herself]** Life is a 100 million people looking for the same thing and none of 'em are finding it..

BILLY: I have everything I need right here...

AURORA: **[Picking up her satchel]** Maybe I'll go to Mexico, I've never been to Mexico...

BILLY: ...I have a table, I have chairs, I have a week's supply of baby food...

AURORA: ...maybe I'll go to the South Pole.

BILLY: ...three shirts, two pairs of pants, four pairs of underpants...

AURORA: Honey, I'm never going to forget you...

BILLY: ...four pairs of socks, one pair of shoes...

AURORA: Maybe we'll run into each other some time, you know what I mean?

BILLY: This is my life. This is all there is.

AURORA: Like it's nice to know that we live on the same planet.

Pause

BILLY: You want to spend the night, don't you?

AURORA: First thing in the morning I'll buy a lock for your door.

BILLY: **[An awkward pause, then turning away]** Excuse me, I forgot something at the Big Value...

AURORA: **[Pulling him back]** You got the best thing the Big Value has to offer right here!

BILLY: **[Turning back]** I've never met anyone like you before.

AURORA: I'm one of a kind.

BILLY: So am I.

AURORA: That's why we like each other.

BILLY: Frightening isn't it.

AURORA: Honey, it's terrifying.

They move closer to each other and are about to kiss when suddenly ERNIE knocks on the ceiling and moans. AURORA and BILLY look up for a moment and then they turn to each other and kiss. There is a slow fade to...

BLACKOUT