THE GLASS MENAGERIE

Tennessee Williams

A young man has been invited to dinner by Tom at Amanda's insistence in order to meet his sister Laura. He was an old acquaintance of Laura's in high school. He was very popular and now works with Tom at the warehouse. In the following scene, Jim and Laura have been left alone in the living room and he is talking to her. Her two short lines have been deleted and marked by asterisks. For more background on this play, see page 116.

JIM.

[*abruptly*] You know what I judge to be the trouble with you? Inferiority complex! Know what that is? That's what they call it when someone low-rates himself! I understand it because I had it, too. Although my case was not so aggravated as yours seems to be. I had it until I took up public speaking, developed my voice, and learned that I had an aptitude for science. Before that time I never thought of myself as being outstanding in any way whatsoever! Now I've never made a regular study of it, but I have a friend

who says I can analyze people better than doctors that make a profession of it. I don't claim that to be necessarily true, but I can sure guess a person's psychology, Laura! [*He takes out his gum.*] Excuse me, Laura. I always take it out when the flavor is gone. I'll use this scrap of paper to wrap it in. I know how it is to get it stuck on a shoe. [*He wraps the gum in paper and puts it in his pocket.*] Yep—that's what I judge to be your principal trouble. A lack of confidence in yourself as a person. You don't have the proper amount of faith in yourself. I'm basing that fact on a number of your remarks and also on certain observations I've made. For instance that clumping you thought was so awful in high school. You say that you even dreaded to walk into class. You see what you did? You dropped out of school, you gave up an education because of a clump, which as far as I know was practically non-existent! A little physical defect is what you have. Hardly noticeable even! Magnified thousands of times by imagination! You know what my strong advice to you is? Think of yourself as *superior* in some way!

* * *

Why, man alive, Laura! Just look about you a little. What do you see? A world full of common people! All of 'em born and all of 'em going to die! Which of them has one-tenth of your good points! Or mine! Or anyone else's, as far as that goes—gosh! Everybody excels in some one thing. Some in many! [*He unconsciously glances at himself in the mirror.*] All you've got to do is discover in *what!* Take me, for instance. [*He adjusts his*

MAGS . . . WHERE ARE YOU? . . . OH, MAGS, DARLING . . . HELLO? . . . ARE YOU THERE? . . . " *(She reenters and faces them.)* This was at my *first* show.

3

FANNY

(Fatigue has finally overtaken her. She's calm, almost serene.) . . . and to you who see him once a year, if that . . . What is he to *you*? . . . I mean, what do you give him from yourself that costs you something? . . . Hmmmmmm? . . . *(Imitating her.)* "Oh, hi Daddy, it's great to see you again. How have you been? . . . Gee, I love your hair. It's gotten so . . . *white!*" . . . What color do you expect it to get when he's this age? . . . I mean, if you care so much how he looks, why don't you come and see him once in a while? . . . But oh, no . . . you have your paintings to do and your shows to put on. You just come and see us when the whim strikes. *(Imitating her.)* "Hey, you know what would be really great? . . . To do a portrait of you! I've always wanted to paint you, you're such great subjects!" . . . *Paint* us?! . . . What about opening your eyes and really *seeing* us? . . . Noticing what's going on around here for a change! It's all over for Daddy and me. This is it! *"Finita la commedia!"* . . . All I'm trying to do is exit with a little flourish; have some fun. . . . What's so terrible about that? . . . It can get pretty grim around here, in case you haven't noticed . . . Daddy, tap-tap-tapping out his nonsense all day; me traipsing around to the thrift shops trying to amuse myself . . . He never keeps me company anymore; never takes me out anywhere. . . . I'd put a bullet through my head in a minute, but then who'd look after him? . . . What do you think we're moving to the cottage for? . . . So I can watch him like a hawk and make sure he doesn't get lost. Do you think that's any thing to look forward to? . . . Being Daddy's nursemaid out in the middle of nowhere? I'd much rather stay here in Boston with the few friends I have left, but you can't always do what you want in this world! *"L'homme propose, Dieu dispose!"* . . . If you want to paint us so badly, you ought to paint us as we really are. There's your picture! . . . *(She points to* GARDNER, *who's quietly playing with a paper glider.)* Daddy spread out on the floor with all his toys and me hovering over him to make sure he doesn't hurt himself! *(She goes over to him.)* YOO-HOO . . . GAR? . . . HELLO? . . .

Passing Game

Steve Tesich

Premiere: American Place Theatre, New York City, 1977
Setting: Upstate New York

Two New York actors have rented cottages at a semi-deserted upstate resort. There has been a chain of unsolved killings in the area, and guests have been staying away in droves. There is no one around but the lecherous night watchman Andrew, who's trying to shoot his old dog; Andrew's young nephew Randy; Debbie, the hard-to-get girl he's pursuing; two actors; two wives.

The two actors have never met, but know each other's faces from the audition circuit. Henry, a black man, has only been successful in dog food commercials. Richard, who's white, has not even succeeded at that—in fact, lately he's lost out to Henry on several commercial auditions. They take out their hostility in savagely competitive one-on-one basketball. Eventually, competitiveness yields to bonding, and they share their darker secrets. Both blame their wives for pumping them full of great expectations about their careers, and both are half-hoping their wives will be "taken care of" by the mysterious killer. Henry once tried to run over his wife in a car "accident," and

AS IS — William M. Hoffman

The present. A New York City hospital for AIDS patients. A HOSPICE WORKER, *a dowdy middle-aged volunteer, wearing a dark dress and bright lipstick and nail polish, opens the play with this speech to the audience. A black humorist,* SHE *approaches* HER *part-time "sainthood" with a heavy dose of sarcasm and irony.*

HOSPICE WORKER: Mother Superior always used to say, "Watch out for the religious cranks, Sister Veronica." When I started working for the hospice I had a touch of the crank about me. I think maybe that's why they gave me the old heave-ho from the convent. But I've kept my vow of chastity and I've made a pilgrimage to Lourdes.

My job is to ease the way for those who are dying. I've done this for the last couple of years. I work mainly here at St. Vincent's. During the day I have a boring secretarial job, which is how I support my career as a saint.

I was much more idealistic when I started. I had just left the convent. I guess I thought working with the dying would give me spiritual gold stars. I thought I'd be able to impart my great wisdom to those in need of improvement. I wanted to bear witness to dramatic deathbed conversions, see shafts of light emanating from heaven, multicolored auras hovering above the heads of those in the process of expiring. I always imagined they would go out expressing their gratitude for all I had done.

A quick joke: Did you hear about the man who lost his left side? . . . He's all *right* now. All right now. *(*SHE *laughs)* We tell a lot of jokes in my line of work.

AUNT DAN AND LEMON — Wallace Shawn

1971. Summertime in Oxford, England. A little house filled with a child's toys and furniture. DANIELLE (AUNT DAN) *(40s), a dogmatic and eccentric American, who is a tutor at Oxford University, has developed a close and intense friendship with the impressionable and sickly* LEMON, *daughter of* DAN's *friends.* AUNT DAN's *long stories and seductive opions entrance* LEMON. *In the first monologue,* AUNT DAN *tells* LEMON *about* GEOFFREY, *one of* HER *lovers. In the second monologue, the time has shifted to the present.* LEMON *(now 25) sits in an armchair, still frail and sickly.* SHE *recalls wanting to run away to* AUNT DAN *and also recounts one of* DAN's *more unlikely obsessions,* HENRY KISSINGER.

AUNT DAN *(to* LEMON*):* You see, the thing was, Geoffrey was the most fantastic liar—I mean he was so astonishingly handsome, with those gorgeous eyes and those thick, black eyebrows—he just had to look at a woman, with those eyes of his, and she immediately believed every word that he said. And he didn't mind lying to his wife at all, because she'd trapped him into the marriage in the first place, in the most disgusting way, and she just lived off his money, you know—she just lay in bed all day long in a pink housecoat, talking on the telephone and reading magazines and ordering the servants around like slaves. But he knew she'd go mad if he left for the week, so he went to her looking totally tragic, and he said, "Sadie, I've *got* to go to Paris for a conference for at least three days, and I'm so upset, I just hate to leave you, but some professors over there are attacking my theories, and if I don't defend myself my entire reputation will be just destroyed." So she cried and wailed—she was just like a baby—and he promised to bring her lots of presents—and the next thing was, I heard a little knock on my tiny door, and in came Geoffrey into my basement room. I mean, you can't imagine—this tiny room with nothing in it except all my

JOHNNY LUCE
by Hallie Leighton

ACTOR. I don't know how I got started. I know I'm a little too young. I mean about my obsession with Johnny Luce. And I know it would have made a hell of a lot more sense if I had known him. I feel so strange liking somebody so strongly that I don't even know. You know, when I went shopping for clothes, I kept asking myself, "Would Johnny Luce like this? Maybe he wouldn't like it." You know, making decisions based on him. And now that he's gone away and he's not going to see anything I wear, I still ask myself, "What would he think?"

I didn't know much about him, but I observed everything he did. What he wore. Every tiny detail--like if he tucked his shirt in or not. Because...because that's all I had to judge him by. He was a grade above me, so I didn't have any classes with him. I'd see him in the hallways and try to follow him around without being noticed.

I didn't like him for his looks, either. I mean, he's not like another Rob Lowe or something. Well, maybe I started liking him for his looks. It's, um, something else now. Whatever I didn't like about him, I forced myself to like. I don't know. How can you describe an obsession?

Now we get to the part about the flute lessons. You see, I knew he took flute lessons every Monday and Wednesday after school. He was good, too. I saw him perform at the scholarship concert. So I finally got up all my courage and signed up for fourth quarter flute, which started last week. I spent the entire Easter vacation just thinking about it. I was nervous because I'd never taken flute before, but anything to be near him. So on the bus to school that Monday I was all made up and stuff, and my friend Sam told me I'd never looked so dazzling. I felt terrific. But all morning I didn't see Johnny at all. I thought maybe he was sick or something. So at lunch I went up to my two friends, and I asked them, trying to be casual, "Have,either of you seen Johnny Luce?" My friend said, "Didn't you know? He moved to California. He left over vacation."

I didn't know what he thought of me, and now I'll never know. I guess he thought I was strange, the way I followed him around so much. But you know, I think his leaving is good in a way. Now I can concentrate on other things like singing or ballet. And I don't have to follow him around anymore. But still...

you believe in confession?" I said, " 'Cause it's a great idea. It predates Freud by twelve centuries."

So I left the Church. Quit Catholic school. Mom figured I was making a leap to Judaism. I told her. "Mom. I don't believe in God in three places and I don't believe in God in one place. Religion's a crutch. I'm not gonna substitute one crutch for another." Then my mother says—dig this—she says, "Megan, my child. Everybody's gotta have a crutch. Everybody has to have a god. You don't want a Jewish god? You want a Catholic god? You'll have a god someday. Believe me."

Well . . . if she's not right, she certainly kept me on my toes, because there isn't a day that goes by that I don't wake up and wonder if I'm going to find a god today.

In this second monologue, Diana, fresh out of college, has moved into her first, depressing New York apartment, a long way from her upper-class Philadelphia upbringing. She explains to her best friend, Megan, her conflicting feelings about this past, particularly her mother.

DIANA: I went to a Quaker school. Absolutely *un*competitive! We used to have an awards ceremony at the end of the year. Everybody got an award! Then it dawned on me that if everybody got an award, it

didn't mean anything . . . So I went to the headmaster and I told him, "Why don't you give up the awards altogether. I mean, if everybody gets an award, it doesn't mean anything." He looked at me and said, "Diana, not everyone realizes that. There are boys and girls here who have never ever gotten an award in their life. It means something to them. So for that reason, we do it." And I said, "But don't you realize how condescending that is to them? It's ultimately going to make them feel worse." He just glared at me and said, "Miss Schmidt. Someday, somebody's going to prick your bubble." I just . . . I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. So he called my mother.

She came into school. Came in looking like a million dollars. Camel's hair coat. Blonde hair. Looked like a Smith College undergrad. Came in smelling like an ocean breeze. I looked at her and said to myself, "I'm gonna get it." Mr. Dumwalt, the headmaster, told her what I said . . . and Mom took me aside. She sat me down . . . and said, "Don't worry about Mr. Dumwalt. He was born with a pole up his ass!" I couldn't believe it. I think that's one of the reasons I've never abandoned hope for Mom.

[Available at New Dramatists]

a book, but I don't think he was really reading, because he never turned any of the pages. And then eventually, since nothing else seemed to be happening, I just went to bed.

Balm in Gilead

Lanford Wilson

Premiere: La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, New York City, 1965

Setting: An all-night coffee shop and street corner on upper Broadway, New York City

The coffee shop is a gathering place for "the riffraff, the bums, the petty thieves, the scum, the lost, the desperate, the dispossessed, the cool; depending on one's attitude there are a hundred names that could describe them." There are thirty-one speaking characters. Fick is a heroin addict, has been one since he was thirteen. Recently he was mugged by "four or five" guys who were looking for money or drink. He starts telling the story to Tig, a male prostitute, and keeps on repeating it long after Tig has moved on. Fick has no coat. It is cold out.

FICK

(They sit quietly, looking up out toward the street.) I mean, I was just walking down the street and they came up on me like they was important, and they start pushing me around, you know. And they pushed me into this alley, not an alley, but this hallway and back down the end of that to this dark place at the end of the hallway and they start punching at me, and I just fell into this ball on the floor so they couldn't hurt me or nothing. But if I came down there with a couple of fighters, a couple of guys, like my friends,

it wouldn't have to be you or anything, but just a couple or three guys, big guys, like walking down the street, you know. Just so they could see I got these buddies here. See I'm on *H*, I mean, I'm flying and I gotta talk man, but I'm serious now; just a few guys and they'd leave me be, maybe, because they'd think I had these buddies that looked after me, you know: cause I—you know—they kicked me up, if I wasn't on *H*, man, they'd be pains all through me—you know—walking down the street by myself—I start looking around and wondering who's out there gonna mess me up, you know. I get scared as hell, man, walking down around here, I mean, I can't protect myself or nothing, man. You know what I mean? You know what I mean? You know what I mean? You know? I mean if I had these couple—of big buddies—fighters—you—you know—if I had a couple of guys—like—big guys—that—you know, there's like nothing—I could—like, if you walked around with these buddies, I mean you could do, man—you could do anything. . . .

Between Daylight and Boonville

Matt Williams

Premiere: Wonderhorse Theatre, New York City, 1980

Setting: A temporary trailer court in the strip mining country of southern Indiana

Three miners' wives and their kids pass the day in the makeshift "recreation area" between two of the trailers. The youngest wife, Carla, is packing to leave her husband. Lorette, an "old floozy" who chain-smokes, says, "Carla, this is the third time this month. . . . Hell, girl, you're packed more than you're unpacked." The third wife, Marlene, is "a large-boned woman about thirty-five years old, although she looks somewhat older. There is a tranquil

WHAT THEO DID
by Debra Neff

ACTOR. Well, ya know, me and all my friends were just kinda hangin' out, ya know. A Friday night in May when it's warm out and all. So I look across the street and I see my friend Theo. And my friend Melody and me both go at the same time, "Yo, Theo!" And then we started laughin'' cause it was like funny, ya know.

So Theo comes over and he's all like "Hey, Nickey, hey, Mel, what's up?" And I mean that was pretty nasty of him 'cause his girlfriend was like there, too, and he just kind of, you know, ignored her, ya know. So that was pretty nasty of him. But Jenny said she didn't care.

Anyway, we go, "Not much, we're just kinda hangin' out, ya know." So Theo goes, "Well, I heard of a pretty good party across town. "You wanna like crash?" And we thought that sounded pretty, ya know, killer. So there we were hangin' out at this party when we see this guy and Jenny goes, "Yo, that's Steven. I went out with him once." Well, I don't know if she did or not. I think she just wanted to get Theo mad 'cause he was like ignoring her, ya know. So she goes,

"Yo, Steven." And Steven comes over and he's all, "Yo, Jen, what's up?" And that just about killed Theo 'cause he told us about this party and there's his girl talkin' to another guy. So Theo goes to me, "Yo, this is like pissing me off." And I go, "Yo, well, Theo, you're ignoring her and it's nasty." So he goes, "Yo, you're right." And he goes over and starts talkin' to Jen. So they're like talkin', right? And then they start to like argue, and the argument got louder and louder. But I wasn't listening or anything.

Then all of a sudden Steve goes, *"Gaugh!"*, ya know, and his eyes like bug out, and his face turns all purple, and then he like falls to the floor with somebody's knife in his back. It was horrible! And I was all like screaming, ya know, so they like dragged me away and sat me down. And all these cops came over and they were like, "Yo, you gotta testify." So you got me here in your dumb courtroom and I told you the story as well as I could, but I just don't know what happened so stop harshing on me! I don't know what Theo did.

name and I've changed my name and we're all working in the same place and she's telling me all these secrets and all of a sudden she says, "Why don't you talk to a psychiatrist?"

TALK RADIO

BY ERIC BOGOSIAN

"Nighttalk" with Barry Champlain on a Cleveland, Ohio, talk-radio station attracts callers the host considers "yellow-bellied, spineless, bigoted, quivering, drunken, insomniatic, paranoid, disgusting, perverted, voyeuristic little obscene phone callers." Denise is one.

DENISE: I'm scared, Barry. □□□ you know, like we've got a garbage disposal in our sink in the kitchen, I mean my mother's kitchen. □□□ and sometimes a teaspoon will fall into the garbage disposal. □□□ ya, so like, you know how you feel when you have to reach down into that garbage disposal and you have to feel around down there for that teaspoon. You don't want to do it. Who knows what's down there? Could be garbage, a piece of something, so much stuff goes down there . . . or germs, which you can't see. You can't see germs, but if they're gonna be anywhere, they're gonna be down that disposal. They grow there, see? They come back up the pipes. Salmonella, yeast, cancer, even the common cold, who knows? But, Barry, even without all that, what if, and I'm just saying "what if," 'cause it would probably never happen, but what if the garbage disposal came on while your hand is down there? □□□ I get so scared of thinking about it that I usually leave the teaspoon there. I don't even try to get it out. But then I'm afraid that my mother will get mad if she finds it down there, so I turn the disposal on, trying to make it go down the drain. But all it does is make a huge racket. And I stand in the middle of the kitchen and the spoon goes around and around and I get sort of paralyzed, you know? It makes a lot of noise, incredible noise. But Barry, I kind of like that noise, because I know the teaspoon is getting destroyed and annihilated and that's good 'cause I hate the teaspoon for scaring me like that. □□□ Well it's not just the

disposal, it's everything. What about insects? Termites. Hornets. Spiders. Ants. Centipedes. Mites. You can't even see the mites, they're like the germs. Tiny, impossible to see! I like things to be clean, you know. Dirty ashtrays bother me. □□□ The mailman brings me unsolicited mail and the postage stamp was licked by someone with AIDS. Right? My mother is a threat to my life by persisting in going out there. □□□ Do you know that there's this dust storm in California that has these little fungus spores in it? And these spores get in people's lungs and it goes into their bloodstreams and grows inside them and kills them? Strange air . . . strange air . . . you have to . . . Oh! There's my mother. I hear her key in the door. She'll kill me if she finds out I used the phone.

RAISED IN CAPTIVITY

BY NICKY SILVER

When her last patient terminated therapy, Dr. Hillary MacMahon blamed herself. Convinced that the patient's abandonment was proof of her own innate badness, the no-longer-practicing psychologist stabbed herself in the hand, threw her TV in the river, clothed herself in rags and generally opted for self-mutilation as the path to sanctity. She explains to the audience.

HILLARY: AS I WAS SAYING!!! □□□ I had no God. And although, intellectually, I have always found the idea of God, per se, rather farfetched and revoltingly patriarchal, and *organized* religion seems, to me, to be little more than another systematic mechanism by which the plutocratic echelon controls the educational and economic underclass, it does also, obviously, provide that subclass a system with which those who feel burdened by sociologically imposed guilt can purge those feelings and continue their lives in a clean, new, virgin state.

I went to the church near my house and told the priest that I was bad and I wanted to make a confession. I said, "Father, I am bad. I am pocked with the mark of Cain." He asked me when I last made a

THANKFUL II
by Doug Hara

ACTOR. What am I thankful for? Don't you hate that question? We're forced to think about it every year on Thanksgiving, and we say, "I'm thankful for the food on our table and a loving family." I mean, I know that there are starving people all over the world, but I just can't bring myself to be thankful for my dinner every night. There has to be some thing more. I don't know. I'm thankful for my health. I've got two arms and two legs and all the right parts. And my brain's okay, too, I think. I mean, some people have handicaps and diseases and stuff. But, I don't know. That's not it. I don't feel lucky for that.

What I'm truly thankful for is being here. I mean, if I wasn't here, think of what I'd be missing. But I am. Alive, I mean. Everyone's alive, unless they're dead, and then it doesn't matter anyway. I am alive. And I go to bed, and I wake up, and I'm still alive. I guess that's what I'm most thankful for... existing. And not just me existing, but everyone else, too. Even the planet existing. I mean, we're all living and having a great time. Who knows why, but who cares. It's great to be alive.

INFINITY'S HOUSE
by Ellen McLaughlin
The desert - 1850 - Catches Rain (20's)

Set against a desert backdrop, this play tells the story of three different eras in American history. Here, a young Indian woman entreats her gods to take her to them now that she has lost her family, her tribe and has become a slave to a white man.

(Catches Rain runs on. SHE throws herself down on the ground and pries off her shoes, takes off her dress. SHE then ferociously takes off her corset so that SHE is only in a cotton shift. SHE buries the corset in the sand.)

CATCHES RAIN: Dear Gods, Dear Gods, hear me. *(SHE rolls in the sand, scoops up a handful of sand and tastes it, rubs it onto herself. SHE then kneads the sand, sifts it through her fingers as SHE talks.)* I'm calling you now, my dear ones. Please hear me. You remember before the White Eyes drove us away, I was the one who drank from the stream one last time and laid my cheek against the water and whispered goodbye. Do you remember me? I am the one who was the first to taste the berries last spring. I sang the first song. Can you find me? I was once Catches Rain. I stopped praying after a time, after too many days and nights of walking, I thought you couldn't hear me anymore. My father said you were calling for us from the creek beds, from the cliff holes, hanging from the tree branches, yearning for us, wondering where we had gone. I was too sad. Hear me now! I am the only one left. Sickness took all of my family. The rest were forced on. Only I survived, and then I was taken by the White Eyes. I have no charms to summon you with, they've even taken my clothes. I have nothing, dear ones. Only myself.

(SHE draws a circle in the sand.) But I know you once loved me. We never betrayed you. I have been taken past the last hoop of life, past the trees, past the water. I ask you now. Hear me. Come find me. Bring me home. I am lost.

LAUGHING WILD
by Christopher Durang
Here and Now - Woman (30's)

Alienation and lack of communication are two themes explored by a woman in the following monologue. As she describes a mishap in a grocery store, we are presented with a character to whom the most simple of tasks becomes a Herculean effort.

WOMAN: Oh, it's all such a mess. Look at this mess. My hair is a mess. My clothes are a mess.

I want to talk to you about life. It's just too difficult to be alive, isn't it, and to try to function? There are all these people to deal with. I tried to buy a can of tuna fish in the supermarket, and there was this *person* standing right in front of where I wanted to reach out to get the tuna fish, and I waited a while, to see if they'd move, and they didn't—they were looking at tuna fish too, but they were taking a real long time on it, reading the ingredients on each can like they were a book, a pretty boring book, if you ask me, but nobody has; so I waited a long while, and they didn't move, and I couldn't get to the tuna fish cans; and I thought about asking them to move, but then they seemed so stupid not to have *sensed* that I needed to get by them that I had this awful fear that it would do no good, no good at all, to ask them, they'd probably say something like, "We'll move when we're goddamn ready, you nagging bitch," and then what would I do? And so then I started to cry out of frustration, quietly, so as not to disturb anyone, and still, even though I was softly sobbing, this stupid person didn't *grasp* that I needed to get by them to reach the goddamn tuna fish, people are so insensitive, I just hate them, and so I reached over with my fist, and I brought it down real hard on his head and I screamed: "Would you kindly move, asshole!!!"

And the person fell to the ground, and looked totally startled, and some child nearby started to cry, and I was still crying, and I couldn't imagine making use of the tuna fish now anyway, and so I shouted at the child to stop crying—I mean, it was drawing too much attention to me—and I ran out of the supermarket, and I thought, I'll take a taxi to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I need to be surrounded with culture right now, not tuna fish.

The Actor's Nightmare

Christopher Durang

Premiere: Playwrights Horizons, New York City, 1981
Setting: A theatre

An accountant named George Spelvin is baffled to find himself on the stage of a theatre. The stage manager tells him that "Eddie" (Edwin Booth) has been in a car accident and George will have to go on for him. The curtain goes up on a play which is either *Private Lives*, Samuel Beckett's *Checkmate*, or *Hamlet*. George wings it as well as he can, but is lost when his co-stars exeunt.

GEORGE

Oh don't go. *(Pause; smiles uncomfortably at the audience.)* Maybe someone else will come out in a minute. *(Pause.)* Of course, sometimes people have soliloquies in Shakespeare. Let's just wait a moment more and maybe someone will come. *(The lights suddenly change to a dim blue background and one bright, white spot center stage.* GEORGE *is not standing in the spot.)* Oh dear. *(He moves somewhat awkwardly into the spot, decides to do his best to live up to the requirements of the moment.)* To be or not to be, that is the question. *(Doesn't know any more.)* Oh maid! *(No response; remembers that actors call for "line.")* Line. Line! Ohhhh. Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I Whether tis nobler in the mind's eye to kill oneself, or not killing oneself, to sleep a great deal. We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our lives are rounded by a little sleep. *(The lights change. The spot goes out, and another one comes up stage right.* GEORGE *moves into it.)* Uh, thrift, thrift, Horatio. Neither a borrower nor a lender be. But to thine own self be true. There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. Extraordinary how potent cheap music can be. Out, out, damn spot! I come to wive it wealthily

in Padua; if wealthily, then happily in Padua. *(Sings.)* Brush up your Shakespeare; start quoting him now; Da da . . . * *(Lights change again. That spot goes off; another one comes on, center stage, though closer to audience.* GEORGE *moves into that.)* I wonder whose yacht that is. How was China? Very large, China. How was Japan? Very small, Japan. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Line! Line! Oh my God. *(Gets idea.)* O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell. But most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. And I resolve to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life, Amen. *(Friendly.)* That's the act of contrition that Catholic schoolchildren say in confession in order to be forgiven their sins. Catholic adults say it too, I imagine. I don't know any Catholic adults. Line! *(Explaining.)* When you call for a line, the stage manager normally gives you your next line, to refresh your memory. Line! The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain upon the place below, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil. Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him well. Get thee to a nunnery. Line. Nunnery. As a child, I was taught by nuns, and then in high school I was taught by Benedictine priests. I really rather liked the nuns, they were sort of warm, though they were fairly crazy too. Line. I liked the priests also. The school was on the grounds of the monastery, and my junior and senior years I spent a few weekends joining in the daily routine of the monastery—prayers, then breakfast, then prayers, then lunch, then prayers, then dinner, then prayers, then sleep. I found the predictability quite attractive. And the food was good. I was going to join the monastery after high school, but they said I was too young and should

*See Note on page 355.

wait. And then I just stopped believing in all those things, so I never did join the monastery. I became an accountant. I've studied logarithms, and cosine and tangent . . . *(Irritated.)* Line! *(Apologetic.)* I'm sorry. This is supposed to be *Hamlet* or *Private Lives* or something, and I keep rattling on like a maniac. I really do apologize. I just don't recall attending a single rehearsal. I can't imagine what I was doing. And also you came expecting to see Edwin Booth and you get me. I really am very embarrassed. Sorry. *Line!* It's a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before. It's a far, far better place I go to than I have ever been before. *(Sings the alphabet song.)* a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,q,r,s,t . . . *(As he starts to sing, enter* ELLEN TERRY, *dragging two large garbage cans. She puts them side by side, gets in one.)* Oh, good. Are you Ophelia? Get thee to a nunnery. *(She points to the other garbage can, indicating he should get in it.)* Get in? Okay. *(He does.)* This must be one of those modern *Hamlets*. *(Lights change abruptly to "Beckett lighting.")*

Angels Fall

Lanford Wilson

Premiere: New World Festival, Miami, 1982
Setting: An adobe mission in northwestern New Mexico
There has been a nuclear accident at a uranium mine in northwestern New Mexico, and all roads are closed. Four travelers seek sanctuary in the mission run by Father Doherty and his half-Indian foster son, Don Tabaha. The stranded travelers are a burned-out professor and his young wife, a fortyish gallery owner and her "boytoy," and a twenty-one-year-old tennis pro named Salvatore "Zappy" Zappala. Zappy is an energetic, cheerful hypochondriac ("I can't hear symptoms without getting it") who sees his gift for tennis as a

didn't even mind that personal message y
painted on the stairs. Ah thought it was cra
but sorta sweet. However, things have now go
too far . . . (*Goes down to the pole table*) Ah c
not accept gifts from a man Ah hardly know.
(*Puts the basket on the pole table*) Especially cann
goods. And Ah read your little note. Ah c
guess the gist of it even though Ah don't spe
Italian. This has got to stop, Mr. Cornell. Ah c
do very well without you leavin' little chocol
almond Hershey bars in mah mailbox—th
melted yesterday, and now Ah got three go
ey letters from home with nuts in 'em—and
can do without you sneakin' into mah room a
Ah go to work and paintin' mah balcony witho
tellin' me about it. Ah stepped out there yest
day and mah slippers are still glued to the flo
And Ah can do without you tying big bottles
eau de cologne to mah cat's tail. The poor th
kept swishin' it yesterday and nearly beat her
to death . . . And most of all, Ah can certainly
without you watchin' me get on the bus ev
day through that high-powered telescope. Y
got me so nervous the other day Ah got on
wrong bus. In short, Mr. Cornell, and Ah do
want to have to say this again, *leave me ay-lon*

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

William Shakespeare

This is one of William Shakespeare's delightful comedies of young love and all its foibles. Helena is in love with Demetrius who seems to be in love with Hermia who, in turn, is in love with Lysander, with whom she has made plans to elope. Helena has just heard their marriage plan and makes one of her own to get her love back. As Puck says, "What fools these mortals be."

•◆•

HELENA.

How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know.
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;

Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and show'rs of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

(Exit)

LUDLOW FAIR

Lanford Wilson

This is a two-character, one-act comedy about two young women who share an apartment. It is a departure from the playright's other works, oftentimes about losers, drifters, and the misplaced. The following monologue by Rachel is from the beginning of the play. She waits for her roommate to come out of the bathroom. It is a humorous moment, though Rachel is serious in her attempt to analyze herself and what she has done. She agonizes over whether she should have called the police about a man she has been dating and who has stolen some money from her.

This monologue is followed by another, which occurs after a brief exchange from both sides of the bathroom door. A number of lines between Rachel and her roommate are deleted and marked by asterisks.

RACHEL.

[*wandering around the room alone. She is restless; she looks at one thing and another. Finally, quite to herself*]. Oh, God; I think you're losing your

DIANE

When I was sixteen, my mother got breast cancer, which spread. I prayed to God to let her suffering be small, but her suffering seemed to me quite extreme. She was in bad pain for half a year, and then terrible pain for much of a full year. The ulcerations on her body were horrifying to her and to me. Her last few weeks she slipped into a semi-conscious state, which allowed her, unfortunately, to wake up for a few minutes at a time and to have a full awareness of her pain and her fear of death. She was able to recognize me, and she would try to cry, but she was unable to; and to speak, but she was unable to. I think she wanted me to get her new doctors; she never really accepted that her disease was going to kill her, and she thought in her panic that her doctors must be incompetent and that new ones could magically cure her. Then, thank goodness, she went into a full coma. A nurse who I knew to be Catholic assured me that everything would be done to keep her alive, a dubious comfort. Happily, the doctor was not Catholic, or if he was, not doctrinaire, and they didn't use extraordinary means to keep her alive, and she finally died after several more weeks in her coma. Now there are, I'm sure, far worse deaths—terrible burnings, tortures, plague, pestilence, famine. Christ on the cross even, as Sister likes to say. But I thought my mother's death was bad enough, and I got confused as to why I had been praying, and to whom. I mean, if prayer was really this sort of button you pressed—admit you need the Lord, then He stops your suffering—then why didn't it always work? Or ever work? And when it worked, so-called, and our prayers were supposedly answered, wasn't it as likely to be chance as God? God always answers our prayers, you said, He just sometimes says no. But why would He say no to stopping my mother's suffering? I wasn't even asking that she live, just that He end her suffering. And it can't be that He was letting her suffer because she'd been bad, because she hadn't been bad and besides suffering doesn't seem to work that way, considering the suffering of children who've obviously done nothing wrong. So why was He letting her suffer? Spite? Was the Lord God actually malicious? That seemed possible but farfetched. Maybe He had no control over it, maybe He wasn't omnipotent as you taught us He was. Maybe He created the world sort of by accident by belching one morning or getting the hiccups, and maybe He had no idea how the whole thing worked. In which case, He wouldn't be malicious, just useless. Or, of course, more likely than that, He didn't exist at all, the universe was hiccupped or belched into existence all on its own, and my mother's suffering just existed like rain or wind or humidity. I became angry at myself, and by extension at you, for ever having expected anything beyond randomness from the world. And while I was thinking these things, the day that my mother died, I was raped. Now I know that's really too much, one really loses all sympathy for me because I sound like I'm making it up or something. But bad things sometimes happen all at once, and this particular day on my return from the hospital I was raped by some maniac who broke into the house. He had a knife and cut me up some. Anyway, I don't really want to go on about the experience, but I got very depressed for about five years. Somehow the utter randomness of things—my mother's suffering, my attack by a lunatic who was either born a lunatic or made one by cruel parents or perhaps by an imbalance of hormones or whatever, etc. etc.—*this randomness seemed intolerable.* I found I grew to hate you, Sister, for making me once expect everything to be ordered and to make sense. My psychiatrist said he thought my hatred of you was obsessive, that I just was looking for someone to blame. Then he seduced me, and he was the father of my second abortion.

[SISTER: I think she's making all this up.]

He said I seduced him. And maybe that's so. But he could be lying just to make himself feel better. (*To* SISTER) And of course your idea that I should have had this baby, either baby, is preposterous. Have you any idea what a terrible mother I'd be? I'm a nervous wreck.

[SISTER: God would have given you the strength.]

I suppose it is childish to look for blame, part of the randomness of things is that there is no one to blame; but basically I think everything is your fault, Sister.

THE WOOLGATHERER
by William Mastrosimone
South Philadelphia - Present - Rose (20's)

Rose is a dreamer who never ceases to be amazed by what she learns about life. When she meets pragmatic Cliff, she is put-off by his grim and practical view of things. Here, Rose tells Cliff the tragic story of the death of some rare cranes that she was unfortunate enough to have witnessed.

ROSE: You may think it's funny but I was the last one to see them alive last summer. There was only seven of them in the world and the zoo had four of them. I used to walk there every night just to watch them stand so still in the water. And they walked so graceful, in slow motion. And they have legs as skinny as my little finger. Long legs. And there was only seven in the world because they killed them off for feathers for ladies hats or something. And one night a gang of boys came by with radios to their ears and cursing real bad, you know, F, and everything. And I was, you know, ascared. And they started saying things to me, you know, dirty things, and laughing at the birds. And one kid threw a stone to see how close he could splash the birds, and then another kid tried to see how close he could splash the birds, and then they all started throwing stones to splash the birds, and then they started throwing stones *at* the birds, and I started screaming STOP IT! and a stone hit a bird's leg and it bended like a straw and the birds keeled over in the water, flapping wings in the water, and the kids kept laughing and throwing stones and I kept screaming STOP IT! STOP IT! but they couldn't hear me through that ugly music on the radios and kept laughing and cursing and throwing stones, and I ran and got the zoo guard and he got his club and we ran to the place of the birds but the kids were gone. And there was white feathers on the water. And the water was real still. And there was big swirls of blood. And the birds were real still. Their beaks a little open. Legs broke. Toes curled. Still. Like the world stopped. And the guard said something to me but I couldn't hear him. I just saw his mouth

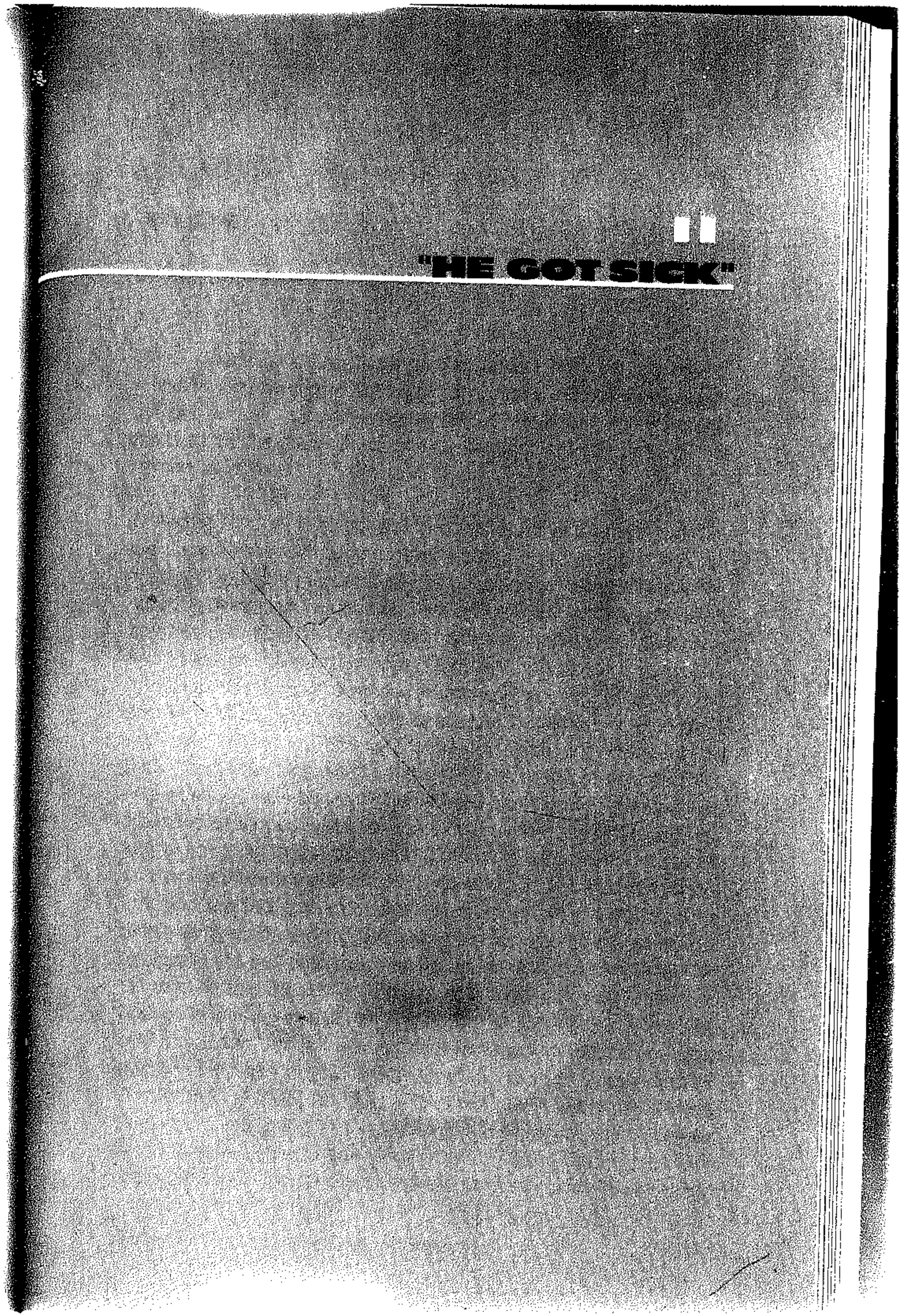
moving. And I started screaming. And the
the hospital and they gave me a needle to m
And they never caught the gang. But even
that? They can't make the birds come alive

ASSASSINS

BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND JOHN WEIDMAN

Lynette ("Squeaky") Fromme is one of fourteen Americans who have tried, successfully or un-, to assassinate a president. In Sondheim and Weidman's musical, Fromme aims to shoot President Gerald Ford as a way of proving herself worthy of the man she worships, Charles Manson.

FROMME: I was like you once. Lost. Confused. A piece of shit. □□□ Then I met Charlie. . . I was sitting on the beach in Venice. I'd just had a big fight with my daddy about, I don't know, my eye make-up or the bombing of Cambodia. He said I was a drug addict and a whore and I should get out of his house forever. □□□ I went down to the beach and sat down on the sand and cried. I felt like I was disappearing. Like the whole world was dividing into two parts. Me, and everybody else. And then this guy came down the beach, this dirty-looking little elf. He stopped in front of me and smiled this twinkly devil smile and said, "Your daddy kicked you out." He knew! "Your daddy kicked you out!" How could he know? My daddy didn't tell him, so who could've? *God*. God sent this dirty-looking little elf to save a little girl lost on a beach. He smiled again and touched my hair and off he went. And for a minute I just watched him go. Then I ran and caught his hand, and till they arrested him for stabbing Sharon Tate, I never let it go.



in each dancer
or in one
or the other.
It has to be
somewhere
in the space
between the two.

So, after learning this,
I was distresed
when Gabriel
walked out
Patricia's door.
Then Patricia said
she had to bake some cakes
for a christening the next day
so I went to bed early
even though it was
Christmas Eve.

COMPANY

BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND GEORGE FURTH

A date that will end in bed: April, a flight attendant who describes herself as "very dumb," visits Robert's bachelor pad for the first time. As he seduces her, she speaks.

APRIL: Right after I became an airline stewardess, a friend of mine who had a garden apartment gave me a cocoon for my bedroom. He collects things like that, insects and caterpillars and all that . . . It was attached to a twig and he said one morning I'd wake up to a beautiful butterfly in my bedroom—when it hatched. He told me that when they come out they're soaking wet and there is a drop of blood there, too—isn't that fascinating—but within an hour they dry off and then they begin to fly. Well, I told him I had a cat. I had a cat then,

but he said just put the cocoon somewhere where the cat couldn't get at it . . . which is impossible, but what can you do? So I put it up high on a ledge where the cat never went, and the next morning it was still there, at least so it seemed safe to leave it. Well, anyway, almost a week later very, very early this one morning the guy calls me, and he said, "April, do you have a butterfly this morning?" I told him to hold on and managed to get up and look and there on that ledge I saw this wet spot and a little speck of blood but no butterfly, and I thought "Oh dear God in heaven, the cat got it." I picked up the phone to tell this guy and just then suddenly I spotted it under the dressing table, it was moving one wing. The cat had got at it, but it was still alive. So I told the guy and he got so upset and he said "Oh no—oh, God, no—don't you see that's a life—a living thing?", Well, I got dressed and took it to the park and put it on a rose, it was summer then and it looked like it was going to be all right—I think, anyway. But that man—I really felt damaged by him—awful—that was just cruel. I got home and I called him back and said, "Listen, I'm a living thing too, you shithead!" *(Pause)* I never saw him again.

I NEVER SANG FOR MY FATHER
by Robert Anderson

Gene, a forty-year-old widower, is the ideal son: obedient, loyal, eager to please, always there when his parents need him. He loved his recently deceased mother very much, and has tried to remain close to his father. Gene is in love with a woman in California, and wants to move there and marry her. He invited his father to come live with him in California, but his father rejected the offer and accused him of not caring.

GENE: That night I left my father's house forever . . . I took the first right and the second left . . and this time I went as far as California.

Peggy and I visited him once or twice . . . and then he came to California to visit us, and had a fever and swollen ankles, and we put him in a hospital, and he never left . . . The reason we gave, and which he could accept, for not leaving . . . the swollen ankles. But the real reason . . . the arteries were hardening, and he gradually over several years slipped into complete and speechless senility . . . with his life centered in his burning eyes.

When I would visit him, and we would sit and look

at each other, his eyes would mist over and his nostrils would pinch with emotion . . . But I never could learn what the emotion was . . . anger . . . or love . . . or regret . . .

One day, sitting in his wheelchair and staring without comprehension at television . . . he died . . . alone . . . without even an orange in his hand.

Death ends life . . . but it does not end a relationship, which struggles on in the survivor's mind . . . toward some resolution, which it never finds.

Peggy said I would not accept the sadness of the world . . . What did it matter if I never loved him, or if he never loved me? . . . Perhaps she was right . . . But, still, when I hear the word Father . . .

(GENE *cannot express it. There is still the longing, the emotion. He looks around—out—as though he would finally be able to express it, but he can only say:*)

It matters.

(GENE *turns and walks slowly away.*)

[Published by Dramatists Play Service]

Monologue from
A MEDAL FOR WILLIE
by William Branch

William Branch has had a long and distinguished career in the arts and media fields. A graduate of Northwestern University, he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia and did further graduate study at the Yale University School of Drama on a Yale-American Broadcasting Company Fellowship.

Winner of a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writing in the drama, among his best-known works are *A Medal for Willie*, the play which launched his career when it was produced on a shoestring at a Harlem cabaret; *In Splendid Error*, an historical drama about Frederick Douglass and John Brown, which became an off-Broadway hit; and *A Wreath for Udomo*, based upon the novel by Peter Abrahams, which was prominently produced on the London stage.

A film and television writer-producer as well, Branch's media credits include *Light in the Southern Sky* for NBC, which won the Robert E. Sherwood Television Award; *Still A Brother: Inside the Negro Middle Class* for PBS, nominated for an Emmy and recipient of a Blue Ribbon Award at the American Film Festival; and *A Letter From Booker T.*, a PBS drama commissioned by its stars, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, which won a Citation from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Currently Professor of Theater and Communications at the African Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, Branch is editor/contributor of *Black Thunder: An Anthology of Contemporary African American Drama* (Mentor, 1992) and *Crosswinds: An Anthology of Black Dramatists in the Diaspora* (Indiana University Press, 1993).

SETTING: MRS. JACKSON is the mother of a Black American soldier killed in action. The stage of the auditorium of a Black high school in a Southern town following the presentation to Mrs. Jackson of her son's medal for bravery by a three-star general from Washington and local White officials. She has changed her mind and tries to give the medal back. They ask her why.

MRS. JACKSON: Why?

[THE OTHERS: Yes, why?]

MRS. JACKSON: All right, then. I'll tell you why. You asked me. Now I'm gonna tell you. [*She begins quietly and builds in intensity, a tower of strength and emotion.*] I didn't want to go through with this program an' all, to begin with. But standin' here just now, readin' off them words, I knew I just can't! I can't be that much of a hypocrite, not even for Willie. You-all 'spect me to 'cept this medal and read that speech you had all ready for me, say, "Thank you kindly, suhs," and then go home an' be happy about the whole thing. But I can't! I can't go through with this—this big LIE. [*The others are shocked.*] Yes, I said Lie. What has all your fine talk ever meant to Willie? He walked around this town nearly all his young life and nobody cared. You Jim-Crowed him and shunned him and you shoved him off in a corner. You gave him a third-rate schoolin' and when he wasn't quiet like a mouse, you put him out in the street. You looked down on him and you kept him down 'cause he was black and poor and didn't know no better than to believe that was the way things is supposed to be!

Yes, my Willie was dumb in a lotta ways. He didn't know nothin' 'bout no i-de-lol-logies or whatever you calls it. He wasn't fightin' 'cause he hated anybody. He joined the Army 'cause he couldn't get a decent job here. Willie thought if he did what they told him in the Army and didn't get in no trouble, maybe someday he could come back home and walk down the street and be somebody. Willie tried so hard, he got himself killed. But he didn't know. 'Cause even while you-all's here supposed to be honorin' Willie, you keep talkin' 'bout keepin' things the way they is. Willie didn't want things to stay the way they is. 'Cause it always meant he come out holdin' the short end of the stick—the Jim Crow end, the poor folks' end.

That's why this is all such a big lie. You-all here ain't really honorin' Willie. You here tryin' to tell yourself that you been *right* all along—that the way you been doin' things is perfectly okay 'cause you can get boys like Willie to go out and fight and die for you and never know the difference. And you tryin' to use me and my dead boy's memory to make out like everybody's all satisfied here in the land of the free, that we's all "one big happy family" who's just tickled to death with the

American Way!

Well, I don't know nothin' 'bout no other kinda way. I ain't never been on no trips to Europe or Russia or China or any of them places that I hears the man talk about on the radio, and I don't know what they does anywhere else. But I do know a whole lot 'bout right here from my whole life of experience. And I say I don't like everything the way it is! And it's high time—way past time—that a lot more changes were made! So that folks like my boy and your boy will have the same chance as anybody else to grow up and enjoy life and live like decent folk without no holdbacks 'cause they're colored.

Yes, Willie's dead and gone now, and I'm proud he was brave and helped save somebody else 'fore he got killed. But I can't help thinkin' Willie died fightin' in the wrong place. [*Quietly intense.*] Willie shoulda had that machine gun over here!

So you can take this medal back on up to Washington and tell them I don't want it! Take it back. Pin it on your own shirt! Give it to the ones who keeps this big lie goin' and send boys like my Willie all over the world to die for some kinda freedom and democracy they always gets the leavin's of! You done a pretty good job. You had folks fooled a long time with all this honey-talk, an' you even had me readin' off your words for you. But I done woke up! I knows what you're tryin' to do and I ain't gonna let you do it to me no more! Here! Take it back! [*She hurls the medal at the General. He ducks in terror...*]

★

Scene from
BACCALAUREATE
by William Branch

CHARACTERS:
ANGELA WILLIAMS: Attractive graduate student at the university.
DOCKERY HILL: A self-described "working man" in his late thirties.
MARTHA HILL: Doc's wife, Angela's older sister.

SETTING: The entire action of the play occurs in the apartment of the Hills, an African-American family, on the second floor of a two-family house in a mid-Western university town during a spring in the late 1950's.

[*There is silence for a moment. Then quick footsteps are heard on the steps outside. The door opens to admit* **ANGELA WILLIAMS**. *She is a quite attractive young woman in her early twenties, and she carries an armful of textbooks. She closes the door and leans against it, blowing at the exertion of running up the stairs.*]

ANGELA: [*Looks around.*] Martha? [*Goes into the bedroom and looks in.*] Martha, anybody home? [*Satisfied she puts her books down on the sofa, takes off her light jacket and starts for the bathroom. Just then the flush of the commode is heard, and an instant later DOC emerges, wiping his neck with a towel flung over his shoulder. He stops upon seeing* ANGELA]. Oh. Hi, Doc.

DOC: Hi.

ANGELA: Is Martha Home?

DOC: Yeah, she's...[*Glances around.*] out in back of someplace.

ANGELA: Why, Doc, that's my towel!

DOC: [*Looks at it.*] Is it? Oh, I hadn't noticed. Guess I just grabbed up the first thing handy.

ANGELA: [*Taking it from him.*] I wish you'd stick to your own

Laughing Wild

Christopher Durang

Act 2, scene 2. A space in which a talk is about to be given. It could be a lecture hall, a stage, a room, a 'space'.

Man (30s) 'is dressed well, maybe even a little trendy. He is dressed up to give a talk, to share his new thoughts . . . He carries with him a few file cards that he has made notes on.' He 'used to be a very negative person', but he took a personality workshop that totally turned his life around. When something bad happens he now knows to be positive rather than negative and he repeats a little mantra to focus his positive energies – 'this glass is not half empty, it is half full'. *His notecards are full of simplistic New Age aphorisms which he uses to cue his affirmative mind-set. Despite his faith in his new optimistic confidence he has to keep battling with his old negative personality. This speech is part of an extended monologue which he addresses directly to the audience.*

MAN (*steps closer to the audience*). I was in the supermarket the other day about to buy some tuna fish when I sensed this very disturbed presence right behind me. There was something about her focus that made it very clear to me that she was a disturbed person. So I thought – well, you should never look at a crazy person directly, so I thought, I'll just keep looking at these tuna fish cans, pretending to be engrossed in whether they're in oil or in water, and the person will then go away. But instead *wham!* she brings her fist down on my head and screams 'would you move, asshole'! (*Pause.*) Now why did she do that? She hadn't even said, 'would you please move' at some initial point, so I would've known what her problem was. Admittedly I don't

always tell people what I want either – like the peop
movie theatres who keep talking, you know, I just
and resent them – but on the other hand, I don't tak
and go wham! on their heads! I mean, analyzing it,
at it in a positive light, this woman probably had son
horrible life story that, you know, kind of, explain
she got to this point in time, hitting me in the super
And perhaps if her life – *since birth* – had been expl
me, I could probably have made some sense out of he
and how she got there. But even with that know
which I didn't have – it was *my* head she was hitting,
just so unfair. It makes me want to never leave my ap
ever ever again. (*Suddenly he closes his eyes and moves
in a circular motion around himself, round and roun
ingly.*) I am the predominant source of energy in my l
go of the pain from the past. I let go of the pain f
present. In the places in my body where pain liv
viously, now there is light and love and joy. (*He open
again and looks at the audience peacefully and happil
was an affirmation.

COMMENTARY: Here's a character whose entire response
written on cue cards. His words seem to have quote mark
them. But what happens when he loses the cues and no lo
easy answers? This is precisely what happens to him in thi
and in the supermarket encounter he describes. Sudde
confronted by irrational behaviour. First he's startled.
tries to analyze it and construct a story, a case history, be
woman's unprovoked act. Finally he seeks solace by bloc
the world. You can see that everyone and everything irrita
standing in a line, going to the cinema, shopping for tuna
his world even the smallest encounter becomes a major i

you believe in confession?" I said, " 'Cause it's a great idea. It predates Freud by twelve centuries."

So I left the Church. Quit Catholic school. Mom figured I was making a leap to Judaism. I told her. "Mom. I don't believe in God in three places and I don't believe in God in one place. Religion's a crutch. I'm not gonna substitute one crutch for another." Then my mother says—dig this—she says, "Megan, my child. Everybody's gotta have a crutch. Everybody has to have a god. You don't want a Jewish god? You want a Catholic god? You'll have a god someday. Believe me."

Well . . . if she's not right, she certainly kept me on my toes, because there isn't a day that goes by that I don't wake up and wonder if I'm going to find a god today.

In this second monologue, Diana, fresh out of college, has moved into her first, depressing New York apartment, a long way from her upper-class Philadelphia upbringing. She explains to her best friend, Megan, her conflicting feelings about this past, particularly her mother.

DIANA: I went to a Quaker school. Absolutely *un*competitive! We used to have an awards ceremony at the end of the year. Everybody got an award! Then it dawned on me that if everybody got an award, it

didn't mean anything . . . So I went to the headmaster and I told him, "Why don't you give up the awards altogether. I mean, if everybody gets an award, it doesn't mean anything." He looked at me and said, "Diana, not everyone realizes that. There are boys and girls here who have never ever gotten an award in their life. It means something to them. So for that reason, we do it." And I said, "But don't you realize how condescending that is to them? It's ultimately going to make them feel worse." He just glared at me and said, "Miss Schmidt. Someday, somebody's going to prick your bubble." I just . . . I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. So he called my mother.

She came into school. Came in looking like a million dollars. Camel's hair coat. Blonde hair. Looked like a Smith College undergrad. Came in smelling like an ocean breeze. I looked at her and said to myself, "I'm gonna get it." Mr. Dumwalt, the headmaster, told her what I said . . . and Mom took me aside. She sat me down . . . and said, "Don't worry about Mr. Dumwalt. He was born with a pole up his ass!" I couldn't believe it. I think that's one of the reasons I've never abandoned hope for Mom.

[Available at New Dramatists]

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

William Shakespeare

This is one of William Shakespeare's delightful comedies of young love and all its foibles. Helena is in love with Demetrius who seems to be in love with Hermia who, in turn, is in love with Lysander, with whom she has made plans to elope. Helena has just heard their marriage plan and makes one of her own to get her love back. As Puck says, "What fools these mortals be."

HELENA.

How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know.
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities.
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;

Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and show'rs of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
To have his sight thither and back again.

(Exit)

YOUR LOVING SON

PHIL

(*Signs letter, then reads aloud.*)

I love you and I still need you. Phil.

(*Reshuffles pages into order and reads.*)

Dear Mom, This is the tenth time I've tried to write this. I hope I can mail this one. I don't want to cut myself off from you and Dad, and I know that if I don't write, that may happen. I don't know what to say to your idea that I've "chosen" to be gay just to hurt you. I don't know how to answer your idea that I'm gay out of spite. I'm just gay and I am as naturally that as grass is green.

You say that I never gave the slightest indication. I can imagine what you mean by that: I seemed normal. As you say, I was such a good boy, got pretty good grades, did fairly well in sports, though never good enough for Dad. I was a good boy, because I didn't want to draw attention to myself. I found out early that if I was quiet and went about my business, I could stay private. Being good was my way of staying secret. And I've always had secrets; especially the secret that I was gay.

I told you the truth, because I felt that I could not go on lying to you about who I really am and to give you the chance to finally know me, with no old lies between us and no new ones that needed telling, like all that stuff I told you about my dating in college or bringing some poor girl like Edith home that Christmas. I think I did her a lot of harm. She was

expecting more from me and I've lost her friendship, because I used her.

You hinted in your letter that I waited to tell you I was gay till I'd graduated, so you'd keep on supporting me. The idea makes me angry and ashamed. And, to tell you the truth, I'm not sure it's not true. If that's why I waited, I didn't know it. But does that mean you wouldn't have sent me through school if you had known?

I don't need your money anymore, but I do need you and Dad, need to know that I still have a place with you. It hurts like hell to think that your love for me has always been conditional. My shrink says I have a lot of work to do on that. He says that I have a responsibility for letting things get this tangled and messy. I get furious when he tells me that. I told him that if you and Dad were going to cut me out of your lives, I couldn't see any point in working on my problems with you, because you wouldn't be around. He says that whether I ever see you again or not, my relationship with you will always be there. I hear him and it makes me angry, because I can feel he's right.

You say that if I'd written to tell you I was gravely ill you could handle it better than this. Have you any idea how that makes me feel, knowing that you would rather deal with my having cancer or being in some awful disabling accident? Or crippled? But, of course, you would prefer a grave illness that didn't include AIDS? Dead giveaway, that. As it is, I'm afraid I'm disappointingly well and likely to be happy. My God, Mom, think before you write such things.

You write that you haven't told Dad yet, because if he knew it would kill him. Why is my being gay enough to cause death? He never expected all that much of me anyway. It was you who always told me that no matter how he behaved