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# COUPLES

A COLLECTION OF SHORT TWO-CHARACTER PLAYS

by Rich Orloff

## ACT I

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| Matterhorn .....     | 8  |
| Class Dismissed..... | 15 |
| Lion Tamer .....     | 24 |
| Afternoon Sun .....  | 33 |

## ACT II

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Heart of the Fire ..... | 42 |
| Oh Happy Day .....      | 52 |
| Invisible Woman .....   | 60 |
| Right Sensation.....    | 66 |

## BONUS PLAY

|                 |    |
|-----------------|----|
| Afterglow ..... | 76 |
|-----------------|----|

If this collection is produced under the title *Couples* by Rich Orloff, at least five of the plays must be included. The plays can be performed in any order, and the bonus play may be substituted for other plays. The author recommends beginning with *Matterhorn* and ending with *Right Sensation*.

## Acknowledgments

*Couples* was originally produced by the WorkShop Theater Company (Timothy Scott Harris, Artistic Director and David Pincus, Managing Director) in New York City and premiered on May 9, 2007. The directors and cast included:

### *Matterhorn*

JERRY .....Richard Mover  
ARLEEN ..... Wende O'Reilly  
FOLKS IN LINE..... Ensemble  
Director ..... Philip Emeott

### *Class Dismissed*

GENE ..... Ken Glickfeld  
LAWRENCE ..... Jess Cassidy White  
Director ..... David Gautschy

### *Lion Tamer*

A MAN .....Justin R.G. Holcomb  
A WOMAN ..... Christine Verleny  
Director ..... Philip Emeott

### *Afternoon Sun*

CHARLIE ..... Peter Farrell  
ROSEMARY ..... Lena Armstrong  
Director ..... David Gautschy

### *Heart of the Fire*

JULIE..... Marie-Pierre Beausejour  
PAUL ..... Vinnie Penna  
Director ..... Paula D'Alessandris

### *Oh Happy Day*

LARRY ..... C.K. Allen  
ELLIOT ..... L.B. Williams  
Director ..... David Gautschy

*Invisible Woman*

SUSANNE ..... Cailin McDonald  
BRET ..... Anthony Aibel  
Director ..... Paula D'Alessandris

*Right Sensation*

STEWART ..... Michael Anderson  
PAULA ..... Jacqueline M. Raposo  
Director ..... Paula D'Alessandris  
Supervising Director ..... David Gautschy  
Lighting Design ..... Richard Kent Green  
Sound Design ..... Philip Emeott  
Stage Manager ..... Sue Sunday  
Producer ..... Anne Fizzard  
Assistant Associate  
Producer ..... Reyna de Courcy

# MATTERHORN

## Cast of Characters

JERRY, late 30's-40's

ARLEEN, about the same age as Jerry

## Place

Disneyland.

## Time

A hot summer day.

## Acknowledgments

*Matterhorn* was first performed on December 7, 1985, as part of *Other People's Problems*, a collection of short plays by Rich Orloff, produced at Ensemble Studio Theatre/L.A. (Linda Callahan, Artistic Director). The cast included:

JERRY ..... Bruce Feld

ARLEEN ..... Carol Henry Prata

The play was directed by Dana Gladstone.

*(A long, crowded line on a hot summer day at Disneyland. At the end of the line are JERRY and ARLEEN. They are a couple in their late thirties or forties, and they have been suffering through the type of long, grueling day of pleasure that only places like Disneyland can offer.)*

*(As the play begins, JERRY and ARLEEN shuffle forward in line, as they will continuously during the scene.)*

**ARLEEN.** My head is throbbing.

**JERRY.** You want an aspirin?

**ARLEEN.** I want to be at the other end of this line. I'm sick of this.

**JERRY.** Everybody else has to wait just as long as we do.

**ARLEEN.** I keep hearing— *(Sings, sorta:)* "It's a small world after all; It's a small world after all" over and over... God, I hate this place. *(Calling out:)* Lisa, don't shake Goofy's hand. You never know who he just touched.

**JERRY.** Everyone likes Disneyland.

**ARLEEN.** Look around you. I keep thinking if there are this many smiling, happy faces in one place, somewhere there has to be an equal-sized gathering of anti-social scum.

**JERRY.** You're just tired.

**ARLEEN.** I still think we could've gotten a room with a better view.

**JERRY.** They said that was the best room they had left.

**ARLEEN.** If we were Mr. and Mrs. Somebody, they would've given us a better room.

**JERRY.** If we were Mr. and Mrs. Somebody, we wouldn't be staying at a Motel Six.

**ARLEEN.** Why I didn't insist we go to Disneyworld...

**JERRY.** We've been to Disneyworld. I wanted to compare.

**ARLEEN.** We're probably the first family in history to fly to Disneyland from Orlando, Florida.

**JERRY.** Look, Arleen, you and I agreed that we would alternate choosing vacation spots, and *no arguments*.

**ARLEEN.** But, Jerry, this is so stupid...

**JERRY.** Did I complain last year when you made us spend our entire vacation with your folks?

**ARLEEN.** We had a wonderful time.

**JERRY.** Two weeks vacation per year; I'd rather not spend it in a mobile home park.

**ARLEEN.** It meant a lot to them.

**JERRY.** I know. Your dad got such pleasure giving me the tour of the front yard... Now I know why your parents take such little steps.

**ARLEEN.** At least, he doesn't floss in the living room while watching the news.

**JERRY.** (*Warning that he might actually show an emotion:*) Don't start. (*Calling out:*) Kevin, stop eating the grass! (*To himself, a nostalgic reverie:*) I wonder if they sell snow cones here. I haven't had a snow cone in years... A lime snow cone... They don't make enough things with lime flavoring... If they can make all those things with lemon flavoring, I don't see why they can't make the same things with lime flavoring... I wonder why there aren't more lime deserts... I think lime's my favorite flavor.

**ARLEEN.** You're a marshmallow with a penis, you know that?!

**JERRY.** Look, *you* wanted to ride the Matterhorn; *you* saw the line; don't you dare lay this on *me*.

**ARLEEN.** It's not the line. It's...everything. It's what you like; it's what you think. It's knowing that as long as you live, you will never learn how to fold a newspaper properly.

**JERRY.** So we'll buy two newspapers: his and hers.

**ARLEEN.** Are you honestly happy with our marriage?

**JERRY.** Compared to the life I'd be leading if I were with any of the women who agreed to go out with me before I met you...I'm reasonably satisfied.

**ARLEEN.** *(Calling out:)* Lisa, stop begging for change!

**JERRY.** You want to see another marriage counselor?

**ARLEEN.** I'm sick of marriage counselors.

**JERRY.** You want to do another one of those weekend intensives?

**ARLEEN.** No, thank you. I couldn't stand another weekend of self-absorbed neurotics congratulating each other for being in touch with their self-absorbed neuroses.

**JERRY.** Let's try sentence completions.

**ARLEEN.** Oh, God.

**JERRY.** "My husband gets on my nerves when he..."

*(No response from ARLEEN.)*

**JERRY.** "When he..."

*(Still no response.)*

**JERRY.** "My husband gets on my nerves when he—"

**ARLEEN.** Gets up in the morning!

**JERRY.** Then *you* suggest something.

**ARLEEN.** I'm sick of suggesting things... We'll just have to make the best of things, I suppose.

**JERRY.** How inspiring.

**ARLEEN.** That's life.

**JERRY.** I love to hop out of bed in the morning and "make the best of things."

**ARLEEN.** What else can we do?

**JERRY.** You want a divorce?

**ARLEEN.** Do you?

**JERRY.** No. *I* happen to believe in the sanctity of the marriage unit, but if you—

**ARLEEN.** No! I made my bed; I'm going to lie in it.

**JERRY.** (*Calling out:*) Kevin, put that squirrel down!... All of it!

**ARLEEN.** We used to like each other so much.

**JERRY.** (*Remembering something long forgotten:*) Oh, yeah. (*After a thought:*) How have our parents lasted?

**ARLEEN.** My parents hate each other's guts. And they have for forty years.

**JERRY.** (*Mulling it over:*) You know, I think mine do, too. (*Getting an idea:*) Hmm...

**ARLEEN.** What?

**JERRY.** Maybe that's what we've been doing wrong.

**ARLEEN.** What do you mean?

**JERRY.** If we can't enjoy each other's company, and Lord knows we've tried... If we can't get along warmly and civilly... Rather than trying to force ourselves to like each other, maybe we should just hate each other.

**ARLEEN.** Are you crazy?

**JERRY.** We already hate each other; all I'm suggesting is that we give up the pretense.

**ARLEEN.** I do not hate you.

**JERRY.** Sure, you do.

**ARLEEN.** I am not a hateful person.

**JERRY.** I suppose "marshmallow with a penis" was a term of endearment.

**ARLEEN.** Are you seriously suggesting we just go around matter-of-factly hating each other?

**JERRY.** Yes.

**ARLEEN.** Don't you think that might have a negative effect on the chil— *(Calling out:)* Kevin, put your clothes back on! Lisa, get off the dwarf!!

**JERRY.** Maybe it'd be good for them. Maybe they should see us be honest with each other, instead of always faking warm feelings.

**ARLEEN.** Are you suggesting we hate each other for the sake of the children?

**JERRY.** I'm saying we should be honest with them, and with ourselves.

**ARLEEN.** I do not hate you.

**JERRY.** I hate you.

**ARLEEN.** That's a fine thing to say in the Magic Kingdom.

**JERRY.** But you do hate me.

**ARLEEN.** The subject is closed.

**JERRY.** Arleen...

**ARLEEN.** *(As in, "Shut up!":)* Jerry!

*(For a moment, silence.)*

**JERRY.** *(Trying to make his point:)* You know I will never go more than five miles over the posted speed limit...

*(ARLEEN doesn't want to hear about this. JERRY presses on.)*

**JERRY.** You know I will never complain about food at a restaurant, no matter how bad it is...

*(ARLEEN is beginning to get angry but tries not to show it.)*

**JERRY.** I'm never going to improve sexually...

*(ARLEEN starts to boil but holds it in.)*

**JERRY.** I'm going to be eating large curd cottage cheese and Melba toast for breakfast every morning for the rest of my life.

*(ARLEEN can barely hold it in, but she refuses to respond.)*

**JERRY.** *(Singing, sort of:)*

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# CLASS DISMISSED

## Cast of Characters

GENE, a professor  
LAWRENCE, a student

## Place

The office of a college professor.

## Time

Shortly before midnight.

## Acknowledgements

*Class Dismissed* was originally performed on August 2, 2001 in the “Hypothetically Speaking 2” Festival produced by Hypothetical Theatre Company (Amy Feinberg, Artistic Director) in New York City. The play was directed by Lona Leigh. The cast included:

GENE ..... Bruce Mohat  
LAWRENCE ..... Nathan M. White

*(As the play begins, GENE, a professor, is packing his office. On the shelves are many books, papers, and religious artifacts. There are several open boxes scattered about. GENE isn't working very efficiently. His mind seems to be elsewhere. There's a knock on the door. GENE checks his watch.)*

**GENE.** Come in.

*(LAWRENCE, a student, enters.)*

**GENE.** What are you—

**LAWRENCE.** I saw your light was on.

**GENE.** I asked you not—

**LAWRENCE.** I know. I didn't listen.

**GENE.** Shut the door.

**LAWRENCE.** Thanks.

*(LAWRENCE shuts the door.)*

**GENE.** You should go.

**LAWRENCE.** I can't.

**GENE.** Why not?

**LAWRENCE.** I just shut the door.

**GENE.** I didn't want to risk saying "You should go" with the door open.

**LAWRENCE.** May I take off my coat?

**GENE.** I wish you wouldn't.

*(LAWRENCE tosses off his coat. After he finishes:)*

**GENE.** *(Sarcastic but not nasty:)* Why don't you take off your coat?

**LAWRENCE.** Thanks... You look like shit.

**GENE.** Yes, and you... You look as good as ever, you little bastard.

**LAWRENCE.** Well, I feel like shit.

**GENE.** That's what I miss most about youth: the ability to feel like shit and still look good.

**LAWRENCE.** Rumor has it they gave you till midnight.

**GENE.** Yes, and given everything else they said, I expect Security to visit at 12:01.

**LAWRENCE.** How liberal of them.

**GENE.** Yes. Liberals. God bless 'em.

**LAWRENCE.** Can I help you pack?

**GENE.** No, thanks.

**LAWRENCE.** These books go in here?

*(LAWRENCE begins packing a box.)*

**GENE.** *(Sarcastic but not nasty:)* Would you like to help me pack?

**LAWRENCE.** I'd be honored.

**GENE.** You really shouldn't be here.

**LAWRENCE.** I stopped worrying about "should" halfway through my sophomore year.

**GENE.** I bet someone was very grateful.

**LAWRENCE.** Several people were.

*(GENE holds a stapler. He seems distracted.)*

**LAWRENCE.** I didn't mean to—

**GENE.** No, no, it's not you, it's— Do you think I should take my college-issued stapler?

**LAWRENCE.** Do you need one?

**GENE.** I don't know... Oh, hell. It's not like I teach Ethics.

*(GENE tosses the stapler in his box.)*

**LAWRENCE.** I think you're the most ethical man I know.

*(GENE thinks a moment and takes the stapler out of the box.)*

**LAWRENCE.** I didn't mean you should—

**GENE.** I know.

**LAWRENCE.** Take the damn—

**GENE.** I just don't know what to take and what to let go of.

**LAWRENCE.** Gene—

**GENE.** Did anybody see you come here?

**LAWRENCE.** No.

**GENE.** Good... Oh, what the hell.

*(GENE, feeling light for a moment, tosses the stapler back into his box. His lightness fades quickly, and he leans against his desk, too filled with emotion to do anything else. LAWRENCE walks over to him and takes his hand.)*

**GENE.** Please don't—

*(LAWRENCE kisses GENE's hand.)*

**GENE.** *(Sarcastic but not nasty:)* Why don't you kiss my hand?

**LAWRENCE.** Why won't you tell me where you're going?

**GENE.** Do you want me to get into even more trouble?

**LAWRENCE.** Tell me—or I'll snitch about the stapler.

**GENE.** Oh, that'll put the nail on the coffin. *(Imagining a phone conversation:)* “Hello, is this the Dean of the College? Professor Hailey has applied for a position in our department and we were wondering—” “Professor Hailey? Top notch. Published in all the major journals. His classes invariably have huge waiting lists.” “And could you vouch for his character?” “His character is impeccable, as long as he's not around attractive young men or staplers.”

**LAWRENCE.** Please tell me where you're going.

**GENE.** I don't know.

**LAWRENCE.** You must have—

**GENE.** It's not like they gave me a long time to make plans... Shit.

*(GENE takes the stapler out of his box.)*

LAWRENCE. Gene—

GENE. (*Picking up some bluebooks:*) How'd you like to grade some midterms? I'm supposed to grade these before I go.

LAWRENCE. Gene—

GENE. Hell, let my replacement do it.

LAWRENCE. How are they going to replace you halfway through the semester?

GENE. Oh, you know, they'll just call up some temp agency for religion professors. Kelly Profs or something. (*Imagining the call:*) "No, no, typing speed isn't important. Do you have anyone with a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies? Is he either happily married or a eunuch?... Good."

LAWRENCE. You don't have to let them win.

GENE. I hate to spoil your idealistic mind, but the war is already over. They moved swiftly and with all their power. And I have no weapons.

LAWRENCE. Will you listen to reason?

GENE. Listen to reason? I teach *religion*.

LAWRENCE. We could organize.

GENE. Oh, yes. Maybe we could charter a new student organization, Students In Favor of Student Unions With Professors.

LAWRENCE. If we argue our case—

GENE. "In silence man can most readily preserve his integrity." Meister Eckhart.

LAWRENCE. People need to know the facts.

GENE. What facts?

LAWRENCE. That there was no coercion.

GENE. That depends on your theoretical framework.

LAWRENCE. Other professors have affairs with students.

**GENE.** Other students' fathers don't threaten lawsuits and publicity.

**LAWRENCE.** You didn't lay a hand on me until after I finished your class.

**GENE.** Oh, I'll get bonus points for that, won't I?

**LAWRENCE.** I wanted you.

**GENE.** Well, we can't always get what we want, can we?

**LAWRENCE.** Well, damn it, why not?

**GENE.** Because if we could, there'd be no need for religion.

**LAWRENCE.** I'm an atheist, remember?

**GENE.** Yes, well, that's why I never told my parents about you.

**LAWRENCE.** I swear, Gene, if I had known—

**GENE.** I know.

**LAWRENCE.** She promised she wouldn't tell him.

**GENE.** She was probably scared.

**LAWRENCE.** If I ever even look at my dad again—

**GENE.** You'll have a great opportunity to turn the other cheek.

**LAWRENCE.** I'm not going home this summer.

**GENE.** That's your decision.

**LAWRENCE.** Or ever.

**GENE.** A mature person never says "Or ever."

**LAWRENCE.** *Or ever.*

**GENE.** You know, when the dean first called me into her office, she said, "How dare you use your influence to seduce him?", and I replied, with great confidence, "I have *never* influenced him."

*(GENE picks up the stapler, puts it in the box, thinks a second, and then returns it to exactly where he picked it up.)*

**LAWRENCE.** I, I think if we let people know we have genuine feelings for each other...

**GENE.** I've read the school policy dozens of times, and there are no provisions for "genuine feelings."

**LAWRENCE.** It's just not right.

**GENE.** It's the post-modern academic era. You have to stop thinking of us as individuals and begin to think of us as interest groups.

**LAWRENCE.** I love you, damn it.

**GENE.** Well, my interest group can't love your interest group.

**LAWRENCE.** Gene—

**GENE.** Let me become a memory, *please*.

**LAWRENCE.** Is that your plan for me?

**GENE.** I'm not sure I'll be able to handle you even as a memory.

**LAWRENCE.** Then why did you just pack the mug I gave you?

*(GENE takes the mug out of his box and puts in the stapler.)*

**GENE.** Satisfied?

**LAWRENCE.** Gene—

**GENE.** Will you just go?

**LAWRENCE.** Gene.

**GENE.** Go.

**LAWRENCE.** *Gene.*

**GENE.** *My life's destroyed; what more do you want from me?!... I, I'm sorry, I—*

**LAWRENCE.** It's okay.

**GENE.** It's not about reason, Lawrence. It's not about the facts.

**LAWRENCE.** I know. It's about love, and prejudice, and what some people—

**GENE.** *No.* It's... They made it clear, they made it very clear, if I even *tried* to fight back... They kept using the phrase "undermining the college's reputation." They said it over and over and *over*. Until it finally sunk in, to my overeducated but incredibly dense brain, it's not about right and wrong to them, it's about...money.

**LAWRENCE.** They're idiots.

**GENE.** Even idiots need money.

**LAWRENCE.** Let me ask you one thing.

**GENE.** I'd rather we just drop it.

**LAWRENCE.** One question.

**GENE.** No more questions, please.

**LAWRENCE.** Just one. One final question.

**GENE.** You know, when you took my class last year, I, I was, I think I was in awe of your questions. I loved how you questioned the texts, how you questioned me, how you questioned everything. It became a source of pleasure to see you raise your hand.

**LAWRENCE.** I, I stayed up late some nights thinking about what I could ask you, wanting to challenge you, hoping someday I might understand how a mind like yours functioned.

**GENE.** Well, now you know.

**LAWRENCE.** Not by a long shot.

**GENE.** I'm glad you came.

**LAWRENCE.** I need to know—

**GENE.** And now you must go.

**LAWRENCE.** One thing.

**GENE.** There's no time. Class dismissed.

*(LAWRENCE sits in a chair as if to say, "I'm not moving.")*

**GENE.** If you don't go within the next thirty seconds, I might end up in some junior high school teaching Remedial Religion!... Please... For me.

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# LION TAMER

## Cast of Characters

A MAN, late 30's-50's

A WOMAN, about the same age as the man

## Place

A living room.

## Time

Early evening.

## Acknowledgements

*Lion Tamer* was originally performed on July 31, 2003 as part of the 2003 Delaware Ten-Minute Play Festival produced by City Theater Company (Tom Shade, Producing Artistic Director) at the Baby Grand Theater in Wilmington, Delaware. The play was directed by Mark Cofta. The cast included:

SUSANNE..... Mary Davis  
BRET..... Matt Casarino

*(As the play begins, the MAN and the WOMAN enter the living room. Their apparel is that of intelligent people who care about their appearance.)*

**MAN.** —and there seems to be a nice breeze.

**WOMAN.** You'll find this place has excellent cross-ventilation.

**MAN.** Good light in every room.

**WOMAN.** I can't live in a place without decent exposures.

**MAN.** I can't live in a place without indecent exposures.

**WOMAN.** So I've heard.

**MAN.** From whom?

**WOMAN.** Oh, the usual suspects: friends, colleagues, Internet sites for the depraved.

**MAN.** I see... How are your neighbors?

**WOMAN.** They're fabulous.

**MAN.** Quiet, I hope.

**WOMAN.** Nary a peep.

**MAN.** No loud stereos or TVs coming through th—

**WOMAN.** Oh, I couldn't tolerate that. I would've moved out in a minute if I had to deal with that.

**MAN.** I feel the same—

**WOMAN.** I mean, you hear the occasional grunt and groans, but that's never bothered me.

**MAN.** I could live with that.

**WOMAN.** Every now and then, you hear *(Accurately recalled:)* "Oh god—oh god—oh god."

**MAN.** I like religious people.

**WOMAN.** And sometimes, "Yes, give it to me baby, that's it, ohhh yeah, more baby, ohhhhh yeah."

**MAN.** I think communication is very important.

**WOMAN.** It's the key to a good relationship.

**MAN.** This is really a fine place you've got.

**WOMAN.** It's made me very happy.

**MAN.** Did I ask why you were moving?

**WOMAN.** (*A shift in energy, as if she's reviewing a scenario:*) I forget. Let's see, you came in... hi, I'm blah, blah, blah... I said, blah, blah, blah...

**MAN.** (*Quickly, overlapping with the above:*) I asked, "Where shall we start?" You said, "Let's start here and work our way up the bedroom—"

**WOMAN.** And I said, blah, blah, blah—

**MAN.** So— (*Resuming:*) Why are you moving?

**WOMAN.** Do you really want to know?

**MAN.** Definitely.

**WOMAN.** (*Thinks a moment, then:*) I need more closet space.

**MAN.** Really? This seems to have a lot of closet space.

**WOMAN.** I need more.

**MAN.** And what's in this closet?

**WOMAN.** Oh, that's where I toss my old lovers.

**MAN.** Saying goodbye is never easy, is it?

**WOMAN.** Well, you know, once you establish a connection with someone...

**MAN.** Are they *all* in here?

**WOMAN.** God, no. The closet's not *that* big—

**MAN.** Hm.

**WOMAN.** —Just the ones I've had since I've moved here.

**MAN.** And the lovers before that?

**WOMAN.** Different closets. Different places.

MAN. If you don't mind me asking, how many places have you lived?

WOMAN. I've lost count.

MAN. Really? Are you promiscuous or bad at math?

WOMAN. I am as active as I am selective, and I focus my energy on more substantial things than counting.

MAN. I'm impressed.

WOMAN. So do you have any lovers in *your* closets?

MAN. No, that's not my style.

WOMAN. It's not?

MAN. When I'm done with a lover, I stuff them.

WOMAN. And mount them?

MAN. God no, I have more self-restraint than that. Once I epoxy them and catalogue them, I...

WOMAN. You—?

MAN. I give them to friends as Christmas presents.

WOMAN. That's thoughtful.

MAN. Anybody who gets me as a secret Santa is always pleasantly surprised.

WOMAN. I like a man who's good to his friends.

MAN. Your eyes are quite luminescent, you know that?

WOMAN. Thank you.

MAN. So is there a current...closet contender?

WOMAN. Not at the moment.

MAN. Are you looking for one?

WOMAN. I thought you came here to look at the *place*.

MAN. Yes, but if I can—

WOMAN. Look, you seem like a very nice man.

MAN. Hardly.

WOMAN. Nice enough to make me want to be frank with you.

MAN. If you'd like.

WOMAN. As I get older, I, well I lose patience quite easily.

MAN. Is that a warning?

WOMAN. It's an acknowledgement.

MAN. I see.

WOMAN. Do you honestly think an interlude of incredible bliss is worth being tossed into a closet for eternity?

MAN. Oh, I have no intention of being tossed into your closet.

WOMAN. Oh?

MAN. I'm also sure you'd never *want* to toss me in the closet.

WOMAN. Oh?

MAN. Yes, "Oh."

WOMAN. The last man who had your confidence, God I miss him. He was, how to, he was, he sparkled. He was generous, kind, far kinder than I am, and when we made love, tears came to my eyes.

MAN. Oh, did he spank you?

WOMAN. (*A change in energy:*) I don't appreciate that.

MAN. I'm sorry.

WOMAN. When he made love to me, he made men like you seem like expired luncheon meat.

MAN. I apologize. Really.

WOMAN. Where was I?

MAN. You said he sparkled.

WOMAN. Oh, yes. He always, he started slowly, kissing my fingers, each of them, individually, as if they each had their own—temperament, their own needs. His touch was, well, when he stroked my arm, he gave each hair on my arm, each follicle—goose

bumps. No man could keep a goose bump going longer than he could. The more he stroked, well, you men, you always get so excited from one little rise. Just imagine feeling a thousand at the same time. Imagine a thousand parts of your body wanting more, a thousand parts aching for release. Finally, after I could stand it no longer, he put his hand on my shoulder, and with one commanding stroke from the curve of my shoulder down to my fingertips, he satisfied my entire arm.

**MAN.** I'm a two-arm man myself.

**WOMAN.** I'm not finished. Then, as he began to work on my second arm, just as he thought he had me in a position of complete surrender, my first arm grabbed his shoulder, and, catching him off-guard, I pushed him on his back. From that moment on, *he* was in complete surrender, and I did his arms, and his legs, and every other place he had follicles.

**MAN.** Was he bald?

**WOMAN.** No.

**MAN.** And where is he now?

**WOMAN.** In the closet.

**MAN.** Stuck with all the others?

**WOMAN.** Yes.

**MAN.** No special treatment?

**WOMAN.** The last time we made love, he hurried over my elbow. And I knew things would never be the same.

**MAN.** Perhaps, but—

**WOMAN.** My anticipation would always be compromised by doubt.

**MAN.** I see.

*(They look at each other.)*

**WOMAN.** I'll understand if you wish to leave n—

**MAN.** Have, have you ever seen lions make love?

**WOMAN.** Uhhh—No.

**MAN.** It's not at all pleasant. Interesting, but not pleasant.

**WOMAN.** Oh?

**MAN.** Lions and lionesses do not get along. They need each other, which makes them tolerate each other, but only long enough to be satisfied. When the lioness is in the mood, she'll let the male circle her without attacking, and she'll lie down, quite passively, while the male mounts her and takes care of his needs. It's very quick, maybe thirty seconds, and as soon as he's done, the lioness growls and swipes at him, and he disappears, knowing if he stays a moment longer, she'll attack.

**WOMAN.** I suppose lions don't have many long-term relationships.

**MAN.** Not even afterglow.

**WOMAN.** Too bad.

**MAN.** The last time I was in Kenya, a land, a land so filled with amazing vistas, I grieved—

**WOMAN.** Grieved?

**MAN.** Thinking about how beautiful the planet might be if Man had never been born.

**WOMAN.** Mm.

**MAN.** I had seen lions making love on a previous trip, and when my guide and I came across a dead lion, I took off my clothes and rubbed myself completely with his scent. A mile or so further, we came upon a lioness, sleeping peacefully. You could see her soft fur expanding and contracting with each slow breath, and she, she was beautiful. I entered her. She was startled, of course, but I held her hind legs, and I filled her, and I held back *nothing*. She of course expected I would finish in thirty seconds, but I did not finish in thirty seconds, and every time it was clear very clear I was about to finish, I took a breath, and slowed down, and then built up again, again, and again. I had more control than this lioness expected or even dreamed of. Finally, after about 45 minutes, the lioness began to relax inside, and what had been an intense, fearful grip became a

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# AFTERNOON SUN

## Cast of Characters

CHARLIE, late 30's-40's

ROSEMARY, about the same age as Charlie

## Place

A motel room.

## Time

A hot summer day.

## Acknowledgements

*Afternoon Sun* was originally performed on July 26, 2001 in the "Hypothetically Speaking 2" Festival produced by Hypothetical Theatre Company (Amy Feinberg, Artistic Director) in New York City. The play was directed by Lona Leigh. The cast included:

CHARLIE .....Peter Basta-Brightbill

ROSEMARY..... Margaret A. Flanagan

*(It is afternoon on a hot, sunny day, in one of those small towns where everyone knows who goes to church and who doesn't. On a road outside of town is a motel, the kind of motel for people who don't expect much in their room. There's a bed, a dresser, and a single painting one would never look at unless stuck in a motel room.)*

*(There is a window on the side wall. Although the blind may be pulled down, one can almost feel the hot sun trying to force its rays into the room. There is also a door to the outside, which should not be on the same wall as the window.)*

*(A man, CHARLIE, and a woman, ROSEMARY, are on the bed. ROSEMARY, who has reached that age when young adulthood is becoming a memory, lies sideways on the bed, facing the wall. She wears a sundress which has been pushed up towards her waist. Her panties and shoes are on the floor by the corner of the bed.)*

*(CHARLIE, who is the same age, sits on the edge of the bed, leaning forward, his hands resting on the insides of his legs. He wears a white shirt whose cuffs have been unbuttoned, plus a thin cotton undershirt, nicely pressed trousers, and socks. CHARLIE dresses to fit in, a goal he has admirably accomplished. His jacket and tie lay on the dresser nearby, and he has removed his shoes.)*

*(On the bed is an opened book. It is a Bible.)*

**CHARLIE.** I'm sorry.

**ROSEMARY.** There's no need.

**CHARLIE.** I—I just can't.

**ROSEMARY.** It happens.

**CHARLIE.** It's not that I don't want to.

**ROSEMARY.** I know.

**CHARLIE.** I didn't mean to, I—I've toyed with you.

**ROSEMARY.** Not as much as I hoped you would.

**CHARLIE.** I led you on.

**ROSEMARY.** Everybody does that.

**CHARLIE.** That doesn't make it right.

**ROSEMARY.** At least it got me out of the office for the afternoon.

**CHARLIE.** You probably think I'm a fool, don't you?

**ROSEMARY.** No more than most men.

**CHARLIE.** Well.

*(CHARLIE picks up the Bible.)*

**ROSEMARY.** I told you not to open that drawer.

**CHARLIE.** I had to find a place for my—

**ROSEMARY.** You could've just put the damn thing in your pocket.

**CHARLIE.** I didn't know this would be in there.

**ROSEMARY.** You don't know motel rooms very well, do you?

**CHARLIE.** No.

**ROSEMARY.** Kiss me.

**CHARLIE.** I...

**ROSEMARY.** Put the book down and kiss me.

**CHARLIE.** I don't think that's a—

**ROSEMARY.** You won't fry in hell for kissing me.

**CHARLIE.** How do you know?

**ROSEMARY.** I've been in hell many times but never because I kissed someone.

**CHARLIE.** *(Tempted, but...:)* I, uh, I think we should go.

**ROSEMARY.** I'm not ready.

**CHARLIE.** Look, nothing's going to—

**ROSEMARY.** It's too hot out. The sun'll melt me.

**CHARLIE.** *(Starting to get dressed:)* I think we should get dressed and go.

**ROSEMARY.** You can go if you want. I'm staying.

**CHARLIE.** I can't just leave you here.

**ROSEMARY.** I bet you can.

**CHARLIE.** Who do you think I am?

**ROSEMARY.** A Charlie.

**CHARLIE.** You must've known some pretty awful men.

**ROSEMARY.** You know, I don't mind if you think I'm trash, but don't pity me.

**CHARLIE.** I don't think you're trash.

**ROSEMARY.** And what do you think of me?

**CHARLIE.** Well... I think you're pretty.

**ROSEMARY.** Is that all?

**CHARLIE.** No, of course not... You have very nice hair.

**ROSEMARY.** Men.

**CHARLIE.** What'd I—

**ROSEMARY.** My Auntie Ro once told me, beauty's only skin deep—and that's enough for most guys.

**CHARLIE.** I think you're a very nice person.

**ROSEMARY.** And I think you're afraid to think otherwise.

**CHARLIE.** It's, I think it's time to go.

**ROSEMARY.** You can if you'd like.

**CHARLIE.** What will you do here by yourself?

**ROSEMARY.** I don't know. Read the Bible. Look for signs the Lord's not a sadist.

**CHARLIE.** You don't really think the Lord's—

**ROSEMARY.** What type of deity would create something that feels so good that only our fear of eternal damnation would keep us from doing it all the time.

**CHARLIE.** In Luke, it says—

**ROSEMARY.** You believe in this stuff, don't you?

**CHARLIE.** I try to.

**ROSEMARY.** You're too good for your own good.

**CHARLIE.** I'm not a saint, you know.

**ROSEMARY.** Oh?

**CHARLIE.** I look at women.

**ROSEMARY.** The sin of looking, how horrible.

**CHARLIE.** I once went to a girlie show in Chicago.

**ROSEMARY.** Ooo, the sin of *paying* to look.

**CHARLIE.** I almost suggested something to a woman on a train once.

**ROSEMARY.** What stopped you?

**CHARLIE.** She got off the train.

**ROSEMARY.** Well, I'm in no hurry to get off.

**CHARLIE.** We, we should go.

**ROSEMARY.** You can go if you want.

**CHARLIE.** How will you get back to town?

**ROSEMARY.** I'll find a way.

*(CHARLIE reaches for his wallet.)*

**CHARLIE.** Here, you can, you can call a—

**ROSEMARY.** Don't.

**CHARLIE.** I didn't mean to im—

**ROSEMARY.** Stay.

*(She kisses his neck.)*

**CHARLIE.** I, uh...

*(CHARLIE checks his watch. ROSEMARY slowly puts her arms around CHARLIE.)*

**ROSEMARY.** The sun's making it so hot out there. It's as if the Lord's suggesting we stay inside.

(CHARLIE *extricates himself from ROSEMARY's arms.*)

**CHARLIE.** I'm sorry.

**ROSEMARY.** There you go being sorry again. One would think you'd gotten a degree in it.

**CHARLIE.** Well, it's just, I—

**ROSEMARY.** Would you have felt sorrier if you had surrendered to your desires?

**CHARLIE.** I'd like to think so.

**ROSEMARY.** What a world in which thoughts as those give us comfort.

**CHARLIE.** We really should—I'm expected—

**ROSEMARY.** Not yet.

**CHARLIE.** I really—

**ROSEMARY.** Please.

**CHARLIE.** Look—

**ROSEMARY.** I won't even touch you.

**CHARLIE.** Then what would we do?

**ROSEMARY.** You can share with me your wisdom.

**CHARLIE.** Well, that won't take long.

**ROSEMARY.** Don't sell yourself short. I bet you can answer a question I've *never* been able to figure out.

**CHARLIE.** And what's that?

**ROSEMARY.** How did you cure yourself...of yearning?

**CHARLIE.** Pardon me?

**ROSEMARY.** How did you cure yourself of yearning?—

**CHARLIE.** I don't—

**ROSEMARY.** —I mean, I know you yearn *some*, or you wouldn't be here now, would you?

**CHARLIE.** Are you talking about lust?

**ROSEMARY.** Oh, no. No, I can satisfy my lust much easier than I can ever satisfy my yearning.

**CHARLIE.** Maybe you just haven't met the right man.

**ROSEMARY.** I don't think the right man would want me.

**CHARLIE.** That's not a very healthy—

**ROSEMARY.** He might *enjoy* me, but he wouldn't *want* me. The men I've known, they begin to get real nervous when they find out how deeply I yearn.

**CHARLIE.** You don't seem like—

**ROSEMARY.** When I look at people like you, I don't get it. Is it that you don't yearn, or have you just learned how to ignore your yearnings. 'Cause I can't do that.

**CHARLIE.** I, I just think about the good things in my life, and—

**ROSEMARY.** I just can't believe that the lives we have are the lives most of us yearn for.

**CHARLIE.** Maybe you expect too much.

**ROSEMARY.** Once I tried to stop yearning. Cold turkey. I said, "I'm going to go all day today and not yearn. And if I can do that, then I'll go for a week. And then a month." Well, I made it through the day. And I got through the week. But I never could make it through the month.

**CHARLIE.** The Bible helps.

**ROSEMARY.** My mama, when she got old enough to leave town, she went straight to New York. And after a year, she felt she had been cured of her yearnings. So she moved back home, read the Bible, and had a family. But she was wrong. She only *thought* she was cured.

**CHARLIE.** I hear she lives in New Mexico now.

**ROSEMARY.** Yep. She found someplace even hotter than this place.

**CHARLIE.** At least it's not as humid.

**ROSEMARY.** I've never been fond of too much dryness.

**CHARLIE.** Maybe, maybe you need a dog. I have a friend who has this collie—

**ROSEMARY.** When my mama lived in New York—

**CHARLIE.** She just had pups, cute little things—

**ROSEMARY.** She got a job as a manicurist in a barber shop. She told me men loved it when she held their hands. If she was gentle with them, and held them a long time, she'd always get a good tip. She told me her mama had told her men were only interested in one thing. But when she held their hands, she knew that wasn't true. But the problem was, you see the problem was that most men don't know that about themselves. And she always hoped that if one day she met a man who knew, maybe they could yearn together.

*(ROSEMARY walks up to CHARLIE, reaches for one of his hands and holds it for the first time. CHARLIE lets her, but he doesn't participate. She lets go.)*

**CHARLIE.** I really am sorry if I caused you any— Well, I'm just sorry.

**ROSEMARY.** You know, you feel sorry about as easily as I yearn.

**CHARLIE.** Maybe.

**ROSEMARY.** If I've learned one thing in life, it's that regret is such a useless emotion.

**CHARLIE.** Goodbye.

*(CHARLIE starts to go. ROSEMARY points to the drawer.)*

**ROSEMARY.** You forgot—

**CHARLIE.** Oh. Right... Thank you.

*(CHARLIE opens the dresser drawer and takes out his wedding ring.)*

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# HEART OF THE FIRE

## Cast of Characters

JULIE, mid-20's  
PAUL, about 30

## Place

A bar in the East Village, New York City.

## Time

Late afternoon.

## Acknowledgements

*Heart of the Fire* was originally performed on August 2, 2001 in the Hypothetically Speaking 2 festival produced by Hypothetical Theatre Company (Amy Feinberg, Artistic Director) in New York City. The play was directed by Pamela Rosenberger. The cast included:

JULIE.....Jo Haney  
PAUL ..... Ian A. Pfister

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*(As the play begins, JULIE, a woman in her mid-twenties who looks like she'd be at home leaning on a bar at an East Village bar, leans on a bar at an East Village bar. She stares at a sheet of paper on the bar. She picks up a pen and starts to write.)*

**JULIE.** Dear...scumbag... You rancid piece of...of unmitigated pus... No, that can't be right. That looks like "unmitigated puss."

*(She stops. She doesn't know what she really wants to write, or perhaps she's afraid to face it. PAUL enters. PAUL's about thirty and exudes confidence, regardless of how he's feeling. PAUL looks like he'd be at home at an Upper East Side yuppie bar. He and JULIE look at each other.)*

**PAUL.** Do you know how hard it is to come up with an opening line at a bar?

**JULIE.** Do you know how often I've heard that one?

**PAUL.** I guess after getting an M.F.A., this is considered an entry-level position.

**JULIE.** You know what I like best about working here?

**PAUL.** Years after the smoking ban started, you can still smell decades of second-hand smoke.

**JULIE.** No.

**PAUL.** You don't have to worry about unruly customers...because there are no customers.

**JULIE.** It's 3:15. Come back in a few hours; this place will be packed.

**PAUL.** Oh, I'm sure it will be chock-full of all those East Villagers who like to express their individuality by looking like every other East Villager.

**JULIE.** What I like best about this place is that I hardly ever run into anyone who looks like you.

**PAUL.** Maybe I should pierce my nose.

**JULIE.** Now there's a fashion trend: a pierced nose on a stuffed shirt.

**PAUL.** Give me a break, will you?

**JULIE.** I gave you more breaks than I ever should.

**PAUL.** Julie.

**JULIE.** I told you a year ago I never wanted to see you again, and unlike some people, I mean what I say.

**PAUL.** Hey, I've spent two days looking for you. You think I *want* to be here?

**JULIE.** Nobody forced you.

**PAUL.** Mom asked me to find you.

**JULIE.** You could've said "No."

**PAUL.** She begged me.

**JULIE.** You could've said "No, thank you."

**PAUL.** She's in the hospital.

**JULIE.** I know.

**PAUL.** She wants to see you.

**JULIE.** Well, we can't always get what we want.

**PAUL.** Julie.

**JULIE.** I've had to accept that, why can't she?

**PAUL.** Listen, you bitch...she's dying.

**JULIE.** She's not blaming *that* one on me, is she?

**PAUL.** What do you want from her?

**JULIE.** Nothing. And when I find I *do* want something from her, I take a breath and keep breathing until the want fades away.

**PAUL.** Would it be too hard to visit her once?

**JULIE.** Why, so you can get points? "Hey, Mom, look who I found."

**PAUL.** Look, I—

**JULIE.** I will not be your prize in a family scavenger hunt!

**PAUL.** Why are you always so angry at me?

**JULIE.** I don't like to take my anger out on innocent bystanders.

*(PAUL sits at the bar.)*

**PAUL.** Oh, barmaid.

**JULIE.** Yes, sir?

**PAUL.** I'd like a drink, please.

**JULIE.** Let me guess: Cosmopolitan.

**PAUL.** No.

**JULIE.** Apple martini?

**PAUL.** God no.

**JULIE.** Mojito?

**PAUL.** Water.

**JULIE.** You're kidding.

**PAUL.** Nope.

**JULIE.** Since when?

**PAUL.** Four months, 22 days, annnnndd 19 hours. More or less.

**JULIE.** Congratulations.

**PAUL.** Thank you.

**JULIE.** Program?

**PAUL.** Uh-huh.

**JULIE.** Which step are you on?

**PAUL.** I'm almost up to number two.

**JULIE.** So, do you want Poland Spring or Perrier?

**PAUL.** Tap.

**JULIE.** Were you laid off recently?

**PAUL.** No. Work's going great.

**JULIE.** Of course.

*(JULIE serves PAUL water.)*

**PAUL.** Thanks.

*(PAUL puts several large bills on the bar next to JULIE.)*

**JULIE.** I don't know what they're charging for tap water on the Upper East Side, but here it's free.

**PAUL.** I tip big.

**JULIE.** Is this a bribe?

**PAUL.** Consider it my contribution to the arts.

**JULIE.** I don't need your—

**PAUL.** Look, I know you're strapped and—

**JULIE.** What's the price?

**PAUL.** All I ask—is that you see her.

**JULIE.** I can't.

*(PAUL puts down two more bills.)*

**PAUL.** One time... For her.

*(JULIE rolls up the bills and stuffs them in PAUL's pants.)*

**JULIE.** Dance.

**PAUL.** What's wrong with you?!

**JULIE.** You want *me* to dance, don't you?!

**PAUL.** Look, you can think whatever you want about me—

**JULIE.** Thank you.

**PAUL.** —But she's your mother.

**JULIE.** And what does that entitle her to?

**PAUL.** A little respect, for one thing.

**JULIE.** Respect is earned; it's not an entitlement.

**PAUL.** She's in pain, Julie.

**JULIE.** And why do we always have to choose *her* pain over ours?

**PAUL.** A half-hour. You can do it for a half-hour.

**JULIE.** I know I can do it for a half-hour. I did it for my entire childhood.

**PAUL.** (*Not knowing what will work:*) Jules...

**JULIE.** Yes, Paulie?

**PAUL.** Do you really think you're better off *not* communicating with her?

**JULIE.** Actually, I was just writing her a letter.

**PAUL.** Really?

**JULIE.** Uh-huh.

**PAUL.** Would you like me to bring it to her?

**JULIE.** I don't think so.

**PAUL.** I'll be glad to—

(*JULIE puts the letter in his face.*)

**PAUL.** "Pus" has one S.

**JULIE.** (*Re: the spelling:*) I'm glad you came.

**PAUL.** Do you really think she was that bad a mother?

**JULIE.** She was better than those species who eat their young.

**PAUL.** Look, I know she wasn't perfect—

**JULIE.** Heh.

**PAUL.** —But she, she fed us, she clothed us; she took care of us when we were sick; she took you to your dance classes and me to Cub Scout meetings and—

**JULIE.** She lived up to her obligations. And she always made sure we knew it.

**PAUL.** She did her best! It may not have been somebody else's best, but it was hers.

**JULIE.** If that's how you feel, fine.

**PAUL.** Damn it—

**JULIE.** Let me be the bad child, okay? I know how to do it; I'm good at it. I provide a great service for everyone in the family who needs a scapegoat.

**PAUL.** Shock them—shock me—provide less of a service.

**JULIE.** The woman doesn't like me!—

**PAUL.** Oh, come on.

**JULIE.** —And I think she *likes* not liking me... I can forgive the former but not the latter.

**PAUL.** Well maybe if you—

**JULIE.** Did you ask her why she wanted to see me?

**PAUL.** You're her daughter.

**JULIE.** Why does she want to see me?

**PAUL.** What kind of question is that?

**JULIE.** Is it because she loves me? Is it because she wants to connect with the real me? Does she want to make amends before she dies? I don't think so. I just think she wants everything to be nice and tidy before she goes so she can die thinking she was a good mother.

**PAUL.** When did you turn into such a cynic about her?

**JULIE.** When I got tired of yearning for her to be someone she'd never be.—

**PAUL.** Jules—

**JULIE.** —Look, I know she never beat us, and we weren't sexually abused, and there was nothing in our childhood that would make a good TV movie. There's no traumatizing event I can point to self-righteously and say "This is why I'm so mad!" But the woman, she, she—she didn't like children, and I'm not even sure she likes people. Except maybe those who satisfy her wants, which I didn't always want to do. And, and the message I remember getting most

from her was, “Every time you have a will of your own, it pisses me off. So stop it.”

**PAUL.** Don't you have any good memories of her?

**JULIE.** Four. And given how many years of therapy it took to dredge up four, those memories weren't very cost-effective.

**PAUL.** You love your grudge, don't you?

**JULIE.** Come on, you hate her just as much as I do.

**PAUL.** Fuck you.

**JULIE.** Finally. A response from your heart.

*(PAUL takes out a small piece of paper.)*

**PAUL.** Here's the address of the hospital in case you change your mind.

*(He extends the paper. JULIE won't take it. He puts it on the bar.)*

**JULIE.** I can't do it, Paul.

**PAUL.** Have it your way.

**JULIE.** This is not my way!

**PAUL.** Well, what is?!

**JULIE.** My way, *my way* would be for her to say, just once, I don't know, something which began with “I'm sorry” would be nice. “I'm sorry for all the times I hurt you. I'm sorry for all the times I failed to recognize that you have a soul. And if you can find it in your heart to forgive me, I promise to stop pretending I was beyond reproach as a mother, and I promise to stop asking that you pretend, too.”

**PAUL.** You really expect her to say that?

**JULIE.** I think it's more likely you'll pierce your nose.

**PAUL.** You don't think of anybody but yourself, do you?

**JULIE.** That's the line she always used when she wanted me to do things *her way*.

**PAUL.** Fine. You win.

**JULIE.** I'm trying to be honest with you, damn it.

**PAUL.** So am I. I'm so sick of you getting off on hating her as if it's some form of moral accomplishment. Because it's not. It's, it's indulging in the, the, the dark joy of bitterness. You can judge me harshly for not wanting to go there, and maybe I'm missing something, but from where I see it, your approach doesn't lead to happiness.

**JULIE.** Is that why you showed her where I kept my journals and my stash?

**PAUL.** I was concerned about you.

**JULIE.** You can leave whenever you want.

**PAUL.** I was genuinely concerned.

**JULIE.** Goodbye.

**PAUL.** Enjoy your hate, Julie. I hope it makes you feel good.

**JULIE.** It doesn't make me feel good.

**PAUL.** Then why do you hang on to it?! Why?!!!

**JULIE.** I've tried to forgive her.

I've tried and tried.

And each time, each time it feels a lie.

I say I forgive her, and bam,  
the hate comes back.

I forgive her again, and bam,  
the hate comes back.

So I dig deeper, and I think I've finally  
gotten it, and bam, the hate comes back.

I'm tired of denying my own hate.

I'm not proud of it.

I'm not saying it's healthy.

I pray each day for it to end.

But I don't think that day will come  
until I get to the heart of the fire.

*(A breath.)*

At least that's this week's plan.

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# OH HAPPY DAY

## Cast of Characters

LARRY, late 30's-50's

ELLIOT, about the same age as Larry

## Place

A living room.

## Time

The present.

## Acknowledgments

*Oh Happy Day* was originally performed on April 7, 2001 as part of the "Play by Play," marathon produced by Heartland Theatre Company (Jan Radcliff and Mary E. Rychlewski, Co-Artistic Directors) in Rochester, Michigan. The play was directed by Amy Lane. The cast included:

LARRY .....Grant Stokes

ELLIOT ..... Darrell Glasgow

*(The living room of ELLIOT and LARRY, early one evening. ELLIOT enters through the front door, puts down his briefcase, and takes off his trench coat. He wears a suit, his tie is loosened, and he's drained from a very trying day. LARRY enters from the kitchen. He got home awhile ago, and he's changed into jeans and a T-shirt or sweater. He's refreshed and glad to see ELLIOT.)*

**LARRY.** Hi, darling. Happy—

**ELLIOT.** Don't talk to me.

**LARRY.** *(Upset, but not too much:)* Well.

**ELLIOT.** Look, I, traffic was lousy, my day was lousy, and Huns are taking over America. I'm sorry I can't be more—

**LARRY.** That's okay.

*(They kiss briefly. LARRY wants more.)*

**ELLIOT.** If I could just have, as a special gift to me, for the next few minutes, I just, I just need to not talk to you or the plants or anyone.

**LARRY.** Do you want me to start dinner, or shall we eat out?

**ELLIOT.** At this moment, even that question is too taxing for my brain.

**LARRY.** I'll make an executive decision.

*(LARRY exits.)*

**ELLIOT.** *(Calling after him:)* Thank you.

*(ELLIOT sits on the couch. For a few moments, he stares vacantly into space. Then he notices his nose. He becomes intrigued, looking away and back at it. LARRY returns with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.)*

**ELLIOT.** Do you realize that when we have our eyes open, our nose is always within our view. We act as if it's not, but it is, all the time.

**LARRY.** Are you saying we're in nasal denial?

*(As they talk, LARRY opens the champagne and pours two glasses. He hands one to ELLIOT.)*

ELLIOT. I'm not sure *what* I'm saying... You spoil me, you know that?

LARRY. Only on certain days.

ELLIOT. You spoil me a lot.

LARRY. It's completely selfish. I spoil *you* one day, and you're obligated to spoil *me* one day.

ELLIOT. I'm so far behind I've lost track.

LARRY. I haven't.

ELLIOT. How far behind am I?

LARRY. Last time I checked my list...358 days.

ELLIOT. Uh-oh.

LARRY. Pretty soon, you're gonna owe me one helluva year.

*(They each hold champagne glasses.)*

ELLIOT. To spoiling each other.

LARRY. To spoiling each other.

*(They clink glasses and drink.)*

ELLIOT. Today sucked, Larry.

LARRY. Yes, I know; I saw a TV news promo: "Today sucked; more at eleven." Did you get any support at all?

ELLIOT. None I can count on.

LARRY. I'm sorry, Elliot.

ELLIOT. I spent all day with Huns. Duly-elected Huns.

LARRY. What about Engleman?

ELLIOT. He sympathizes, but is afraid of losing the next election.

LARRY. Dixon?

ELLIOT. Is busy courting the Christian right.

LARRY. Palmer?

**ELLIOT.** Palmer suggested we meet for drinks. In the Bahamas.

**LARRY.** And what did you reply?

**ELLIOT.** “I don’t drink.”

*(ELLIOT finishes his champagne and pours himself some more.)*

**LARRY.** *(Holding out his glass:)* Me, neither.

**ELLIOT.** Huns. They should stop calling themselves Republicans and Democrats and rename themselves “Huns” and “Those Who Aren’t Huns But Who Act Like Huns So They Won’t Lose the Hun Vote.”

**LARRY.** Well, I’ll be glad to move out of this state any day you want.

**ELLIOT.** Where’d you like to live?

**LARRY.** Oh, I don’t know. Someplace fantastic and unreal. Like where *Will and Grace* live.

**ELLIOT.** What really gets me is that off the record, they all agree the bill’s a distraction from the serious issues of the day.

**LARRY.** Then why don’t they—

**ELLIOT.** I think politicians define their job as distracting the public from the serious issues of the day.

**LARRY.** Think their bill will pass?

**ELLIOT.** It’s a toss-up. I keep hoping it’ll get buried somewhere in committee, but I don’t think Dolmatch will allow that.

**LARRY.** Great. For eons they label us as promiscuous and decadent, and now they try to pass a bill to keep us that way.

**ELLIOT.** This morning Dolmatch said his bill was essential to protect the sanctity of the institution of marriage. Fortunately, this afternoon both his ex-wives came out against it.

**LARRY.** Now *there’s* a dangerous institution nobody’s looking at.

**ELLIOT.** Pompous hypocrites?

**LARRY.** Worse. I think it's time someone passed a law prohibiting what any sane person can see is destroying the fabric of our society.

**ELLIOT.** What's that?

**LARRY.** Opposite-sex marriages.

**ELLIOT.** Now there's an idea.

**LARRY.** Granted some of them work, but when you look at history, you'll see a high percentage of them lead to adultery, abuse, violence, and incredibly boring talk shows.

**ELLIOT.** Half of them end up in divorce.

**LARRY.** Exactly. Would you buy a toaster if you knew it had a 50% chance of breaking down? What does it say about our society when we have higher standards for toasters than for marriage?

**ELLIOT.** Now let's not trash all opposite-sex couples. Some of them are fine people.

**LARRY.** Stop apologizing for them. Most of them don't even go to church. And the ones who do dress as if God had no fashion sense.

**ELLIOT.** Good point.

**LARRY.** I think if anyone looked objectively at the statistics of how many straight people have alcohol or drug problems, and how many are just plain unstable—well, I'd be afraid to let them teach in our schools.

**ELLIOT.** You are such a joy to come home to.

**LARRY.** I like making you happy. And if I can make you happy by bashing large segments of our population, I'm willing.

**ELLIOT.** I'm a very lucky man.

**LARRY.** I just wish people knew how hard you worked.

**ELLIOT.** (*A very personal remark:*) God, if I didn't have you...

**LARRY.** I got you something.

**ELLIOT.** I got you something, too.

**LARRY.** What, what, what?

**ELLIOT.** What'd *you* get *me*?

**LARRY.** I know. Let's open our presents at the same time.

**ELLIOT.** You're on.

*(LARRY and ELLIOT get their presents, sit next to each other on the couch, and exchange gifts.)*

**LARRY.** One, two, three, go.

*(They unwrap their presents. LARRY got ELLIOT something classy, like a nice shirt. ELLIOT got LARRY a thong. They both look at their gifts.)*

**LARRY.** You know, we may be the same sex, but we have completely different minds.

**ELLIOT.** I also bought you something else—

**LARRY.** Let me see it.

**ELLIOT.** I can't. The store screwed up the order—but it'll be here in a week, I promised.

**LARRY.** Oh God, deferred gratification, I hate using those muscles.

**ELLIOT.** Sorry.

**LARRY.** Well, I have one more surprise for you, too.

**ELLIOT.** Let me have it.

**LARRY.** It's a little more serious.

**ELLIOT.** You're pregnant.

**LARRY.** Elliot, please.

**ELLIOT.** It's okay if you are. We can work out the religion thing.

**LARRY.** I need you to listen.

**ELLIOT.** What is it?

**LARRY.** Well, I've been giving a lot of thought to us lately. I know we've had our ups and downs—

**ELLIOT.** Every couple has their—

**LARRY.** Today is a good day. We've had some bad ones, too; face it.

**ELLIOT.** I know.

**LARRY.** And I thought about what our counselor said, and what's going on in here—(*Touches his heart*)—and who I really am, and what I really want, and well, I'm... (*Sips some champagne, and then, melodramatically:*) I'm getting a vagina.

**ELLIOT.** What?!

**LARRY.** I'm going to have a sex-change operation.

**ELLIOT.** Larry!

**LARRY.** A complete makeover. Hormones, electrolysis, breast implants, heels. I'm going to become a 100%, red, white and blue, Vaginal-American.

**ELLIOT.** (*Enjoying this:*) Why?

**LARRY.** Because then none of those assholes could stop us from getting married!

**ELLIOT.** You know, I almost believed you for a moment.

**LARRY.** Thank you. I was practicing all day.

**ELLIOT.** You know, from the first day I met you, I thought, this person is sick, and I want him.

**LARRY.** The first day I met you, I thought, he seems like the type of guy I'd find attractive even if I were sober.

**ELLIOT.** When I think of that day, I'm so glad I didn't stay home and work on my taxes.

**LARRY.** When I think of that day... I think about how much more hair I had.

*(Or "how much more hair you had," whichever is more appropriate.)*

**ELLIOT.** When I think of that day, I feel grateful.

**LARRY.** Me, too.

**ELLIOT.** And every day since.

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# INVISIBLE WOMAN

## Cast of Characters

SUSANNE, late 30's-40's

BRET, about the same age as Susanne

## Place

A stylish bar in the city.

## Time

Early one evening.

## Acknowledgments

*Invisible Woman* was performed on October 14, 2000 as part of the "Full Circle" festival produced by Circle East Theatre Company (Michael Warren Powell, Artistic Director) at HERE Arts Center in New York City. The play was directed by Ken Lowstetter. The cast included:

SUSANNE..... Kathryn Carrol  
BRET..... James Lurie

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(SUSANNE sips a glass of wine at the bar. She's stylishly dressed, in a way that shows she wants to look attractive but isn't comfortable looking sexy. She's waiting for someone. BRET enters, sees her and approaches. He wears a handsome suit, and he takes pride in how well he carries himself.)

**BRET.** Hey, honey!

**SUSANNE.** Hi!

*(They kiss.)*

**BRET.** Sorry I'm late.

**SUSANNE.** That's okay.

**BRET.** I was walking out the door when Armitage said, "I need you to look over these figures *now*," and I said, "How about first thing in the morning?", and he said Erickson wanted them faxed to Japan in an hour, and I said what's the rush, and he said Erickson's in one of his moods, and well you know, Erickson, the rise and fall of the yen and his cock are closely related. I tried to get out of there as fast as I could.

**SUSANNE.** It's no big deal.

**BRET.** It's just, Erickson, I mean, I just hate it when people think they're the center of the universe, I really do; where's the bartender?

**SUSANNE.** It sounds like a rough day.

**BRET.** Adventures nonstop, beginning to end. So how are you, Susanne? How was your day?

**SUSANNE.** The usual.

**BRET.** Anything interesting happen?

**SUSANNE.** No.

**BRET.** Any stories?

**SUSANNE.** No.

**BRET.** What was the least uninteresting moment?

**SUSANNE.** It was just a day, Bret.

**BRET.** I like what you've done with your hair.

**SUSANNE.** Thanks. I hoped you would.

**BRET.** We don't see each other enough.

**SUSANNE.** *(Who agrees, but who has trouble with compliments:)* Well, I know how busy you are.

**BRET.** Yeah, well, they don't pay me to be nine-to-five.

**SUSANNE.** I understand.

**BRET.** So what's been filling your head lately?

**SUSANNE.** Nothing really.

**BRET.** I'm sure there's more of an answer than that.

**SUSANNE.** Well, I've been with me every minute, and there isn't.

**BRET.** C'mon. I want to know. You've got my undivided attention. Bartender!

*(BRET turns to hail the bartender. The lights shift and focus on SUSANNE.)*

**SUSANNE.** *You want to know how I am? Well, that makes two of us.*

*You want to know the thoughts in my head?*

*Well, so do I.*

*At least, part of me does.*

*And part of me doesn't.*

*And the part of me that doesn't, rules.*

*Mostly I keep busy, so I won't have time to listen to myself.*

*I keep busy, because I'm afraid*

*if I take time, there may be*

*nothing to listen to.*

*And every now and then,*

*when I do hear something,*

*I get scared.*

*What does that thought mean?*

*What am I supposed to do with it?*

*Where should I put it?*

*When it goes away, I breathe easier;*

*And I try to get busy again.*

---

*Other people, I look at them, and  
They seem so filled with  
thoughts and feelings.  
How can they get any work done?  
If I felt and thought as much as  
most people, I don't think I'd have  
the energy for anything else.  
Sometimes I think feeling and thinking  
is a fad, and one day it'll pass.  
Somewhere,  
Somewhere inside me,  
I know I must have that which others have;  
And if I forced myself,  
I could feel all that's inside.  
I'm sure if I forced myself,  
If I really forced myself,  
And I got over the urge to scream,  
I could tell you a great deal.  
But what if I couldn't stop?  
And what if I stayed that way,  
Thinking and feeling all over the place,  
Every waking moment?  
And telling you all about it;  
Getting so that I wanted to;  
And that I needed someone to listen?  
No, that doesn't sound the least bit attractive.  
And if I told you everything I thought  
And everything I felt  
And everything I desired,  
And when I finished,  
If, but for a split second,  
You looked at me in silence,  
I'd feel so alone  
That the terror would collapse my heart.  
And even if I survived that,  
Even if I survived the terror,  
You'd know where my soul lived;  
And I need to have an unlisted soul.  
I know you seem to like me,  
But I know you don't know me.*

*So what does your affection mean?  
And I see that you're kind.  
And I see you try to bring me out.  
But I don't trust it's what you really want.  
No, even if I knew what I thought and felt,  
I could not tell you.  
So please stop asking.  
I could love you if you stopped asking.  
Please.  
Please  
Order your drink,  
And let's have dinner,  
And tell me stories of your day  
And of your life.  
Distract me, engage me,  
Let me live through you.  
You can do that, I know you can.  
It's your most attractive feature.  
Just stop asking me how I am,  
Please,  
Before I get annoyed,  
Before I lose patience,  
And get so fed up I tell you,  
And risk it all,  
And face the terror I have not yet  
named but which runs my life.  
And if you make me go there,  
I will only resist you  
And resent you,  
And neither of us will be happy.  
So you tell me how you are,  
And I will listen,  
And I will take your hand,  
And I'll make you glad you're a man.  
But I will not tell you how I am.  
I cannot tell you.  
Ever.*

*(The lights shift back. BRET has caught the unseen bartender's eye.)*

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# RIGHT SENSATION

## Cast of Characters

PAULA, late 30's-50's

STEWART, about the same age as Paula

## Place

Paula's bedroom.

## Time

Evening.

## Acknowledgments

*Right Sensation* was originally performed on April 28, 2004 in the "Just Add Water" Festival produced by the WorkShop Theatre Company (Timothy Scott Harris and Elysa Marden, Artistic Directors, and Riley Jones Cohen, Executive Director) in New York City. The play was directed by Holli Harms. The cast included:

PAULA ..... Tracy Newirth  
STEWART .....David Walters

---

*(As the play begins, PAULA and STEWART are in PAULA's bedroom, kissing with enthusiasm. They're horny and attracted to each other, but not yet comfortable and confident with each other. They're both dressed and have not yet reached the bed.)*

**PAULA.** You kiss really well.

**STEWART.** Thanks. You, too.

**PAULA.** And I'm not just saying that because I'm drunk.

**STEWART.** Me neither.

**PAULA.** I'm not that drunk.

**STEWART.** I'm as drunk or as not drunk as you want me to be.

*(He puts his hand up her blouse. She moves it away from her breasts, and so he slides it to the back of her blouse. They continue to kiss.)*

**PAULA.** I don't normally do this.

**STEWART.** Me, neither.

**PAULA.** I've never done this.

**STEWART.** I'm willing to have done this or not done this, whichever you prefer.

*(She moves his hand away from her bra strap. They continue kissing, and his hand moves to the bra strap again.)*

**PAULA.** Please don't.

**STEWART.** Okay.

*(Their kissing becomes more passionate. STEWART puts a hand on her bra strap and quickly unsnaps it. PAULA recoils, grabbing her blouse so her bra stays on.)*

**PAULA.** I said NO, you bastard!

*(PAULA runs into her bathroom and slams the door. STEWART is a bit stunned. He approaches the door.)*

**STEWART.** Look, I'm, I'm, I'm sorry, I—I didn't mean to, it's just—when my hand gets in the vicinity... I, I can't tell you how proud I

was when I mastered the skill... I'm, I'm really sorry... Patty, are you okay?

**PAULA.** (*O.S., not okay:*) I'm fine, and my name's Paula.

**STEWART.** Will you come out—Paula...please?

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) Why should I?

**STEWART.** 'Cause, 'cause I'd like to see you.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) Why?

**STEWART.** Because, because you're nice, and, and you're really sexy, and you have a great smile.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) What if I didn't have teeth?

**STEWART.** You'd still be sexy.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) Why?

**STEWART.** Well, you have beautiful eyes.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) What if I didn't have eyes?

**STEWART.** You'd still be sexy.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) Why?

**STEWART.** You have a great neck.

**PAULA.** (*O.S.:*) What if I didn't have a neck?

**STEWART.** Is this a puzzle? Because I suck at puzzles. You want to torture me? Lock me in a room with a crossword puzzle.

(*PAULA enters.*)

**PAULA.** What if I only had one breast?

**STEWART.** I see two...don't I?

**PAULA.** I had a mastectomy.

**STEWART.** Oh... Oh, well, you know, that's okay, no, I mean it's not o—I mean, whatever... So you had cancer?

**PAULA.** No, my right breast just got in the way during archery.

**STEWART.** I'm sorry, I was—

PAULA. No, no, that's—

STEWART. They look fine. From here.

PAULA. I had an implant.

*(A long silence.)*

PAULA. If you want to go...

STEWART. No, I, I, I just can't think of anything to say that doesn't make me sound like a jerk, which I'm not, I swear, I'm not, it's just not always readily apparent.

PAULA. You don't seem like a jerk.

STEWART. Yeah, well, the night is young. How long ago did—

PAULA. Uhhhhhwhile ago.

STEWART. Am I your first since—

PAULA. Uh-huh.

STEWART. How much did you have to drink to—

PAULA. I didn't count.

STEWART. Well, I'm honored you chose me.

PAULA. You should be.

STEWART. You know, you really don't have to be self-conscious, I mean, I've seen implants before.

PAULA. You have?

STEWART. Sure. Plenty of times.

PAULA. Plenty of times?

STEWART. After my divorce, I uh, I uh, I kind of went through a, a strip joint phase—which I'm way over—

PAULA. Uh-huh.

STEWART. Anyway, so, like changing topics, like I know this must be traumatic but, well, like what's the big deal?

PAULA. What's the—!

**STEWART.** I just mean, lots of people have fake parts these days. Like hip replacements, or fake knees, or hair plugs. Most people are not 100% there—if you know what I mean.

**PAULA.** It's just not the same as it was. It's like replacing, ummm—

**STEWART.** A Lexus with a Honda?

**PAULA.** No!

**STEWART.** (*Defensive:*) Sorry. Just trying to empathize.

**PAULA.** It's like replacing an orange, with a wax orange.

**STEWART.** Better than a wax prune. (*Off her glare:*) You know, you don't cheer up easily.

**PAULA.** How would you like it if you had surgery and woke up with a wax testicle?

**STEWART.** My trousers would be more comfortable. Look, I'm sorry about your, your misfortune and everything, but you still got one good one, don't you?... Was that a stupid thing to say?

**PAULA.** For a human being, yes. For a guy, not necessarily.

**STEWART.** Look, I don't know what you—I just want to—I, I, I, I've had some moles removed... Not that I'm equating.

**PAULA.** I probably shouldn't have—

**STEWART.** No, no, you did the—

**PAULA.** It's just that, it was my favorite one.

**STEWART.** You had a favorite breast?

**PAULA.** Yes, I did.

**STEWART.** Why?

**PAULA.** It was rounder and, and perkier.

**STEWART.** And your other one?

**PAULA.** It's, it's—none of your business.

**STEWART.** Fine.

**PAULA.** I just liked my right one better.

**STEWART.** Okay.

**PAULA.** Women often prefer one over the other.

**STEWART.** Do you have a favorite ear? Do you prefer one nostril?

**PAULA.** Do you have a favorite testicle?

**STEWART.** I just thank God I have two... Oh, shit, I mean, I'd thank God if I had one also.

**PAULA.** Probably not with the same gusto.

**STEWART.** I'm just grateful I'm not a eunuch...most days.

**PAULA.** Look, Steven, I just—

**STEWART.** Stewart.

**PAULA.** It has no nipple.

**STEWART.** I think nipples are highly overrated.

**PAULA.** You do?

**STEWART.** Well, starting now.

**PAULA.** Look, *Stewart*, I really liked kissing you—

**STEWART.** Same here.

**PAULA.** It's, you see, when I had my mastectomy, well, I thought if I had an implant, you see the doctors warned me, because of where my cancer was located, they—they had to take the nerves out with the breast. So there's not just no nipple, there's no sensation there. None.

**STEWART.** Nothing?

**PAULA.** You can touch it and lick it and put pins in it, and it feels...nothing.

**STEWART.** Oh.

**PAULA.** I, I wasn't going to say anything, but, but then I thought, what if he starts sucking on it, and I don't respond, and he'll think—

**STEWART.** It's okay.

**PAULA.** I mean, it's there, but don't waste your time on it.

**STEWART.** Does it affect your balance?

**PAULA.** What?

**STEWART.** Like you told me you like to swim. Does it affect your stroke?

**PAULA.** They don't weigh that much.

**STEWART.** Well, I've never weighed one.

**PAULA.** Look—

**STEWART.** Guys have a lot of fixations about breasts, but weighing them is not one of them.

**PAULA.** And what fixations *do* you have about breasts?

**STEWART.** Well, you know, the normal ones.

**PAULA.** Do you prefer them big or small?

**STEWART.** I've never been with a breast that's either too big *or* too small.

**PAULA.** Never?

**STEWART.** Mostly I'm just glad when they're...available.

**PAULA.** Well, one of mine isn't really available.

**STEWART.** That's— You know, you never asked how *many* I prefer.

**PAULA.** How many do you prefer?

**STEWART.** Five. So you're four short; live with it.

**PAULA.** (*Not amused:*) Thanks.

**STEWART.** Listen. I can see why this would be hard for you and why you had to get sloshed and all that—

**PAULA.** I wasn't sloshed.

**STEWART.** It's just—I don't care if your right boob is made of plastic, Formica, recycled linoleum, used tires, or filled vacuum cleaner bags. I like you. I find you attractive. I would like to fondle

any and all of you. If you like me, you're welcome to do the same. If you don't like me, fine. But if you *do* like me, and you don't—enjoy me because you're afraid, well, well, well like now we're talking loss. *(A moment, then:)* This is about as articulate as I ever get, so don't expect better.

**PAULA.** What if, what if you touch it and go “ugh”?

**STEWART.** Then I'm a real loser.

**PAULA.** What if, what if you like it better than my real one?

**STEWART.** Then, then you can write a thank you note to your surgeon.

**PAULA.** What if, what if after all this, I give in and you decide I'm a lousy lover?

**STEWART.** I'm not that picky.

**PAULA.** And what if I decide *you're* a lousy lover?

**STEWART.** I'll add you to the list.

**PAULA.** What if, what if, what if we had sex and find out we really like each other?

*(A long beat.)*

**STEWART.** Well that sobered me up. How about you?

**PAULA.** It's like I just drank a double espresso.

**STEWART.** If um, we don't have to—

**PAULA.** You know, about a month after the operation, I uh I decided—I—how to put this delicately—

**STEWART.** I'll be more turned on if you don't.

**PAULA.** I decided it was, it was time to “own” my sexuality again.

**STEWART.** Before that were you just renting?

**PAULA.** *So* one night I took a warm bath, with bubbles, and candles, and a glass of sherry, and I relaxed. And I came into my bedroom, and I lit some more candles, scented candles, and I got into bed, and I began to caress myself. Slowly. Delicately. Skillfully. But,

but every time I touched my right breast, it was, it was as if, instead of candles, someone was shining a thousand harsh, cold fluorescent lights on me. And, and I tried to, to close my eyes and get into it again, but every, every time I touched—...the lights went through my eyelids.

**STEWART.** (*Warmly.*) Hey...

**PAULA.** (*Near tears by now.*) And if I focused on *not* touching my right breast, the lights they still—

**STEWART.** It's okay.

**PAULA.** *No, it's not.*

**STEWART.** Of course not, but, but—look, I haven't had the light thing—

**PAULA.** Then don't—

**STEWART.** With me it's noise. Nights when all I want to do is be with a woman, you know—I don't mean sex. I don't mean not sex, I just mean—be with her, you know? And then the noise starts. And nothing I do adjusts the volume. And soon I'm with the noise more than with the woman.

**PAULA.** And what do you do when that happens?

**STEWART.** I do what any guy would do. I beat myself up.

**PAULA.** And what if I, what if I do something like that while you're here?

**STEWART.** I dunno... I'll, I'll try to dim the lights for you.

*(A beat.)*

**PAULA.** I got new sheets. Do you like 'em?

**STEWART.** I can't tell from this far away.

*(They move to the bed.)*

**PAULA.** If we could just kiss and not—

**STEWART.** Whatever.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE.**

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# AFTERGLOW

## Cast of Characters

LENA, late twenties  
GLENN, late twenties

## Place

Glenn's bedroom.

## Time

Nighttime.

## Production Note

*Afterglow* is an additional short play which may be substituted for any of the others in *Couples*.

## Acknowledgments

*Afterglow* was first performed on December 7, 1985, as part of *Other People's Problems*, a collection of short plays by Rich Orloff, produced at Ensemble Studio Theatre/L.A. (Linda Callahan, Artistic Director). The play was directed by Nancy Ann Adler. The cast included:

LENA ..... Allison Argo  
GLENN ..... Michael Keys Hall

*(A bedroom. His bedroom. Things are still a little messy from what has just happened. There are clothes strewn on various objects.)*

*(Her name is LENA. She's in her late twenties. She probably dresses well. LENA likes people to think she is worldly and sophisticated. Some people do. LENA's in a grand mood, very happy and very pleased with herself.)*

**LENA.** You know, that was probably—No, no, no. That was, without a doubt, the best sex I've ever had.

*(He pops his head up from under the covers of the bed. His name is GLENN. GLENN is also in his late twenties. GLENN is more charming and less shy than he thinks he is—but nobody has yet convinced him of that. He's in a great mood, a bit overwhelmed by a wonderful experience he can't explain.)*

**GLENN.** Gee, thanks... Thank you very much.

**LENA.** Don't get cocky. I was complimenting myself as much as I was complimenting you.

*(During the rest of the scene, LENA finishes getting dressed and ready for the world. The actors are welcome to ad-lib a few remarks along the way, such as "Where did I put my shoes?")*

**GLENN.** *(Still amazed by it:)* We were good, weren't we?

**LENA.** *(Nonchalantly:)* I'm always good... *(Smiling:)* We were damn good.

**GLENN.** Yeah.

**LENA.** Yeah.

**GLENN.** Yeah.

**LENA.** I never thought I'd be able to top the sex I had two years ago in Yosemite. There's something about fucking with a bear in the distance...

**GLENN.** I've never felt so accomplished.

**LENA.** I've never felt so glad I'm so accomplished... It's Glenn, right?

**GLENN.** Right. Lena?

LENA. Right.

*(LENA starts to get dressed.)*

GLENN. What are you doing?

LENA. I really have to get going.

GLENN. Stay the night... I make a great breakfast.

LENA. Do you?

GLENN. I make a mean piece of toast.

LENA. *(Not necessarily meaning it:)* Maybe some other time.

GLENN. *(Regarding her decision to go:)* You sure?

LENA. Yeah.

GLENN. Yeah.

LENA. Yeah... You know, you do make good eye contact.

GLENN. Thanks... You know, this was the first time I ever met anyone at the supermarket.

LENA. Oh, don't give me that.

GLENN. It's true.

LENA. Sure. I bet all your buddies refer to the produce section as "Glenn's turf."

GLENN. No, honest.

LENA. *(Skeptical:)* Uh-huh.

GLENN. I mean it. I haven't been intimate with anyone for, God, over six months.

LENA. *(Mulling it over:)* I don't think I have, either, really.

GLENN. *(Skeptical:)* Come on. An attractive woman like you. You haven't been to bed with anyone for six months?

LENA. Bed, yes. Intimate, no.

GLENN. Oh. How does one do that?

LENA. How to put this... The guys I have had sex with lately I didn't really have the sex with while I was having sex with them.

GLENN. I see.

LENA. You I had sex with.

GLENN. I'm honored.

LENA. You should be.

GLENN. I still can't get over it.

LENA. You will.

GLENN. I always thought that for sex to be this good, you had to really had to—I mean, I know nothing about you. This is such a threat to my belief system.

LENA. Oh, good. Threatening belief systems is a real turn on for me.

GLENN. Feel free to threaten mine whenever you want.

LENA. I will. (*Looking at him:*) You know, regardless of what some women say, I think men are definitely better than vibrators.

GLENN. Boy, you just come right out with it, don't you?

LENA. Uh-huh.

GLENN. You're very bold.

LENA. Thank you. I used to be very shy.

GLENN. What happened?

LENA. It got boring. So I changed.

GLENN. Just like that?

LENA. That's right.

GLENN. A person can't change just like that.

LENA. I can. I can do anything once I put my mind to it.

GLENN. But how? I've been trying to get over my shyness all my life.

LENA. I just did.

GLENN. That's no answer.

LENA. (*With some bitterness:*) Look, I just got sick of...of...of all of it. Waiting for the phone to ring. Waiting for them to make up their minds. Waiting for the right moment for everything. That's what shy people do. They wait... I just got sick of it. So I changed.

GLENN. Just like that?

LENA. (*Case closed:*) Just like that.

GLENN. I wish I could change so easily.

LENA. Wishing is a very passive activity.

(*A beat.*)

GLENN. So what do you do?

LENA. Must we?

GLENN. What?

LENA. It's just that talking about our jobs after sex like we had would be like, like...like winning the lottery and celebrating at McDonald's.

GLENN. It was fantastic, wasn't it? I've never yelled "Oh, God" nearly so loud.

LENA. Let's not begin to wallow in nostalgia, shall we?

GLENN. Why was it that good? It had no right to be that good. If sex with someone I just met in a supermarket can be that satisfying, why have relationships? Why get involved? Why go through all those hassles? Why not just shop more often?

LENA. Because I assume what just happened is the exception and not the rule.

GLENN. But— But it did happen, didn't it? Which means it can happen. Doesn't that make you wonder?

LENA. No... Look, I really should be going. Thank you for a very pleasant distraction.

**GLENN.** (*Disappointed by her summation of the evening:*) You're welcome.

**LENA.** (*About ready to go:*) Well...

**GLENN.** (*With some hesitation:*) You know...

**LENA.** What?

**GLENN.** We still haven't exchanged phone numbers.

**LENA.** (*Deciding "No":*) Look, honestly—you think we'll ever be able to top what just happened?

**GLENN.** Who knows? I never thought a discussion about seedless grapes would lead to great sex.

**LENA.** Well, you do make good eye contact.

**GLENN.** You should see what I can do with my toes.

**LENA.** Look... (*Bringing the name back into memory:*) Glenn... Everything has been so perfect to this point. Why force ourselves into something that's bound to be so...ordinary?

**GLENN.** (*Disappointed:*) I understand.

**LENA.** Everybody's so afraid of moving on.

**GLENN.** Well... Thank you for a very enjoyable and educational experience.

**LENA.** You're welcome. Nice meeting you.

**GLENN.** Nice meeting you.

*(LENA, now completely dressed, made-up, and ready to go, picks up her purse. She starts out the door. GLENN watches till the very last moment—when push comes to shove.)*

**GLENN.** Ummmm!!!... (*Catching her attention:*) You forgot something!

**LENA.** What?

*(GLENN, summoning up all his courage, walks over to LENA, looks at her, and kisses her hard. She responds.)*

**GLENN.** What's your phone number?

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