

WALKING THE BLONDE

by

Leigh Curran

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## Scene One

A cul de sac on New York's east side. An early fall evening in the mid 1980s. USR in the sidewalk is a grate through which heat escapes. DSL is a trash can, a bench and a feeble tree with a sign under it saying: Curb Your Dog! DSR is a fire hydrant. ARNO enters slowly carrying a rose. SHE is in her early fourties. SHE is dressed in a tailored but chic manner. SHE takes in a building in the distance then sits on the bench, takes off her gloves, opens her shoulder bag and takes out a small tin box with Chinese figures on it. SHE opens the box for the first time, takes a sharp breath and rests it uncertainly on the edge of a bench. SHE gets out the Book of Common Prayer. SHE re-examines the contents of the tin box, eventually lifting a small bag of ashes into the palm of her hand. SHE bursts into tears. SHE quickly closes the box and gets control of herself. SHE takes the rose, the tin box and the prayer book USC. SHE drops the rose on a very particular spot. SHE opens her prayer book to a place already marked and begins to read it to herself. OWEN enters with a shopping cart full of cans and bottles various necessities for coping with life on the street. ARNO makes her way back to the bench and her pocket book, her back to OWEN. OWEN sees the rose, picks it up, puts it behind his back and studies ARNO.

OWEN

Bet you don't smoke.

ARNO

Excuse me?

Bet you don't smoke.

OWEN

Uh ... no. I don't.

ARNO

(OWEN stares at ARNO still trying to figure her out. ARNO turns back to OWEN)

I don't smoke.

OWEN

I don't smoke neither.

(OWEN smells the rose then puts it in his cart as ARNO watches)

Uh huh. Well ... good.

ARNO

(ARNO opens her book again and smooths down the page)

Sometimes I smoke.

OWEN

That's nice.

ARNO

Sometimes you smoke, too.

OWEN

Not anymore.

ARNO

Not for ... 3 months?

OWEN

Excuse me?

ARNO

(OWEN laughs ... proud of his guess and heads for the trashcan next to the bench)

I'm right. That's who I am. I'm right.

OWEN

Alright ... you're right.

ARNO

OWEN

I'm always right ... 'bout everybody.

ARNO

Well ... I'm ... happy for you.

OWEN

Bet you're lyin.

ARNO

Okay ... I'm not.

OWEN

It's important not to pretend. Not even for a moment.

ARNO

Uh huh.

OWEN

It's important to see into things ... 'cause there's always the possibility you could see a little further. That's all we come to do ... to see a little further ... but we don't know it 'cause we still ain't seen far enough.

(ARNO smiles politely and returns to her prayer book determined to begin her ceremony. OWEN looks through the trash as ARNO reads sotto voce:)

ARNO

"Jesus said, Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so ---

(OWEN begins to make himself at home on the grate)

Excuse me. I don't know how to say this ... but I need to be alone.

OWEN

Well, you ain't never gonna be. Don't you know that by now? Woman of your age. You must be half way through your life. You ever been without nobody? You ever lived without no phone?

(OWEN notices an imaginary animal)

Hey, little fella. What's your name?

ARNO

Just for five minutes.

(OWEN makes playful growling noises)

I'll give you a dollar.

(OWEN scratches behind its ears)

OWEN

Oh, I say ... yeah ... you like that, don't ya?

ARNO

Look, I believe I was here first

OWEN

You was there first. I was here first.

ARNO

Uh huh.

(ARNO makes her way DSL as OWEN continues playing gently with the animal)

"In my Father's house are many Mansions." I already read that. "If it were not so ... I would ... I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And wither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

OWEN

She belong to you?

ARNO

Uh ... I don't believe I know what you're talking about.

OWEN

This little dog. She belong to you? Shaggy little thing, ain't ya?

ARNO

Look, I need to be alone here. Couldn't you just walk down the street to where the green awning is?

OWEN

I only walk once a day.

ARNO

Two dollars. I'll give you two dollars. Three.

OWEN

Someone could come along. Steal my grate. S'posed to be cold tonight.

ARNO

Well, then crawl into a refrigerator box or something.

OWEN

Say, that's good. That's real good. Crawl into a refrigerator box. You oughta be the president.

ARNO

I'm sorry ... it's just ... uh ... look, I'm moving to Santa Fe in the morning and I need to complete this little ceremony before I go. So if you could just ... pretend you're not here.

OWEN

What I want to do that for? You already doin' it for me.

ARNO

Oh, really.

OWEN

Puttin' up the wall in time for Christmas.

ARNO

Never mind.

OWEN

Oh, yes ... I see it all.

ARNO

Well, then, could you keep it to yourself until I've had my moment here?

OWEN

Can't keep it to myself. It don't belong to me.

ARNO

Then just ... don't talk. Turn your back. Fantasize. Hallucinate. Whatever. But just do it in that direction.  
(Silence. OWEN turns his back)

Thank you.

(ARNO acknowledges the ashes in a perfunctory manner, re-opens the Book of Common Prayer to another previously marked spot and rather quickly begins to read:

ARNO (CONT)

"The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou aren't ... art ... art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me. Thou shalt prepare a table before me in the presence of them that trouble me;"

OWEN

She ain't listenin'.

ARNO

"Thou hast annointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full."

OWEN

Whoever it is you're buryin'.

ARNO

"Surely thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Amen.

OWEN

She's dwellin next to the fire hydrant right now.

ARNO

Maybe I'm not burying anybody. Maybe I'm standing here on a dare reciting the entire Book of Psalms. Maybe this is a publicity stunt for God.

OWEN

Well, whatever you is up to nobody hears you when you pray by the numbers.

ARNO

Maybe nobody hears me. Period. No matter what I do.

OWEN

Then why are you doin' it?

ARNO

You know, really ... I don't ask you why you've pissed your whole life away on the street. I don't see what business it is of yours ---

OWEN

I pissed my whole life away so I can say what I think!

ARNO

Well, I'm happy for you.

OWEN

Uh huh.

ARNO

No. I really am. Happy. Very, very happy.

OWEN

(To the dog)

You believe her?

ARNO

Oh, god ... I don't have to listen to this. I really don't have to listen to this.

(ARNO begins to exit snapping her fingers as if calling her dog)

ARNO (CONT)

Let's go.

(SHE stops ... confused)

OWEN

Who did you come with?

ARNO

My dog. Are you satisfied? I came with my dog.

OWEN

That little thing right by your feet?

ARNO

This little thing. In a can. This is where she used to pee. That building with the green awning there is where I used to live. This ... right here where I'm standing was her spot. These are her ashes. Or her bones. I thought they'd be more pulverized.

(Silence)

Did Bethany and Nona put you up to this?

OWEN

What's that?

ARNO

Do you know my friends Bethany and Nona?



OWEN

Well, if I do I don't know I do.

ARNO

Yeah, that sounds like something they'd tell you to say.

OWEN

I don't know no one by those names. (To the dog) Do I? (To ARNO) Say, look at how she like her mistress. Take her in your arms. Like the way you would. What's the matter with you? She don't stop needin' ya just 'cause she don't got her body. Where you go to school?

(ARNO prepares to exit)

ARNO

I don't see that that's relevant.

OWEN

(To the dog) Come here, honey ... what you say your name was? You lick my face I lick yours back.

(HE licks her face. ARNO stops and listens)

Look at that tail. How you keep it curled up so good? Oooooo ooo! Show me that one more time. Look at how she strut. Come on over here. That's it, Mama ... come on home.

(HE strokes her gently)

You was mine I'd call you Honey. All that pretty yella hair.

ARNO

We called her the Blonde.

OWEN

You called her that to her face?

ARNO

There were other names.

OWEN

Like what?

ARNO

Like You. A lot of times I called her You. Now, please ... give me back my dog and let me scatter her to the wind before I move to New Mexico.

OWEN

I don't got your dog. You got your dog. Right there ... in that little can.

ARNO

Really ... alright. We'll do this some other day. You've been very helpful.

(ARNO exits and OWEN calls after her:

OWEN

The way you are ... it's 'cause you won't let her lay down in your heart.

ARNO

(Returning)

I'm glad you know me so well. I'm really glad you know me so well. Probably a PHD in psychology. Probably graduated from ten colleges simultaneously at the age of eight. Now if you'll excuse me.

OWEN

I never un-excused you.

ARNO

Then fine ... have a nice life. Jesus, this fucking city. Can't even scatter your dog.

(ARNO exits. OWEN rolls over then begins to wipe off his face as if it's being licked)

OWEN

Go with her. I'm in enough trouble. Go on. Bye, bye.

(HE watches the Blonde leave then rolls onto his back)

God may not always come when you want Him ... but when He arrives He is always on time.

BLACKOUT

## Scene Two

A courtyard in an old adobe ruin outside of Santa Fe. ARNO is sitting on one of several overturned joint compound buckets making lemonade. SHE is very up. PETER, her brother, examines an architect's drawings.

ARNO

So she finally persuades the guy to shut up. He lies down on his grate. She re-opens her prayer book and starts to scatter the dog's ashes ... or cat, or whatever it was ... and ... are you ready for this? ... he starts talking to the animal she's trying to bury. Like it's right beside him.

PETER

No kidding.

ARNO

Describes it perfectly.

PETER

Who did you say this happened to?

ARNO

No one you know. And she told it to me with a completely straight face. Is that weird or what?

PETER

Reminds me of what happened when Mother died.

ARNO

She showed you where her papers were. You just forgot.

PETER

Maybe ... or maybe she was showing me then ... guiding my hand to the secret compartment. Ooooooaaahhh.

(HE rolls up the drawings)

ARNO

Oooooaahh yourself. So what do you think? Did I do good?

PETER

That you did.

ARNO

They're a little behind.

PETER

Well, that's to be expected.

ARNO

And I'm sorry about the bedroom. You can sleep in the kitchen if you want.

PETER

No, no ... I'd rather sleep out here with you.

ARNO

It cools off at night. And the air ---  
(SHE smells the air)  
Is that air or is that air?

PETER

That is air. Hot air. But that is air.

ARNO

You're not sorry you came, are you? Because I could really use your expertise. I want to turn this courtyard into something interesting where people can ... I don't know ... drink espresso between forays into art.

PETER

I just worry that you're too far out of town. An art gallery should be accessible.

ARNO

People will find us. When they've bought their souvenirs they'll want something really ---

PETER

High quality.

ARNO

You got something against quality ... oh, ye who restoreth brownstones?

PETER

I'm just not sure people will drive 25 miles out of their way to drink coffee and look at art.

ARNO

Peter, Santa Fe is growing all the time. Pretty soon it's going to merge with Los Angeles. "Don't judge what you don't know."

PETER

Or what was that other thing Mother used to say?

ARNO

"To the good!" Everything was always "to the good."

PETER

And honesty was always the best policy.

(PETER sits, suddenly dejected)

ARNO

I know what you're thinking ... but, trust me ... you gave your marriage your all. You mustn't beat up on yourself because you're not doing what Mother would've done. Sometimes leaving is the only self respecting thing you can do.

PETER

I keep hoping we'll become friends.

ARNO

Nobody becomes friends. That's all bullshit. You guys don't belong to each other anymore. Trust me.

PETER

But belonging changes. Just like with the Blonde. She lives in you here now.

(HE puts his hand on his heart)

ARNO

Yoo hoo ... she was just a dog.

PETER

She wasn't just a dog. She was an era.

ARNO

How much sugar?

PETER

Where is she, anyway?

ARNO

In my bag ... in a can. Canned era. The perfect gift ---

## PETER AND ARNO

For the woman on the go.

(PETER returns the plans to a colorful woven bag and takes out the can with the ashes in it. ARNO puts in as much sugar as she wants. PETER shakes the can)

ARNO

I opened it once. I think Mother was a bit more pulverized. See what you think.

(HE looks inside)

PETER

I'd return her.

ARNO

Tell the mortitian she's too al dente.

(THEY laugh. PETER shakes the can like a rattle and THEY both begin to sing La Cucaracha ... forgetting half the words. ARNO dances a mock flamenco)

Something, something, something ... ole!

PETER

I miss you. And I bring 'hellos' from ---

ARNO

Big hug.

(ARNO goes to hug PETER who turns in such a way it aggravates his neck)

Oooo ... I'm sorry ... I wasn't thinking. What an asshole. What can I do?

PETER

It's okay. It's chronic.

ARNO

(SHE puts a hand on his neck and starts to massage it)

Stress.

PETER

Oh, that's good. Right there. God ... you have no idea.

ARNO

Maybe you should see a doctor.

PETER

Well, actually, I've been getting some help from a friend of yours ... Emma.

ARNO

Emma Thacher?

PETER

Emma. Yes. She gave me a treatment a couple of days ago.

ARNO

Why?

PETER

Because it was either pain killers or something holistic.

ARNO

Oh. I thought she gave up "healing" when she married and moved to the country. Is there trouble in paradise?

PETER

I was hoping you could tell me.

ARNO

You're not interested in Emma. Say you're not interested in Emma. She is one of the world's more desperate people.

PETER

I thought she was kind of nice.

ARNO

All she talks about is the meaning of life. Everything is significant. After a while you want to say, "Honey, sometimes a woman eats a banana and it's just a banana."

(SHE finishes massaging his neck)

PETER

Thanks.

ARNO

I mean, the last time I saw her she got into this whole thing about why I get cold so easily ... and I'm here to say: Whatever it was she meant ... it was for her mind only. Do you know her well or something?

PETER

I only met her once ... through Becky.

ARNO

Oh, yeah?

(SHE hands PETER a glass of lemonade)

PETER

Yeah.

ARNO

To my first and favorite overnight guest.

PETER

To roughing it with a relative.

ARNO

To this time next year.

PETER

To freedom from buzz saws and plaster dust. They're doing good work.

ARNO

They're doing good everything. They're just way over budget and I can't take out a second loan ... I just can't.

PETER

You know I'd help you if I could.

ARNO

Don't be silly. I can manage. My old apartment's going co-op.

PETER

Yes, I heard ... you want to sell the rights.

ARNO

Have you and Becky become best friends or something?

PETER

We've run into each other a couple of times. I called her when my neck went out. Went over to your ... to the apartment to meet Emma. Becky's been letting her use that little room off the kitchen to give the occasional treatment so ... uh ...

(PETER starts going through his pockets)



ARNO

Want to go for a walk?

PETER

Isn't it a little hot?

ARNO

Not on the ridge. We could take the Blonde. Throw her around.

PETER

In New Mexico?

ARNO

She loved it here.

(PETER rolls his eyes like: Yeah, right)

Or anyway, she liked it when we looked at the pictures.

PETER

Why don't you wait until we're all together again in New York?

(PETER hands her a letter)

ARNO

We Who ... white man?

PETER

Look ... Becky asked me to give it to you and that's all I'm doing.

(ARNO backs away)

I don't know what's inside. I only know she told me to tell you it wasn't ---

ARNO

A birth announcement.

PETER

Really, Arno.

ARNO

Well, I've been gone 6 months ... I can add.

PETER

It's not a birth announcement.

ARNO

I thought you didn't know what was inside.

PETER

Well, then maybe it is a birth announcement.

ARNO

(taking the letter)

So she's had the baby?

PETER

Alright, yes ... she ... had the baby.

ARNO

(dropping the letter in the trash)

Great ... she can have the baby. When?

PETER

A couple of days ago. Actually ... when my neck went out. I showed up for my treatment and she went into labor. Very advanced.

ARNO

Well, more power to her.

PETER

Thank God for Emma. You'd've thought she delivered babies every day of her life.

(ARNO looks at the trash can with the unopened letter in it)

ARNO

So now Becky wants me to make it possible for her to raise the baby in the same apartment where she brought it into the world. How maternal.

PETER

Maybe I should've spared you the details.

ARNO

Peter ... I'm a big girl.

PETER

I know. I just ---

ARNO

--- want everyone to be happy.

PETER

What can I say?

ARNO

I'm happy. That's what you don't understand. My life in New York ... the other gallery ... The whole time I was there this is what I was dreaming about doing and now I'm doing it. It's costing a little more than I thought it would but ---

PETER

But why ... if you're going to sell the rights to your New York apartment ... don't you sell them to Becky so she can go on living there?

ARNO

Because they're my rights, Peter ... and I don't want to invest the money of an old lover in my new life. I mean, where the fuck is the father in all of this?

PETER

Europe, I think. Some sort of research grant.

ARNO

Oh ... I thought they were bravely happy in my apartment.

PETER

As far as I know she's gone through the whole thing by herself.

ARNO

So now it's Arno to the rescue!

PETER

That isn't my impression.

ARNO

Look, I don't care if you two want to be friends. I really don't. But watch out for her ... that's all I'm saying. She's not as helpless as you think.

PETER

It might've been a bit more ... whatever ... if you'd contacted her directly instead of through a lawyer ... that's all.

ARNO

Peter ... you have this sort of knee jerk obligation to the people you've been involved with but at a certain point ... kindness is nothing more than an ego trip.

(Silence)

Let's take a walk on the ridge.

PETER

I think I'm glad you talked me into coming.

ARNO

One of the great things about the desert is you don't have to weed.

(ARNO exits)

BLACKOUT

## Scene Three

A beach on Nantucket on a grey day in winter. ARNO and her two oldest friends, BETHANY (who is Southern) and NONA, are making a place for themselves in front of a campfire. NONA is preparing to fill a pipe with marijuana.

ARNO

So tell Lewis he can't see the kids until he makes his payments.

BETHANY

Don't think I haven't thought about it.

NONA

And?

BETHANY

It's not their fault he's an irresponsible son of a bitch. Do you know what he does last week? Calls up five minutes before he was supposed to come and get the kids for the weekend. He knows I'm going to the city with Kyle and that we're going to the flower show. He knows this because I've told him three times. I keep a list on the bulletin board so I know I'm not going crazy. "Things to be sure Lewis hears". Every day I add something to it. Three times. You have to say everything three times ... then he usually hears it and has his little reaction. So two weeks ago I began to speak to him about last weekend and could he take the kids. Three times I mentioned it. Three times I wrote it down on the bulletin board. I was tempted to go for four but thought ... no, he'll accuse me of bein' pushy. Besides ... he seemed to be okay about it and I didn't want him to think I'd totally given up on him growin' up ... even though I have. So, anyway, at the eleventh hour he calls and says he can't take the kids because his girlfriend with the multicolored hair has cramps. Cramps, honey ... cramps. That girl has five self-inflicted holes in her right ear and ran a safety pin through her nose while watching television and she can't endure cramps. The pain is too much for her. Now you know damn well they decided to go somewhere. But does he make other arrangements? No. He just dumps them back on me like I'm the Houdini of baby sitters. Never have kids. Never get married. Hurry up with that marijuana. I haven't gotten high in so long. And I live in Woodstock. God, I love Nantucket. All the times

BETHANY (CONT)

we've had here.

(Silence)

Are we really going to do this? Are we really going to scatter this poor little helpless creature on a nameless beach?

NONA

It isn't nameless ... it was her favorite.

ARNO

And anyway, she isn't helpless ... she's dead.

BETHANY

Nona, why do we like Arno? Why do we think we have to put up with her year after year? Because of boarding school? Is it as sentimental as blind loyalty?

NONA

It's the quality of her marijuana.

ARNO

My marijuana? You're the pusher. I keep you in business.

(NONA takes a toke and passes the joint to ARNO who helps herself)

NONA

Well, you certainly have been lately.

BETHANY

Her oils keep her in business, don't they, Nona? Your herbal oils.

NONA

I got an idea for a hanging sculpture on the way here and if I can figure out how to weave it it will be so far out and so expensive I won't need to push drugs or make herbal oils. I'll be an artist who earns a living doing what I love to do.

BETHANY

You'll be a dyin' breed.

ARNO

Your herbal oils could become a big business, though.

NONA

I don't care about that.

ARNO

You're not supposed to care. As soon as you start to give a shit ... it all disappears.

NONA

Don't say that ... it's too depressing.

ARNO

It's a law of life.

BETHANY

Oh, honey ... you're just going through a rough patch.

ARNO

Kiss it. Make it all go away.

BETHANY

You kiss it.

ARNO

God, it's cold.

NONA

I think it's nice.

BETHANY

We forgot marshmallows.

NONA

Well, what do you expect? Mercury's in retrograde.

BETHANY

(to ARNO)

Isn't it always?

NONA

Did you know marshmallows can kill you? Those fluffly little harmless things.

ARNO

And to think I used to go for fluffy, little, harmless things.

NONA

"I'm going to cast you forth from here into utter darkness!"  
Who said that?

ARNO

Sister ... uh ...

BETHANY

Sister ...

ARNO

The one with the ... things in her what's-its!

NONA

Yeah.

BETHANY

When she caught us overeating in the bathroom after lights out.

NONA

What was her trip?

ARNO

The only time we ever got caught, do you realize that?

NONA

You get away with it better than anyone I know. I used to think of it as your art form.

ARNO

I love getting away with it. I think it's what we're put on earth to do. I think it's how we show God a good time. Because let's face it ... the guy has no one to play with.

(Silence)

God ... this grass.

(ARNO lies on her back. NONA and BETHANY do the same)

Star light, star bright,  
First star I see tonight,  
Wish I may, wish I might  
Have this wish I wish tonight.

(THEY wish)

NONA

There aren't any other stars out to make it come true on.

ARNO

Then don't look up anymore ... until it gets a little darker.

NONA

But what if I do? What if I accidentally look back ---



ARNO

Then you'll know you're a scum bag and you don't deserve to live.

NONA

Seriously.

ARNO

You won't look back. Just tell yourself you won't and you won't.

NONA

I don't know how you do that.

ARNO

(rising)

You don't worry about it.

NONA

It's like you just decide what you want to feel and you feel it. I wish I was you. I can't tell you how many times I wish I was you.

BETHANY

The other day Kyle started in about how something was my problem. It wasn't his problem ... it was my problem ... and it was up to me to do something about it. Change it. And, I guess if I didn't that meant I didn't love him. I said: But I don't love you. Maybe one day I will ... but right now on account of Lewis and how skittish I still feel ... I get tired of remindin' him how much I still don't love him. And he's everything I want. He's good with the kids. He's serious about buyin' that house with me. He's got great taste in furniture. And every time he tells me how much he believes in us I become mean spirited and totally turned off to sex. We haven't had it in over a year. And he understands.

ARNO

And that's his problem.

BETHANY

Oh, Arno ... I don't know what I'm going to do.

ARNO

You're going to come over by this fire and get stoned.

BETHANY

I don't want to get stoned.

ARNO

Lighten up ... you leveled with him.

BETHANY

If he would just treat me like shit. Not a lot.

ARNO

Every Sunday morning, say ... instead of going to church.

BETHANY

He's so sure I'm going to change.

ARNO

Sure he's sure ... because if you change then he won't have to.

BETHANY

I've been wondering that.

ARNO

You make him come to you.

NONA

But you can change all the same.

BETHANY

You think so?

NONA

We can all change. That's why there are stars to wish on.

ARNO

The old hope factor.

BETHANY

Sometimes I feel like such a waste of time.

ARNO

Oh, Bethany ... look at me. Come on. Right here in my big old browns.

(BETHANY looks at ARNO)

You've never wasted my time. Ever. Or Nona's.

NONA

I'm the one who's always late.

BETHANY

It must be nice to be so free. To not have to take anybody else's feelings into consideration. I'm so tired of trying to "come from love" all the time ... when half the time I'd like to come from murder.

(Silence)

I miss the nuns.

ARNO

You don't miss the nuns. You never liked the nuns.

BETHANY

I know. But they liked me.

(ARNO laughs and gets up. SHE moves around trying to stay warm)

ARNO

I'm glad that Emma couldn't come. It's never the same when she joins us. (to NONA) I couldn't believe you asked her.

NONA

She's going through a rough time.

BETHANY

She's separated.

NONA

I didn't think we were supposed to say anything.

BETHANY

She's left Thayer for a woman.

ARNO

Well, finally the truth seeker stumbles upon the truth.

BETHANY

And she won't tell us who it is.

(ARNO thinks of all that PETER told her about EMMA delivering BECKY's baby and drifts off by herself)

NONA

She left Thayer because she didn't want to have children and he did.

BETHANY

Same thing.

NONA

It's not the same thing.

BETHANY

Honey, it stands to reason ... when you don't want to have children you want to be with a woman. Either that or end up an old maid. Remember the look on Emma's face when we ran into her at the movies? I bet it is that friend of Becky's with the red hair.

NONA

I don't think it's our place to talk about it, Bethany, when Emma asked us not to.

BETHANY

Why, Nona, honey ... you're having an opinion.

NONA

I'm sorry.

(ARNO boxes the air)

ARNO

Pshew, pshew, pshew.

(BETHANY takes a toke and coughs it out)

BETHANY

I don't know ... maybe I'm too old for this.

(ARNO huddles by the fire)

ARNO

God, am I the only one?

NONA

We don't have to stay just because we've arrived.

ARNO

No, it's good for me. The cold is good for me. What can I tell you? ... I'm a WASP.

NONA

Well, you came in as a WASP ... but that doesn't mean that's how you have to go out.

ARNO

Shit!

BETHANY

What?

ARNO

I looked back at the star before I'd seen another one. Typical, fuck.

NONA

I'm sorry.

ARNO

It's not your fault.

BETHANY

What did you wish?

ARNO

I'm not telling!

BETHANY

Something about your new gallery?

ARNO

(To herself) Jerk. (To the heavens) JERK!

BETHANY

Like that it's finished in time for the opening.

ARNO

It'll get finished if I have to do the work myself.

BETHANY

You know ... maybe this is none of my business, but I always admired that you didn't sell the rights to your apartment. Becky's been able to get back on her feet.

ARNO

I didn't do it because of Becky.

BETHANY

Well, whatever your reasons ...

ARNO

I make more money if I wait until the black book comes out.

BETHANY

All the same ... I know it's been hard on you ... living out of boxes in a partially restored adobe ruin. Alright, it's not a ruin ... but, honey, there's no sheet rock on the walls.

ARNO

(tickling BETHANY)

Where's your sense of adventure?

BETHANY

Maybe you should get another dog.

ARNO

Do you know what the proper thing to say is when we scatter the Blonde?

BETHANY

Oh, dear.

NONA

No.

ARNO

May she rest in pieces.

(ARNO and NONA laugh)

BETHANY

That's not funny. Honey, you have to grieve.

(ARNO continues laughing)

Grieve!

NONA

Grieve, Baby, grieve.

ARNO

Grieeeeeeve.

ARNO AND NONA

(Singing to the tune: Dream)

Grieeeeeeeeeeve, grieve, grieve, grie-ve.

BETHANY

Nona, you'll only encourage her.

NONA

Yes, mother.

(NONA and ARNO continue to laugh.  
ARNO puts her thumb in her mouth)

BETHANY

This is bordering on the tasteless.  
(BETHANY starts to exit)

NONA

Arno ... she's leaving.

ARNO

The fear of abandonment.  
(THEY cry like frightened babies)

BETHANY

Now sober up. Both of you!  
(NONA and ARNO pull themselves together)  
Arno, go get her ashes. The moment has arrived.

ARNO

Bury me.

BETHANY

What?

ARNO

Bury me ... in the sand. The way we did when we were kids.

BETHANY

I'm not going to bury you.

ARNO

Nona, come on ... bury me.

BETHANY

If you bury her I'm leaving the beach!

NONA

The way you said that ... wow ... look at her mouth. For a moment I saw your mother.

BETHANY

Good, honey. (To ARNO) Now go get the Blonde.

ARNO

I don't know where she is.

BETHANY

What do you mean you don't know where she is?

ARNO

I think I left her in the ladies' room at the airport.

BETHANY

I can never tell if you're kidding me or not.

ARNO

I can't either.

(ARNO and NONA laugh. BETHANY  
comes between THEM)

BETHANY

Nevermind. We'll start without her. (To ARNO) Say the first  
thing that comes into your mind.

ARNO

You can stay but your mother has got to go.  
(ARNO and NONA fall apart)

BETHANY

I wish I knew what was so funny.

NONA

Come back. Please. Come back.

ARNO

You've successfully manipulated us.  
(BETHANY exits)

NONA

We'll do the funeral. I wrote a sort of surprise ... we'll  
start with that.

(NONA rummages in her bag)

ARNO

No more jokes, I promise.

(ARNO pulls the can from her pocket and  
holds it so BETHANY can see it)

NONA

Of course, I never finished it ... but we'll all finish it.  
(BETHANY returns)



BETHANY

It was your idea to come here.

ARNO

Yes, it was. I take full responsibility.  
(SHE slaps her own face)

NONA

Oh, loooooook. A picture of the three of us the last time we were all here together. Before we all moved to different states. I look like an old stove. Sorry it's so wrinkled.

(SHE hands BETHANY the photograph.  
Silence. NONA studies the contents  
of her bag. ARNO looks off into space.  
BETHANY takes in the photograph)

God, I am so unorganized.

BETHANY

Nice, Honey. Very nice.

(Silence)

ARNO

Look at the gray. Just so ... gray. So like ... boring. I always thought boring was so boring that it would feel ... boring. It feels boring. Boring ... boring ... boring.

BETHANY

I don't know how to get stoned anymore, I guess. When you have kids there's a part of you that always stays aware. 911. I can never get stoned enough or drunk enough to forget 911.

ARNO

Sure you can. You just say fuck it all. Like with sex ... wherever it takes you ... fuck it. You'll come back. The kids'll still be there. And if you don't and they aren't ... so what?

BETHANY

You know how you're always asking me to tell you if you're coming across like a man?

ARNO

Bethany, go unconscious, will you?

BETHANY

You used to wonder about things.

ARNO

Fine. I used to wonder about things.

BETHANY

And now you're talking in absolute statements. And I hate it when you talk in absolute statements. It reminds me of Lewis. You're not hard. You're Arno and you care. Now say you care.

ARNO

I care. I really, really care.

BETHANY

I don't know why I put up with you anymore. I really don't. You don't take me seriously. You don't respect me. You take my observations as criticisms ---

ARNO

Hey, look ... I came here to have a good time. And you're on this whole trip about grief and loss and god knows what else. Jesus Christ ... what do you want? My guts on a platter? You grieve. Grieve for your marriage. Your kids. The hardness in your life. Just don't do it through me.

(Silence. ARNO takes a joint from NONA, takes another toke then hands the joint to BETHANY who refuses it)

Come on. It'll do you good. I'll tell you what I wished for.

(BETHANY takes the joint and waits for ARNO to tell her)

I wished that the next time I wish on a star I have something to wish for.

BETHANY

You need to get into town more often. You're too isolated. When was the last time you went on a date?

NONA

There is no bottom to this bag. It keeps going down and down and down. Right through the universe ... through galaxies ... into infinity and out the other side. Things. Piled up. Stacked up. No order. No reason. And it's all mine ... for all time.

ARNO

What are you looking for?

NONA

It was supposed to be a surprise. But it's not happening like a surprise, is it, Arny? It's happening like ... It's happening

NONA (CONT)

like what it's happening like. And that's what's supposed to be happening. Oh, good. Sometimes I get worried I'm fucking up the moment with expectations.

(ARNO looks in the bag)

ARNO

There are no expectations in that bag.

(BETHANY takes a big toke. SHE looks at ARNO)

BETHANY

I haven't done this in a long time.

ARNO

It's good shit. One toke is all you need. Nona knows. Nooo-nnnnaaaa knooooooooows. Know-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh waoh waoh waoh wahooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo ...

(ARNO and NONA begin to howl at the moon. BETHANY lets her breath go and waits to feel stoned. ARNO begins to dance slowly, sensuously ... in her own world. BETHANY watches ARNO then gets up and joins her)

Now how do you feel?

BETHANY

I don't know. Maybe a little dizzy.

ARNO

It is hard to get you stoned. Nona, let's lay the Blonde out in a line and snort her through a straw like coke.

(BETHANY chases ARNO around the beach)

BETHANY

You think it's chic to be cynical!

ARNO

You think it's chic to have kids!

(ARNO raises her hands as if to tickle BETHANY)

BETHANY

Ah, don't!

(SHE wrestles BETHANY to the ground and sits on top of her)

ARNO

Now I've got you where I want you.

BETHANY

I wish I was gay.

(ARNO gives BETHANY a short and friendly  
kiss on the lips)

You're bad.

(ARNO rolls onto the ground, laughing)

NONA

Mace. When was the last time you girls used a can of mace?

(SHE squirts it and it doesn't work)

Must've been here since 1975. The year I decided younger men  
knew how to relate to strong women better than men my own age.  
The year I decided they had no fear of commitment. After all  
... we raised them. I must've held onto this in case I met one  
who  
had slipped through the cracks and was still behaving like an  
animal. It doesn't work anymore but I don't remember using it.  
I don't even remember finding it in my bag. I worry that I'm  
disassociating. People do that, you know. They split off from  
aspects of themselves. It's like whole qualities float off into  
the void. Never to be seen again. And it becomes less and less  
complicated to be alive because there's less and less of you to  
... to ...

ARNO

Fight with?

NONA

To ... Shit. This is the second time in two days I haven't  
been able to get to the end of a ...

ARNO

Thought?

NONA

Okay.

ARNO

It's just your bag.

NONA

I'm sorry.

(BETHANY starts to laugh)

ARNO

What?

BETHANY

It's just your bag! Why is that so funny?

ARNO

You're out there, honey ... out there where the buses don't run.

BETHANY

I feel so ---

ARNO

Powerful.

BETHANY

Oh, god ... you can tell.

ARNO

Something wrong with feeling powerful?

BETHANY

I don't like it.

ARNO

You're so funny.

BETHANY

Don't laugh at me. Talk to me.

ARNO

It's okay to feel powerful. Let's feel powerful together.

BETHANY

No, no, no, no, no, no, no --- Talk to me. About the real world.

ARNO

The real world?

BETHANY

Talk to me!

ARNO

Okay, okay. We're in Nantucket. We're smoking a little dope. Nona's right here.

(motioning to NONA)

Come on, your turn. God.

NONA

Say the first thing that comes into your mind.

BETHANY

Emma's moving in with Becky.

NONA

And Santa Clause is coming to town.

BETHANY

Emma's moving in with Becky!

(ARNO registers the implication. BETHANY  
throws herself at ARNO)

Oh, Honey ... talk to me.

ARNO

Uh, look ... this isn't supposed to be happening.

NONA

Arno ... it's not what you ---

(BETHANY grabs ARNO. ARNO pushes her off)

ARNO

I don't do this anymore! I don't do it!

(ARNO pushes BETHANY away and goes off by  
herself. NONA sits beside BETHANY)

NONA

It's okay.

BETHANY

I don't know what's happening to me.

NONA

Don't close your eyes. You'll come back.

BETHANY

Nothing's real.

NONA

Look in my eyes ... tell me what you see.

BETHANY

I feel about five.

NONA

It's okay to be five.

BETHANY

But I don't like children!

(BETHANY starts to cry and laugh. NONA reaches into her pocket for a kleenex and discovers what she's been looking for)

NONA

Here it is! The poem thing I never finished. For the Blonde.  
(ARNO puts her fingers in her ears)

BETHANY

I gotta pee.

NONA

So pee.

BETHANY

I don't feel like going over there.

NONA

Go over there ... it's okay.

BETHANY

I don't even feel like pulling my pants down.

NONA

Well, you do what you want but I'm not sitting next to you on the ferry.

BETHANY

Arno has her fingers in her ears.

NONA

I worry about Arno.

BETHANY

I do, too.

NONA

I worry that I sell her too much dope.

BETHANY

I worry that one day I won't like her anymore.

(Silence. BETHANY exits to pee ---)

unnoticed)

NONA

Then I get into this whole thing about what worry really is. And how it accomplishes nothing. It's like this massive waste of energy and as I start to think about what that energy could become if it was properly expressed ... I quit thinking about her and start thinking about myself. And nothing ever changes. I don't quit worrying. And she still has her fingers in her ears. And life is still none of our business ... as usual.

(Silence. NONA sits beside ARNO)

A penny.

ARNO

What? Oh ... woolgathering.

NONA

Tell me. Let's get personal.

ARNO

Fog's coming in.

NONA

Yeeees.

ARNO

I was wondering what it must be like to be bisexual. Really bisexual. Not bisexual as an excuse to avoid commitment.

NONA

We're always wondering something, aren't we? It's like we're never satisfied. We always know we don't know enough. And if we didn't not know it ... and we knew it ...

(Silence)

What happens to the thoughts we think we forget? Are they released into the void? Or do they clog up our unconscious minds? Run us from deep inside? Is it our obligation to ... unstick ... our ... our ... ourselves ... so we become ...

(Silence)

Shit.

ARNO

How much do you know?

NONA

About what?



ARNO

Emma ... moving in with Becky.

NONA

Is she?

ARNO

I'm asking you.

NONA

Hey, that's great! I mean ... I'm sorry ... it's just ---

ARNO

I love it.

NONA

Well, maybe if you'd return Becky's phone calls ... She didn't even know about the Blonde. No one knows how much to say to whom anymore, you know?

ARNO

When did they become such good friends?

NONA

I don't know. After you left. Emma went back into healing. Becky needed help with the rent ---

ARNO

Becky can pay the rent! Last summer she was ready to buy the rights. And you may be sure she'll be all over my lawyer when the black book comes out.

NONA

Well, then ... maybe she's lonely. It's a big apartment.

ARNO

Lonely. Right.

NONA

She was young and inexperienced when you met. I bet if you talked to her now ---

ARNO

Every time I try to bury the Blonde someone wants to talk about Becky. What the fuck is this? Jesus. It's too cold. I don't like it here. It's too cold to get really high.

(Silence)

You'd think maybe Becky would've called me, you know? The

ARNO (CONT)

Blonde was in kidney failure when I left.

(Silence)

Probably never crossed her mind ... she's so fucking self involved. Her freedom. Her uncertainty. How much of her "self discovery" was I supposed to accommodate?

NONA

I know.

ARNO

She got everything she wanted. A career. Respectability. A baby. And now live-in help to help her raise it. Not only live in ... but holistic. Perfect. No factory parts in their baby food.

(Silence. ARNO looks at NONA)

No sugar either, poor kid. Is it a boy or a girl?

(NONA, tired of ARNO's sarcasm, refuses to respond)

What?

(BETHANY returns)

BETHANY

When my boys were five they played with dolls. When they were six they ripped their heads off and looked inside to see what made them tick. When they saw what that was they took up with guns.

(Silence)

I love being a mother. Sometimes I deny it but that's only for effect. I love it more than anything. Because, when you think about it, nobody has ever done it right. So, naturally, you think you're going to be the first one. And along the way you learn you're not. And how you handle the helplessness ... because life is going to go where it has to whether you want it to or not.

ARNO

Perhaps we could like ... you know ... like have this like meaningful, spiritual experience here. Like, you know ... read your inspiration, man and gag me to the max.

NONA

Okay ... my poem thing. It's not very good.

ARNO

Stop apologizing! God! Every time you admit you're wrong --- You're not an asshole, okay?

NONA

I didn't say I was an asshole.

ARNO

Life, Nona ... life!

(NONA unfolds her poem)

NONA

The Blonde is what we called her  
 When we spoke among ourselves  
 But what we called her to her face  
 Would fill both books and shelves.

Groan ... everybody groan.

(THEY do)

Now we say the first name we remember for the Blonde. Arno you start. We'll go in a circle this way. The first nickname that comes into your mind.

ARNO

Uh ... Fur Below.

BETHANY

Big Dog.

NONA

Miss Face.

ARNO

Fizzle Bizzle.

BETHANY

Angel Eyes.

NONA

Toady.

ARNO

No!

NONA

What?

ARNO

Just don't call her that.

(ARNO shoots a look at BETHANY)

NONA

Okay.

BETHANY

Don't look at me with darts in your eyes.

ARNO

I do look at you with darts in my eyes and you know why. That was a private nickname ... between Becky and me.

BETHANY

I never said a word to anybody. It was Becky who told you, wasn't it, Nona?

NONA

I just thought it was a name like any other.

BETHANY

She didn't do it on purpose. She was hurt.

ARNO

Why, whenever I ask for a modicum of understanding from the two of you do you side with Becky? I'm supposed to "understand", aren't I? Be a peaceful Buddah like Kyle, right Bethany? No, come on ... tell me ... should I see her through this "phase" and let her say the same things behind my back that you say behind his?

BETHANY

You can lower your voice.

ARNO

Let her pretend to love me. Endure me. The way you endure Kyle.

BETHANY

I'm changing that.

ARNO

You're buying a house with someone you don't even love ... let alone sleep with.

BETHANY

Sometimes there's no choice. You don't have a delinquent husband and three kids ---

ARNO

You don't have kids, either. You have little things you tell them what to do and you get to scold them when they don't. You didn't have them for them. You had them for yourself. For security. And let me tell you something, the best thing Lewis ever did was desert you. You were just using him, anyway.

BETHANY

You can find your own way back to the ferry.

ARNO

Yeah, right ... walk away ... that solves everything.

BETHANY

It's what you did.

(BETHANY exits)

ARNO

I was the one who was deceived. I had a right!

BETHANY (OS)

YOU DON'T KNOW TRUTH FROM FICTION!

ARNO

YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH? IF IT WEREN'T FOR ME BECKY'D STILL BE SELLING HER JEWELRY IN FLEA MARKETS. NOW THEY'RE WORKS OF ART!

(NONA prepares to leave)

NONA

Bethany!

ARNO

Go with her!

(NONA hesitates)

Do you realize what Becky gets for one necklace at Bergdorf's? And all because of my old gallery in New York. And the minute she gets what she wants she's straight and I'm history. And I'll be goddamned if I'll let her get ahold of my apartment.

(Silence)

You wonder what the fuck it's all about, you know?

NONA

It's about whatever you want it to be about.

ARNO

Oh, Nona ... can't you just say: Oh, honey ... I know?

NONA

I'm sorry ... I mean, well ... if I'd thought of it I would've said it. But I didn't think of it. Probably because ...  
Despair is man made, you know.

ARNO

You wouldn't admit it if you felt it, anyway.

NONA

I admit a lot of things. Things you don't even know about. I'm always trying to understand. That's why I don't get a lot done. Things like why you've never shown my hanging sculptures in any of your galleries. Why you've never offered and why we've never talked about it.

ARNO

If I was to mount a show of yours god knows if you'd even remember to show up.

NONA

I show up to sell you dope.

ARNO

Alright! You're not very talented. Now go away and understand that.

(Silence. ARNO goes after a sandflea inside her sock)

It's what you wanted to hear, isn't it?

NONA

Boy ...

ARNO

Hanging sculptures.

NONA

Nevermind.

ARNO

Wallhangings. Say it, Nona ... macrame wallhangings. And they don't sell because their time has passed. You've got to let go, Nona. It's the only way to fly.

(SHE goes after the sandflea again)

Get out of here.

NONA

Boy, Arno ... boy ...

ARNO

It's for your own good.

NONA

You've always ... you seduce me into thinking you really want to hear what I have to say and then you turn on me. You've always done that. And I always think it's for the last time.

ARNO

Hope. Hope is what is really man made. Hope and dope.

(SHE goes after the sandflea again, slapping her leg and gradually working her way up to her face and head)

I SAID GET AWAY YOU FUCKER!!!

(SHE looks at NONA)

You can smile. I'm never violent. Even I have my standards beyond which I never go.

(Silence)

It's just ... everything.

(Silence)

Bury me.

NONA

Bury yourself.

(NONA exits leaving ARNO alone by the fire. SHE stares at it then lower her hand slowly into the flames)

BLACKOUT

## Scene Four

A park in San Francisco on a sunny spring day. ARNO sits alone on a bench eating rice cakes ... on the edge of madness. A second bag of rice cakes is on the bench beside her. EMMA enters.

EMMA

Arno? Emma. Emma Thacher.

ARNO

Emma?

EMMA

Wow.

ARNO

What are you doing here?

EMMA

This is incredible. There's a healing seminar. Craniosacral therapy.

ARNO

Uh huh.

(EMMA sits)

EMMA

I have had you on my mind. I can't tell you how many times you've crossed it. As recently as last night. And now here you are ... the power of thought ... manifesting. Anyway, I'm here for the week. How have you been? I can't believe this. Both of us in San Francisco. Isn't life incredible?

ARNO

Okay.

EMMA

There really are no accidents.

(Silence)

Anyway, I'm learning all about the human brain. The spinal chord. The craniosacral system. I said that, didn't I? How to listen to subtle motion in the body. With my hands. Anyway ... I'm ... well, I'm practicing healing again.



ARNO

Yes, I know. Want a rice cake?

EMMA

No thanks.

ARNO

In my apartment.

EMMA

Yes.

ARNO

I'm sorry.

EMMA

Just until I can find a place to ---

ARNO

I mean about you and Thayer.

EMMA

Well ... there you are.

ARNO

You sure are.

(Silence)

EMMA

I met somebody ... during the chaos. Sort of ... well, a sort of lesbian.

ARNO

I think I heard ... but I'm not supposed to know.

EMMA

Bethany, right? I should know by now.

ARNO

We all should ... but who does?

EMMA

Still ... if it weren't for her I never would've looked up Becky. She's been a godsend. I didn't know any women who were ... uh, well ---

ARNO

Gay.

EMMA

Well, anyway ... bisexual.

(Silence)

I'm sorry about the Blonde.

ARNO

Yeah, well ... that's life.

EMMA

You must be used to it by now.

ARNO

Want a rice cake?

EMMA

Okay.

(EMMA takes a rice cake and ARNO  
eats another)

I'm not. Used to it. I hope one day we become friends. Thayer  
and I.

(Silence)

My friend and I will. That's one of the amazing things about  
falling in love with a woman. When you break up ... well, you  
make an effort to kind of hang in there, don't you? ... while  
your feelings transform. Anyway ... that's been my ... not that  
I've had a lot ... of experience. But I've sure learned a lot  
about love ... let me tell you. And about not having  
expectations. I mean, for a year there when I wasn't getting  
what I wanted ... I behaved like a real asshole. Talk about not  
wanting to grow up.

(Silence)

What are you doing here, anyway?

ARNO

Waiting for the sun to go down so I can dig a little hole and  
throw the Blonde in it. She's been rattling around in the trunk  
of my car for too long now ... and I need the can. Just  
kidding. Actually, I'm about to throw myself off the Golden Gate  
Bridge.

(EMMA laughs)

You can laugh.

EMMA

No, it's just ... I've never thought of you as someone who might  
---

(Silence)

Actually, we've all sort of been wondering where you were.

EMMA (CONT)

Becky said she called the gallery a couple of weeks ago and got a disconnect.

(Silence)

So is this where you're living?

ARNO

Until they fix my car. I'm a prisoner of foreign parts.

EMMA

Oh, God ... anything mechanical ... forget it.

(Silence)

I guess I should tell you that the black book's come out ... so if you want to sell the apartment ... There's another one in the same building that Becky has her eye on.

ARNO

She's doing well, huh?

EMMA

Well, her jewelry will always support her. It's classic.

ARNO

You've got to stand for something you believe in in this life. Something more than money.

EMMA

Oh, she's painting again. She's been offered a show in Tribeca.

ARNO

But then most of what you see in galleries today is not art. Anymore than the synthesizer is music. Have you heard the sounds of the New Age? A lot of self indulgent wandering. No structure. George Winston ... drip torture. I could be making a fortune if I'd show artists who paint for the trend. I did make a fortune. But this gallery was going to be different. No compromising. I threw it all behind a brilliant, eccentric, middle aged Native American who had never been shown before because he was painfully shy and inclined not to show up. But in his work he was fearless. He could handle any medium. I put every cent I had into his opening. It was museum quality. And what did the art critics review? His personal life. He's perceived as local color which means, I guess ... his talent is incidental. Nobody wants to see beneath the surface anymore. I wish I could paint or sculpt. Because you could die ... every time you turn on the ... MTV ... what is MTV? Fast food images. It's too late. Cars aren't made to last. Answering machines ... forget about. And families ... here you are ... the

ARNO (CONT)

surrogate father of my ex-lover's child telling me it's okay to buy my own apartment. Who are you? Why are you following me around? Surely you've met other lesbians by now. Or have you and Becky gone straight ... for the sake of the child?

EMMA

Well, I think we're ... I don't know. Because ... what happened to me ... it may've just been the person.

ARNO

That sounds familiar.

EMMA

But it's true ... because before we met I'd never had a single thought in that direction. I mean, wasn't I supposed to have known at the age of five? And the first time we did it I mean, I had to be really careful ... I was afraid I'd burst out laughing. It all seemed so ludicrous. Me with a woman.

(Silence)

Except it wasn't. Not with her. It went way past sex. Way past everything and right into who we were as people. How we fit together. Physically, spiritually, mentally. I kept waiting to feel that what I was feeling was wrong ... and I never did.

ARNO

What happened?

EMMA

She couldn't leave where she was. She tried.

ARNO

Then it became about excuses.

EMMA

I don't know what it became about. Just that it's still in me. And it's getting to be a fucking drag.

ARNO

The first woman you break up with is the hardest ... no two ways about it.

EMMA

But why did we have to break up at all? I mean, when you love somebody ... When you have that kind of capacity for connection ... I just don't get it. And I will never get it. And somehow or other I have to find a way of living with not getting it

EMMA (CONT)

because I need to get it ... and this is like "The Big Lesson". You look for answers you're dead. And I don't have to tell you ... I love answers. I really loooooove answers. So, okay: there aren't any. I'm supposed to live the rest of my life without the most profound connection I've ever felt with anybody. I'm supposed to "go on" ... as if that's all somehow or other "okay". And, I mean I wish I could just bear down and concentrate like nothing ever existed outside of whatever it is that I'm doing when I'm not thinking about her which is pretty much all the time. I can't even go out with other people. It's all about comparisons. Talk about obsession. At least with Thayer ... well, I don't know what with Thayer either, really. I mean, when you think about it I lost them both in the same year. A man and a woman. Talk about the primal scream. I don't know ... maybe nobody talks about the primal scream anymore. Craniosacral therapy ... I need it done to me. Really. That's why I came here ... only I'll never admit it. I never admit to anything. Except what's good. I only see what's good. Probably because I'm a very dark person.

(Silence. ARNO continues eating her rice cakes)

You sure eat a lot of those things.

ARNO

Well, it's better than a box of David's cookies.

(Silence)

EMMA

It must be pretty incredible to have always known who you are.

ARNO

Excuse me?

EMMA

Sexually.

ARNO

I tell you, people today will talk about anything.

EMMA

Well, no ...

ARNO

It takes time. Just like anything else.

EMMA

But how do you know when the time is up? How do you know when you've become who you're supposed to become?

(ARNO rises)

ARNO

Just kind of look around from time to time and let me know if anyone in uniform is coming.

EMMA

Or like with your rice cakes, Arno ... how do you know when you've eaten enough? How do you know when you've forgotten what you're trying to forget?

ARNO

Oh, really ... let's not ... you know ...

EMMA

Anyway.

(Silence. ARNO gets a spade from her bag and begins digging a hole for the Blonde)

ARNO

Maybe if I was eating lots of pasta, say, with parmegian cheese and fresh basil ... maybe some sundried tomatoes. Or a lemon cheesecake in its entirety. Maybe then if you asked me what I was trying to forget ... But rice cakes? This is just flirting with danger. The only real trouble with these things is that they shed.

EMMA

Well, at least we always know how to find you.

ARNO

My little trail of self destruction.

(Silence)

I mean, if I was a compulsive eater I would cook entire dinners for myself. As it is I live on rice cakes, peanut butter and juice ... and usually in bed in front of the TV. And sometimes kumquat marmalade.

EMMA

Well, but you need your greens.

ARNO

Emma ... you're too serious. You have always been too serious. That is the source of the tension between us.

EMMA

I thought when I saw you that maybe things would ... well, would be different from how they always are with us.

ARNO

Because you'd slept with a woman?

EMMA

I guess. I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.

ARNO

Emma, I don't like you. Nothing personal.

EMMA

I didn't mean we had to like each other. I just thought ... You're right. I make everything too significant. So this was a meeting just like any other ... even though it wasn't planned.

ARNO

Evidently.

(Silence)

EMMA

It isn't how much you eat ... it's that you eat as if your food was about to be taken away from you.

ARNO

I didn't ask you here.

EMMA

Not with your conscious mind.

ARNO

Now right about here is where I begin to lose it every time I'm around you and Nona. All this airy fairy other worldly bullshit. I really don't want to hear this. I'm being very straight with you.

EMMA

It's not about other worlds ... it's about responsibility.

ARNO

I'm responsible! Jesus Christ, I ran two art galleries. And may I remind you that the one in New York was very successful. And may I also remind you that while the other was not ... I took the loss.

EMMA

(overlapping)

Not responsibility for money --- for yourse ---

ARNO

(overlapping)

I did not declare bankruptcy! I did not sell the land to developers! I could've bought and sold the New York apartment twenty times had I done that. But the building still stands and you and Becky and that baby ... whatever your "relationship" ... still have a place to live!

EMMA

Well, but ... maybe it's time you let us take care of ourselves.

ARNO

Becky used to do that. It used to drive me up the fucking wall.

EMMA

Look, I'm sorry. I'm going to go now.

(EMMA starts to leave. ARNO turns her hand into a gun and shoots EMMA three times.

EMMA turns around, comes back and steps firmly on the bag of rice cakes. Silence)

EMMA

I don't know why I did that.

ARNO

Well, I'm sure we'll discuss it when you do.

(EMMA begins to pound her foot on the rice cakes. ARNO pushes her aside to try and save them. EMMA pushes back and THEY begin to wrestle)

EMMA

You and Becky didn't just break up over a baby!

ARNO

You and what's-her-face didn't just break up over ... over some ... some some circumstances she couldn't leave!

EMMA

She loved me!



Not enough!

ARNO

You witch.

EMMA

Gimme my rice cakes!

ARNO

You're so afraid of what you really feel ---

EMMA

I said gimme!

ARNO

Why?

EMMA

J-j-j-j-j-ju ---

ARNO

No!

(ARNO freezes with rage)

They're all crumbled, anyway. What are you going to do? Pour them down your throat?

(ARNO remains rigid)

I mean, rice cakes.

(EMMA sees what's happening to ARNO)

Are we talking about rice cakes? Arno? Okay.

(EMMA drops the rice cakes and moves quickly and quietly behind ARNO. SHE puts her left arm across ARNO's chest and her right hand on ARNO's stomach. ARNO becomes even more rigid)

What's going on in here? Come on, Arno ... show me. Or I'm never leaving. This is it forever. You and me. Locked. My hand in your gut. Come on, Arno.

(ARNO's clenched fists begin to shake. EMMA puts her hands over them. ARNO pushes against EMMA's hands)

Come on, Arno ... show me.

ARNO

Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh ---

(ARNO begins a dry sob then starts to shiver uncontrollably. EMMA holds her)

EMMA

Give me the cold. That's right, Arno ... give it to me. Give it to me. Give me the cold. Give me the cold.

(Gradually ARNO calms down. Silence.  
THEY disengage carefully)

Well, anyway ...

(EMMA sits. ARNO looks at her eventually.  
SHE is vulnerable and shy)

ARNO

Nona said you cured a dog of cataracts.

EMMA

Thayer's dog. Anson. It was an accident.

ARNO

Watching TV or something.

EMMA

He used to nuzzle his eyes under my hands. Every time I'd sit down he'd search me out. Maybe after about a month or two ... we took him to the vet for his parvo virus and his eyes were clear.

ARNO

Sounds like you don't know your own power.

EMMA

But it isn't about power. Please. Look ... what just happened ... we shouldn't talk about it. We should just ... Because when we live with things ... the way they are ... we have the power ... it's just there ... because we're totally present. That's all we're really here for, you know? To become totally present.

(Silence)

I wish I'd loved a woman before I met Thayer. I would've been a better wife.

(Silence)

ARNO

Once, right after she died there was this homeless man who could see the Blonde. Or anyway, he said he could. Do you think that sort of thing really --- ?

EMMA

I don't know. I'm not clairvoyant. And I don't always trust people who are.

ARNO

She was my Toad.

EMMA

What?

ARNO

The Blonde. I used to call her that. It was just a silly name. My brother and I made it up when we were kids.

(Silence)

We grew up in a boys' school.

EMMA

I didn't know that.

ARNO

Every night one of the teachers had to make himself available. Make sure lights went out and homework got done ... you know. Anyway, we called him the Toad. It stood for: Teacher On Active Duty. All of the Blonde's names came and went ... but that one ... at some point every day I called her that for her entire life. Sometimes Toady. It was like our ... love word.

(Silence)

Maybe he couldn't see her after all ... that bum. Maybe it was nothing more than coincidence.

EMMA

Like us meeting here today.

(Silence. EMMA picks up the can with the Blonde in it)

I think my grandfather was more pulverized than this.

ARNO

So was my mother.

(ARNO takes the can and puts it in the hole)

EMMA

Why are you burying the Blonde here?

ARNO

It's pretty. And it's green. And it's San Francisco.

(Silence)

I don't know. I don't know why I'm burying the Blonde here.

(ARNO looks at EMMA then takes the can out of the hole and puts it in her bag)

Let's not go foraging for significance.

EMMA

Alright ... then I'll just say 'goodbye'.

ARNO

And I'll just walk out of this park with you.

(THEY begin to exit. ARNO changes her mind)

EMMA

Goodbye.

ARNO

Goodbye.

(ARNO sits on the bench)

Walk, walk, walk.

BLACKOUT

## Scene Five

New York City. The same cul de sac as in scene one. An early fall evening. ARNO and BECKY are walking toward the Blonde's spot.

ARNO

It's nice when you leave town ... and you move back and the same restaurant is still there. Same maitre d'. Same angel hair primavera. And they still think we're the same. There's something comforting in that.

BECKY

I said you were away on a trip. I don't know what they thought when I was pregnant.

(THEY arrive at the spot)

Well, this must be the place.

ARNO

I came by here once to bury the Blonde. Maybe two years ago. With the Book of Common Prayer. Me! Praying mainly that you wouldn't see me. And that you would. I took it all out on a homeless black man who wintered on that grate and claimed he could see the Blonde. Just what I needed, right?

BECKY

He's gone now. I don't know where ... but he's gone.

ARNO

Well, there you are.

(Silence)

BECKY

I told you our apartment would be worth something one day.

ARNO

"Our" apartment ... she queried.

BECKY

Well, your name's still on the mailbox ... she replied casually.

ARNO

Yes, but you own it, she reminded gently ... have owned it for over three hours.

BECKY

Only until you can afford to buy it back, she said, shrugging her shoulders and looking at her feet.

ARNO

I thought you couldn't wait to get rid of me.

BECKY

Sometimes I couldn't.

ARNO

I guess I was pretty hard to live with.

BECKY

It wasn't about you.

ARNO

But I made it very difficult.

BECKY

You're a very ---

ARNO

Don't say forceful. Please don't say forceful.

BECKY

Articulate woman, alright? You make your thinking so clear it's hard to hold to another point of view.

ARNO

I never told you not to go out with men.

BECKY

Arno, you gave me more freedom than I knew what to do with. It wasn't you. It really wasn't.

ARNO

But I'm forceful.

BECKY

Yes, and I was mousey. And together we did this thing to each other.

ARNO

I just wish we'd talked about it instead of ---

BECKY

I couldn't. I didn't know how.

ARNO

You were scared of me.

BECKY

No ... I wasn't. I wasn't scared of you.

(Silence)

Nothing that happened was your fault. You can try and make it your fault if that will make you feel better ... but that's not what I believe.

(Silence)

I was trying to grow up. I still had feelings for men. I couldn't pretend they were resolved in me when they weren't. You and I ... I was only nineteen when we met. You were the only woman I'd ever been with.

ARNO

Am I still?

BECKY

Emma and I were friends, Arno. Our lives were in upheaval. We helped each other. Period.

ARNO

You were "friends" with the father of your child.

BECKY

What happened that night was an accident.

ARNO

What happened that night was something you wanted to have happen, Becky. You knew I'd never agree to it. No, don't walk away!

(Silence)

So what did I do? What did I do just now that's putting this intolerable ten feet between us?

BECKY

When you said I knew that you'd "never agree to it." I just felt all those things I felt then ... like I had to ask your permission to live my life.

ARNO

We were living together. Surely we should've discussed getting pregnant. Jesus god ... wouldn't you've been ---

BECKY

Yes! Look ... I have no excuse!

(regaining her composure)

You asked me why I walked away and I'm telling you. You always do that. You ask a question. I answer the question I think you're asking and you say: But, but, but. Nothing I say is good enough. Or right. Or what you want to hear. That's why I stopped responding.

(Silence)

ARNO

All I was saying was that I felt tricked. Not because you slept with someone else ... but because you waited to tell me you were pregnant until it was too late to do anything about it. Call me old fashioned. I felt totally and completely tricked.

BECKY

Well, I did, too! You know? I did, too.

ARNO

You just said I gave you your freedom.

BECKY

And I was expected to use it in a very specific way. And if I didn't ... you'd turn off. That's what you do ... and it's very confusing because you have a greater capacity for love than anyone I know but at the eleventh hour there are always conditions. You don't love for nothing. You talk about it. Like you really want to. But you don't do it.

(Silence)

Except with the Blonde. But now that's she's dead ... you don't even let yourself love her. It's always jokes. Snorting her through a straw like coke.

(Silence)

I'm sorry ... I don't mean to get off into the Blonde. It's just ... your capacity to shut down when things don't go your way ... I was scared. When I found out I was pregnant I was so scared ... not of having the baby ... not of not being able to handle it ... and **not** of you. But of losing you ... because of how you are. And you're right ... we should've talked. I should've made you feel included.

ARNO

You never even tried.

BECKY

Because once I found out I knew I had to go through with it. No matter what you felt or did. I had to have my baby. It was



BECKY (CONT)

like a gift and I knew I'd shrivel up into nothing if I let myself be talked out of it.

ARNO

Then that's all I'm saying ... it wasn't an accident.

BECKY

It was. Then it wasn't. Alright?

ARNO

Yes, well ... see ... that's saying nothing, as usual.

BECKY

I'm sorry you feel that way.

ARNO

You hide behind ambivalence.

BECKY

Arno, I thought ... I thought maybe if I became a mother you and I would be more ... more ... like ... I was painting the way you wanted me to paint. Even my jewelry ... you showed it when it pleased your eye. I was tired of being a good kid. I wanted to be a woman, Arno. Like you.

ARNO

Oh, please.

BECKY

See, and then when I say what I think you dismiss it.

ARNO

You wanted us to be equals so you got pregnant.

BECKY

No ... you're making fun.

ARNO

I'm not. You were tired of feeling like the kid ---

BECKY

That's what I couldn't articulate.

ARNO

And I was overbearing and insensitive.

BECKY

Arno, stop it! Some things don't have anything to do with you. You're just in the line of fire.

(Silence)

Maybe we should do the Blonde.

ARNO

(throwing the can)

Here, take her. I don't care.

BECKY

I can tell.

ARNO

Oh, god ... are you going to give me a lecture on how I should "express my feelings" for the Blonde? Let her "lay down in my heart". How the fuck are you supposed to let a dead dog lie down in your heart? What the fuck does that mean, anyway?

BECKY

And why does it piss you off?

ARNO

I don't know why in god's name you want to be like me. I'm not having such a terrific time, you know.

BECKY

I like your spirit. You drive me crazy ... but I like your spirit.

ARNO

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

(Silence)

BECKY

I know things have been rough. Especially with the gallery.

ARNO

It was too far out of town.

BECKY

But still ... they got your hopes up. And then to pull out like that. It would've made a great museum.

ARNO

No one wanted to take the chance. Except the goddamn developers. I tell you ... pretty soon you'll look for the North

ARNO (CONT)

Star and see MacDonald's golden arches. The Milky Way will be a K Mart. We'll throw the homeless on Pluto. It's so hard to ... feel proud of being ... human.

BECKY

I love you, Arno.

ARNO

How old is he now, anyway?

BECKY

Tony?

ARNO

Whatever his name is.

BECKY

Eighteen months.

ARNO

And "the father"?

BECKY

He's around.

ARNO

And?

BECKY

He lives with a man.

ARNO

Stop it.

BECKY

I don't write the script ... I just live the story.

ARNO

He's bisexual?

BECKY

Not when we ... you know. He was straight. When we were in art school he was married. Not that that proves anything ... but ... anyway ...

ARNO

Now how do you feel about men? Or should I even ask?

BECKY

Gay men make great fathers.

ARNO

You know what I mean.

BECKY

I don't know. I don't know that I'll ever know. Maybe if I'd had a little girl ... but I look at Tony ... the way he takes things in ... it's so different from the way I do. And the two of them together ... what they share ... effortlessly. I'm being let into a whole new world. I have to keep myself open. Have to grow with him. He's my Toad.

ARNO

Don't.

BECKY

But it's the truth.

ARNO

I wish you'd known these things about yourself when we met.

BECKY

But then we never would've loved each other.

(Silence)

Like with the Blonde. Do you wish you'd never loved her?

ARNO

Let's not start saying these things.

BECKY

But they're what I live with every day. Right in here.

(SHE puts her hand on her heart)

You're as alive in me as you've always been. I don't just cut off my feelings because you're not here. I talk to you. I wonder sometimes what you'd do if you were me. I let Tony crawl up under my t-shirt. I say: Where's Tony? Just the way you did with the Blonde. I can't escape you. You may not approve of me ... but I can't escape you. That's just the way things ... that's just the way they are.

(Silence)

Were you with the Blonde at the end?

ARNO

Yes.

BECKY

Alone?

ARNO

Well, the vet was there.

BECKY

Did you hold her?

ARNO

Oh, I wouldn't let her go until I absolutely had to.

(ARNO begins to unravel)

I'm sorry ... it's nothing. It's just ... she always hated the vet's. I should've had her put to sleep at home.

(Silence)

She was so dehydrated, you know? Her tongue ... was dry and swollen. And when he walked into the room with the needle ... she couldn't see him ... but she knew. She started to panic. I didn't know what to do so I just held her ... like a baby ... and watched him put the needle in. She kicked her legs ... but I held them down. And I kept hoping for a fucking miracle. I'm such an asshole, you know? I think some sort of magic will save me at the eleventh hour like I'm exempt from ... I don't know ... or something. So with great confidence I ... restore adobe ruins ... in the desert. Because how do I know that the Blonde ... Maybe she wanted to die of natural causes. Maybe that building wanted to blow quietly into thin air. Because we were so ... so ---

BECKY

Helpless.

ARNO

Fuck helpless ... fuck it! I should've thought of something. Even if all I'd done was say 'no' ... and taken her home for another day. I'm such an asshole!

BECKY

Uh!!!

ARNO

What?

BECKY

Arno, just tell me what happened. You're not the heroine or the villain of this piece. Some things just are. When you hate yourself you keep me out. You keep me from having the

BECKY (CONT)

experience of your things that just are.

(Silence)

ARNO

All I really wanted to do was go with her, you know? So we could keep moving through each other ... the way we used to. Because

at least I knew when I loved her I was doing it right. I knew that at least once in my life ... I was loved and loved back and it wasn't a struggle. I mean, alright ... maybe it's easier when they can't talk back. I'll give you that. But still ... something has to be said for that connection. Because it was so ... so ...

BECKY

Unconditional.

ARNO

Oh, Becky ... I've become so mean. I smoke too much dope and I beat Emma up in the park.

(BECKY holds ARNO and laughs gently)

I did. That's not funny. What?

BECKY

I don't know. You.

ARNO

Well, at least I'll never eat another rice cake.

(Silence)

I miss her, you know? Late at night ... that little, warm body ... So much ... tenderness. I miss that, you know? There's no more tenderness. Sometimes I think I don't even know what that is.

BECKY

It's this, Honey. It's just this.

ARNO

This is too sad to be tender. I'm sorry. I don't mean to cry.

BECKY

I miss her, too.

ARNO

Sometimes ... sometimes I even miss you.

BECKY

Well ... hallelujah.

ARNO

Not as much as I miss the Blonde, though ... because I'm still mad at you.

BECKY

Yeah, we wouldn't want to let go of that too fast, would we?  
(ARNO laughs)

ARNO

I'm such an asshole.

BECKY

You're determined, aren't you?

ARNO

Yes.

BECKY

Alright, you win ... you're an asshole.

ARNO

In my next life I'm going to like myself the whole time. Of course, I'll probably die at birth.

(Silence)

It's not wrong, is it? To let a dog in that far? I mean, I'm not a pervert, am I?

BECKY

No, honey ... you're not a pervert.

ARNO

It's not sick or anything.

BECKY

It's life.

ARNO

How do you know so much? You're younger than I am.

BECKY

Well, evidently, I learned from a master.

ARNO

Mistress.

BECKY

I learned from a master mistress.

(Silence)

Come upstairs.

ARNO

I don't know. Peter's expecting me. Wants to play a game of Scrabble.

BECKY

At least say 'hi'. I've told Tony all about you.

ARNO

He's too young to know all that.

BECKY

Not that I love you. Or loved you. Whichever you prefer.

ARNO

You aren't going to tell him that!

BECKY

Arno ... undo your tie and come into the New Age. No one has it down. The first person to redefine it wins eternal life.

ARNO

Maybe we ought to do this first.

BECKY

Maybe we don't have to do it at all.

ARNO

I don't want her kept on the mantle piece.

BECKY

We don't have a mantle piece.

(Silence)

Come on, I'm late for the baby sitter.

ARNO

Baby sitters. It has come to this. Grrrrrrr.

BECKY

"Don't judge what you don't know."



ARNO

I am living to eat those words. I want you to know that ...  
living to eat them.

BECKY

Come on.

ARNO

You go ahead.

BECKY

Alright. We'll be waiting.

(BECKY exits. ARNO looks at the can  
not sure what to do with it. A dog  
barks)

ARNO

Very funny, very funny.

(The dog barks again)

Hey, Big Dog ... Is that you?

(SHE holds out her arms)

Come on. Come say 'hi'.

(SHE looks around then kneels on the street  
and pulls her shirt out of her pants)

It better be you.

(SHE holds out the bottom of her shirt  
so the Blonde can crawl in)

Where's my Toady? Where'd she go?

(SHE looks down her shirt)

Is she in here? Is she? HUUUUH!

(SHE hugs the Blonde to her heart.

Silence. SHE gets up, sits on the bench for  
a moment, picks up her purse and puts her  
hand on her heart)

Let's go meet Becky's kid.

(SHE exits slowly leaving the can on the  
bench)

END OF PLAY