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Prayer for My Enemy

by Craig Lucas

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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**The World Premiere of PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY was co-produced by
INTIMAN Theatre, Seattle, Washington, Opening night July 27, 2007
(Bartlett Sher, Artistic Director; Laura Penn, Managing Director) and
Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, CT, Opening night September 19, 2007
(Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director; Joan Channick, Managing Director)**

**PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY was originally commissioned by
Long Wharf Theatre
(Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director; Joan Channick, Managing Director)
With support by the Irving & Susan Laurie Foundation and
the Altria Foundation**

PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY was first produced by the INTIMAN Theatre (Bartlett Sher, artistic director; Laura Penn, managing director), in Seattle, Washington in July 2007. The performance was directed by Bartlett Sher, with sets by John McDermott, costumes by Catherine Zuber, lighting by Stephen Strawbridge, and sound by Stephen LeGrand. The production stage manager was Lisa Ann Chernoff. The cast was as follows:

BILLY Daniel Zaitchik
TAD James McMenamin
MARIANNE Chelsey Rives
AUSTIN John Procaccino
KAREN Cynthia Lauren Tewes
DOLORES Kimberly King
TONY Conor Gormally

PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY was originally commissioned by and made its East Coast premiere at the Long Wharf Theatre, in New Haven, Connecticut on September 19, 2007. The performance was directed by Bartlett Sher, with sets by John McDermott, costumes by Catherine Zuber, lighting by Stephen Strawbridge, and sound by Stephen LeGrand. The production stage manager was Lisa Ann Chernoff. The cast was as follows:

BILLY Daniel Zaitchik
TAD James McMenamin
MARIANNE Katie Ross Clarke
AUSTIN John Procaccino
KAREN Cynthia Lauren Tewes
DOLORES Julie Boyd

PRAYER FOR MY ENEMY made its New York City premiere at Playwrights Horizons (Tim Sanford, Artistic Director; Leslie Marcus, Managing Director) in October 2008 under the direction of Bartlett Sher. The set design was by John McDermott, the lighting design by Stephen Strawbridge, the costume design by Catherine Zuber, the sound design by Scott Lehrer and the music by Nico Muhly. The production stage manager was Lisa Ann Cherooff and the production manager was Christopher Boll. The cast was as follows:

BILLY Jonathan Groff
TAD Zachary Booth
MARIANNE Cassie Beck
AUSTIN Skipp Sudduth
KAREN Michele Pawk
DOLORES Victoria Clark

CHARACTERS

BILLY NOONE – 20s

TAD VOELKL – 20s

DOLORES ENDLER – around 40

AUSTIN – 50s, Billy's father

KAREN – 50s, Billy's mother

MARIANNE – Billy's sister, slightly older

SETTING

The action takes place in America and Iraq in 2003 and 2004.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Dialogue appearing in italics represents the psychic interior of the character, the running commentary of thoughts and justifications and questions, the emotional tide within, which is not necessarily any more true or reflective of objective reality than the things we actually say out loud; it is simply all the stuff we keep to ourselves, including the lies we tell ourselves. These italicized passages are spoken by the actor, but never heard or responded to by others (except in Scene 12 where indicated).

for André Bishop

Scene One

(TAD and BILLY are both filling their gas tanks.)

BILLY. Hey. (pause) Hey.

TAD. (a silent?) Huh?

BILLY. How're you doin'?...I'm the guy you were tailgating.
(pause) Why'd you do that?

TAD. You were going really slow, / look, I –

BILLY. I was driving the speed limit.

TAD. Billy?

BILLY. Tad!? *How long?! Remember? I didn't know you were alive, remember all you did for me, how we talked about Being and Nowhere and the universe and what god might be and how you helped me make it through those years of grade school when I was such a geek getting straight A's and everybody called me a faggot when I wasn't and you said what's wrong with playing with each other until we can get girls and so we did until you started crying that one time and you said you were turning us both gay you couldn't do that to someone so nice, and then your dad got transferred and we said we'd be best friends for life but we weren't, we both kept moving apart and I just assumed somehow you'd gone with guys and I went with women but still there was something so romantic about what happened and I've never told anybody especially with the shit my dad's put me through he went kind of off the deep end or maybe he was always there but anyway wow –*

TAD. You still call me Tad!

BILLY. What do they call you now? Theodore?

TAD. Fuck you! Man, I would've recognized you anywhere, what the fuck's that guy's problem, I thought, better not look him in the eye, that's the only reason it took me so long! *You probably think I just like guys from all that shit back then but I don't I've been married oh it's a long story you're not gonna want to hear, that's why I've moved back.*

BILLY. Where are you living now?

TAD. I've moved back, can you believe it?

BILLY. Your parents? / You – ?

TAD. No, I've been married, I got married in high school!

BILLY. *You're straight?*

TAD. Long story.

BILLY. *I feel like I'm gonna cry.*

TAD. Long fuckin' sob story.

(a honk)

BILLY. *(to unseen driver)* What? We're utilizing the fuckin' services!

TAD. Dude, pull around!

BILLY. Come on, let's both check our oil and drive the fucker crazy.

TAD. No, he's gonna drive around.

BILLY. You look so the fuck the same, what sob story?

TAD. Oh, man.

BILLY. No, come on, I'll buy you a drink.

Scene Two

(TAD and BILLY are in a bar.)

TAD. She was pregnant, you know, I was sure the baby was mine though now, I don't know, we decided to go for it, got married, then she started getting cold feet, you know, adoption, abortion, you sure you want to hear this? So she aborts the baby, I start getting all wigged out about not maybe going to college, how are we gonna do this, I go on one of those anti-depressants, can't practically get it up, she suddenly one day says she has a crush on this other guy, can we try poly-amory, you know what that is?

BILLY. Threesomes.

TAD. Bingo, well, she wanted this guy to herself, me to herself, so she goes starts going back and forth, I get more depressed, more pills, now I can't come even if I could get it up she leaves me for him, I decide to try a different approach, you know, so I decide to go to one of those retreats, like health yoga in the mountains kind of place where they teach you to let go let god, I'm drinking like a fish, too, which you're not supposed to do when you're on the other pills, so I give up the pills, but I do it too quick, start hearing voices in my head, back on the pills, go to the retreat, it turns out tantric does not mean learning to meditate, (*correcting himself*) meditate, Jesus, on the breath, it means learn to take the energy you use ejaculating to lighten and I mean would have used, 'cause you stop doing that, you can learn how to not shoot, right?, so that's what I do, I can be really enlightened and energized and concentrated on another person now without, I mean, I can come, I can come like crazy, I can have multiple orgasms, and this drives women wild, but it also makes them kind of nervous about settling down, so I've got this little bevy of beauties, my wife then sues me for mental and emotional cruelty, wins, she wants half the house, my dad bought us the house, she never worked a day in her life, so I sold the house and ran, here I am. What's going on with you?

BILLY. I'm going...tomorrow I'm leaving for Iraq.

TAD. *Iraq?*

BILLY. I'm stationed in Baghdad.

TAD. What the fuck are you doing in the military? I thought you'd have a PhD. in particle fuckin' physics.

BILLY. Yeah, no, I mean, I decided, you know, I joined the reserves that's all. *I'm not gay!*

TAD. The reserves.

BILLY. Yeah, I don't know. I didn't want to take any more dough from my father, though...well, I'm still living at home, but I'm paying rent with the cash from the, anyway, they called us all up, I'm infantry. *He started calling me "Missy" my father, "Missy," "Fagboy" didn't matter how many girls I brought home 'cause I'm not all bluster and I know I'm effeminate, I don't know what the fuck that's got to do with the price of beans, being a fag and being girly they're two different things, it's not like I dress up in women's clothing, I love women but still "Liberace," "Lady William – "* He's out of his mind no I mean really he's crazy, bi-polar –

TAD. Your dad?

BILLY. Wouldn't take his meds, the whole family, all we did was try to hold him in place and my older sister married this jackass just to get away from him my mom spent all her time at the deli it was a fuckin' mess I joined the reserves thinking he was in Vietnam he'd be, but – What meds?

TAD. Was I on? Lexapro.

BILLY. Yeah, I tried that, same thing: no squirt, but...

TAD. You still on it?

BILLY. I'm on some new shit, but I'm not going to be able to get it in Baghdad, fuck, I'm subscribing to all these heavy girly magazines like "Xtreme" just to keep the guys off my back, they started calling me all kinds of shit. *Like "Helen."*

TAD. What kind of shit?

BILLY. Just shit.

TAD. Fuck.

BILLY. *I loved you did you know that?*

TAD. Iraq.

BILLY. I know.

(pause)

TAD. What the hell kinda world.

BILLY. They're throwing a going away thing for me in the backyard in a little bit, you want to come?

TAD. Oh, I don't to want break in on –

BILLY. No, no, no, you'd be doing me a favor. It's great to see you.

TAD. Yeah! *You were my first love really I don't care what anybody says you were it. Sure?*

BILLY. You'll stop by?

TAD. Yeah, I'm gonna try.

BILLY. Okay. *(pause)* That's very cool.

(They pummel each other; the tussle becomes an embrace, then they violently shove apart.)

Scene Three

(DOLORES *alone.*)

DOLORES. Mother didn't want us to postpone the wedding: "It's only a stroke, I'm not an invalid," but that's exactly what she is, long as she needs to be in the wheelchair. Mom says, "I can talk, I can move my arms." As if this were proof of anything. (*short pause*) Frankly, I'm glad to get out of New York City. Charles, my fiancé, loves all that frenzy, the noise, the endless possibilities. To me, it's one long shriek of rage, that's what I hate most about the city – the fury of so many people's resentment and frustration and, well, they've been put in a space too small for so many, a big filthy loud dangerous ugly unsanitary uncivil and foul-smelling cage. Like rats, they start biting off their own feet, not to mention yours.

(*bell*)

Coming! And here I have a clear mission: Keep her occupied, fed, cleaned. It's payback for all the wretched things I put her and Dad through, though to hear them tell it, you'd think I was born a schizophrenic porcupine, or something, instead of a normal –

(*bell*)

Coming! Anyway, Dad's dead, so –

(*bell*)

There must be something wrong. (*exiting*) Mom? Mom?!

Scene Four

(Backyard of BILLY's parents. AUSTIN is grilling. TAD and BILLY are standing with him.)

AUSTIN. Their call is different for family members than others outside their clan. Every single elephant in the world, not special ones. All. They perform ceremonies. They can recognize the skeletons of dead relatives –

TAD. Uh.

AUSTIN. – and they perform a grieving ritual, running their hind feet over the remains, and they sing a grieving song, a heartbreaking noise, nothing else like it on earth.

BILLY. They have more than one hundred thousand muscles in their trunks alone.

AUSTIN. Highly evolved, their memories are indeed as complex and deep, really, they probably have a larger network of relationships than any other land mammal.

TAD. Huh.

AUSTIN. They do.

(MARIANNE arrives with a drink for TAD.)

TAD. Thanks.

AUSTIN. What's that?

MARIANNE. *Don't listen to him he's an asshole he'll keep you nailed to this spot for hours and then when you think you've been really nice about it he'll tell you what is wrong with every choice you've ever made.*

AUSTIN. – so deep we can't even hear but from miles away they hear and the sounds have exact meanings, they can tell what one another are thinking.

TAD. That's...

MARIANNE. *Boring it's insane a grown man knows all this and –*

(KAREN approaches.)

KAREN. How 'bout our soldier boy, hmm?

TAD. You must be very proud. *So cheerful when you're talking about slaughter.*

MARIANNE. *He's made her life impossible refusing to do anything about his / mania.*

TAD. *Off to the morgue her son she raised her only son decapitated probably from some huge piece of flying – and she'd feel so warm and / gooey –*

MARIANNE. *And only when he crashed / the car –*

TAD. *And all their friends and church buddies telling them how wonderful and brave they are!!*

MARIANNE. *Only then does he agree to take his meds and stop drinking. And of course lecture everybody about how evolved he is now –*

KAREN. *(looking at BILLY)* He knows how to watch out for himself, I know, so I'm not going to worry.

AUSTIN. I'll give you a documentary to watch. *(short pause)*
On elephants.

TAD. Oh.

BILLY. Oh yeah, we've got them all.

TAD. Great.

KAREN. He's going to be fine. *(to BILLY)* Why did you enlist? Are you an idiot?! What good are all the things we've taught you and all the things you've learned all the memories you've stored up and all the experiences all the effort and washed cars and finals and after school work and cleaning your room and French and calculus if you're gonna let it all spill out of your skull with the rest of your brains / in sand?

MARIANNE. *And we're supposed to forget that he threw broken appliances at mirrors and stabbed the kiddie pool with a knife when some neighbor kid had peed in it and he was "sick of it goddamit, what's the point of fighting all the time working I'm sick of / life!"*

BILLY. Okay, enough.

TAD. God.

MARIANNE. *Why do you think we never had anyone over?*

TAD. *You always had those little flecks in your eyes, yellow and orange, like a cat. I bet you lick like a cat.*

KAREN. Tad?

TAD. Uh-huh? I'm fine for now, thanks.

(KAREN walks away.)

MARIANNE. You look exactly the same.

TAD. I do?

MARIANNE. Doesn't he?

TAD. You look better.

MARIANNE. Oh, I don't think you noticed me back then.

TAD. Are you kidding me?

MARIANNE. No.

TAD. I asked you to the prom.

MARIANNE. No, you didn't.

TAD. I did.

BILLY. He did.

MARIANNE. You did?

AUSTIN. I think he did.

MARIANNE. You all remember that?...No, you didn't!

TAD. Okay.

MARIANNE. You did?

TAD. You went with Gerard.

MARIANNE. I married Gerard.

TAD. Oh.

BILLY. You divorced Gerard.

MARIANNE. I divorced Gerard.

TAD. Good. He was kind of an –

MARIANNE. No, we're friends.

TAD. Oh.

MARIANNE. He's okay.

TAD. Yeah, I liked him, okay.

(pause)

AUSTIN. They have a kid.

TAD. Oh.

BILLY. *Don't spoil it.*

MARIANNE. NOOO!

BILLY. *It's finally working out, can't you see all of what we went through, it's finally straightening out and they're going to be happy and Tad and I and all of us can be friends, we can be a family, and if I for any reason I don't come back she'll have someone to replace everything she's lost already and protect her from you too don't you see that?*

AUSTIN. He's in a home.

MARIANNE. You wanna just speak for me?

AUSTIN. Well, he was wondering, I'm sure.

MARIANNE. Were you?

AUSTIN. Yes he was. *I'm sorry I'm a lunk a lughead things just come marching out of my mouth, I can't stop them – Autistic.*

TAD. Yeah?

(short pause)

BILLY. He's very beautiful.

MARIANNE. He's very beautiful.

TAD. What's his name?

AUSTIN. **MARIANNE.**

Anthony. Tony.

Tony.

BILLY. He's six.

TAD. What exactly is autism?

MARIANNE. Well, funny you should ask, because no one really knows, they think it might be, well, all kinds of things –

AUSTIN. *My fault.*

MARIANNE. – but it could be congenital –

(KAREN returns with drinks and snacks.)

AUSTIN. That's where I come in, my mental illness.

MARIANNE. He doesn't really respond to love or touch he's in his own world he can't function in class.

AUSTIN. It runs in my family.

MARIANNE. Go to school.

AUSTIN. I'm bi-polar.

TAD. Ah.

KAREN. You're not mentally ill.

AUSTIN. That's why I drank. To take the edge off – (to KAREN, *without stopping*) What do you think it is if not a mental illness?

MARIANNE.

They think it could
also be caused by some
thing
as simple as inocula-
tions, /something they
use –

KAREN.

It's a condition – an
allergy.

AUSTIN.

No, alcoholism is an
allergy.

(to TAD) That's what I
say if –

That's what I say when
somebody, whenever
anybody offers me a
drink.

TAD.

I've heard that.
(to AUSTIN)
Uh-/huh.

MARIANNE.

Uh-/huh –

AUSTIN. "I'm allergic," I can't. If I drink, I break out in
handcuffs.

(Everybody laughs.)

AUSTIN. They've all heard that –

MARIANNE. I haven't.

AUSTIN. But – No? I tell people I've used up all the drinks
a guy gets allotted for one lifetime, we all get a certain
amount –

TAD. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN. – and I'll tell you, though, this disease doesn't just
want to slow me down –

TAD. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN. – it doesn't want my house, my family, my credit
cards, total my car, this disease wants me dead.

TAD. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN. Underground.

TAD. Right.

AUSTIN. It wants me stone cold done.

TAD. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN. Rotting meat.

TAD. MARIANNE.

Yeah. We get it.

AUSTIN. That's how insidious it is. I'm filled with gratitude.

That's what being sober has done for me. I'm blessed with a son, a beautiful kid – And god will protect him, I know. A marvelous daughter, both of them individuals in their own right –

MARIANNE. Thank you.

AUSTIN. – a daughter who puts me to shame with her strength and clarity, don't pooh pooh me, a loving, endlessly giving wife, they have all given me more than I could possibly ever deserve –

KAREN. Sh.

AUSTIN. I've put them through hell, I have. You can't shut me up. I do, I thank god every day, I hit my knees first and last thing, for this second chance. I didn't deserve it, but...

(short pause)

MARIANNE. We did.

AUSTIN. I don't ever want to go back.

Scene Five

(DOLORES *alone.*)

DOLORES. Well, my mom had another stroke. She felt it coming on and kept ringing, I feel awful. Worse still, I called 911 and got that ridiculous recording, “Your call is important to us, please stay on the line.” I bundled her up in the car and took her to the emergency room, she’s in over night, at the most two days, it was another tiny one, her vision blacks out, but she’s still awake. Charles wants to put her in a full-time “facility.” For Christs’ sake, she reads, watches TV; she can cook if I put the cutting board across her wheelchair, she loves to try new things. Last night we were cooking Mexican. Without the chilies. We walk the driveway, she wheels herself...And there is no more beautiful time of year than this – the leaves pouring down like feathers from huge unseen flying birds migrating across the sun, so many burnt umbers and oranges and blood, blood reds. Plum colored. The oaks hold onto their leaves the longest, I remember that, even in the shivering bleak cold. That’s mother and me, our last holding on. Yes, she can be the world’s most gigantic pill, as Charles says, but...she’s come all this way, through decades, not to mention my dad. I’m the only one now. My sister is way upstate in her – not ashram, silent order: Nuns, buddhist nuns in Albany, New York, that’s like having, I don’t know, Kurdish rebels in – Cleveland. But it’s just as well she’s silent. But mother is quite comfortable. And this is the house I grew up in. Listen:

(*silence*)

That’s all you ever hear. A creak when the heat comes up, a corresponding creak when it goes off. I love this house. There is such a sense of...fit. You’d think I’d find it oppressive, but...I’m less lonely here than I – would be, was, back there, will be again, all too soon. Charles really can’t leave the city and I can’t see how

we can be together if I don't live with him, and I love him – Well, people have many worse problems than this one. But for now I'm getting a little respite, and, oh, for god's sake, we've been sleeping together for seven years. (*pause*) It isn't that Charles is – The sun doesn't rise and set in his eyes, let's put it that way, he's a human being. He didn't, doesn't quite...hang the moon. But he's very responsible and works hard and he's not an A-hole which in the city, listen, that's more than you might think. To find someone who – especially if you're not nineteen and a micro-neurosurgeon. I started as one of his secretaries at the hospital, he used to be chief of the department. We went out, anyway...he's good people.

Scene Six

(BILLY, TAD and MARIANNE are together in the back-yard, lighting up and smoking a joint.)

TAD. What's with the elephants?

BILLY. A lotta people came.

MARIANNE. D'ja think they wouldn't?

BILLY. You know he doesn't talk like that, that's all memorized from documentaries; his father couldn't read. He perseverates.

MARIANNE. Tony...does the same thing, but with movies.

TAD. Uh-huh. Perseverate.

MARIANNE. Uh-huh.

BILLY. With Dad it's either elephants or the Yankees.

MARIANNE. Oh, yeah, don't even say that word.

TAD. Okay. Yankees?

MARIANNE. He can tell you who played the woman in the tollbooth –

BILLY. Tony.

MARIANNE. Tony, in a chase scene where a car goes crashing through –

BILLY. She doesn't even have to have a close-up.

MARIANNE. He knows her name, what other movies she was in –

TAD. Mm-hm.

MARIANNE. – if she's still alive.

BILLY. *(sees)* Fireflies.

TAD. I'd like to meet Tony.

BILLY. You should.

MARIANNE. Okay.

BILLY. *(getting up)* Anybody want?

(Head shakes. BILLY moves toward the house. TAD lies back, staring up at the sky.)

MARIANNE. Are you cold?

(Shakes his head: "No.")

TAD. Are you?

(MARIANNE shakes her head "No.")

TAD. / Goo[d food].

MARIANNE. *(same time)* Billy – Oh, sorry.

TAD. No.

MARIANNE. Billy joined the reserves, Dad goes: "Great, throw your life away for nothing, oil."

TAD. Uh-huh.

MARIANNE. Billy says something like, "Tell me you don't feel something for kids fighting for you getting killed over in" and Dad's like, "You don't know anybody over there."

TAD. Uh-huh.

MARIANNE. What were you gonna say?

TAD. Oh, I don't...Oh: Doesn't it seem strange...that of all the times it could be, from the beginning of the universe, let's say time isn't infinite, let's say that it's only a couple of hundred trillion years it's all here, then nothing...That's still a lot of time. If it could be any little slice of time –

MARIANNE. Yes.

TAD. – any eighty year slice in all that time – what are the odds –

MARIANNE. Right.

TAD. – that it would be this slice –

MARIANNE. Yes yes.

TAD. – of time that we happen to be alive in...

MARIANNE. Uh-huh.

TAD. You've thought this?

MARIANNE. Oh, sure.

TAD. I've tried to explain this to so many people and they never know what I'm getting at.

MARIANNE. No?

TAD. Doesn't it just seem pretty amazing –

MARIANNE. Uh-huh.

TAD. – that it just happens to be right now –

MARIANNE. Yes.

TAD. – and not during the dinosaurs –

MARIANNE. Absolutely.

TAD. – or a billion years from now when neither of us would
be here, it's now, it's right now, in all that vast expanse
of time, this is the moment in time it actually is.

MARIANNE. I still can't go to the prom with you.

(pause)

TAD. We'll find something to do.

Scene Seven

(DOLORES *alone.*)

DOLORES. Coming back from the hospital, I stopped at the G&K deli, it's been there forever, the same couple running it –

(**KAREN** *begins to get ready for bed; she washes her face, flosses.*)

I've never known their first names, the point is that the wife, Mrs. Noone, always smiles and says hello, recognizing me, which is what's missing in the city. Even if you see the same people over dozens of years, they still act as if you are a threat to their well-being. And is that any place to raise kids? It's fun to drive here, the lakes and the endless woods, serene –

(*The sounds of a nature program on public television.*

AUSTIN *kneels by the bed, prays. But his attention is drawn to the program, the subject of which is naked mole rats.*)

Our property even butts up against state park, the Appalachian trail is a thousand feet from the house! But Charles's practice is down there, shrinking heads, unearthing unconscious desires, he makes a pile and he loves what he does, whereas I can do what I do anywhere on earth. Which is nothing. I mean, I have held down half a dozen jobs over the last fifteen years, but they all seem to be exercises in existential futility:

Companies that provide some obscure service, returning profits to unseen people in expensive homes one never gets invited to. I've learned every single word processing system, computer programming, technological whatever, I can work any phone system with my toes while juggling memos and smiling through the worst nastiness, but why should I have to? Why shouldn't I live like regular people?

KAREN. Are you going to stay up?

DOLORES. Charles won't even consider Brooklyn, that's how Manhattan-centric he is. He has his office in the groundfloor space, he has half a brownstone. I've always kept my own eeny little walk up, and now, with the wedding, we're moving in, oh blah blah blah. Oh, I should get back before visiting hours end, though that's another thing, they don't really care. They don't have all their rules crammed up their asses like –

(AUSTIN and KAREN have both gotten into bed. KAREN kisses AUSTIN and turns off her light, rolls away. The TV light plays on AUSTIN's face.)

One day, New York city has alternate side of the street parking, right?, this was back when Charles had the car, so I'm in charge of parking – Nice to have a full-time servant, isn't it? I'm waiting for the street cleaner, finally he comes, goes by, and that's another thing: they arrive with this enormous worthless piece of junk that spews dirty water all over everyone and everything, stinking up the atmosphere and leaving the street just as filthy, but now all the shit is wet, that's cleaning the streets in Manhattan, so I re-park the car, get out, and this cop on a mini-toy joke bike which – represents his genitals, I suppose, gives me a ticket! I say, "The street has already been cleaned." He says, "Read the sign." "Oh, come on, that's so they can clean the street and they have." He says, "I don't make the laws." I wanted to say, "You don't make sense either, and I pay your fucking salary so you can give me tickets for things that aren't hurting anybody, what the fuck is your job anyway, asshole, you think a uniform is a substitute for brains or integrity?" But who needs to get arrested, have you ever seen a holding pen in New York City? They put you in with murderers, no toilets, lock the doors and go out to lunch on YOUR nickel. I'll take the suburbs. Give me banality before brutality. Any day.

AUSTIN. *(still staring at the TV)* They lose all their hair and their eyesight; their whole life is lived underground. Look how cute.

Scene Eight

(TAD speaks with BILLY by phone; half of BILLY's head is covered with a bandage.)

TAD. We miss you, man. Your dad's got me praying and I don't even believe in god!

BILLY. Is anybody on the line?

TAD. What do you mean?

BILLY. Is anybody listening?

TAD. No. Why?

BILLY. I saw him.

TAD. Who?

BILLY. God. I saw god and I saw Satan and I saw past time and this universe, can I tell you, will you just listen?

TAD. What do you mean you saw / God?

BILLY. Okay. Okay, so...don't tell anybody, okay?

TAD. Okay.

BILLY. You know I never believed in any of that shit. But okay. Something happened...I'll tell you in a letter –

TAD. What?

BILLY. – that's not the important part – the important part is I lost consciousness –

TAD. What happened?

BILLY. I'm okay. I was hit. I got shrapnel in my eye, they got it out.

TAD. Jesus.

BILLY. I'm gonna be a hundred percent.

TAD. Come home, tell 'em you can't see, lie, come on. Nobody thinks you're a coward if you lie, nobody thinks you're not brave or not masculine nobody thinks any of that shit.

BILLY. I could hear and see things, but they were like, I could see through them. I saw that white light everybody talks about and I went into it and past it. I died – and the first thing I realized was, I mean I could see

it, this is what god is: there are an infinite number of universes – and time, which we're programmed to perceive – is no more real than anything else – Are you there?

TAD. Yeah yeah.

BILLY. I'm telling you something, it's true, this is all real –

TAD. I'm listening.

(**MARIANNE enters.**)

MARIANNE. Let me say hi.

BILLY. But things, things that happen here: we're creating them more than we know, okay, listen, please god –

TAD. What?

BILLY. Every fraction of a second the universe splits off into infinite possibilities – ones where I don't drop out, or you and I can grow up to be married to each other, I'm not saying –

TAD. I'm listening, hey.

(**MARIANNE tries to listen in, but TAD moves her away:**
“Hang on.”)

BILLY. It's all choice, okay, and I was even starting to decompose, stuffing my hands into the soil, and I tried to stand and I realized that there is nothing substantial about the body, I threw myself on a bush with strong branches and I passed through it, first the branches stung like hell and then I just let go, I let my body go –

TAD. Uh-huh.

BILLY. Right through it. You know how we have consciousness? We're always moving a little bit forward and a little bit back, we conceive of everything in terms of then and now, and that's an illusion! A seizure is just rapid moving between then and now, then and now –

TAD. Did you have one?

BILLY. I died, man.

MARIANNE. (*mouthed or sotto voce*) Have what?

BILLY. And I was onto another world when I started to ache for the people I love, Mom and Marianne and you and my buddies...*Dad...*, I chanted their names and moved back through all the stages, back into this world, you know, like someone who chooses to be reborn so they can help others, I wanted to find out how all your stories come out, I mean, I wanted to help and love you all.

TAD. Come home, okay?

BILLY. I will.

TAD. I gotta see your fuckin' face.

BILLY. I will.

TAD. You gotta go back to school, you gotta write this shit down, you gotta –

BILLY. I will. / But –

MARIANNE. Let me...

TAD. Hold on.

MARIANNE. (*takes the phone*) Hey.

BILLY. Hey.

MARIANNE. Did he tell you?

BILLY. What?

MARIANNE. You sitting down?

BILLY. What?

MARIANNE. We're, you're gonna be an uncle.

BILLY. Hey!

MARIANNE. Yeah.

BILLY. How about that?!?

MARIANNE. Are we nuts?

BILLY. Oh – !

(**BILLY** *cries.*)

MARIANNE. What a zoo, huh? I'm gonna try and give you a normal one this time. Nephew.

TAD. Don't say that.

BILLY. It's a boy?

MARIANNE. I'm just – Yeah. Hey. So...thanks for bringing your friend over! Are you...?

BILLY. I'm so good.

MARIANNE. We love you, are you okay?

BILLY. That is – Oh, congratulations.

MARIANNE. Yeah.

BILLY. I'm sorry.

MARIANNE. So. Here, I'll give him back.

TAD. No.

MARIANNE. Oh, well –

BILLY. It's okay.

MARIANNE. Mom and Dad both send their love.

BILLY. Are they there?

MARIANNE. No. I mean...

BILLY. Okay, well – give 'em my love.

MARIANNE. You too.

BILLY. And I'll call –

MARIANNE. Theo'll tell me what's going on.

BILLY. Okay.

MARIANNE. Okay? / So.

BILLY. Okay.

MARIANNE. You're sure you're okay?

BILLY. I love you!

MARIANNE. You're sure you're – ? Love you, too!

(BILLY *hangs up.*)

MARIANNE. Aww.

TAD. Don't say that.

MARIANNE. Oh, I don't know, I'm just...He cried. Like a baby.

TAD. Well sure. Life. That's gotta be...

MARIANNE. I know.

TAD. Don't say that about Tony.

MARIANNE. I know.

TAD. I love him just as much as –

MARIANNE. I know. I don't know. What is it with men? You get so emotional. (*pause*) Okay.

Scene Nine

(DOLORES *alone*)

DOLORES. "My mother is dying," I said, "please come up," and he says, "Honey, she's in a coma, she doesn't even know you're there, hop on the train!" Hop on the train? You, hop on this, you... *(pause)* I keep getting in the car, driving over, driving back, there's nothing to do, I don't want to leave her alone, but – And everyone is so nice, the head nurse, all the staff, even the cleaning people smile and say "Excuse me." But it is really...so beautiful right here right now, why didn't I know that growing up? I'm so attuned to everything, the beauty, Mom holding onto her life, bit by bit, all of it, the past and the present, it's all so...unbelievably rich. *(pause)* "Hop on the train." I'd like to hop on your fucking head and suffocate you with my thighs and whatever else you don't pay enough attention to, you're so tired and...Ugh. Listen to me.

(phone)

Oh god, here it comes. Hello?...Oh! Thank you. Thank you very much. *(hangs up)* She woke up!

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