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SF PERUSALS

46 BEACON

by Bill Rosenfield

SAMUEL FRENCH

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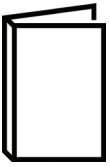
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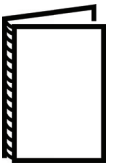
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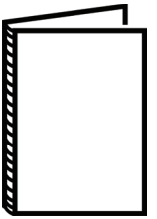
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Rosenfield is a transplanted American playwright now living permanently in the UK. His plays include *46 Beacon* (West End, Trafalgar Studios; London fringe, Hope Theatre; Blank Theatre LA Living Room Series), *True Fans* (The Abbey, Orlando; Blank Theatre LA Living Room Series), *Sunshine and Shadow* (Blank Theatre LA Living Room Series), *Let Me* (Asolo Theatre Unplugged Series, Sarasota Florida) and the award-winning one act *Bridal Terrorism* (published and licensed by Samuel French).

His highly acclaimed adaptation of Frank Loesser's *The Most Happy Fella*, directed & choreographed by Casey Nicolaw, was produced as part of the City Center Encores! Series in New York City.

Prior to turning his attention to playwrighting he had a career in the recording industry in New York as the executive producer of over 65 original cast recordings beginning with the original production of Stephen Sondheim's *Assassins* and ending approximately twenty years later with the award-laden revival of *Hair*, garnering over thirty Grammy nominations in the process. He holds a BA in Dramatic Literature from Hofstra University. Among the awards he has received are two Drama Desk Awards (1992 and 2002), a Society of Directors and Choreographers Foundation Governor's Award, and a Richard Rodgers Award (2006).

AUTHOR'S NOTE

"Not that it matters, but most of it's true."

That was the ad line on the posters for the 1968 movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and it also applies to *46 Beacon*. The play came out of my need to express just how far and fast gay politics had progressed. I had begun to feel that along the way an important aspect of gay identity was getting lost. Those characteristics that helped us identify each other were falling by the wayside. If I met someone who knew about the musical version of Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp*, I instantly knew a lot about him (some would say too much). Now when meeting a younger generation of urban gay men I find that the gay cultural icons or signposts of my youth are all but invisible. More importantly, they really aren't needed anymore. The mainstreaming of gay life is what we've been striving for, but at what cost?

One of the first things that I say to any of the actors playing the part of Alan is that, it being 1970, he has never seen two men kiss romantically before. Not in life, or in the movies or on television; so that when he and Robert do finally kiss, he doesn't know what it looks like. He has no visual context for the act itself. It's all strange to him and yet it feels very right. In addition to the surprise in that kiss there is also a sense of relief and belonging.

There are a fair number of theatrical references in the text. I've put them in quotes. They don't necessarily need to be delivered "outside" of the character but it should be clear that the character knows he's making a reference. You can spend a happy afternoon Googling them and falling down a giddy YouTube rabbit hole with them.

In the post-coital scene the words to the song that's referenced should not be sung under any circumstances. It would spoil the joke.

Finally, It's important to understand that while the play is a sexual cat-and-mouse game, the age difference between the two men and their actions should never feel creepy or make the audience uncomfortable.

Bill Rosenfield
2017

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46 Beacon was first produced by Oli Sones and Ed Sinke in London's West End at the Trafalgar Studios on 5th April 2017 with the following cast:

ROBERT	**JAY TAYLOR**
ALAN	**OLIVER COOPERSMITH**
DIRECTED BY	**ALEXANDER LASS**
DESIGNED BY	**RUTH HALL**
LIGHTING BY	**RICK FISHER AND JAI MORJARIA**
STAGE MANAGER	**SARAH SEYMOUR**
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	**JOE WINTERS**

Readings:

Above-the-Stag, London, featuring Matthew Baldwin as Robert and Greg Airey as Alan, directed by Alexander Lass, on 3rd February 2012.

The Blank Theatre, Los Angeles (Daniel Henning, Artistic Director), featuring Jeff Witzke as Robert and Matthew Scott Montgomery as Alan, directed by Kevin Chamberlin on 5th February 2013.

[Your Name Here] Theatre Company, New York with Christian Coulson as Robert and Evan Johnson as Alan on 12th March 2013.

Studio production:

The Hope Theatre, Islington (Matthew Parker, Artistic Director), with Matthew Baldwin as Robert and Jak Ford-Lane as Alan, directed by Joshua Stamp-Simon for two weekends in October 2015. Stage manager, Matt Nelson.

That production, with the same cast, was subsequently presented by Sophie Angelson and James Kemp as part of a New Works Festival sponsored by Room One at the **Above the Arts Theatre** on 17th and 19th February 2016.

CHARACTERS

ROBERT – an attractive Englishman in his 30s
ALAN – a somewhat gawky American boy in his teens

Time: Now and then (8 July, 1970, 10:30pm)

Place: A room at 46 Beacon, a residential apartment hotel on Beacon Hill in downtown Boston, Massachusetts.

The room is warm, there is a double bed, a record player, some place to make drinks, and perhaps a comfortable chair, a television, a bureau.

There is a window that overlooks the Boston Common.

If you lived in a messy house, then this room is very sophisticated; if on the other hand you're a sophisticated person, then this room is simply acceptable. But it is in no way tatty or cheap.

The music needs to be from the first half of the 1970s or before but it doesn't have to be James Taylor; it should simply be seductive in a hip (for that period) folk music sort of way.

This play is dedicated to
GARY GUNAS
whose love and support made this play
(and so many other things) possible
&
MATTHEW BALDWIN
for his friendship and inspiration.

PROLOGUE

Now

We hear James Taylor's ***"FIRE AND RAIN"*** *(just a suggestion, not etched in stone) and a single light reveals* **ROBERT** *dressed in a contemporary casual manner.*

As the song ends he sings...

ROBERT

"...BUT I ALWAYS THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU AGAIN."

The music fades away.

1970 was a sexy year. I mean really sexy. Hippies. Pot. Head shops.

Truly lovely, lovely drugs. Alternative newspapers. Blue pages. Pink pages and sex. Gay sex. Straight sex. Group sex. Everywhere you looked, there was sex.

And believe me I looked and I did a lot more than that.

The turbulent 60s were giving way to the hedonistic 70s, not overnight of course, nothing happens overnight. At least not then. Now is a different story; our attention span is so short that we demand change with every twenty-four hour news cycle. But we're not here to talk about now. Sorry, we're here to talk about then.

The cliche for being gay was still to be swishy and oh so camp! Remember them? "Swishy and Camp – can I help you?" It was way before the Village People. It was all about Judy! But she died and Stonewall happened. And then *The Boys in the Band* where gay men and their coded language

were exposed for all the world to see. Julian and Sandy had nothing on them.

What else? Oh yes, there was a musical called *Company* which featured a "confirmed bachelor" as its central character. What it meant to be gay was changing. How we lived our lives was changing. But we didn't know how much. I mean Stonewall really was only a bunch of drag queens proclaiming "Enough is Enough" long before Barbra and Donna got hold of that saying.

But back to sex. I was getting laid a lot. We wore shirts open down to here and tight tight trousers. And we all cruised each other like mad. There was no AIDS, there were crabs though.

A relationship could be simply reduced down to one word "Where?"

Now we don't even need that. Swipe left. Swipe right. Of course gay men were less out than they are now. There were coded questions:

"What bars do you go to?"

"Didn't I see you in church recently?"

And specifically here in Boston:

"I was at the corner of Comm Avenue and Arlington Street. when…". Well you get the idea.

The lights slowly come up on the room.

Boston, Massachusetts. The San Francisco of the East. Where we will spend our evening. The surrounding towns read like my long-forgotten provincial tour route for *The Reluctant Debutante*: Brighton, Gloucester, Ipswich, Salisbury, Northampton.

But we're downtown in the city centre in a lovely location at a slightly posh address 46 Beacon. Overlooking the historic Boston Common, where cows once grazed. A different sort

of grazing goes on there now – with a different sort of cow. The address is posh, the digs themselves? Only just.

This is a residential hotel which means people move in for an extended period of time, a few weeks or a few months, and then they move on. Businessmen, family members taking care of relatives in town, a Congressman or two working up the street at the State House or as is the case with this room "Theatricals". "I'm a seagull". No I'm an actor. God I hate saying that. But it's important because well, it's who I am. I'm here for a few months from my home in London giving the theatre in this town a bit of British class. Work permits were a lot easier in those days. And this room is my home. The theatre is just across the Common on a rather slightly seedy side street. Tonight though, this room for the next eighty-three minutes, without an interval, is a crossroads of sorts. A place and a night that the boy in question – there's always a boy in these things – remembers in detail, and believes that I do as well.

46 Beacon. He likes the sound of it. A beacon, a light, an illumination.

There's an ice bucket and glasses. A record player. There's – well you can see what there is – not much, but enough. And it being July, there's air conditioning. Can we have the air conditioner on please?

The soft hum of an air conditioner begins.

Nothing says nirvana on a hot summer evening like the hum of an air conditioner. America has many flaws but air conditioning? Not one of them.

Where was I? The boy. It's ALL about the boy.

ALAN *enters the room. They regard one another.*

ALAN Well go on, don't let me interrupt your flow.

ROBERT The boy in question is thin. Not sickly thin, but thin, and while there is no muscle per se, there is no fat either. His hair is a little too long really, but clean and shiny.

And his eyes are clear and bright. Look at them. In those eyes I could see sadness and something akin to hope or am I saying that so you'll think I'm sensitive?

It's his story and this evening he's taking it all in. He hopes I am as well, but more than that, he hopes you will. It wasn't that long ago, just one man's lifetime. For now though, it's about the boy, earnest and funny in that young way of trying too hard; and man, oh man did I want to fuck him.

Blackout.

1.

Then

As the lights come back on the sound of the air conditioner cross-fades to the sound of a shower running offstage.

ALAN *is standing at the window looking out.*

He walks nervously around the room.

He picks up the album jacket and puts it down.

He looks at a framed picture on the bureau.

He picks it up.

He doesn't sit.

He goes back to the window.

He studies the picture.

The shower stops.

ALAN Who's the guy?

ROBERT *(off stage)* What?

ALAN The guy?

ROBERT *(off stage)* What guy?

ALAN In the picture.

ROBERT *(off stage)* My roommate.

ALAN Oh.

ROBERT *(off stage)* I'll be out in a minute.

ALAN *puts the picture back where it was.*

ALAN So this is it then?

ROBERT *(off stage)* Yup.

ALAN And the theatre pays for it?

ROBERT *enters drying himself off. He's naked.*

ROBERT Sure, it's part of my contract. They pay the rent and then I get a per diem.

ALAN Per diem? *(He sees* **ROBERT***)* Oops sorry.

ROBERT Relax.

He smiles.

Per diem. Per day. Money which covers daily expenses – meals and this and that.

ALAN So then it doesn't really cost you anything to be here.

ROBERT *has put on a pair of velour trousers (no underpants) and during the following he puts on a pullover velour top as well. Very smooth, very seventies.*

ROBERT Well I wouldn't go that far. It's supposed to cover everything but I have – well I'm bad with money so it only covers some of it.

ALAN But if you cut back a little – it would cost you nothing. Right?

ROBERT That's the theory.

ALAN Wow.

ROBERT But why cut back?

ALAN I don't know. So that it's all free, I guess.

ROBERT Would you like a drink?

ALAN Uh, sure. And this is the only room?

ROBERT Yes. It's just a studio. But it's all I need. Back home my flat is much bigger.

ALAN The one with the roommate?

ROBERT Yes, the one with the roommate.

ALAN It would have to be.

ROBERT What?

ALAN Bigger.

ROBERT Right.

Pause.

ALAN Why didn't you shower at the theatre?

ROBERT I prefer showering here rather than at the theatre. It's more relaxed. Less communal. Less rushed.

ALAN Oh.

ROBERT Drink?

ALAN Right...a Coke?

ROBERT Not bloody likely; how about a gin and tonic?

ALAN Uh – well.

ROBERT Just one. Come on live a little.

ALAN Sure, if you're having one.

ROBERT I'm having at least one.

He smiles.

ALAN Great then. I'll have one too.

ROBERT Make yourself comfortable. Take off your shoes.

ALAN Sure.

ROBERT Relax.

ALAN *slips off his shoes. He remains standing.*

ALAN I'm relaxed.

ROBERT Sit. Please. Just put your feet up.

ALAN Right. Uh so…you live here alone?

ROBERT Yes. Well sometimes I have *visitors*.

He smiles.

ALAN Oh.

ROBERT But here, tonight, I'm all on my own. Well, you're here.

ALAN Does it get lonely?

ROBERT A little, but between the show and getting to know new people – here you go. I put some lemon in it as well, I hope that's ok.

ALAN Sure.

ROBERT Cheers.

ALAN Cheers.

ROBERT To new friends.

ALAN To new friends.

They drink.

Yikes, it's like a bitter Seven-Up.

ROBERT Indeed it is.

ALAN So…you were saying?

ROBERT I was?

ALAN I asked you about being lonely.

ROBERT Right. Well not that much. I make friends pretty easily and Boston is such a great city.

ALAN Yeah. I like it a lot.

ROBERT Have you always lived here? Because you don't have the accent.

ALAN "Pack ya caa in Haaavad yaad."

ROBERT That's the one.

ALAN No we moved here three years ago from Ohio.

ROBERT We?

ALAN My dad and step-mom and me.

ROBERT Any brothers and sisters?

ALAN Yeah but they're all older than me. They're back in Ohio.

ROBERT You miss them?

ALAN Not really. Sure. I suppose. Actually, no.

ROBERT Why not?

ALAN I don't know – we're not that close. We're different from one another.

ROBERT Sit down. Really, you *can* relax.

ALAN Thanks.

ROBERT Different?

ALAN What?

ROBERT You said you were different from the rest of your family.

ALAN Yeah.

ROBERT How?

ALAN Just different. I dunno. Younger. I'm the youngest and they just grew up ahead of me. Different that's all.

He sits.

ROBERT I'm glad we're doing this.

ALAN What?

ROBERT This. Having a drink.

ALAN Right. Me too.

ROBERT Getting to know one another.

ALAN Yeah. It's...nice.

ROBERT I've wanted to do this since the first time I saw you at the theatre.

ALAN Really? Me too.

ROBERT You seem nervous.

ALAN No, it's just...different.

ROBERT What is?

ALAN This. Being here.

ROBERT How so?

ALAN I usually don't get to know the actors well.

ROBERT Really?

ALAN A few times maybe I get invited out to the Beef and Ale after the show, but not a lot. You know, when everyone is going I sometimes get to tag along.

ROBERT So this is special then?

ALAN Yeah.

ROBERT Well I hope it's the first of many evenings.

ALAN Uh, yeah. Me too.

ROBERT To Special Evenings.

ALAN To Special Evenings.

They clink glasses.

ROBERT Give me your foot.

ALAN What?

ROBERT Your foot. Don't you like to get your feet massaged?

ALAN Uh. Sure. Er no. I mean...

ROBERT Sorry. Have you ever had a foot massage?

ALAN Actually no.

ROBERT Give me your foot.

ALAN Which one?

ROBERT Doesn't matter.

ALAN Here.

ROBERT Thanks.

ALAN No, on second thoughts here.

He switches feet.

ROBERT Now you were saying?

ALAN Uh nothing. I mean…ooooh that feels good.

ROBERT For me as well.

ALAN Do you have a thing about feet?

ROBERT Just a little. Relax. That's good. You were saying about your brother and sister?

ALAN Oh. I was? Um…well they're older than me and, wow that feels fantastic.

ROBERT I knew it would.

ALAN My parents got divorced when I was nine and that kind of tore the family apart.

ROBERT Oh that's sad.

ALAN Yeah. And my step-mom has two sons – but they're older than me as well. Oooh.

ROBERT Good?

ALAN Yeah.

ROBERT I'm glad. Don't forget your drink.

ALAN Right.

He takes three big gulps.

ROBERT Steady on. We don't want to get you drunk now.

ALAN No I guess not.

ROBERT Have you ever been drunk?

ALAN A few times.

ROBERT How was it?

ALAN Fun.

ROBERT Fun but...?

ALAN But the next morning I had a bad bad headache.

ROBERT I bet.

ALAN Hardly seems worth it.

ROBERT Oh sometimes it's worth it.

ALAN Like when?

ROBERT Like now, when two friends can sit and relax and unwind.

ALAN And rub each other's feet?

ROBERT You want to rub my feet?

ALAN Well not really but –

ROBERT But what?

ALAN It only seems polite.

ROBERT One hand washes the other?

ALAN Or foot.

ROBERT Or foot.

ALAN Something like that.

ROBERT Let's just concentrate on you right now – we'll worry about me in a while.

ALAN That feels so good.

ROBERT I'm glad.

ALAN No really.

ROBERT Good.

ALAN You could do this for a living.

ROBERT I have a job thank you.

ALAN I didn't mean that –

ROBERT Relax, I know what you meant.

ALAN I mean cause you're a good actor, you don't need to be a foot massager for a living.

ROBERT A masseur.

ALAN A masseur?

ROBERT Someone who massages other people for a living.

ALAN Right. You don't need to do that.

ROBERT How does this feel?

ROBERT *does something special with* **ALAN***'s foot.*

ALAN Wow.

ROBERT You like?

ALAN I like. A lot.

ROBERT Let me do it again. There.

ALAN Oh yeah. That's it.

Pause.

Can I get another drink?

ROBERT You haven't finished this one.

ALAN *downs the drink.*

ALAN Now I have.

ROBERT Easy baby.

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