bobrauschenberbergamerica

by CHARLES L. MEE

An empty stage covered by a blank canvas.
A ladder.
The actors come out to remove the ladder and canvas.

Big Music.

1 Title

A chicken slowly descends from the flies on a string.
It has a sign around its neck that says:
bobrauschenberbergamerica

2 What I Like

A roller skater bursts in with a big red umbrella, and the rest of the characters come out immediately, some with objects--the trucker has a bathtub on wheels with a light set in the mass of crunched steel where the showerhead should be, and maybe a One Way sign on the side of the tub. Susan has a stuffed deer on wheels, or maybe a goat with a tire around its stomach. Becker the filthy, rag-dressed, disheveled, offhand derelict has a cardboard box, Phil's Girl pushes a baby carriage with a stuffed chicken inside, Wilson has a house window on wheels. Allen crosses the stage carrying a ladder

while a voiceover is heard:
VOICEOVER
What I like to do is...
I start with anything,
a picture,
these colors,

I like these colors,
or I might have an idea about something I'd like to try with a shoe,
or maybe I just feel:
happy.

Look,
everything overlaps doesn't it?

Is connected some kind of way.
Once you put it all together, it's just obvious.
I mean, tie a string to something, and
see where it takes you.
The biggest thing is
don't worry about it.
You're always gonna be moving somewhere so
don't worry about it.
See?
Start working when it's almost too late at night,
when your sense of efficiency is exhausted
and then just,
let it come on....

[The sign disappears and the characters exit as the voiceover ends.]

3 Bob's Mom

Bob's mom comes out onto the front porch.
She talks, while we hear crickets,
and while photos are projected behind her on the wall--
but her talk and the photos don't match up:
BOB’S MOM
That’s Bob’s 1st Birthday Party
on the back porch with the morning glories all in bloom
that’s Butch East,
Johnnie East,
Susan East,
she just got arrested for drugs,
Billy Kraemer and Alex Cameron.

And that’s Bob with Johnnie East in their canvas swimming pool
when they were about four
Johnnie popped that beach ball later that day
and I told Bob I wasn't buying another one.

There’s Bob with his dog Jab.
He used to feed him the cheese sandwiches I made the boys for lunch. They're under the porch.

This is some kind of hut they made in the back yard
out of crates and branches and clothes.
You can see Bob's feet out the side.
That's Donna Kraemer trying to get in the back.

There are the boys outside Dobson's 5 & 10 cent store.
They almost died blowing up those balloons--
they're 6 feet long.
It’s Johnnie East, Bob and Tommy Hoffman.
The Port Arthur Independent ran this picture
on the front page of their second section for the 4th of July.
Tommy Hoffman got meningitis and died.
That was a real sad day for all of us.

Art
art was not a part of our lives.

[We hear a newspaper boy’s bike bell. A newspaper is thrown onto the stage. Bob’s Mom picks it up, waves, and goes back inside.]
4 Our Town

BECKER
Where I grew up
you could walk to the end of the block
and step right into the countryside
field after field
nobody owned this land so far as we knew.
It had little lakes where we would cut down saplings
and build lean-tos
and camp out
no grownups, just the kids, boys and girls
we had no fear
of anything.
You could just go and go
you didn't know where you were headed
but you were a free person
you’d see where it was you’d been
after you came out of the woods at the end.

5 Setting Out

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
When I leave home at 5 AM,
the Big Dipper is bright over my shoulder
against the dark road we live on.
And it's quiet.
And if there's a moon
it's still up and hovering
over the little lake.
The front range of hills is a dark silhouette in the background.
In the evening ducks and geese are on the pond
and the fish are standing on their tails.
The quarry I load out of is surrounded by
red monoliths of rock
like sentinels
with flocks of blackbirds perched on top.
When the weather's hot the afternoon sky is blue,
and it grows giant cumulus,  
which by evening go dark  
and shoot the most amazing sideways heli-arcs of fire.

[A bathing beauty, the trucker's girlfriend, enters sucking the tail end of a milkshake from a cup. Phil notices her.]

Everywhere I go there's something to see.  
I don't know how I got so lucky.  
But here I am.

[ A girl on roller skates races across the stage.  
Bob's Mom steps out onto her front porch, shaking out a dishtowel.  
Faint music,  
as though heard on a radio in a truck cab in the night,  
or through the open window of a house in Kansas,  
coming from another house, far distant across the field;  
it could be the music of Ibrahim Ferrer,  
or another country song.]

**6 Falling in Love**

Susan enters from the opposite side,  
She sees Becker and he sees her. They stop.

**SUSAN**  
So often we find  
we look at someone  
and  
we are disgusted.

**BECKER**  
Oh, yes.

**SUSAN**  
We think: here is a real dirtball  
and we think
if we get too close
we might catch something.

BECKER
Yes, we do.

SUSAN
And yet, as far as we know,
we ourselves might be the contagious ones
not knowing what it is we have
but having it even so
without knowing it.

BECKER
We never know.

SUSAN
Still, we think
get this fellow away from me
lock him up, put him away
send him to an island
you know, the island of the damned,
the island of the rejects
whatever
just get him out of here.
And yet, life twists and turns
sometimes like lightning
you don’t know
suddenly you’ve got cancer
and you are facing death
or in the least likely place
you see someone
and you fall in love
you look at the guy
and you think:
I don’t think so
and yet there it is
you don’t know why
your friends all say: are you crazy?
you love him?
buts you love him so much
you just want to knock him down and kiss him

[She runs at Becker,  
knocks him down, and kisses him madly.]

7 The Triangle

Wilson enters.

WILSON
Hey, what the hell is going on here?  
Do you know who the hell you're kissing?

BECKER
No. No, I don't.

WILSON
This is my wife.

SUSAN
Wife?

WILSON
Fiancée.

SUSAN
Fiancée?

WILSON
My girlfriend.  
I mean, I thought we were going steady.  
What the hell is this?  
I walk/turn my back for one minute  
and you're taking up with someone else?  
What are you  
some sort of biological creature?
SUSAN
Yes. Yes, I am.

WILSON
I am from Chicago, Susan.

SUSAN
I know that, Wilson.

WILSON
So what do you think that means to me?

SUSAN
What?

WILSON
Kissing. What do you think that means?

SUSAN
I wouldn't have any idea.

WILSON
You see what's happened these days
nobody can tell you what kissing means!

SUSAN
I can tell you what it means when I kiss you.
It means goodbye.

[She walks out.]

8 Making Nice

A lone man, Allen, wearing shower cap and towel,
enters and sings a song to smooth things over--
The Inkspots' song: I don't want to set the world on fire--
or something else to distract from the fight
and get everyone's attention moving elsewhere--
and the characters already on stage, Phil, Phil's Girl, Wilson and Becker the filthy derelict, sing backup for Allen. At some point in the song, Susan enters and joins in the song:

I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire
I don’t want to set the world on fire

9 Another Lover

Another man, Carl, enters and dances to the song, and after Allen sings, while the music is still playing, Allen, the singer, joins Carl, the dancer, so that they dance together.

Wilson takes over as soloist when the lyrics pick up again.

NOTE: as the piece goes on, there will be several relationships among the characters contained in dialogue--but also all sorts of relationships are possible without dialogue, in bits of physical actions that occur on the side, and in dances that suggest deeper, more lingering relationships.

At the end of the song, Carl and Allen exit together. During the following scene, the rest of the characters gradually leave Phil and his girl alone in the tub.
10 The Bathing Beauty

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
I look at you and I think
if it wouldn't be wrong
I'd like to make love with you on a pool table.

HIS GIRL
It wouldn't be wrong if you'd let me handcuff you to the pockets.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
You could do that.

HIS GIRL
What I think about is
I'd like to have sex with you in the parking lot
behind the Exxon station
near that diner on the Malibu highway
you know the one?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Near that road up into the canyon.

HIS GIRL
That's the one.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
That would be pretty public.

HIS GIRL
I'd like to have the whole world see
you want me so much
you can't wait.
I'd like to have the whole world see
you're not ashamed of me.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Why would I be ashamed of you?
HIS GIRL
I feel ashamed myself.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
For what reason?

HIS GIRL
Who knows?
Every fifteen minutes I feel ashamed of myself at least once.
And humiliated.
For no reason.
It just comes back to me over and over again.
Do you ever feel that way?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Every fifteen minutes I feel worried.

HIS GIRL
Do you feel you want to hurt someone?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
No.

HIS GIRL
Do you feel you want to get even?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
No.

HIS GIRL
That's good.
Do you feel you want to bite something?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
I don't think so.
Maybe I feel that.

HIS GIRL
Do you feel you want to take off all your clothes?
PHIL, THE TRUCKER
No.
I usually don’t feel that.

HIS GIRL
Do you feel you want more money?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Oh, sure. Everybody feels that.

A VOICE CALLS OUT
Lunch is served!

[A big table and several chairs are brought out.]

VARIOUS PEOPLE SAY
Oh, thank god.
I’m famished!
Just in time!
I wasn’t going to last another minute!

[Bob’s Mom brings out a roast chicken. Chicken picnic lunch is served. Everyone takes some food and sits in the chairs.]

11 Table Talk: The Stars

ALLEN
The way the stars are, with your naked eyes you can’t see much.

SUSAN
Oh.
No. Unless you know a lot.

ALLEN
But even looking at the stars,
I would rather say the night sky,
you see two kinds of things...3 or 4 kinds of things.
SUSAN
You see planets, you see stars, you see meteorites, you can see aircrafts ...
all these things...

ALLEN
so it’s a great show
the way the planets appear and dance around, we follow it all the time
and we have on our bulletin boards in the back ...
and we have a chart of the whole thing, and people record that stuff...
because we know these motions very well.
It’s the foundation probably of qualitative science.

SUSAN
The early work of people trying to understand...

ALLEN
first just day and night, then the seasons
and then the stars and then the planets...
there are different things that go back tens of thousands of years,
older than written history.

SUSAN
Right.

ALLEN
There is a great deal more space than time, you know.

SUSAN
No.

ALLEN
Yes.
And this is because the signals we can get all come in at the speed of light...
SUSAN
that's really fast.

ALLEN
Yes. And they cover a great distance.
So it doesn’t take them much time to cover a lot of distance--
that's how you get more space than time in the universe.

SUSAN
Right.
Right.

12 Table Talk: The Dispute

WILSON
How could you just suddenly: disappear?

SUSAN
I didn’t.

WILSON
I thought you did.
And I thought you loved me.

SUSAN
Well, I do love you.

[The other characters exit.]

WILSON
Oh, yes, you love me,
but you don’t love me in that way.

SUSAN
I never pretended to love you in that way.
WILSON
I can't go on in life
without being loved in that way.

SUSAN
A lot of people are never loved in that way.

WILSON
How can you tell
if you are really alive
if you're never loved in that way?

SUSAN
What do you mean: in that way?

WILSON
Unless I thought you were crazy for me
so crazy for me you couldn't stand it
you just had to kiss me
you just had to knock me down and kiss me
because you couldn't stand it
that you laughed at my jokes
or thought I was so cool
or like said really intelligent things that made you think
maybe not all of those things
but even just any one of them
just one of them

[Silence.]

You see what I mean, not even one.

SUSAN
I'm sorry.

WILSON
Why did you live with me, then?
SUSAN
I thought I loved you
but I guess I didn't know what love was.
I liked you in a way
not much
but in some ways
or at least in the ways I thought guys could be likeable
and the rest of it I thought maybe that's just
how guys are
and as time went on maybe it wouldn't matter so much
but then I find it does matter
I can't help myself
some stuff you do
I just can't get over it
and the stuff I liked:
that I thought you were a responsible person
and mature
solid and dependable
all those turned out not to be true at all
so what am I left with?

WILSON
It's not your fault.

SUSAN
No, it's not.

WILSON
Or maybe it is
that you weren't thinking very clearly
or being very focused when you made your choice
and a lot of people were depending on that choice being really clear
or at least I was

SUSAN
I know.
I'm sorry.
WILSON
Being sorry doesn’t cut it somehow.
I know people always say they’re sorry
and probably they are
and I don’t think it means nothing
I’m sure it means something
and it’s essential for people to feel it
and to say it
in order for life to go on at all
and yet
the truth is
it doesn’t cut it.
I’m sorry: but it doesn’t.

SUSAN
I’m sorry.

WILSON
Is that somehow now
supposed to cut it?

13 Table Talk: A Couple Seeks Advice

Everyone comes back on and start clearing the table. Allen and Carl talk about their idea, both interrupting one another and talking simultaneously

ALLEN
OK.
I would like to hear opinions or advice on my idea.

CARL
Well, our idea.

ALLEN
Our idea.
It’s a business really.
CARL
A new business because....

ALLEN
because the catering business is not like a big business.

CARL
So a year ago we bought a small acreage
we thought: let’s go into a real business for ourselves
have a small business

ALLEN
and we fixed up the chicken coop

CARL
and bought 20 broiler chicks to raise for our own butchering.

ALLEN
I have an ample enough coop to raise more chickens for butchering
and also some egg producers.

CARL
I like this idea because I’ve always wanted to do something with farming,

ALLEN
but we didn't inherit farmland,

CARL
which is usually how you get to be a farmer.

ALLEN
Well, anyway, how do you find your target market?

CARL
Advertising would not be hard,
I have a good program on my computer to make flyers and business cards,

ALLEN
but do we have to get a license to maybe sell to local restaurants?
CARL
Do we have to be monitored by the state since we’d be selling meat?

ALLEN
We just have the idea
and now we don’t know what to do with it

CARL
and also we’re nervous about failing
and Allen:
he’s afraid if we go into the chicken business
he’s going to end up looking like a chicken

ALLEN
Well.
I mean, look at Frank Perdue.

CARL
What do you mean?

ALLEN
What do you mean, what do you mean?

CARL
You mean he looks like a chicken?

ALLEN
Well, look at him.

CARL
I don’t think being a chicken farmer
is going to make you look like a chicken, Allen,
otherwise plumbers would look like pipes
carpenters would look like sawdust
the president of General Motors would look like a bumper.

ALLEN
Have you seen the President of General Motors?
[Allen and Carl storm off. Phil, Phil's girl, Wilson, and Becker exit. Susan climbs into the bathtub. Bob's Mom is left on stage.]

14 Table Talk: Bob's Mom's Grandmother

Bob's mom talking about family photos in album, a slide is projected behind her.

BOB’S MOM
When I was sixteen my grandmother had to be put into a home. My grandmother had terrorized my mother and uncle for so many years it was difficult to feel much in the way of empathy or compassion or love for her. But I related to her in one way. We shared a real passion for the color red. My grandmother's house was a museum. She collected cut Italian colored glass decanters and glasses. Each object uniquely shaped. Colors rich. I valued those objects deeply. I wanted to play with them, to make new shapes of them, to make new surfaces for them. I wanted to smash them and see what they looked like as heaps, to see how light played on their shattered surfaces. My grandmother always wore a large rectangular ruby pendant on a gold chain. I dreamed of having that one day. Of having that color. When my grandmother died I asked what became of the ruby. It turned out she had gone into the home years before and everything was sold at a yard sale. The objects she collected--beautiful objects--all discarded. Thrown out. No one wanted them. Cast off. I would have preferred to smash them against brick walls to see what they might have become.

Well, art was not a part of our lives.

[A girl skates through on roller skates. People drift back slowly and continue to clear away the food from the picnic.]

15 Guy Talk

Phil comes out with a checkerboard.
He sits down beside Susan and they start to play checkers.
As this scene goes on, people drift to and from the table, getting up to get something and then not coming back, going inside, or getting up to get another drink for someone
and then not coming back,
some taking their plates or glasses with them
to continue eating and drinking wherever they stand.

And as the conversation continues,
the others may begin to engage in other activities--
Allen and Carl both bring out ironing boards and start to do some ironing in the background;
Phil's girl swings in a tire swing;
Becker the filthy derelict sets up housekeeping inside his box;
etc.

SUSAN
The woman next door
is having an affair with an orchestra conductor in Cincinnati.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Does Cincinnati have an orchestra?

SUSAN
I guess it does.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Does her husband know?

SUSAN
He doesn't know.
She just flies off to Cincinnati from time to time
when her husband is away on business
or the conductor comes to Denver.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
How did they meet?

SUSAN
On an airplane.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
What does she do?
SUSAN
I don't know.
She flies around a lot.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Is she a stewardess?

SUSAN
Oh, right.
She's a stewardess.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
No wonder she can just go wherever she wants.

SUSAN
Right.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
It's a perfect job if you want to have love affairs.

SUSAN
Right.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Do you think all stewardesses are having love affairs?

SUSAN
Well, most of them probably.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Why not?

SUSAN
Exactly.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Would you, if you were a stewardess?
SUSAN
Yes, I think I would.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
So would I.

SUSAN
I have to pee.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
What?

SUSAN
I have to pee.
Would you wait here?

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Oh. Sure.

[She leaves;
everyone stops what they are doing,
turn to look, and just stand around waiting for her to come back;
we hear a flush from offstage;
finally she returns.]

SUSAN
Times have changed.

[Everyone else resumes what they were doing.]

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Since when?

SUSAN
Since, oh, I don't know.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
I don't think they have.
SUSAN
Of course they have.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Well, of course they have
in the sense that now you have electric lights and so forth
the internet
whatnot,
but otherwise I don't think times have changed.

SUSAN
I think they have.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Compared to what?

SUSAN
My grandmother.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
You wouldn't know.

SUSAN
That's true.
I wouldn't know.
Maybe that's what changed.
But in Russia you know
they didn't have love affairs for years
all during the communists.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
How do you know?

SUSAN
There was a study.
They didn't even have sex with their husbands and wives
not much.
PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Why not?

SUSAN
They didn’t feel like it.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER
Are they having sex now?

SUSAN
Now! Well, sure. I suppose they are.
You know, things have changed in Russia.

16 Becker’s Movie

Becker climbs out of his box, holding two old license plates, which he uses as the script. He casts the other people in the movie and they do the roles as well as being film crew and audience. The objects around them on the stage become props in the film. Bob’s Mom watches from inside the house.

BECKER
OK. I have an idea for a movie.
I think this could be really great.

You will play Clem, the meteorologist
you will be the billionaire on his deathbed,
the roles are all marked for you in the script.

Ready?

CAST MEMBERS [variously]
Sure.
OK.
Right.

BECKER
OK. Here it is:
This is a film about a conspiracy to blow up a train carrying nerve gas from the west coast to the east coast where it is supposed to be dumped into the Atlantic. Only one FBI man is alert to the danger and he cannot convince his superiors that a conspiracy exists. He is playing a hunch and sometimes he doubts the validity of his intuition. Minutes before countdown he has the evidence he needs.

OK.

The conspirators include a folksy meteorologist, an embittered homosexual, a Chinese cameraman, a Lesbian, a Mexican pistolero, a Negro castrated in his cradle by rat bites. The time and place for countdown depends of course on prevailing winds and the meteorologist is busy with continual calculations, weather maps, barometer and wind reads, telescopic observation of clouds and birds. There are also instruments of his own invention. He is contemptuous of weather reports.

ALLEN as CLEM, THE METEOROLOGIST
Doesn’t know a typhoon from a fart. You see that vulture up yonder? He can tell you more than a room full of weather maps and barometers. The birds know.

BECKER
The conspiracy is financed by a private inheritance. This sum was left to Clem the meteorologist by an eccentric billionaire perturbed by overpopulation, air and water pollution, and the destruction of wild life.

Now there is a shot of the billionaire speaking on his deathbed.

CARL as BILLIONAIRE, on his deathbed
Clem, swear to me by everything we both hold sacred that you will use every cent of that money to turn the clock back to 1899 when a silver dollar bought a good meal or a good piece of ass.

BECKER
Cut to conspirators headquarters in run-down 1920 bungalow. Audrey [Becker indicates Susan] the homosexual is looking through the Telstar. Inside the gate the last cylinders of nerve gas are being loaded into a train. The Telstar lingers lovingly on the ass of a young soldier who is bending over to pick up a cylinder of gas. Mr. Lee the Chinese cameraman takes over at the Telstar. Train doors shut and locked. A gum-chewing MP reading Sextoons presses a button. The train moves out.
ALLEN as CLEM
You know I love this country. Only thing wrong with it is the folks living there.

BECKER
His face goes black with hate.

ALLEN as CLEM
Mother loving stupid asses bible belt cuntsuckers.

BECKER
He smiles and turns to Audrey, Miss Longridge and the spade whose name is Jones.

[Phil's Girl becomes Miss Longridge, Wilson becomes Jones and Tio Mate.]

ALLEN as CLEM
Now you're city folk. You never drank cool spring water on a summer afternoon. You never sat down to fried squirrel and jack salmon with black-eyed peas and wild raspberries. You never sank your hands in the soil and let it run through your fingers.

BECKER
He turns back to the map.

ALLEN as CLEM
Yes, sir. We're going to lay down a mighty fine load of fertilizer.

BECKER
He sweeps his hand across the Middle West.

ALLEN as CLEM
The trees will grow again, the bison will come back, the wild turkey and the deer.

SUSAN as AUDREY
Other people are different from me, and I don't like them.

BECKER
Miss Longridge is looking at the nudes in Playboy. Tio Mate the Mexican pistolero is cleaning his Smith & Wesson tip-up 44. Jones is taking a fix.

Cut to FBI man pacing up and down in his office.
CARL as ROGERS
I tell you I had a dream. I saw that train go up and that gas sweeping up the Eastern seaboard.

PHIL'S GIRL as FALK
Are you going to tell the chief about your dream, Joe?

BECKER
[ROGERS, picking up the phone.]

CARL as ROGERS
No, but I'm going to ask him for more agents.

BECKER
Cover story for the conspirators is that they are making a documentary film of America. Clem is the director, Lee the cameraman, Audrey the script writer, Miss Longridge the business manager and Tio Mate the studio guard. The film of course is a documentary of America.

In a deserted roadhouse Audrey rapes a young sailor at gunpoint while Lee impassively films the action.

AUDREY
OK. CUT! You can put your clothes on now. And now let's see how fast you can run.

BECKER
Sailor takes off like a rabbit and reaches the top of a hill fifty yards away. Tio Mate draws and aims and fires. Tio Mate can blast a vulture out of the air with his 44.

Miss Longridge rapes two female hitchhikers. And then, stark naked, she kills them with a baseball bat.

They stop at a filling station and honk. Nobody comes, so Jones gets out to fill the tank himself. At this moment, the owner of the filling station, a Nigger-killing lawman with six notches on his gun, comes out a side door.

PHIL, THE TRUCKER as LAWMAN
Get away from that pump, boy.
WILSON as JONES
Yassuh, boss.

[As Becker speaks the following lines, everyone tries to keep up. Chaos ensues.]

BECKER
Jones drenches the lawman with gasoline and sets him on fire.

Jones who is hooked on junk leaves a wake of dead druggists.

Audrey is restrained at gun point from mass rape of a Boy Scout troop.

Tio Mate shoots down an army helicopter.

Clem sounds a word of warning to his impetuous companions.

ALLEN as CLEM
Such a thing as too much fun. We're leaving a trail like a herd of elephants.

BECKER
That's as far as I've gotten so far.
How do you like it?

[No one is sure how to respond.]

17 Line Dancing

Suddenly: a line dance.
At the end, it stops as suddenly as it began,
and everyone goes back to their normal lives. Phil's Girl crawls into the tub, Becker climbs back into his box and watches the following scene. Everyone else exits, except for Wilson and Susan, who are left onstage.
18 Crazy for You

WILSON [confronting Susan]
So
it turns out
you come to me
to be with me
and then
as soon as you feel reassured that I love you
you go back to your husband
and then if you talk to me on the phone
and I seem to be slipping away from you
if I seem anxious or uncertain
then you come back to me and make love with me
and stay with me
until you know you have me again
I can’t help myself loving you
and then you go back to your husband again
so it turns out
the only way I can keep you is by making you feel anxious
keeping you on edge
making you feel I’m about to drop you
so the way to have you
is to reject you
and if I don’t reject you
then I don't have you
we are in a relationship that is sick
where you show love by showing aversion
you show aversion by showing love
so that you live a backwards life
and the one person you want to love and cherish
and show how much you care
is the one person you will drive away by doing any of those things
how can we go on like this?
this is insane
this will make us both insane
this is how people go insane!
[He storms out.]

19 Dessert

Bob's Mom brings out a cake and sets it down on the picnic table. As this next scene goes along, Susan starts to eat compulsively, taking pieces of cake or cupcakes from the table--at first absentmindedly, at a normal cake-eating pace, and then more and more compulsively, until she is stuffing it into her mouth.

BECKER
I think I know how he feels myself.
I thought you cared for me, too.

SUSAN
I did care for you.
There was something about you
I don't even know what it was that just hit me
I couldn't help myself
but then it turns out
it was like a summer storm
it passed as quickly as it came
and then it was over.

BECKER
Maybe it wasn't over for me.

SUSAN
I'm sorry.

BECKER
I don't think you can just drop someone like that
and just say I'm sorry.
SUSAN
I didn't just say I'm sorry
I am sorry.

BECKER
This is why some people call women fickle.

SUSAN
I don't think it has anything to do with being fickle.
How it is for women:
Women feel what they feel when they feel it
and then when they don't feel it any more they don't feel it.
Unlike a man
who won't know what he feels when he feels it
and then later on
he'll realize how he felt
and so he'll talk himself into feeling it again
when he doesn't feel it
because he thinks he should be consistent about the positions he takes
and stick to them
so a man always thinks he feels things he doesn't feel
and so he never really knows how he feels at all.

BECKER
That could be true.

SUSAN
Of course it's true.
Pretty soon
you're going to thank god you had such a narrow escape
you're going to feel lucky I dumped you

BECKER
I'm never going to feel that.

SUSAN
Maybe not.
BECKER
I think you must be a sort of a tease
or worse
some kind of seducer and dumper kind of person
who is just a loose cannon
cutting a swath through men
leaving them wrecked all around you
what is that all about?

[She speaks, with a mouth full of cake,
eating as she speaks,
with greater and greater animation as she goes on,
till she is yelling through a mouth full of cake.]

SUSAN
Maybe that would be about something
if it were in any way true
but it is not in any way true
I'm a person who is looking for true love
like anyone else
except the difference is
I am trying not to be afraid of my feelings
and censor things
and lie and lie and lie all the time
pretending I feel like this or that
going with some guy because I couldn't be sure any more
how I felt about him
because he had some things I liked and other things I didn't
and trying to talk myself into not caring about the things I cared about
and caring about the things I didn't care about
because I've done that a lot in the past
so I am trying to let my feelings lead me through life
And
feelings are feelings
they come and go.
So probably I'm just as disoriented as you are
and left in the lurch
suddenly dropped
or thrown down the stairs
it’s not as though this is not a struggle for me too
but the one thing you can be sure of is
if ever I am sure of how I feel
in a way that is the kind of feeling that I know will last
then when that time comes
if it so happens that I do tell you I love you
then you can be sure of it.

[Becker and Susan exit.]

20 Martinis

Music.

Phil’s girl brings out an immense piece of plastic sheeting
which she spreads out on the floor.
She takes a bottle of gin
and pours it out on the sheeting,
then she takes a bottle of vermouth
and waves it over the gin,
then she takes a bottle of olives and pours it out onto the gin;
she begins to slide forward on the gin,
licking it up with her tongue.
Phil enters in a bathing suit
and he joins her
sliding forward on his stomach
and licking up the martini.

Everyone enters and clears the stage.
A girl on roller skates rolls by.
The stage is empty.

21 Why does the chicken cross the stage?

A chicken crosses the stage--moving cautiously, stopping and looking around as he goes, scratching at the ground--maybe while we hear, as a voiceover, an astronaut talking to Houston base.
A man in a chicken suit crosses the stage.

[Silence, till the chicken is almost off the other side.]

Why does he cross the stage?

22 The Universe

Music begins to play. Characters arrive slowly, all of them moving as if walking on the moon. Allen emerges first, pushing a car door on wheels. Susan and Phil’s girl are cuddled up inside.

while:

A man (Wilson) practices his golf swing in slow motion and:

A young girl eats candy wrappers or dog biscuits to the awe of her peers while Allen speaks:

ALLEN
You think that you see what’s present ...but you don’t, you never do...
All you can ever see is the past.
Look in the mirror,
you see a person in the mirror who is younger than you are...
because the light has to go from you to the mirror
and from the mirror to your eye.
So it leaves you, goes to the mirror
and comes back.
So whenever you see yourself,
you see yourself a little earlier.
It’s actually unimportant. It’s nanoseconds.
But the truth is:
all any human being can ever observe is the past.
You never see the present.
And everything you look at is younger than it is right now.
When you look at the universe,
you are looking at a universe that is billions of years younger.
[Allen and Susan drift off into space. Phil's girl joins the golfer. Carl rides by on a bike. He climbs off the bike, and then laundry falls from above. Bob's Mom comes out and watches him.]

23 The Laundry Opera

Carl dives over and over again into a pile of laundry while we hear an operatic aria. After a while, Carl exits.

24 Clean Sweep

Becker the filthy derelict, as janitor with a push broom, crosses, sweeping up the laundry, while Bob's Mom speaks again, with slides projected behind her, but the photos don’t match up:

BOB’S MOM
That's Bob and Freddie Martin dressed up as The Lone Ranger and Hopalong Cassidy.
Look at them in their masks and cowboy hats, with all those swords and guns and flashlights stuck in their belts.
Two tough little cowboys. I don't think Hopalong ever wore a mask, actually.

This is Bob and some kind of contraption he made in Boy Scouts from hundreds of popsicle sticks.
You can see how he glued the sticks all straight and organized at the bottom and then where he got bored.
He started gluing the sticks every which a way and adding feathers and bottle caps and twigs to it so it looked like that on top.
He looks pretty pleased with himself, but I don't think the Scoutmaster was.
Oh my Lord, that’s Bob up on the roof
trying to fix his short wave radio antenna.
Just after I took that picture the antenna fell over
and touched the power line on the street.
He was smart enough to let go in time,
but the power blew up his radio and burned a hole in his desk.
I think he got more careful about things after that.

And here’s Bob and Barbara Spangler
at Ethel Howell’s Ballroom Dance Class end of the year formal.
Barbara got the Most Polite Student Award that year.
I don’t know why Bob didn’t get one too.
He certainly was just as polite as she was.

25 The Galaxy

Allen enters with a ladder. He climbs to the top of the ladder and speaks. During the scene, the other characters come out one by one and wave at him. He appears to be waving back, but he exists in a different time and space, and his gestures are linked to the images he is describing.

ALLEN
This connection between time and space is everything...and you can’t interpret or judge easily the way we can around here. That’s why we’re not sure of many things because we have only one interpretation--the way things look to us here on earth at one particular moment.

What we did: we thought it was, at that point, urgently necessary to do that. But I don’t know why that is. In any case, it all happened and it’s very hard to see how it could have gone otherwise.

But the place itself was fascinating, especially for a scientist engaged in the work...

it was dangerous...it seemed very responsible, it demanded all our attention, and we worried a great deal about what was happening ...

But, meanwhile, it was a beautiful place, a high mountain, 8,000 feet high, fair weather in New Mexico, in the winter it snowed, in the summer it was hot, never
humid. The snow would cover the whole world in two feet of snow overnight and a week later it would be gone...no trace of it...

And when the snow was there you’d poke a hole, you’d look into it and you would see a deep blue color...because of the sky...the shadows are blue against it....for the same reason. The bright blue sky light...the bright blue sky light fills in the shadows and the shadows are intercepting the light from the sun itself. Just that little bright disc.

So behind it, in the shadow, like the earth’s shadow, there's a kind of local light that has a blue tinge because the sky has not turned off. At night, the sky is turned off because the sun is what illuminates the sky, illuminates the earth and the sky, the sky is just there and we see the air in the shadow.

So it’s the most beautiful place, Los Alamos...It was very grim, you knew the outcome couldn’t work at all, that’s what we all thought, but we weren't going to give it up.

[A newspaper boy’s bell. Bob's Mom comes out to pick up the newspaper. The other characters come out to admire the stars.]

26 Square Dance

A country music song slams into the piece-- remember what country music does, how american it is, how it adds automatically themes of love, betrayal, a hundred story lines enter the piece with country music a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song a country music song
CARL
Square up everyone

[Music starts. CARL does a singing square dance call, the old square dance standard:]

Four ladies to the center and back to the bar
four gents center with a right hand star
opposite ladies for an aleman thar
back up boys but not too far
throw in the clutch, put 'er in low
it's twice around that ring you go
on to the next for a do pass-o
and bring her on home as fast as you go
down in Arkansas on my knees
I thought I heard a chicken sneeze
I looked around here's what I saw
a bald headed maid with a pretty little taw

[The rest of the characters join in on the following verse.]

ALL
too old, too old
I'm too old to cut the mustard any more

[The music cuts out into ecstatic mode--
The square dancers
do flat out clog-stomping
so that they seem to float in the air
and only occasionally it seems the heel of a boot stomps the floor
as they float in ecstasy.

As the music continues,
Wilson and Susan have an especially ecstatic duet.]
27 The Assassination

Carl is assassinated. Several shots ring out and he drops dead. Allen catches him and holds him. People stand around staring, then slowly go off, leaving Allen, Carl and Phil onstage.

28 Chicken Jokes

Phil tells chicken jokes to distract from the solemnity.

PHIL
A chicken went into a library and went up to the circulation desk and said to the librarian:
Boooook!
Book! Book! Book!
So the librarian gave the chicken four books, and the chicken left and came back later that day, put the four books down and said:
Book! Book!
so the librarian took back the first four books and gave the chicken two new books and the chicken left and came back later the same day, put down the two books and said:
Book! Book! Book!
so the librarian took back the two books and gave the chicken three new books and the chicken left. But this time the librarian followed the chicken out of the library to see what it was doing with these books since no one could read fast enough to go through those nine books in a single day.
So the librarian followed the chicken down a dirt road and right down a path through the woods and came to a pond
where the chicken was handing the books
one by one
to a frog
who kept saying of one book after another
Read it! Read it! Read it!

[Allen carefully places Carl down on the ground, and leaves.]

or

A chicken and an egg are lying in bed. The chicken is leaning against the headboard smoking a cigarette, with a satisfied smile on its face. The egg, looking a bit ticked off, grabs the sheet, rolls over, and says, "Well, I guess we finally answered THAT question!"

What do you call a chicken that wakes you up at the same time every morning?
An Alarm Cluck!

The sound it makes is tick tock a doodle do

If you have deviled eggs, what you need is an eggsorcist.

Chickens are the hardest working animals. They work around the cluck.

Chicken soup is good for you. Unless you're a chicken!

When a chicken is crazy, it's referred to as a cuckoo cluck.

Why didn't the chicken look both ways before she crossed the road?

[Waits for the audience to answer.]

Because she was a dumb cluck!

[Phil exits.]
29 Welcome Speech

Carl, who has been lying on the stage dead, sits up and gives a speech welcoming everyone to an art opening, while we hear cement mixers, pounding, banging, clanking, sawing.

CARL
OK.
How we put the show together.
First, I want to welcome everyone
I'm glad you could all come tonight.
We don't often get to do a show like this
where we can just put on whatever we like
figure OK what the hell
lets just do whatever we feel like
and hope you'll enjoy it.
I often feel those of us who are in the museum world
are particularly blessed.
Because we get to explore our feelings
whatever they may be
that's a sort of freedom.
You know, that's how it is to deal with art
because art is made in the freedom of the imagination
with no rules
it's the only human activity like that
where it can do no one any harm
so it is possible to be completely free
and see what it may be that people think and feel
when they are completely free
in a way, what it is to be human when a human being is free
and so art lets us practice freedom
and helps us know what it is to be free
and so what it is to be human.

But, still, it often seems to me almost miraculous
how we can put things here in the museum
and ordinary folks
my mom and dad and my own neighbors
and I myself
will come to see things
sometimes things that I myself find completely incomprehensible
and really offensive
people will come to our museum
and think: oh, that's interesting
or, oh, that's stupid
but they don't really hold it against the show
they just move on and look at something else and think
oh that's cool.
And I wonder:
how do we get away with that?
And I think well, we are a free people
that's why
and we understand that
in a way maybe other people in the world don't
we like an adventure
often we might think
well, that's a piece of junk
but that's how this fellow sees the world
and there's a certain pleasure in seeing things from his point of view
we are a patient people
no matter what you hear people say
and a tolerant people
and a fearless, open people
that's how it is for us

I think that's how it is to be an American.

We're all unique.
It's a precious thing to compare ourselves to nothing else.
This is my working attitude.
I don't feel shame in my joy.

[He looks confused.]

I started out here knowing what I meant to say
and now I have to say
I don't know what I said.
But I’d just like to welcome you
and let you know
we’re all glad to be here with you tonight
to share this with you
and we hope you have a swell evening.

30 General Applause

Canned applause and bravos from the audience at the 25th anniversary Cage
concert at Carnegie Hall, which continues over the following scene:

31 Yard Sale

Bob’s Mom comes out, puts something down, goes back inside.
A guy comes in, looks at something,
hands money to someone
and walks out with it,
and then others enter and do the same
while Phil speaks

PHIL
On the way out of Albany
we stopped at Joe's Eat All You Want restaurant ($1.50).
Just for dessert Steve Paxton had five pieces of pie.
I asked the cashier on the way out:
how do you manage to keep this place in business?
Most people, she said rather sadly,
don't eat as much as you people.
Near the Grand Canyon
we found a lodge in a meadow surrounded by a forest
near the north rim of the canyon.
We were so comfortable there.
Fireplaces and good food.
Steak, salad, and Irish whiskey.
North of Seattle
we stopped at a place in the middle of the forest
that advertised homemade pies.
Some of us had two pieces.
Blackberry.
While we were there, some other customers came in and ordered pie.
"I'm sorry: we don't have any more."

Eat
in any municipal, state or national park is my advice.
Build fires: broil steaks or chickens
roast vegetables in foil with butter, salt, and pepper.
Fill a large wooden bowl with salad greens you've collected.
Heavy cream, lime, salt, and mushroom catsup,
olive oil, lemon juice, chives (or shallots),
poato salad,
corn on the cob,
ice cream with chocolate sauce
red raspberries.
Ginger ale and beer.
Dark beer.
A big kettle full of chili.
Peanut butter.
Dill pickles.
Rare roast beef, mustard on the side
smoked salmon and cream cheese
A sandwich of beef, ham, lettuce, tomato with Russian dressing.
Garlic.
Whenever anyone mentions they are going to put garlic in a dish
I always hope the cloves will be large.

[Phil exits.]

32 The Beating

Allen comes on carrying a square of astroturf, a garbage can, and a baseball bat. He sets the astroturf down carefully, places the garbage can on the astroturf, takes out two earplugs and puts them in his ears. He beats the garbage can with a baseball bat. He exits.
33 The Marching Band

A 123-piece local high school marching band
(or else a solo bagpipe player)
enters playing
and marches through the center of the piece and out again.

Everyone gathers to watch the parade.

34 The Dark Side

Bob the pizza boy, a character we have not seen before,
enters from where the marching band exited with a pizza box in his hand.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
And yet, I think, nonetheless,
forgiveness is possible.

SUSAN
You do.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Well, sure.
Really under any circumstances.

Uh, primarily, uh, uh, the, uh, the...
primarily the question is
does man have the power to forgive himself.
And he does.
That's essentially it.
I mean if you forgive yourself,
and you absolve yourself of all, uh,
of all wrongdoing in an incident,
then you're forgiven.
Who cares what other people think, because uh...
SUSAN
Was this a process you had to go through over a period of time?
Did you have to think about it?

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Well, no.
Not until I was reading the Aquarian gospel did I,
did I strike upon,
you know I had almost had ends meet because I had certain
uh you know
to-be-or-not-to-be reflections about of course what I did.
And uh,

ALLEN
I'm sorry, what was that?

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Triple murder.
Sister, husband. Sister, husband,
and a nephew, my nephew.
And uh, you know, uh, manic depressive.

CARL
Do you mind my asking what instruments did you use?
What were the instruments?

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
It was a knife.
It was a knife.

ALLEN
A knife?

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Yes.

ALLEN
So then, the three of them were all...
BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Ssssss...

[points to slitting his throat]

like that.

WILSON
So, uh,
do you think that as time goes by,
this episode will just become part of your past,
or has it already...

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
It has already become part of my past.

CARL
Has already become part of your past.
No sleepless nights? No...

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Oh, no. In the first three or four years there was a couple of nights where I would
stay up thinking about how I did it, you know. And what they said...they told me
later there were something like thirty stab wounds in my sister, but uh I remember
distinctly I just cut her throat once.

[Becker offers him a chair. He sits, making himself at home.]

That was all, you know, and I don't know where the thirty stab wounds came from.
So that might have been some kind of blackout thing. You know, I was trying to re-
re- re- uh, re- uh, uh, resurrect the uh, the crime--my initial steps, etc. You know,
and uh, and uh, I took, as a matter of fact, it came right out of the, I was starting the
New Testament at the time, matter of fact I'm about the only person you'll ever
meet that went to, to do a triple murder with a Bible in his, in his pocket, and, and,
listening to a radio. I had delusions of grandeur with the radio. Uh, I had a red shirt
on that was symbolic of, of some lines in Revelation, in the, in the New Testament.
Uh I had a red motor...as a matter of fact, I think it was chapter 6 something, verses
3, 4, or 5, or something where uh it was a man, it was a man. On a red horse. And,
and, a man on a red horse came out, and uh, and uh uh, and he was given a knife,
and unto him was given the power to kill and destroy. And I actually thought I was this person. And I thought that my red horse was this red Harley Davidson I had. And I wore...it was just, you know, it was kind of a symbolic type of thing. And and uh, you know, uh after the murders I thought the nephew was, was the, was a new devil or something, you know. This, this is pretty bizarre now that I think back on it. I thought he was a new devil and uh, uh. I mean basically I love my sister, there's no question about that. But at times my sister hadn't come through uh for me. You know and I was in another, one of these manic attacks. And uh, and uh, uh, you know, uh, I was just uh, I was just you know, I mean I was fed up with all this you know one day they treat me good and then they tell all these other people that I was a maniac and watch out for me and etc. and like that. And uh, uh, so I went to them that night to tell them I was all in trouble again, you know, and could they put me up for the night, you know, and they told me to take a hike and uh so uh, believing that I had the power to kill, uh you know, that was that for them. You know. I mean when family turns you out, that's a real blow. You know. But uh, back to the original subject of forgiveness. If I forgive myself I'm forgiven. You know that's essentially the answer. I'm the captain of my own ship. I run my own ship. Nobody can crawl in my ship unless they get permission. I just (he nods) "over there." You know. "I'm forgiven." You know. Ha-ha. You know. (Laughs.) It's as simple as that. You know. You're your own priest, you're your own leader, you're your own captain. You know. You run your own show, a lot of people know that.

Who ordered a pizza?

ALLEN
Oh.

SUSAN
A pizza.

ALLEN
I don't think anyone here ordered a pizza.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Someone ordered a pizza.
I don't go around picking up pizzas if nobody ordered one.
ALLEN
I think there's been some mistake.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
I think you are the one who is making a mistake
if you think nobody
is going to pay me for the fucking pizza.
I paid for the pizza.
You know: pizza
is not returnable.

ALLEN
Right.
I'll pay you for the pizza.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Plain cheese.

ALLEN
Right.
Here.
Keep the change.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
[checking the money Allen has given him]
Right.
Thanks.
Appreciate it.
Which way did I come in?

[The others all look at one another and then point in the same direction.]

ALLEN
Over there.
Right out that way.

BOB, THE PIZZA BOY
Right.
Thanks again.
[He leaves. We hear a newspaper boy's bike bell. Bob's Mom comes out, takes the pizza, and goes back inside. Everyone follows her, except Allen, Carl and Phil's Girl.]

35 Lovers

ALLEN
You know
I've been thinking about it
and it turns out
I love you

CARL
You do?

ALLEN
Yes.

CARL
I didn't know that.

ALLEN
Neither did I
but
I look at you
and I think you're good-natured.

CARL
Oh, good-natured.

ALLEN
Yes.

CARL
You do?
ALLEN
Yes, I really do.
And I think
if you think a person’s agreeable and warmhearted
then I think there’s something there you can’t explain
that gives you real
delight.

CARL
Oh.

ALLEN
I find
you give delight to me.

CARL
Oh. Well.
That’s what I’d hope for more than anything.

ALLEN
So would I.

CARL
And you’re not sorry about it?

ALLEN
How do you mean?

CARL
That you find delight in someone
who doesn’t seem to you in any other way
desirable
who doesn’t perhaps have those qualities
that you can count on
for, you know, the solid, long-term kind of thing.

ALLEN
I would just take delight long-term.
CARL
Oh.
So would I.

[Bob's Mom comes out, Allen sees her and follows her back inside.]

36 Falling in Love

Carl begins to dance as he talks to Phil's girl.

CARL
I think I fell in love with him
and I mean I fell in love with him like
the first time I saw him
I just couldn't stop looking at him
he was a soccer player
and I don't go to soccer games
and I don't like jocks
but I was there because a friend had taken me and bla bla bla never mind
but I was walking to our seats in the bleachers
and I saw him walking along the sidelines
and I just couldn't take my eyes off him
I was like a cartoon joke
I was looking at him and walking
and I could have walked right into a wall
and I think the reason I fell in love with him
is that he reminded me of a friend from high school
who reminded me of a guy I saw in a movie.

[Carl sits down beside Phil's girl.]

37 Fidelity

PHIL'S GIRL
When I was nineteen
it seemed to me I shouldn't be tied down to one guy
I loved him
and when we were together we were just with each other but if I went to Paris, for example, I thought I should have love affairs because I was nineteen and I thought he should, too, and I told him I was having love affairs and he should, too, and I wished he did both because it would have made me feel less guilty and also because I would have thought he wasn’t such a nerd if he did but he said he only cared for me and it made me feel like such a bad person that’s definitely one of the reasons I broke up with him and then, when we broke up, he told me he had been having affairs with other women and then that just tore it after that, I just thought he was a jerk.

[Susan enters, bouncing a ping pong ball. Carl turns to Phil’s Girl.]

CARL
Pizza?

[Phil's Girl nods. They both go into the house, leaving Susan outside.]

38 Eternal Love

Wilson opens a window and sees Susan.

SUSAN
You know
I’ve been thinking about it
and it turns out
I do love you

WILSON
You do?

SUSAN
Yes.
WILSON
How could that be?

SUSAN
I look at you
and I think you're sweet.

WILSON
Oh, sweet.

SUSAN
and good-natured.

WILSON
Good-natured.

SUSAN
Yes.

WILSON
You do?

SUSAN
Yes, I really do.
And I think
if you think a person's agreeable and warmhearted
then I think there's something there you can't explain
that gives you real
delight.

WILSON
Oh.

SUSAN
I find
you give delight to me.
WILSON
Oh. Well.
That's what I'd hope for more than anything.

SUSAN
So would I.

WILSON
And you're not sorry about it?

SUSAN
How do you mean?

WILSON
That you find delight in someone
who doesn't seem to you in any other way
desirable
who doesn't perhaps have those qualities
that you can count on
for, you know, the solid, long-term kind of thing.

SUSAN
I would just take delight long-term.

WILSON
Oh.

[He runs downstairs and joins her outside.]

So would I.

39 The Waltz

Music starts.
Wilson and Susan do a beautiful Viennese waltz while Allen speaks.

ALLEN
Well, it depends on what you want to predict...I can predict the death of the sun
quite accurately probably within ten to twenty percent ... I don't think I'd be wrong by more than one billion years plus or minus. You can predict the positions of the planets 100s of years into the future very accurately because we have studied vectors so much. But if you want to predict what's going to happen two years from now in Haiti you can't say very much--because the human system, that's a very complicated system.

[Wilson and Susan continue to dance. Phil and Phil's Girl appear at the windows above them, and throw out ping pong balls like confetti. The music stops suddenly, they go inside.]

40 Whitman

As Becker speaks, people wander out of the house and slowly clear the stage.

BECKER
O take my hand Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you, Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? what persons and cities are here?
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? who are the married women?
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms about each other's necks
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

What do you hear, Walt Whitman?
I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of animals early in the day,
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut shade, to the rebeck and guitar,
I hear fierce French liberty songs,
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old poems....

What do you see, Walt Whitman?
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, factories, palaces, hovels,
huts of barbarians, tents of nomads upon the surface....
I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth....
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses, gains, passions, of my race...
I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India....
I see the battlefields of the earth, grass grows upon them and blossoms and corn....
I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of the earth,
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see the male and female everywhere,
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophs,
I see the constructiveness of my race,
I see the results of perseverance and industry of my race,
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among them, I mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

[Becker exits.]

41 Bob

Late evening.
Do we hear an operatic aria faintly in the background?
a man singing a love solo.
BOB’S MOM
He was a sweet boy.
Of course, he loved his bicycle.
He would float for hours in the canal in an inner tube
and he built a go-cart out of wooden boxes.

We belonged to the Church of Christ
so of course there was
no drinking, no movies, no gambling
not even card-playing for fun,
no kissing before marriage,
no dancing.
You can be sure the Pleasure Pier on Lake Sabine,
which had a dance pavillion,
was definitely off limits.
Everything you did,
if it could possibly be interpreted as an indulgence,
was evil.
That's how it was then.

Everyone was poor those days.
We were a rural people so I knew how to sew.
I could arrange the paper patterns so close together on the fabric
I didn't waste a bit.

I scrubbed all the clothes on a washboard
I planted vegetables and canned them every year
and we raised chickens in the backyard for Sunday dinner.
We had linoleum on the floor in the kitchen.

He was a handsome boy
with a clear, fair complexion.
But he was not full of himself.
He was humble within himself,
and kind to everyone.
You knew he was going to go someplace,
you just didn't know where.
Isn't it something
how he can see the beauty in almost anything!

We were ordinary working people.
Art was not in our world.

[We hear a newspaper boy's bike bell.]

42 The Last Dance

Night time.
Stars in the sky.
Crickets.

The music of Ibrahim Ferrer (of Buena Vista Social Club fame). Bob's Mom starts to
dance. Becker the filthy derelict joins her. Eventually everyone else enters and
dances. They leave in couples. The last remaining couple is Bob's Mom and Becker,
and then he leaves.
Crickets.
Bob's Mom does a few moves alone on stage and enters her house.

43 The Final Moment

At the end of the piece: a man's voice says:
"OK!
That feels good to me.

PROGRAM NOTES:
The text for bobrauschenbergamerica was developed in a workshop with Tali
Gai, Jane Comfort, Kathleen Turco-Lyon, Rebecca Brown, Reba Herman, Alec
Duffy, Jacki Goldhammer, and Carolyn Clark Smith and incorporates texts from
them as well as from Robert Rauschenberg, Fred Becker, Philip Morrison, Walt
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