
The Last Stop

A comedy in two acts

FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

Robert J. Wheeler

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CHARACTER	DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
GOD	A deep voice	Any	Male
HELEN	God's assistant	30-50	Female
ROB	Dead playwright	30-50	Male
STELLA	Angel	30-50	Female
GUS	Hen-pecked husband	30-50	Male
HILDA	Gus's wife	30-50	Female
BASIL	An actor	30-50	Male
JULIA	Librarian and Basil's wife	30-50	Female
TRUCK DRIVER	Truck driver	30-50	Male
MAX	Magician	30-50	Male
SHEREEN	Max's magic assistant	20-30	Female
ROCK STAR		30-50	Male
POPE		50-90	Male
INVESTMENT FUND MANAGER		30-50	Male

FOURTEEN ACTORS REQUIRED – LESS WITH DOUBLING

The playwright would like the following read to the audience by the A.D. or his representative.
 “Welcome to our production of “*The Last Stop*” at (*name of theatre or church*) on this (*the date*).
 The playwright has dedicated all productions of this play to Mavis Bedford, his friend and inspirer from long ago. Now please relax and enjoy the play. Children play during the day.
 Tonight (*or today*) is your time to forget your troubles and enjoy your play time. Please remember to have phones turned off or silent and recording of any kind is not permitted”.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop

A "Bus Stop" sign is on top of a three-panel screen to represent a bus shelter.

A bench is in front of the screen. Both the bench and screen are at an angle to the audience, with the SL end of bus stop closer to the audience than the SR end. EVERYTHING IS WHITE.

ROB (35-40), ruffled hair, casually dressed, with a worn white shirt, red scarf, black pants, strolls from UR to the bus stop.

ROB This can't be right.

Rob walks around disoriented.

No. This is all wrong. I can't remember where I've been or where I'm going. I should leave.

Rob starts to leave, stops, sits on the bench.

I'm lost and alone at a bus stop with nowhere to go.

Rob jumps up.

Being dead is so, so, so limiting. *(new idea)* Hey! I could write a new play about a man at a bus stop, so I'm not fully dead. *(another idea)* Forgot, there's a manual!

Rob pulls a manual from a pocket. The word "MANUAL" is printed on the cover. He sits on bench, leafs through it.

The manual. Bla-bla-bla-bla.

Rob stops leafing through it, looks into the pages.

The interesting part. The steps. Step one. Move to the bus stop. Step two. Sit on the bench. Step three. Wait for the bus. Step ...

STELLA *(O.S.)* BOO!

Frightened, Rob jumps up, looks around.

(O.S.) I swear, all playwrights are directionally challenged!

(MORE)

STELLA ENTERS from behind the three-panel screen, is covered with a shimmering silver robe with a black lining.

Where does it say to wander around whining on and on about being lost, alone and dead?

Stella seems to glow with the robe and long blonde hair. Stella snatches the manual from Rob.

Does step four say that? No, it says wait for passengers to exit the bus! Here, read it.

Stella hands the manual to Rob.

ROB Who are you?

STELLA Stella.

ROB Stella who?

STELLA Stella The Star. You're Rob The Playwright. I've heard about you.

ROB Me?

STELLA It's not good!!!! You neglected your body. No exercise! Writing at all hours! Eating pizza, pop and chips? Does any of that sound good to you?

ROB *(nervous)* I'm, I'm a, a playwright, not an exercise or a culinary nut.

STELLA Just a dead nut! You gave yourself a heart attack because you were unable to perform the simple task of maintaining your body. You're the worst kind of nut.

ROB What's that?

STELLA The problem nut!!

ROB *(moves forward)* Are you an angel, or, or *(steps back)* maybe you're the Other?

STELLA Other what?

ROB The not nice Other.

STELLA *(eyes gleam)* Oh, the other Other?!!!

Stella flings off her robe, turns it inside out so the black side faces out and wraps it around herself.

(demented) The Other has it easy, real easy! Mean, real mean, takin' care of business, grab you, throw you into the red eye express, on the long, winding, shrieking, yes, the red eye express, down, and I mean straight down, vertical, into excruciating burning Hell!!!!

(MORE)

Terrified, Rob jumps onto the bench.

Stella turns her robe shimmering side out, becomes sweet again.

(nice) But no, I'm required to be nice, oh so nice. The Other has it easy. Everything dark. No grey, pathetic, miserable loose ends to deal with!!!

ROB *(sits on bench)* I'm a miserable, grey loose end?

STELLA You left out pathetic. You're way grey, verging on black, and loose! Never had looser.

ROB But you're not the Other?

STELLA I'm a problem solver, a facilitator, here to solve a nasty problem which is you.

ROB In a good way?

Stella shrugs. Rob jumps up.

My prayers have been answered!

Stella takes the manual.

STELLA I'm from COMPLAINTS!

ROB *(guiltily)* Oh-oh.

STELLA Multiple complaints have been lodged against you.

ROB Me?

STELLA Multiple!

ROB But, my prayers.

STELLA *(demented)* You don't have a prayer. Complaints get priority. Squeaky wheel? There's nothing squeaker than a persistent, whiney, squeaky complainer. Worse than anything, worse than chalk on a board.

Rob's terrified, jumps onto bench.

ROB *(pleading)* Okay, I'll settle for purgatory.

STELLA You've been whining on and on about not finishing your sordid play after it happened, remember?

ROB Yes, yes, that's right. I am so sorry.

STELLA *(writes on manual)* He says he's sorry.

ROB I was just wondering, sometimes out loud, possibly insisting a little, off and on, from time to time, that I be permitted to finish it. Sorry again.

STELLA *(writes on pad)* Oh, so sorry. *(looks to Rob)* Is that right?

ROB Yes! Yes! Yes!

STELLA You were turning Playwrights' Heaven into PLAYWRIGHTS' HELL!!

ROB *(guilty)* I was about to write the last scene of my play "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone" when I felt a pain in my chest, and I found myself without my body.

STELLA *(sarcastic)* Are you?

ROB Am I what?

STELLA Missing yourself?

ROB Yes, very much. *(sales pitch)* "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone" is an important play. A fantastic comedy. Promotes organ donation! It has a husband and wife who . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold on.

ROB: He has a roofing company and she works as an . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold it!

ROB You don't care about my play?

STELLA At this moment I'm REQUIRED to find you a temporary body so you can finish your supposed precious play.

ROB Hallelujah!!

STELLA In another moment I'll be about saving a child from a preventable mishap, but now I've got you, just you, understand?

ROB That's fine. *(eager)* I'm listening.

STELLA The transfer procedure doesn't happen often.

ROB No?

STELLA Permission has been given for the passionate playwright clause, the PPC, to be enacted.

Stella throws arms up, indicating herself.

All this is just for you.

ROB Tremendous! "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone" has a poignant ending. My protagonist writes about organ donation and dying.

STELLA *(writes on note pad)* Good at dying but not at writing about it. This pitiful playwright's only success is *(thinks)* . . . untimely dying.

ROB Do I get to choose the body? How about sex?

STELLA We've just met. I'm not that kind of facilitator.

ROB *(shocked)* No, no!

STELLA When I was a young star, maybe. Lately, I've elevated myself.

ROB No, I don't mean . . . Look, I didn't mean . . .

STELLA *(interrupting, points at him)* Got ya! You're so serious. Lighten up. The manual explained everything.

ROB *(guiltily)* Manual?

STELLA *(perturbed)* Are you telling me you didn't read your manual?!

ROB I skipped to the steps. First, second, you know.

STELLA *(glances up)* He didn't read his manual!

ROB Booooooring.

STELLA Playwrights are directionally challenged and non-manual readers. *(looks skyward)* Why me?

ROB Sorry. I see myself in . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold on!

Stella looks heavenward then back to Rob.

Checking my transfer resources. You were saying?

Rob puts a foot on end SL end of bench, enthusiastic, eyes aglow, clears throat.

ROB I see myself in a young, strong, male body. Football player. Yes, football player.

Rob throws out his chest, motions with left hand.

A handsome, rich quarterback.

STELLA You're more interested in scoring with the ladies than finishing your wacky play.

ROB It's funny yet poignant, not wacky.

STELLA It has to be wacky.

ROB Why?

STELLA You're the wackiest facilitation I've ever had. You want me to make you look good for the ladies!

ROB It's been quite a while since . . . you know.

STELLA You died in the arms of a hot blonde!

Rob shrugs.

Yesterday?!

ROB How time flies.

STELLA I'll see what's available.

Stella gives Rob a stern look, he takes foot off bench.

ROB Okay, okay, maybe a female body? Young, attractive.

STELLA Can you convince anyone, male or female, to lay down and die for you?

Rob sits on the SR end of the bench.

ROB *(deflated)* If I could have convinced people to buy houses, cars, appliances, I'd be rich.

STELLA You're a playwright by default?

Rob shrugs.

(writes on pad) Multiple failures! I'm putting you down as one big failure.

ROB Okay, okay, can we move on to finding me a body, any body, to occupy whatever I am.

STELLA Presently you are your essence, minus the physical stuff.

Stella sits on the SL end of the bench.

ROB A sad situation.

STELLA If you were an assembly line worker you'd go into a blissful space and stay there.

ROB *(frustrated)* To finish my play I'll need . . .

STELLA *(interrupting, not hearing him)* No stories bouncing around in their heads screaming to get out. Nothing to obsess about! Pleasant souls, easy to please with nothing going on. So, so, so easy. *(sigh)* The good cons. Wonderful.

Rob jumps off the bench.

ROB *(aggressive)* Can I send you back?! Get someone who cares more about me than their past!!?

Stella jumps off the bench.

STELLA *(indignant)* Send me back?! Me?! You're looking at the cream of the crop. You got lucky when I got unlucky. I'm your ticket to finishing your boring play.

ROB *(earnest)* It's a life changing masterpiece! Very significant. A monumental contribution to humanity.

STELLA *(indignant)* If you had drawn any of the others, you'd be regretting it, really regretting it.

ROB *(sarcastic)* Yeah, right.

STELLA They could scoot you into an old lady with failing eyesight. How about that?

Rob reacts negatively.

Or a prisoner who's getting unwanted, intimate attention. Try writing with that going on!

Rob over-reacts.

ROB I had no idea.

STELLA Oscar Wilde is crafting his sequel to his "The Importance Of Being Earnest" in the body of a diminutive insurance salesman.

ROB Sounds good, okay by me. An insurance salesman can work and write.

STELLA He's married to Prudence, a champion kick boxer. He could finish it.

ROB What are you saying?

STELLA Prudence likes to spar with him.

ROB Oscar's better half is abusing him?

STELLA Correction . . . his better three-quarters.

ROB *(reluctantly)* Oscar's suffering for his craft?

Rob staggers to the bench and sits on it.

STELLA Somewhat.

ROB How much what?

STELLA He's missing some teeth.

ROB Missing teeth?

STELLA Just six, maybe seven.

ROB *(stunned)* Oscar's a living punching bag?!

Rob fathoms.

STELLA All transferees experience side effects.

ROB What's the title of Oscar's sequel?

STELLA “The Importance of Loving Prudence”.

ROB *(fearful)* On second thought, a transfer might not be a good idea.

STELLA *(annoyed)* There’s no turning back. It’s in the manual!

Rob shrugs. Stella swats at Rob’s head. Rob ducks. She misses him.

STELLA You didn’t have to duck.

ROB I did!

STELLA No, you didn’t. My hand would have gone right through you.

ROB *(sarcastic)* Yeah, right.

STELLA You don’t have a body, remember?

ROB That’s right.

STELLA *(wicked smile)* Watch, I’ll prove it.

Stella winds up and punches Rob in the stomach. Rob keels over.

ROB Ahhhhhhh!

STELLA *(perplexed)* That’s not supposed to happen.

ROB Owwww! That hurt!

STELLA *(insincere)* Soooooorry.

ROB *(still suffering)* It happened! It hurt!

STELLA *(uncertain)* That’s it! Body memory.

ROB *(still suffering)* You huuuuurt mee!

STELLA You’re whining again!

ROB Sorry.

STELLA You remembered your physical body so well you made it hurt. It was your fault.

ROB You punched me, and it’s my fault?!

STELLA Absolutely! Too much body memory! You expected it to hurt, so it hurt. All your fault!

ROB Okay, okay, can we move along?

STELLA *(resigned)* I’ll fill you in. People in bodies, who can’t handle the situation they’re in, request a transfer out of the situation which necessitates leaving their body, which helps situations like yours.

ROB *(stands)* I could end up married to a kick boxer?

STELLA *(enjoying it)* Or worse!

ROB Oh my Gu . . .

Stella brings her finger up to Rob's lips, looks around.

STELLA *(interrupting)* We don't want to attract any undue attention. It's a significant sacrifice to step into a body, but you want to finish your play, the hallmark of your life, right?

ROB I don't know about hallmark of my life. I know I can't write if I have to fight off a kick boxer spouse.

STELLA *(to the side)* The prospect of failure has reared its ugly head.

ROB Okay, okay, Stella, listen. I have a small request.

STELLA *(to the side)* More from the ugly head.

ROB First I'm a dog's tail, now I'm the ugly head? Stella, I . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* I have a distinct feeling it'll get worse.

Stella looks DR.

Shush! They just got off the bus. Here they come.

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop

Rob and Stella are as before.

GUS and HILDA (50s), ENTER from DR. They wear worn out coats. Hilda has a head scarf, Gus a hood. They behave like they're in a snowstorm. Hilda has a grating voice. Gus is forlorn. Both speak with German accents.

ROB Homeless people?!

STELLA No! It's winter. They stepped off a cold bus into a blizzard.

ROB I don't see a bus or a blizzard.

STELLA You're allowed to see only what you need to see.

Gus and Hilda sit on the bench, Hilda SL and Gus SR end of bench, oblivious to Rob and Stella.

Rob and Stella stand near Gus. Hilda and Gus never look at each other.

HILDA It'll take the six bus a good ten minutes to get here. Thanks to you we'll probably freeze to death before it arrives.

GUS The shelter will keep the wind off.

Whenever Rob and Stella speak Hilda continues to yammer on condemning Gus, but we don't hear her

ROB That's supposed to be a bus shelter?

STELLA The best I could do on short notice. Shusssh.

HILDA If you ran faster, we would have caught the five bus and been home by now.

ROB It feels odd to see people huddled from the cold with no cold to speak of.

STELLA Weather is a physical condition.

HILDA This shelter is full of holes.

Hilda stands, points to the bus shelter.

(MORE)

There's a hole the size of a watermelon blowing on me.

Gus moves to the base of the shelter where she was pointing, facing DS.

Hilda sits on the SL end of the bench with her back to Gus.

GUS Better?

Hilda shrugs. Gus hangs his head dejected.

HILDA Why me?!!!

Gus hangs his head lower. Hilda's nagging mouth keeps moving but we don't hear her.

Hilda lifts one side of her butt and FARTS.

Gus reacts, eyes bug out, about to vomit.

ROB *(smells)* That's disgusting!

STELLA You want to finish your play, right?

ROB Yes, but . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Focus! Gus placed his request for transfer two years ago. Tonight is his night to fly.

ROB I'm to be Gus?

STELLA After his momentary heart attack. You'll look like Gus, be inside his body. Ready?

ROB Have you noticed Hilda has a attitude problem?

STELLA No body is perfect.

ROB She's so negative and the gas?!

STELLA Your teeth will be safe.

ROB It'll take me a month to finish the play. I doubt I'll last a week with her nagging and farting on and on. I need fresh air and peace to write.

STELLA Get ear plugs! Open windows!

ROB I don't know.

Stella touches Gus with her robe.

Gus grabs his chest, staggers to DC, collapses on floor, head down, bum up.

Hilda doesn't see Gus go down, mouths words without us hearing her.

Stella and Rob are around Gus.

STELLA Touch him and you'll go on the next bus with Hilda so you can finish your precious play.

Rob moves to Gus, hesitates.

Finishing your play means everything to you, right?

ROB Touch that?

Rob reaches out but doesn't touch him, pulls back.

I can't.

STELLA *(eager)* Yes, you can!!! I'm on a tight schedule! Go ahead, touch him!

ROB *(pulls back)* If it's between Hilda or a kick boxer, I'll take the kick boxer.

STELLA What are you thinking?

ROB I can get false teeth, but once sanity is lost, it's lost forever!

STELLA What am I supposed to do now?

ROB Bring him around. He can go with the next needy playwright.

Stella mouths a silent but profound "fuck," looks up.

STELLA Sorry.

Stella touches Gus with her robe. Gus awakens, sits on the bench.

HILDA There's our bus. Come on.

Hilda and Gus move to exit, towards DR.

Rob takes two steps toward Gus, says the following like a howl of wind toward Gus.

ROB Diiiiivooooorrree.

GUS *(to Hilda)* Did you hear something?

Hilda and Gus stop.

HILDA It's the wind!

GUS I thought I heard a word.

ROB Murrrrrrddder.

GUS There it is again.

HILDA Dementia! Schizophrenia! Is there no end to my torment?

Hilda and Gus move toward the DR exit.

STELLA What were you thinking?

ROB Just a couple of words.

STELLA If he gets a divorce or kills her he lives a happy life and withdraw his transfer request.

ROB So?

STELLA Deceased passionate playwrights rely on distressed people wanting transfers.

Rob sits on the SL end of the bench.

ROB Sorry.

Rob jumps up, races to Gus.

Acccciiiiiddeent.

GUS There it is again.

Gus half turns, then Hilda and Gus EXIT DR.

STELLA *(stressed)* You're unbearable!! Sit!!! I need to think!!!

Rob sits on the bench.

(calmer, looks heavenward) Rechecking my transfer resources.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop

Rob and Stella sit on the bench. Stella looks up, Rob's depressed.

STELLA Okay. *(looks to Rob)* Another option is being arranged. Their car will break down. They'll be on the next bus.

ROB What have you got, a hobo from the gutter?

STELLA Female librarian and male actor. Julia and Basil are in their 30s.

ROB The actor is perfect.

STELLA The librarian wants the transfer. Female?

ROB I would have pre . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Take it or leave it!

ROB Okay, okay. I'll take it.

STELLA Good. I've got better things to do than moly coddle a stubborn playwright. Here they come.

Rob moves to Stella.

BASIL reads a bound play, oblivious to the weather or Julia.

JULIA has an ample, not excessive bosom, dressed in theatre opening night wear, her with a black wrap, slightly low cut gown, but not too low, rush into the bus shelter from DR.

Both could speak with British accents.

They sit on the bench, Basil SL side, Julia SR side.

Stella and Rob are beside Julia.

BASIL You're sure it's the seven bus we need?

JULIA Our driver said it should be here in five minutes.

Julia holds up two bus transfers for Basil to see.

BASIL Good. We will get to the theatre in sufficient time. I want a perfect opening night.

Basil and Julia talk without sound when Stella and Rob talk.

ROB Okay, okay, I'm ready. Have her heart stop. I'll touch her.

STELLA Patience. For my records I need to know why she wants the transfer.

JULIA You're still learning lines?

BASIL Every word must be perfect. Paraphrasing is unthinkable.

ROB He's a playwrights' dream.

STELLA Good to know since you'll be living with him.

JULIA You're a perfectionist about your acting, but not about everything.

Basil looks away from his book to Julia.

BASIL What do you mean?

JULIA: Our marriage.

BASIL Have I missed an anniversary, a birthday? I've been busy with the play.

Julia jumps up, moves to SR end of bench.

JULIA As if you don't know!

BASIL I don't know?

JULIA I forgot my lunch last week and went back for it.

BASIL So? You got your lunch and went on your way, right?

JULIA: No! I bought my lunch but couldn't eat it because I was sick to my stomach.

BASIL A touch of the flu?

JULIA (*incensed*) I saw you with another woman in our living room! On our sofa! I wanted to scream. I ran back to the library as fast as I could. You called her Gwendolyn, the love of your life.

BASIL No! You've got it wrong.

JULIA: You broke my heart.

STELLA Another broken heart.

Stella, Julia and Rob are close.

Julia is in tears.

Stella touches Julia with her scarf.

Julia grabs her chest, gasps, and starts to fall.

BASIL (*stands*) I was acting! She was my leading lady.

Julia collapses, her upper body on the SR end of the bench.

Stella moves behind the bench to Basil, touches him on the shoulder.

Basil becomes calm, smiles out to the audience, sits on SL side of bench.

STELLA (to Rob) Don't just stand there! Touch her! I'm behind schedule.

ROB Okay, okay.

Rob rushes to Julia, kneels beside her, brings his left hand up, his fingers splayed and gently lowers his hand on her back, his head down for three seconds.

Simultaneously (because Rob's finger presses into her back unseen) they jerk their heads up and take deep breaths.

Julia is now in Rob's body and Rob is in Julia's body.

Julia In Rob's body has a blissful smile, stands, circles behind the screen.

Rob In Julia's Body is on its knees. The voice is Julia's but deep without an accent

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay, okay, this is weird. I'm a child?!

STELLA It's normal to feel different at first.

Rob In Julia's Body takes a step forward on knees DS.

Stella moves with her on SR side of her.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY You've turned me into a 10-year-old girl!

STELLA It's not what you think.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I wish I had a facilitator who knew what she was doing. I hated my childhood. Now I must go through another one! This time as a girl?

STELLA Gabriel told me there'd be times like this.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay, okay, listen! You've got to do something!

STELLA You're on your knees! Stand up!

Rob In Julia's Body, tries to stand grasping the bench, is in high heels, slips half a dozen times before falling by the bench.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

I've been hobbled!

Rob In Julia's Body frantically struggles to stand holding onto the bench.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Help me!

STELLA

Stop! Stand straight.

Rob in Julia's Body stands still, feet firm. One ankle goes over, then it straightens, then the other goes over and straightens.

As a playwright you're barely tolerable. As a woman, you're impossible.

Rob in Julia's Body is out of breath, struggles to breath,

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) My chest! Tight, so tight! Can't breathe! A heart attack!

STELLA

(sarcastic) Heart attack?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

I've got experience!

Rob in Julia's Body COLLAPSES on one knee.

STELLA

It's a self-imposed torture device.

Rob in Julia's body is on her knees and struggling to breath.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

You can't make the transfer, so you're burying your mistake. You're evil.
Evvviiii!

STELLA

(looks up toward God) Why can't a man act like a woman? *(to Rob In Julia's Body)* You're wearing a bra!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I'm dying! I'm sure of it! *(pause)* Bra?

STELLA Relax. Take a few breaths. You'll get used to it

Rob in Julia's body takes a few deep breaths, breathes easier, tenderly stands, clomps two steps toward DS. He's on high heels so acts like he's falling forward. Stella moves with her.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I can't stop myself. I keep falling forward.

STELLA A common side effect.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My balance has gone! You've wrecked my inner ear!

STELLA It's not inner ear.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Ears are very sensitive!

STELLA You've got boobs.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My hearing will be the next to . . . Boobs?

STELLA Have a look.

Rob In Julia's Body looks down at chest, is SHOCKED, jumps back suddenly.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY *(shocked, as loud as possible)* AHAAAAAA!

Rob In Julia's Body looks to the audience, confused, smiles to the audience, then looks down to the boobs again, looks up toward the audience, smiles to the audience.

I've got boobies? Boobs. *(to Stella)* Can I touch them?

STELLA Of course.

Rob In Julia's Body tenderly cups them from below.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My very own boobs. Can I name them?

STELLA Sure. They're yours.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay, okay. I'll call them . . . uhuh. I'll call them . . . Yes! I'll call them the
Boobsie Twins. (*panics*) What if they're not real?

STELLA They're real.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY You're sure? I wouldn't want this body if they're silicone. Everything about me
is natural. How about a warranty?

STELLA Comes with a lifetime body back warranty. Don't like this one, you get a walrus!
You can finish your play with flippers!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay! Okay! I was just wondering out loud.

STELLA Look. I've got to get going. So, you're happy with the transfer, right?

*Rob in Julia's Body, shoulder shimmies, tries to twirl the boobs,
does a Gypsy Rose Lee imitation with the wrap behind the
shoulders, like a boa.*

What are you doing?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY The twins want to break out.

STELLA They're in bra-cataz!!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Yet they yearn to fly free.

STELLA (*hums the Stripper music*) Da da da, ta da da da etc. It's not as easy as it looks.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY It took me forever to learn to drive. There's movement! I detect movement!
Nearing lift off! With a little practice I'll . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* You're transferred, and you've got a new hobby. So, I'll be on my way.

Stella moves toward shelter. Rob In Julia's Body stops shoulder shimmying, turns serious.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Wait a minute! Wait just aaa minute! Something's wrong! Very wrong!

Stella moves back to Rob in Julia's Body.

STELLA What now?

Rob in Julia's Body does a hip swivel.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Nothing's swinging below deck!!

STELLA *(happily)* C'est la vie.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) They're missing!

STELLA *(happily)* Enjoy your new body. Finish your play.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) No! You can't leave me like this!

STELLA *(happily)* I get a huge feeling of satisfaction when everything goes my way. Any more complaints and it's flippers for you!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(pleading) You can't.

STELLA *(happily)* You're so serious. Lighten up.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) I'm two too light!

STELLA *(happily)* You can twirl, twiddle, fiddle and fart all you want. I've got important interventions to facilitate. Bye, bye.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

No! There's the five-minute clause!

Stella stops a step away from being behind the SL edge of shelter.

STELLA

You said you didn't read your manual!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

I skimmed it. I know there's a five-minute clause! Fill me in.

STELLA

Why should I?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) Okay, okay. You said you'd fill me in, remember? Are you a liar?

Resigned, Stella returns to Rob in Julia's Body.

STELLA

If, within five minutes, both parties change their minds, then the transfer is revoked. Both parties!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(pleading) I want my, my, my whatever I was back!

STELLA

It takes two to tango!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

So, I'll need both of them! *(swivels hips)* Did you ask Julia? Check with Julia!
(begging on knees) I beg you, pleeeeeeaaasse! *(whining)*

STELLA

A champion *(mocking)* whiiiiinnnnnnner.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Sorry. Please.

Stella moves behind the SR end of the bench.

STELLA

Both parties never agree to . . . My Gu . . . She heard something before the transfer. She's changed her mind! Oh no! This is a disaster.

Stella claps hands twice.

Julia in Rob's Body, with a frozen heavenly smile, spin drifts from behind the SR end of the shelter.

Stella is between Julia in Rob's Body and Rob In Julia's Body.

Stella touches them simultaneously.

They take sudden deep breaths, snap into their previous forms.

Disoriented, Rob backs off to the side. Julia sees Basil.

JULIA Basil, you said . . .

BASIL *(interrupting)* I was acting! We were rehearsing for tonight's performance. Shirley Smith is the female lead in "The Choice."

Basil points to a page in the play he's reading.

See. It says Gwendolyn, you are the love of my life, but . . . *(looks at her)* Julia, I love only you.

ROB He could be acting now. How's she to know?

STELLA I've seen him act. He's not that good.

Basil and Julia embrace.

ROB I wrote "The Choice". It's a terrific play about a passionate dentist having to choose between his wife, Gwendolyn, or his dog, Rex.

STELLA You wrote about a dentist needing to choose between his wife or his dog?

ROB Yes.

STELLA Why?

ROB Gwendolyn became allergic to Rex's fur, so it was either Gwendolyn or Rex.

STELLA Don't tell me he put Rex down.

ROB Never. He chose Rex. It was a poignant scene.

STELLA He chose Rex the dog over Gwendolyn the wife?!!

ROB Rex was a cute Jack Russell. They're adorable.

STELLA Poignant, huh! You admit to writing "Gwendolyn, you were the love of my life . . . but . . . you're no match for my dog Rex?"

ROB It's a corny line I know, but trust me, in context, it's perfect.

BASIL Here's our bus.

Basil and Julia, arm in arm, EXIT DR. Rob steps forward toward Stella.

ROB What now?

Stella and Rob sit on the bench.

STELLA *(wails)* I've failed. Game over. End of story. Fini. Julia was your last hope. What will happen to me now?

ROB You?!! I'm missing a body!!!

STELLA I've got a history, an unsavory history.

ROB Stella The Star?

STELLA You're my fourth miserable failure. You were my fourth strike.

ROB It's three strikes then you're out.

STELLA In Heaven you get a free swing.

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE THREE

ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop

Rob and Stella sit on the bench, both appear depressed.

ROB You're telling me your good old eons weren't so wonderful?

STELLA It's hard to talk about.

ROB Go ahead, clear your conscience. I told you about my failure to sell stuff. Tell me about Stella the Star's dark history.

STELLA My last millennium performance review didn't go as well as it could have.

ROB No?

STELLA No. God's got this nasty secretary, Helen. She's efficient, but nasty, jealous, detests me because I'm God's Special Angel, so needles me whenever she can. Now she's got another reason to put me down.

ROB Down?

STELLA Way down.

ROB You mean into that Other place?

STELLA The ultra hot place.

ROB Ouch. Why?

STELLA I'm responsible for a Pope, an Investment Fund Manager and Rock Star taking the direct red eye plunge, the terrifying flight into Hell. Now you.

Rob jumps up.

ROB *(a look of disbelief)* I'm going to Hell?!

STELLA Not you, the other three.

ROB My lucky day.

STELLA You're my fourth failure. The first three, as I said, are in Hell. You're still here, for now.

ROB *(a look of horror)* For now? What about forgiveness?

STELLA There's only so much forgiveness to go around. After this, I could be playing for . . . the Other.

ROB No!

STELLA Yes.

ROB No!

STELLA The Other has requested that I be transferred.

ROB You?

STELLA They want God to transfer me to their team.

ROB Why?

STELLA Because the Devil's best tempters haven't bagged a pope. It's an angel joke. Angels laugh at me. It's embarrassing.

ROB I got your picture.

STELLA The Pope was one of God's favorite's.

ROB How could you have sent a Pope to Hell?

STELLA Unintentionally. It happened near the beginning of the eleventh century. Pope Urban the Second was getting into the sauce more than normal, so I was sent to facilitate his imbibing problem with the wine. Everything was going very well until, well . . . (*hesitates*)

ROB Go on.

STELLA His flock were constantly bickering and fighting with each other. In those days they used swords, not like words or nuclear threats of today, so they were making a huge bloody mess. Pope Urban thought they didn't have enough to do.

ROB I've heard farming was taking off around then. Did he turn them into farmers?

STELLA It was ten ninety-six! Instead of turning them into peaceful farmers, he launched the Crusades!

ROB Crusades?

STELLA Years of war and slaughter! Thousands of lives lost!

ROB That's history.

STELLA Negative history that I'm responsible for. I got him off alcohol, then, out of the blue, he turned to mass murder. (*jumps up*) He said he was going to wage war on sin, which seemed like a good idea at the time. Actually, he meant sinners! I'm not a mind reader!

ROB What about the Investment Fund Manager?

STELLA A pleasant man, very personable, but he liked the ladies, was squandering his personal development, hopping from woman to woman. I was sent to encourage him into monogamy, which I did. He was happily married for a year, then one day, he got the idea that he could use a few extra dollars, more than his commission. This crazy idea took hold, so he took all his investors' money to Vegas and squandered it. He died broke in a brothel. He thought what happened in Vegas stayed in Vegas.

ROB I've heard that.

STELLA Let me tell you, what happens in Vegas definitely gets around!

ROB What about the Rock Star?

STELLA Felix Wonderful! He was talented. He could play all the instruments, sing, dance. You name it, he could do it. Had audiences begging for him. I was sent to show him some humility. I was doing okay too, then well . . .

ROB So, what happened?

STELLA Sex drugs and rock and roll. More sex drugs and rock and roll. On and on until . . . well . . .

ROB Until?

STELLA At twenty-eight he wore out, looked like a man of seventy-five. Next thing I knew he was dead and booked on the terrifying, red eye plunge into burning Hell. He wasted his potential.

ROB How's that your fault?

STELLA *(shrugs)* I failed on all three facilitations. The Pope was using the booze to keep him from thinking about mass murder. The Investment Banker was happy hopping from woman to woman, never thinking about robbing his clients until I showed him the benefits of monogamy. I tried with the Rock Star but didn't stand a chance against the temptations of celebrity status. He died before he could be inspired to write some significant songs. Three stains on my record. Now you.

ROB Me?

STELLA Yeah.

ROB I'm going to Hell because you screwed up?!!

STELLA *(shrugs)* Who knows?

Rob reacts.

LIGHTS FADE to THIRTY PERCENT.

You'll never write an ending to, to . . . what was it called?

ROB *(defeated)* “I’ll Miss Me When I’m Gone”.

STELLA Guess what?

ROB What?

STELLA I won’t miss you when you’re gone.

LIGHTS DIM ON THEM TO 20 PER CENT

Stella slumps, her head on Rob’s shoulder.

Rob bends his head so it rests on the top of Stella’s head.

They are sad for THREE SECONDS.

The SOUND of a LOUD CRASH.

LIGHTS COME UP

Rob and Stella fly off the bench to DR.

Wind blows on them. A tire wobbles onto the stage.

A disheveled TRUCK DRIVER, (30-40), wearing a cowboy hat, beige T-shirt, dark pants and sounds like a cowboy, staggers through the storm into the shelter from DL to DC.

TRUCK
DRIVER

(Texas accent) God no! My truck is wrecked! Insurance expired! My life is over.

The Truck Driver faces the audience, looks up.

I wish I were dead!

The Trucker continues to stagger.

ROB *(perks up)* Wasn’t that a transfer request?

STELLA *(very perked up)* It was!

ROB Tremendous!

STELLA You’re sure this time?

ROB Never been surer!

STELLA His financial life is in a tailspin.

ROB I’m a playwright! Truckers are rich compared to what I’m used to.

The Trucker limps and staggers toward the bench.

Stella touches The Trucker with her robe.

The Trucker COLLAPSES partially on the SR end of bench.

STELLA You know the drill.

Stella returns to SR.

*Rob kneels beside the Trucker, touches him as he touched Julia.
They transfer as they did with Julia.*

The trucker is in Rob's body.

*Rob's body takes on a blissful smile, drifts behind the shelter. Rob
is in the Trucker's body.*

Hallelujah. Transfer complete.

*Rob In The Truckers body stands, flexes his arms, air types with his
fingers. Talks without accent.*

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

Yes! Fingers work perfectly.

Rob in Trucker's Body swings his hips, is pleased.

It's tango time! (does a fist pump) Yes!

STELLA Finally.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

Okay, okay, wait a minute. Wait just a minute!

STELLA I'm not waiting a millisecond!

Stella backs toward the bus shelter.

Transfer complete!

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

What's that smell?

STELLA I don't smell. Odor is a physical thing.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

Smells like a deer has been killed and been decaying for a couple weeks at the side of the highway.

Stella shrugs, he makes a face.

Horrid!

Rob In The Trucker's body moves DC to audience, sniffs DR and DL, returns DC, lifts right arm high overhead, smells under his under right arm, repulsed by the smell, lowers right arm, raises left arm high overhead, smells under the left are, repulsed by the smell, faces audience, distraught, shouts.

It's me!!!

Stella moves toward the bus shelter.

STELLA *(sarcastic)* Too bad. Take a shower. It might come off, and then again it might not. Oh well, I'll be on my way.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

No! Wait! *(whining)* Pleeeeeaaaase wait!

Stella exits behind shelter. Rob looks toward the audience.

Stella.

Rob In Trucker's Body turns to UC, sees she's gone, is desperate.

Stella!

Rob In Trucker's Body turns to audience, is crazed with fear, throws hat, drops to knees, smells both under arms, is disgusted, throws arms to the Heavens.

(screams to Heaven) STEEEELLLLLLA!

Stella rushes from behind the screen, stands behind the kneeling Rob In Trucker's Body.

STELLA *(enthusiastic, smiles with a fist pump)* YES!

Stella and Rob In Trucker's Body freeze.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE

LIGHTS UP

Time: Morning

Place: God's waiting room

The bus stop screen is gone. The bench is DC.

On the UC wall is a massive white sign UC reads "HEAVEN". Under the word in smaller type is "Waiting Room". There is a sign hung under the waiting room sign facing UC, away from audience.

A desk and chair are DR. EVERYTHING IS WHITE.

STELLA sits on the bench, nervously twirls her hair.

HELEN (O.S.) Stella's here for her revised millennium angel performance review. Stand by.

Nervous, Stella jumps up, stands to rigid attention.

STELLA I'm so literal.

Stella sits.

HELEN (O.S.) Stella, are you standing by for your return visit to the hot seat?

Stella lays on the bench.

(pause) Stella, are you 'standing' by?!!

STELLA Yuk you!

HELEN (O.S.) What?

Stella sits up.

STELLA Standing by!

Helen strolls on from SR.

HELEN, dressed in white, (30-60), personality reminds us of Carla in "Cheers" and/or the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz" with a grating, whiney voice.

HELEN I heard something. Come on Stella, you've got something on your mind, something you need to blurt out. Let me have it! I deserve it, so do you. *(she cackles)*

(MORE)

Stella moves to SR. Stella opens her mouth to shout something.

Helen moves to the "Waiting Room" sign, releases a sign that is hinged under it, reads: "UNCOOPERATIVE INDIVIDUALS WILL BE SENT TO HELL". Stella closes her mouth.

You're sure?

STELLA Very.

Helen returns to and sits at her desk. Stella returns to and sits on the bench.

I have no reason to be concerned. None at all.

HELEN *(sarcastic)* Yeah, right. I've seen your history. I'm looking forward to having you back on the hot seat.

STELLA It's warm. Warmed with God's love.

HELEN I'm surprised you're still here. I was under the impression you'd joined the Other.

STELLA Never! I've had an extremely successful problem facilitation under difficult circumstances. A major success.

HELEN Yeah, right. It's leopard time. You've got spots, big ones that can't be changed. Oh, Stella, you're on.

Stella jumps up.

GOD *(O.S.)* Stella, you there?

STELLA *(clears throat)* Uhmhhh. Uhmhhh. Uhmhhh.

GOD *(O.S.)* Stella! Stella!

STELLA Yes, yes, I'm here. I'm filled with joy regarding my last problem facilitation. You must know how it turned out since you're . . .

GOD *(interrupting, O.S.)* . . . all knowing? Somebody starts a rumor, and in a flash, it's all over. After all, I've heard I'm only human.

Stella snickers, grimace, hoping it's a joke.

STELLA With a sense of humour.

GOD *(O.S.)* Rob The Playwright is transferred. You have achieved a degree of redemption.

Stella grimaces again.

STELLA Redemption?!? What about forgiveness?

GOD (O.S.) I've got this other problem for you to facilitate.

STELLA Other problem?

GOD (O.S.) Pope Urban is suffering in Hell! You know how that makes Me look?! Out of all the popes through history, only one is in Hell. I want you to fix it.

STELLA But, but, but . . .

GOD (*interrupting O.S.*) No excuses. I need him with the other popes.

STELLA Dealing with red eye flight passengers in Hell isn't part of my job description.

GOD (O.S.) I've rewritten your job description. It's the obvious solution to your failed problem facilitations.

STELLA Solution?

GOD (O.S.) You're to join the Other.

STELLA Me, play for the bad guys, (*whining*) the Other team?! Oh, no! I'm your special angel, right! You won't manage without me around! I'm supposed to be special.

GOD (O.S.) You won't truly join the Other.

STELLA No?

GOD (O.S.) Just pretend to join them. Once you have gained their confidence, you'll see to it that the Pope, Rock Star and the Investment Fund Manager are remorseful. Then you'll Shepard them from Hell.

STELLA You're all wonderful and powerful. Tell the Devil to hand them over.

GOD (O.S.) And lose face?!

STELLA But, but, but . . .

GOD (*interrupting O.S.*) Stella, all three had one thing in common. Would you care to guess what it was?

STELLA Me?

GOD (O.S.) You misfacilitated! It's so embarrassing. Frankly, Stella, you've humiliated Me! God!

STELLA No?

GOD (O.S.) All three would be here in Heaven if it weren't for your 'help'.

STELLA It's not fair.

GOD (O.S.) What?

STELLA There are two million, nine hundred thousand, one hundred and thirty-nine ways to sin and three ways to be good . . . to love You, oneself and one's neighbor as oneself.

GOD *(O.S.)* Good point.

STELLA So, you can see how the odds are heavily stacked against good doers. Besides, I'm not equipped to deal with the devil and his demons. They scare me.

GOD *(O.S.)* I'll give you an advantage. How about they won't see you? I'll make you invisible to the Other.

STELLA That's a start.

GOD *(O.S.)* What'll it take?

STELLA Make the Other invisible to me.

GOD *(O.S.)* Okay, only the Rock Star, Investment Fund Manager and Pope will see you and you'll see them, only them. You'll fix things, right?

STELLA Oh, I'll fix everything. No problem.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE – END OF SAMPLE